

Postal Notes: A Brief History of Tubac Post Office

By John Cloninger March, 2019

Tubac Historical Society

1856 Located at the **Santa Rita Mining and Exploring Company** store established when **Charles Poston** came to town, a “post office” of sorts was established. The service was weekly mail between Tucson and Tubac. Mail was sent out from Tubac each Friday and received from Tucson each Sunday.¹

1859 **Frederick Hulseman** became Tubac’s first Postmaster when notified by Sylvester Mowry (Territorial Representative) that he was officially appointed to this position.²

1860 Postmaster Hulseman closed the post office due to “annoyances he had experienced” with the “corrupt officials at Washington” and “not a citizen in a population of nearly 400 could be found to accept the office.”³

1865 Postal service re-established in AZ including Tubac, **Henry Jenkins**, Postmaster.⁴

1867 Post office operated in **Thomas Yerkes’** store which sold dry goods, groceries and provisions.⁵

1877 **T. Lillie Mercer** served as Postmaster and again in 1880. Mr. Mercer is best known as being largely responsible for the building of the Tubac schoolhouse in 1885.⁶

1887 Postal service discontinued due to declining population in Tubac.⁷

1904 Post office re-established after 17-year lapse. **James Cowan**, Postmaster⁸

1905 **William Lowe** appointed Postmaster. Serving for 36 years, he ran the post office and a little store which sold cold drinks out of a section of his house with the help of his family. One of his sons reminisced that the “little old post office was the happiest place in town”. The building is also significant because it was the location of the first telegraph and telephone connection in Tubac to the outside world. The **Lowe House** is still there located at 14 Calle Iglesia.⁹

1920s and 30s **Ramon Quintero** carried the mail from across the Santa Cruz river as part of what became known as the Burro Mail. The mail train came from Tucson and would stop in Tubac on the east side of the Santa Cruz river. Ramon would wait for it and then carry the mail sacks back across the river, sometimes above his head if the river was swollen, or later, on the back of his faithful burro, **Kenyon Ella**. Kenyon Ella was given to Ramon by **William Allen** of the Kenyon Ranch.¹⁰

¹Tubac Historical Society Brownell, Elizabeth R. 1901-1993 Research card files 1969-1980

²Brownell Research files, THS

³*Latest from Arizona The Hesperian Letters* Edited by Constance Wynn Altshuler, 1969 pg. 122

⁴Brownell Research files, THS

⁵Brownell Research files, THS

⁶Brownell Research files, THS

⁷Brownell Research files, THS

⁸Brownell Research files, THS

⁹<https://lowehouseproject.com/tubac-history>

¹⁰*Arizona Daily Star* (Tucson, Arizona) · Fri, Feb 21, 1941

1941 Mrs. Goldie Edgell succeeded William Lowe as Postmaster. She stepped down and for a while a man named **Magruder** and then **Hoyt Smith** unsuccessfully tried to keep the Lowe store and post office going.¹¹

1942 Post office business was suspended. Hoyt Smith became the last Post Master of Tubac. Citizens began to receive **free rural delivery** (RFD) out of Nogales.¹²

1947 Tumacacori post office opened and residents received RFD on one of its routes.¹³

1959 The defunct post office in Tubac opened for one day in March to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the publishing of Arizona's first newspaper, *The Weekly Arizonian*.¹⁴

1961 A sub-station of the Tumacacori post office opened in Tubac in a building on the corner of the **Will Rogers Jr.** property, located across from the entrance to the Presidio State Park. Tubac received its own cancellation stamp. **Mrs. Collier Rogers** was the first Clerk-in-Charge. As a sub-station, the Postal Clerk of Tubac bid on and received an appointment as a private contractor.¹⁵

1965 Post Office moved to Uptown Plaza (near where Brasher Real Estate currently is located), **Louise Trees**, Postal Clerk.¹⁶

1969 Post office re-opened after being shut down for 38 days. Its new location was in the **El Presidito**. Rent charged by **Mrs. Gay Griffin** was \$1 per year. **Dorothy Mitchell** became Postal Clerk.¹⁷

1973 Post office moved to the west side of El Presidito. On opening day, coffee, punch and cookies were served. Dorothy Mitchell, Postal Clerk, retired in 1981 after 12 years on the job. When interviewed about her retirement, Dorothy said, "I have to admit that after 12 years, I'm tired of seeing letters...and especially junk mail". **Carol Megariz** became the new Postal Clerk.¹⁸

1982 Post Office moved to Tubac Centro, north of the Lowe house. Later this property became the Secret Garden. Some locals referred to this 1982 site as The Hole or, during monsoon season, The Swamp. Carol Megariz was Postal Clerk for about 18 months. **Norma Gaby** then assumed this position for about six months before **Gayle Peterson** (then Gayle Wisdom) was awarded an emergency contract to keep the post office open.¹⁹

1983 Gayle Peterson was awarded a full contract and moved the post office to Upper Tubac Rd in a building owned by **Harry and Ellen March**. (Currently #3 and #4 Tubac Rd.) The Marchs ran a grocery store and deli next door in what now is Mariah's (#8 Tubac Rd). Residents would often gather at the deli for a cup of coffee after picking up their mail.²⁰

¹¹ Brownell Research files, THS

¹² *Arizona Republic* · Sunday, Dec 13, 1942 and Brownell Research files, THS

¹³ Brownell Research files, THS

¹⁴ *Arizona Republic*, March 10, 1959

¹⁵ Brownell Research files, THS

¹⁶ *Green Valley News* January 24, 1965

¹⁷ *Arizona Daily Star* Wednesday February 19, 1969

¹⁸ *Green Valley News* June 28, 1973

¹⁹ *Nogales International* 2/24/82 and conversation with Gayle Peterson

²⁰ Conversation with Gayle Peterson

1991 The Post Office was relocated from Tubac Rd to its current site in the **El Mercado** complex on the East Frontage Rd (2255B) due to a need for more space and adequate parking. El Mercado was built by the Marchs and first used as a Mexican furniture store on the south end and a small plant nursery on the north end. Gayle’s husband, Pat, wanted to open a coffee shop on the north end of the new location so residents could have an informal community center like they did when the post office was located on Tubac Rd., but this never happened.²¹

2011 Gayle Peterson retired after having the Tubac post office contract for 26 years.²²

2012 **Julie Jung** obtained contract to operate the Tubac post office.²³

2017 Tubac post office window closed for a brief period due to subcontractors not being paid.²⁴

2018 Julie Jung ended tenure as postal contractor.²⁵

2018 **Fernando Alvarez** began his tenure as postal contractor to run the post office on May 21.²⁶

²¹ Conversation with Gayle Peterson

²² *Nogales International* February, 2011

²³ Conversations with various Tubac residents

²⁴ *Green Valley News*, 12/6/2017

²⁵ Conversation with Fernando Alvarez

²⁶ Conversation with Fernando Alvarez

Tubac and former Tubac residents who provided information

Grace Alegria Margaret Armbruster

Lee Blackwell Rojean Garrett

Pixie Geren Ann Groves

Virginia Hall Ellen March

Carol Megariz Jim Patterson

Gayle Peterson Nancy Valentine

Kathleen Vandervoet Brian Vandervoet

Karen Wilson Patty Wilson

Special thanks to Mary Bingham at THS for her valuable research