



Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark Historian's Office
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Huguenot Post Office History

The Huguenot Post office was established on February 23, 1835, while Andrew Jackson, our 7th president, was in office. Charles C. Boyd was the first Postmaster.

The first mail route through the valley was from Kingston connecting with a route to Philadelphia. The mail probably was carried in wagons along the Old Mine Road (now Route 209). Later mail was carried by boats on the D & H Canal (1828-1898), as well as by rail over the Monticello & Port Jervis Railroad, later known as the Ontario & Western Railroad (1871-1957). After the railroad ceased operation, mail was

delivered by Star Route carriers from Port Jervis. Today mail trucks deliver mail from local distribution points.

Huguenot is unique in that it has been served continuously by women postmasters for ninety-two years, from 1915 until the present. The only man providing postal service in Huguenot during this time was Jamie Burns who was acting as Officer-in-Charge (not as Postmaster) for nine months between the time of Betty Rolff's retirement in July 1989 and Hilda M. Lehr's appointment on April 12, 1990.



Trading Post General Store and Post Office

The first Post Office of record was located at the Trading Post store on the D & H Canal. When Harriet E. Space was appointed as Postmaster, the Post Office moved into her home on Route 209. The current Post Office opened on June 1, 1971.



Current Post Office

History of Postmasters

Postmaster	Date of Appointment
Charles C. Boyd	February 23, 1835
John B. Van Inwegen	March 24, 1838
Peter B. Swartwout	January 22, 1850
John S. Van Inwegen (name changed to John Vanton on November 25, 1854)	November 19, 1853
Charles K. Bidwell	June 29, 1868
Betsy M. Bidwell	March 24, 1870
Charac Van Inwegen	September 22, 1885
John M. Thorpe	July 3, 1897
Charac Van Inwegen	July 26, 1901
Ellen S. Van Inwegen	May 13, 1915
Kathryn M. Fowler	February 16, 1920
Harriet Space	September 1, 1935
Acting Postmaster Harriet Space	January 28, 1936
Betty Rolff	March 1, 1969
Officer-in-Charge Betty Rolff	February 2, 1971
Jamie Burns	July 29, 1989
Officer-in-Charge Hilda M. Lehr	April 12, 1990
Susan Beebe	February 1, 2005

Huguenot Postmistress Ends 33 Years Serving Public

By Yolanda Melniker, Union Gazette February 1969

Huguenot--"Old postmasters never die. They just lose their zip". Gales of laughter greeted that remark by the "old postmaster" herself since it was obvious that here was one who was not only full of "zip" but full of wit and endowed with a rare, rich sense of humor.

The testimonial dinner at the Tom Quick Inn honoring the Huguenot postmaster, Mrs. Harriet Space, on her retirement after 33 and a half years of service, was a gala affair with 80 neighbors, friends, and relatives turning out to pay tribute to a "fine human being."

Mrs. Space thanked Howard "Howie" Swartwout who gave her the chance to become postmaster in Huguenot in 1935. He was chairman of the committee at the time of her appointment.

Among those attending were long time residents of Huguenot, Mr. and Mrs. Forrest Jenks and the oldest person and unofficial mayor of Huguenot, Willard Dorer. Town officials and their wives, Supervisor and Mrs. Arthur Hoag; Councilman and Mrs. Benjamin Lane; Highway Supt. and Mrs. Ernest Heater and Tax Assessor George Edwards were also on hand.

The Rev. Richard Coffill of the Deerpark Reformed Church gave the invocation

and benediction. Also at the head table with the guest of honor, were Mrs. Space's sister-in-law, Mrs. Clifford Space; nieces and nephews, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Vander Zilver of Lakewood, N.J. and Mr. and Mrs. Clifford "Jerry" Space Jr., of Huguenot.



Charles H. Swartwout Jr. of Huguenot, the master of ceremonies and 'almost a relative' was seated with his wife, Nancy, to Mrs. Space's right. After a sumptuous meal in which prime ribs of beef was the main course, brief words of praise and appreciation were tendered the guest of honor.

Ralph Van Inwegen, who himself retired about three months ago, said, "Now she'll take a little rest and do everything she wants to do. And, honey, I hope you have a ball!"

Herman Boerner included in his words "a little apology". "When Harriet and I went to Port Jervis High School, we had a snowstorm and with no school buses those days, we had to walk from Port Jervis to Huguenot right through two feet of snow, and I didn't even

carry her books." Willard Dorer said, "She may be Harriet to you, but she's been Hattie to me all these years. You've been wonderful to me and to everyone else."

George Edwards who, according to the master of ceremonies, "was always helping with remodeling and fixing the post office," said, "I am sure so many people in this crowd realize how far out you went to help us, far beyond your duties as postmaster."

When Supervisor Hoag said, "You should have called on my wife to speak, "it turned out he merely meant that Mrs. Hoag and Mrs. Space had gone to school together, had gotten their diamonds together" and "have been very good friends together all these years. The name might be little but the heart that goes with it is big and everybody in the valley knows this." Hoag remarked.

Mrs. Betty Rolff, who will be officer-in-charge until a new postmaster is appointed, said, "I'm fairly new in this area but the few years I've worked with Harriet have been wonderful ones for me. I'm awfully glad I can still holler 'HELP' through the door."

John McCormick, U. S. Post Office Inspector, who could not be present, sent a letter which Charles Swartwout read and which concluded with the words, "[Mrs. Space] has truly been a civil servant in the very best tradition."

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A standing ovation was given Mrs. Space who brought the evening to a close with her thanks to her many friends and showed just how little, if any, of her "zip" she had lost even though at that moment she seemed to swallow hard when she also said, "I have lost my cool."



Postmaster Betty Rolff explains how the boxes at the new Huguenot Post Office work to a local resident. The new facility, about a quarter mile north on Rt. 209 from the old post office, opened Tuesday.

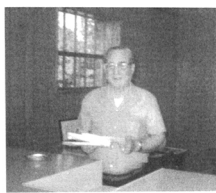
Huguenot Opens New Post Office On 209

Union Gazette June 1, 1971
HUGUENOT--While many still tried the door to the old Huguenot Post Office, Postmaster Betty Rolff was explaining how the new boxes worked to a few local residents who found their way to the new facility a quarter of a mile down Rt. 209 from the old one.

"It's the end of an era," she told one elderly resident of the town, handing her a key to one of the 250 boxes in the spacious new post office Tuesday.

"The old post office was so small nothing was more than two steps away. We had 120 boxes with combination locks, but no one ever used them. They were so close we just handed the mail to

everyone," she explained. "I've had a box for years and I never even learned the combination," another resident laughed in agreement.



Bill Hunt, Postal Clerk, in the new Huguenot Post Office. She and William Hunt, postal clerk, joked about the size of the building with residents who helped themselves to coffee and buns to celebrate for the opening of the new office.

The modern, roomy new post office was built by Hunt to U. S. Post Office specifications. Hunt owns the building and leases it to the Postal Service.

"I should have just enough time to get used to this place before the summer rush, when the camp kids start writing home to Mom and Dad," Mrs. Rolff noted.

Mrs. Rolff was appointed postmaster February 20 taking over from Mrs. Harriet Space who served the community for almost 33 years before retiring from the mob, which she had originally accepted thinking it would only be for a few years.

"So far it's great! It's a palace," Mrs. Rolff beamed apparently pleased with her new quarters.

Huguenot gets new postmaster

The Tri-State Gazette April 12, 1990

By DAVID GORDON
Staff Reporter
HUGUENOT--Hilda Lehr was sworn in as postmaster Thursday continuing a 73-year Huguenot tradition. She is the fifth consecutive woman to hold the post.

About 50 residents were on hand for her swearing-in ceremony and many brought homemade baked goods to celebrate. Lehr is no newcomer; she has worked as a clerk in the Huguenot Post Office for about three years.

"She's very popular. People here like her," Deerpark Supervisor James Garvey said.

Lehr, whose husband, Bernie Lehr is postmaster in Glen Spey, replaces Betty Rolff, who retired in July, 1989. She lives in Forestburgh, about 10 miles from the office, she said.

According to Harriet E. Space, who was postmaster for 33 years, women have run the office since 1915, when Ellen Swartwout Van Inwegen was appointed for a five year term. Kathryn Fowler ran the office for the following 15 years. The office was then located in the general store now known as the Huguenot Trading Post.

Space took over from Fowler, running the post office from her home on Route 209. The existing post office was built by William E. Hunt in 1969 and Rolff took over as postmaster in May 1970.

In staffing a rural post office, the department looks for someone appropriate to the community, who will get along with the residents, Sherry Elkind, the director of field operations at the post office Sectional Center in Poughkeepsie, said. While training and qualifications are necessary, "We look for a pleasant person," she said. "Everyone I interviewed for the job was qualified, but Hilda had that something extra."

Ralph Russo, a spokesman for Congressman Benjamin A. Gilman, R-N.Y.-22 said the postmaster is "perhaps the most important federal position." While many citizens never meet their elected representatives face to face, "The local postmaster affects our lives day by day. She keeps our businesses going and keeps our family and friends in touch."



Postmaster Hilda Lehr cuts a cake following swearing in ceremony

Lehr, who has worked in the Godeffroy, Congers, Port Jervis and Narrowsburg post offices before coming to Huguenot in 1986, said she likes

the community, and "I'm glad I got the job". She takes over a post office that was first opened during the term of Andrew Jackson, in 1835, Space said.

Town of Deerpark Bicentennial Stamp Cancellation August 30, 1997



1863 Huguenot Schoolhouse. Left to Right Janis Zeller, Betty Ehre, Charles Swartwout, Warren Gardner

Stamp collectors and history buffs spent Saturday morning, August 30, 1997, at the 1863 Schoolhouse, 25 Grange Road, Huguenot for a special, one of a kind stamp cancellation. It was the first fund raiser held by the Town of Deerpark Bicentennial Commission, as part of the 1998 Bicentennial Celebration, to help finance the renovation of the schoolhouse.

Janis Zeller, from the Huguenot Post Office, made the necessary arrangements.

Envelopes with a sketch of the schoolhouse were printed, a special edition of education stamps was ordered and a unique cancellation stamp was designed to cancel mail sent from Huguenot on

August 30, 1997. The 1863 Huguenot School has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1997. The renovated schoolhouse is now the Town Museum and is being used for community events and programs and as an office for the Town Historian.



If Walls Could Talk... September 23, 2007 Homecoming for Upper Huguenot School

All former students of the Upper Huguenot School are cordially invited to a special program at the 1863 Schoolhouse on Sunday September 23, 2007 at 3:00 PM. Please bring old photos and be ready to tell stories about what it was like being a student in this old school.

Please contact Betty Ehre (845) 856-3105 or Norma Schadt (845) 754-8070 to receive a short questionnaire to be completed with information about your school experiences. These will be added to the school's records in the historical archives of the Town of Deerpark.

We look forward to a wonderful day filled with good times, memories and refreshments.

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