

From Overland Stage to Postal Truck: A History of the Mail Service in Rogers, Arkansas

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Author's Note

This history was written by the daughter and granddaughter of two Rogers' postmasters who now has the privilege of working in an office in the old post office on Second and Poplar which is being used as the annex of the Rogers Historical Museum. I very much feel I'm writing this with the spirits of my ancestors looking over my shoulder. I owe my love of history to both Claude M. Williams and Dick Williams who were both amateur historians and luckily passed that gene on to me. They also passed on to me the importance of public service and giving back to your community. I hope they would be proud of this commemorative history of the Rogers Post Office.

When it was announced the old post office would yet again be given a new purpose in the next few years, I felt compelled to record its history, which led in the end to a more comprehensive work on the delivery of the mail from before Rogers became a town. I got the idea for this commemorative history from the long-time editor of the *Rogers Democrat* and then *Rogers Daily News*, Erwin Funk. He had written a short history of the Rogers Post Office and its early postmasters in 1963 when the Post Office moved to Walnut and the building was rededicated as the Rogers Public Library.

I would like to thank the wonderful staff of the Rogers Historical Museum for all their assistance with my research, particularly Monte Harris for pointing out any "historical" errors before they went public. Also, thanks to Lucy Jacobs Keymeier for having such a keen eye for spotting typos and grammatical errors.

Robin Williams McClanahan,

5th generation Northwest Arkansas native and 4th Generation Rogers native – and proud of it.

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**From Overland Stage to Postal Truck:
A History of the Mail Service in Rogers, Arkansas**

By Robin Williams McClanahan

Today's citizens of Rogers have probably not spent much time pondering the significance of sending and receiving mail in the lives of their ancestors. However, for early settlers, a letter or newspaper brought by stage and later, rail, maintained an important link to a larger world and loved ones left behind when they ventured forth to start a new life on the western frontier. Taking a few moments to sit down to read a letter allowed one to escape, for a time, from the hardship of farm work or running a business. Folks knew what times the mail was due to arrive and would gather in anticipation of the possible receipt of a letter or to post one of their own. The post office was a place where citizens congregated, caught up on the latest news and shared their own. Those settlers living on rural, isolated farmsteads made a journey into town weekly or monthly to replenish supplies. Upon arrival, the post office would usually be their first stop, to check for letters or collect newspapers. Newspapers went through the mail, whether it was a local paper or from a distant city. There was no door to door delivery of newspapers until free rural and city mail delivery began in the early 1900s. Those who did not have a regular newspaper subscription, could always read one for free at the post office. The post office kept the latest papers looped around a wooden spindle which hung from a rack, with a chair or bench nearby for convenience of perusal. The mail remained an important ingredient to the psyche and was the only means of conducting business (the telegraph was in use but was too expensive to use for regular conduct of business) up until the mid-1980s when telephonic faxes began to be used, and then in the 1990s when the internet ushered in a new era of digital communication - email.

This particular history will focus on mail delivery and the post office as it pertains to early Rogers' history, and to a small extent Northwest Arkansas. More specifically, a brief overview of postal history in the United States; and a chronological breakdown of Rogers postal history to include its post offices, postmasters and changes in the delivery of the mail over time. Basically, from stage coach to mail truck and everything in between, from the time before Rogers was even a town until the 1960s, when the Post Office on Popular and Second Streets became the new library and the post office moved into larger quarters on Walnut. A special focus on the Old Post Office building takes on more significance now, as the historic building once again will be repurposed by the City of Rogers for yet other usage once the Rogers Historical Museum moves into its new quarters. Time marches on and the face of Rogers is ever changing. It is, therefore, important that we record as many of these changes as possible for the benefit of future generations of Rogers' citizens.

Before the Railroad

Earliest Mail Delivery in Benton County:

Prior to any official mail coming through Rogers, the settlers in the area before the 1840s sent mail first by very unreliable means, through someone who happened to be passing through the area heading in the direction they wanted it to go. If you were able to get your mail to an official mail rider (lone rider on horseback), the nearest Pony Express route was in Missouri, the cost of sending a letter was 8 cents per sheet if sent 40 miles or less, gradually increasing to 25 cents per sheet for letters sent more than 500 miles. So you'd best have something important to say and keep it very brief!

Star Routes:

As early as 1785, Congress authorized the Postmaster General of the United States to award mail transportation contracts to stage coach operators, "in effect subsidizing public travel and commerce with postal funds". Mail by stage coach came at a higher price to the government than over horseback, but still preferred. Obviously, mail carried by a stage coach with two drivers and a guard was safer than mail carried by a lone rider who was more susceptible to attack. However, an 1845 act passed by Congress took steps to reduce mail transportation costs by awarding mail delivery contracts to the lowest bidder, with renewal every four years (carriers had to re-bid each time). This was an abandonment of the preference for stage coach. These bids were known as "celerity [swiftness, speed], certainty and security bids". Postal clerks shortened the phrase to three asterisks or stars (***) , thus the bids became known as star bids, and the routes became known as star routes. By 1850, mail came by horseback, stage, steamboat and railroad, whoever was the lowest bidder. Star Routes were almost all carried on horseback, although boats, skis, sleds, snowshoes and mules were also used. Using horseback cut the cost to the government by 38%, from 7.2 cents to 4.5 cents per mile. Star Routes by horse or horse-drawn vehicle were used until the early 20th century.¹ In what would become the Rogers area, Star Routes brought the mail until the railroad was built and took over mail delivery shortly after its arrival in 1881. The closest Star Route depot was Cross Hollows. In the 1880s the postal clerk there was one Benjamin F. Sikes of whom more will be written later in this history.²

Hazards of the Road:

Delivery of the mail in the frontier days was a hazardous business and not something taken lightly by those intrepid souls who undertook to make it their living. Robbing of those carrying the mail was a serious problem. Those especially vulnerable were men alone on horseback and carriers with any kind of regular schedules – predictability was dangerous and made a robber’s life much easier. Mail carriers did carry money, not only for their personal expenses, but many transacted the selling of stamps, registered letters and sold money orders (which was a big business when people kept all their cash at home instead of putting it in a bank and writing checks). Plus, the mail itself could be carrying money sent from one person to another. Sending a money order was safer but certainly not fail safe.

Punishment for robbing a mail carrier was harsh. “Anyone found guilty of robbing carriers could receive 5-10 years of hard labor for the first offense and death for the second offense.”³

Mail carriers were government contractors and had to be at least 16 years old until 1902, when the age limit was raised to 21. They also had to take an oath of office, which alluded to the seriousness of the job of carrying the mail. Carriers also had to provide their own equipment, be it horse, boat, wagon – whatever was necessary for their job.⁴

Mail by Stage Coach:

Beginning in the 1840s, delivery of the mail in Northwest Arkansas was awarded to Drs. T.J. and Wade Pollard of Fayetteville. They opened a stage coach line that connected the railroad in Missouri to boats on the Arkansas River. This presented the opportunity for settlers in Benton County to have a more reliable form for sending and receiving mail. In 1858, the Pollards sold their business to John Butterfield’s stage line, the Overland Mail Company, which carried U.S. Mail, freight and passengers from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Coast.⁵ The new Butterfield stage route passed through Benton County entering Arkansas north of Pea Ridge, passing the Elkhorn Tavern (not a regular stop) and continuing on, following what would become the Old Wire Road (telegraph road) through Avoca but looping east to Callahan’s Stage Station up above Callahan Springs on the east side of what is now Rogers, in the vicinity of D and Spruce Streets. Callahan’s Stage Station, also known as Callahan’s Tavern, was the first relay station where teams of horses were changed after entering Arkansas from Missouri. The first stage delivering mail arrived at Callahan’s on September 18, 1858. Stations where teams were changed had to be larger to accommodate overnight passengers and have a stable and corral for horses and personnel to look after the horses before and after each change of teams. As there

was no downtown Rogers at that time, the stage left Callahan's and proceeded generally toward what is now Arkansas Street and on down the Old Wire Road (as it is now), to Cross Hollows, east of Lowell, and then on through Springdale, Fayetteville and into the Boston Mountains to Fort Smith. Then either overland or by steamship or barge down the Arkansas River to Little Rock. The Butterfield Stage Lines had contracted with the United States Post Office Department to carry mail from St. Louis, Missouri to San Francisco, California. The stage usually came through two times per week, one heading east and one heading west. The cost of mail delivered by stage was based on the weight of the letter and whether it was over or under 300 miles. Mail continued to be sent and received in this fashion until the railroad built a line through Benton County which began regular mail delivery in 1881.⁶

Mail by Rail:

The Post Office Department recognized the value of the railroad in transporting mail as early as 1832. However, it was not until 1864 that the first U.S. Railway Post Office (RPO) route was established. Before that time, the rail system was not extensive enough yet and the mail would have had to be moved back and forth between rail and stage, depending on where it was going. Most of the new RPO routes were in the East, where rail lines were more extensive.

You did not have to go through the post office to mail or ship in the 1800s and early 1900s. Folks could take their mail directly to the Railway Post Office (RPO). The clerk or agent for the RPO rode on the train and was the agent for a particular mail route. Mail surviving from that era carry cancellations like R.P.O., R.M.S. (Railway Mail Service), Transit, Tfr Clk (Transfer Clerk), or the route designation and E., W., N. or S. Rogers had a contract from 1901 – 1934. The Rogers – Grove mail route was originally called the Arkansas and Oklahoma. There was also a Frisco route (St. Louis to San Francisco). Note that the mail came via the railroad beginning in 1881 when the track was first established, but there was no official route or contract for the RPO until 1901.⁷

When railway service began, "the cars were equipped primarily to sort and distribute letter mail. Parcel Service was added in 1913, which soon outgrew the limited space aboard trains". So terminals were established next to major railroad stations (warehouses), allowing parcels to be sorted then loaded into mail cars for transport. "In 1930, more than 10,000 trains moved mail."⁸

Watching the mail and other freight unloaded from the train was a spectator event in those days when Rogers was still a small town with not a lot of entertainment. Folks knew when the train carrying mail was due in each day and many gathered to watch. You could sit in Roy Davis's Restaurant in the hotel or

Boyd's Café across the street from the depot and watch through the window, and if the train crew happened to stop for lunch that day, you could sit and visit with them and listen to stories of riding the rails. Rogers native Virginia Rand Smith remembers doing just that at Boyd's Café next door to her dad's (J.O. Rand) Fuel, Feed and Seed store on Elm and First Streets in the mid-1920s. She said the Engineer would buy her ice cream and tell her stories of riding the rails. Trains used a lot more fuel when they came to a full stop and then started up again. If there wasn't enough mail to warrant a full stop, other methods were used. According to Virginia, "sometimes the trains would go through and they'd just have the bag of mail hanging on an arm out over the track and they'd hook it and just keep going." The railway mail clerk would also use the hook for mail coming into Rogers as well.

The Railroad Mail Clerk, a Dangerous Job:

According to a communication from U.S. Postmaster General Cortelyou in 1906 reprinted in a Rogers' newspaper, he complained about the railroad being to blame for injuries and death to railroad mail clerks. He wrote, "It is a notorious fact that although the government pays a rental of mail cars that annually exceeds the first cost of these cars, the cars provided by the railroads are the flimsiest of all cars used. With the mail car always being right behind the engine and most accidents being head-on collisions, the lightly-built mail-cars are usually the ones sustaining the greatest damage." During 1905, 12 mail clerks were killed on duty, 125 seriously injured and 386 slightly injured. Cortelyou continues his tirade by requesting railroad mail clerks be better paid and their families receive some kind of compensation. "The men engaged in the railway mail service are the most illy paid servants of the government when the exacting and dangerous nature of their work is taken into consideration."⁹

The Coming of the Railroad and Rogers' First Postmaster

Before 1880, Benjamin F. "B.F." Sikes resided in and handled the mail at Cross Hollows. Upon hearing that the St. Louis to San Francisco Railroad (shortened to Frisco) was to put a line in which would run through Benton County, Sikes offered to donate a portion of his lands in what is now downtown Rogers for track right of way. He persuaded other land owners in the area to do likewise in order to get the railroad, a very lucrative business, to come through their lands. Sikes also donated 30 acres on which to build a town. Negotiations commenced and the decision was made by Frisco to accept Sikes' offer. Once the laying of track was completed in 1880, it was not long before the Frisco railroad brought the first mail by rail through this area, depositing the mail at a log structure built by Sikes near what would become Elm and First Streets.¹⁰ Sikes had moved all his mail equipment from Cross Hollows and began

distributing mail brought by rail out of his log house next to the track since it was the only building in existence near the railroad at that time. Initially, all mail leaving Rogers had the Cross Hollows cancellation stamp on it, as Sikes had not yet received one with the Rogers designation. Benjamin F. Sikes was appointed Rogers first official Postmaster by the President of the United States on January 19, 1881, the same year Rogers became a town. Sikes' daughter, Mrs. J.A. Robertson served as assistant and went by the title of Postmistress.¹¹

Sometime during 1881, the citizens of Rogers elected John Pertle, local druggist, to the position of Postmaster. The City of Rogers recognized Pertle as its first officially elected Postmaster. This is not in agreement with official U.S. Postal Service records which show B.F. Sikes as first official Postmaster and no listing at all for John Pertle.¹² Regardless, the Post Office and its equipment were moved from Sikes' log building into a portion of Pertle's drug store, a small frame building on W. Elm Street.¹³ The reasons for Pertle having never been appointed Postmaster by the U.S. Government must remain a mystery. U.S. Postal Service records show B.F. Sikes as having remained as official Postmaster until the job was given to Joseph H. Rackerby on October 25, 1881.¹⁴ If it were not for the fact that interviews with prominent Rogers citizens of the time, insist that Pertle was indeed duly elected and served in that capacity and that research performed by Erwin Funk in the 1950s references city election records of Pertle's election, it might be refuted that Pertle was ever Postmaster. It can only be concluded that either his name was never sent forward to the Postmaster General for appointment by the President of the United States, or the government denied the appointment. It does beg the question of how he got paid unless the monies were still sent to Sikes and he paid Pertle. We will simply never know.

The Times They Lived In – 1881 to 1906

Early Postmasters:

Up until the late 20th century, the Postmaster was an important position which carried prestige among the citizenry. Postmasters were appointed by the President of the United States and were usually the only federal representative in the town, and the Post Office the only federal building (once the post office became a separate building). "Candidates for the job were proposed by the outgoing Postmaster, the local community, or local Congressmen." The job was considered a "political plum" even though it was not a very secure job. In most small towns, the Postmaster job was usually a sideline to their primary occupation, such as storekeeper. A newly appointed Postmaster had to take an oath of office to support the current President and uphold the Constitution. They also had to reside in the community

where the post office was located and post a bond. "The Postmaster was exempt from militia duty but could be called upon to work on the roads."¹⁵

Before 1904, there were no mail carriers. If you wanted your mail, you had to go to the Post Office and pick it up. And, before 1919, there was no separate post office building in Rogers. Many businessmen would vie to have the post office in a portion of their shop, as folks would most certainly congregate when they came in to get mail to catch up on the latest news and gossip, and were very likely to look around in the shop and make a purchase. So not only was it prestigious to be postmaster but often a boost to their business as well.

However, most postmasters in those days did not hold the job for long. Until the establishment of Civil Service, being postmaster was not a secure job. As all postmasters were appointed by the President of the United States, the appointment was normally based on recommendation by local officials or the political party currently in power. So at the very least, when a Democrat defeated a Republican or vice versa, a new postmaster was inevitable. The same could be said for postal employees. The postal system seemed to be very much the old crony system. The newly appointed postmaster brought their own people with them, in many cases, to run the office. So many times, with a change in postmaster, the postal employees were out of a job.¹⁶

The postmaster's salary was as insecure as the job. It was based on local cancellation of stamps - basically, the total cost of stamps sold each month. The higher the volume of letters, the more the postmaster was paid, hence most postmasters having the position as a side line to their regular business because of the unreliable salary. The earliest postmasters used the position mostly as a political plum and thus spent more time on their regular business, leaving the day-to-day operation of the post office to their assistant postmaster.

Each postmaster was required to keep the post office open during normal business hours and if mail came into the post office on a Sunday (rail or stage), the post office was to be open for one hour after delivery of the mail. If a church service was going on, the postmaster had to wait until conclusion and then open the office for an hour. "The decision dated back to the 19th century controversies over the drivers of mail wagons blowing on a horn or a trumpet as the wagon came into town. Some ministers complained that the men would rise up, leave the church and head for the post office, where they would visit with each other and even play cards."¹⁷

Democrats versus Republicans: The Political Context:

In the years after the Civil War, people in the South became so embittered by “Carpet Bag Republicans” that it became almost solidly Democratic. “So pronounced was the dislike of Republicans that many people in the North became convinced that Republicans were not even allowed to run at large [for public office] much less take part in political affairs”.¹⁸ Many former Confederate towns made northerners, who were generally Republican (the party of Lincoln) feel unwelcome and discouraged from settling.

The citizens of Rogers, however, proved a bit more liberal, but still cautious, in welcoming Republicans. For example, J.H. Rackerby, a Republican and popular Rogers’ citizen, had been appointed Postmaster in October 1881 by a Republican President. In September of that year, D.W. Hinman had moved to Rogers and established *The Champion*, a newspaper which was Republican in politics. He was subsequently appointed Postmaster due to a new President being elected and Hinman being a supporter of that President. Hinman’s appointment was unpopular with the local citizenry, but seems to have had less to do with him being a Republican and more to do with the change of location of the post office to Hinman’s newspaper office on Elm Street and to his “irksome” personality. “H.H. Miller recalled that businessmen who disliked Hinman would collect as much of the outgoing mail as possible and mail directly with the railway mail clerk [thus by-passing the post office and its subsequent revenues]. Within six months *The Champion* faded out of the picture and went into oblivion with the editor and the postmaster.”¹⁹

This general tendency to mistrust Republicans gave some Rogers’ businessmen, most of them lifelong Democrats, the idea to start their own Republican newspaper, hoping it would encourage settlers from northern states. So, *The Rogers Republican*, originally just *The Republican* was started by a bunch of Democrats in May 1888. It was the only one in Benton County and until 1906, “ownership of *The Republican* was recognized as giving the editor a first mortgage on the local job as postmaster.”²⁰

Early Rogers Post Offices:

In the early days (1800s – early 1900s), small town post offices, such as the one in Rogers, did not take up a lot of space, a small room sufficing for all its needs. It should be noted, that until 1913, the post office did not handle parcel post (packages), only letters and printed matter (newspapers and magazines). Packages were considered freight and were shipped directly with a freight company such as Wells Fargo. It was up to the Postmaster to find or make space for a post office, with equipment paid

for by the postmaster, local businessmen or sometimes the city government.²¹ Therefore, the Postmaster either created a space within his own store if he was a shopkeeper or rented a space within someone else's business. Thus between 1881 and 1919, there were no less than eight different Post Office locations in downtown Rogers.

A typical Rogers post office between 1881 and 1906 would generally consist of a counter and/or a cashier window for the sale of money orders, stamps and envelopes. A clerk would also hand out general delivery mail for those patrons who received mail infrequently and so did not pay to rent a post office box. The post office would have typical office furniture such as a desk and chairs for the postmaster and the assistant postmaster, supply cabinets, rubber stamps (printed with the City of Rogers logo) and ink pads for cancelling mail going through the post office, a newspaper rack with sometimes a table and chairs where men could sit and play checkers or cards if space permitted. Most importantly, a wall would be lined with post office boxes of various sizes, the larger ones accommodating businesses that received a large volume of mail, which could be either locked with a key or combination lock. In 1900, the cost of a post office box, referred to as a "call" box, was 80 cents per year for one with no lock; \$1.40 per year for a small lock box and \$2.00 per year for a large lock box.²² Whenever the post office moved locations, there would be a line with much pushing and shoving of those patrons wanting post office boxes, as it was first come, first served. Folks seemed to prefer those boxes nearest the door and nearest a light source so they could see to open their box.

Keeping Up with Who's in Charge and Where the Post Office was Located Prior to 1906:

As alluded to previously, there was a new Postmaster appointed every time the political situation changed or a new President elected and with that change, a change in post office location. The year 1881 was a particular busy one for Presidential appointments, as there were actually three different U.S. Presidents serving in that one year. Rutherford B Hayes' term was over in early 1881, James Garfield was sworn in and then assassinated, and in that same year, Chester Arthur was sworn in as Garfield's replacement.²³ Hence, three different postmasters for the brand new town of Rogers in one year. As to the change in location for reasons already discussed (wherever the current postmaster chose to house it), the most important thing was that the location be as near as possible to the railroad depot for ease in unloading and transporting mail to the post office for distribution. Therefore most locations were either along First Street or on Elm or Walnut near the corner of First Street.

The first mail distribution in January 1881 was most likely out of B.F. Sikes' log house along the railroad near Elm and First. This would have been a temporary measure until a place to house the post office was found. After a few months, the postal equipment Sikes brought from Cross Hollows was moved to John Pertle's drug store, as discussed earlier, at around what is now 113 W. Elm where Pertle took up the mantle of unofficial Postmaster. Sikes saw his job as Postmaster as one of bringing the post office from Cross Hollows, getting it up and running and then turning it over to someone else. He was a very busy man, platting and selling off the rest of his 130 acres of land for businesses and residences – basically building a town.²⁴ When Joseph Rackerby was appointed Postmaster by President Garfield on October 25, 1881, Rackerby moved the post office to an unknown locale on Walnut Street. As he was not a business owner himself, it is surmised that he rented space from a shopkeeper on that street to serve as post office.

Following Garfield's demise, the new U.S. President appointed a political supporter, Daniel W. Hinman, the unpopular *Champion* newspaper editor discussed earlier. Hinman moved the post office to the offices of his newspaper in the small frame building on W. Elm. After losing his job as postmaster to Hinman, J.H. Rackerby took a position for the railway mail service. In a twist of irony, the choice of some Rogers businessmen to take their mail directly to the train in an attempt to undermine Hinman's stamp revenue, gave the last laugh to Rackerby. As railway mail clerk, he received the revenues that Hinman lost. Sweet revenge! Joseph Rackerby ended up serving on the railway as mail clerk until 1903 when he was credited with being the oldest railway mail clerk west of the Mississippi, having served for 22 years.²⁵ He figured that in a single year on the main line run, he normally handed 20,000 pieces of mail each trip. He made the trip fifteen times a month, which meant 3,600,000 pieces each year." He died in Rogers in 1907, his obituary reading, "Few citizens of Rogers have been more popular than Mr. Rackerby and he enjoyed the respect and esteem of the entire community."²⁶

Following the financial failure and subsequent resignation of D.W. Hinman, on March 1, 1883, President Arthur appointed a fellow Republican, Campbell Stroud, the son of early Benton County businessman, J. Wesley Stroud. Campbell was a store clerk for H.L. Stroud in Stroud's mercantile store on Walnut. He was cousin to H.L. (J. Wesley was H.L.'s Uncle). As Hinman's offices had been an unpopular location for the post office, it once again changed premises. This time to the north half of the Benton County Hardware on the SE corner of Elm and Second Streets. Stroud remained postmaster until July 7, 1885, at which time he decided to move further west and eventually ended up in Sheridan, Wyoming.²⁷ In July of 1885, another Rogers' newspaper editor, a Democrat, was appointed by the newly elected Democratic

President, Grover Cleveland. D.A. Oakley, editor of *The Republican*, replaced Campbell Stroud as Postmaster as part of a growing trend of Rogers newspaper editors also having the position of Postmaster. It does seem odd that a Democrat was the editor of *The Republican* but they do say politics makes strange bedfellows. Also, it must be remembered that *The Republican* newspaper was begun by a group of prominent Rogers' businessmen, all staunch Democrats, hoping to attract more Republicans to Rogers. These same men were most likely the nominators of Oakley for appointment as Postmaster.

Yet another newspaper editor was appointed when a newly elected Republican, President Benjamin Harrison took office. W.C. Chynoweth, a Republican, was Postmaster during the same years he was editor of *The Republican*, June 1889 to October 1893.²⁸ When Chynoweth took the postmaster position in 1889, the post office was moved to a back room of Citizens Bank on the SW corner of Walnut and First Streets where it shared premises with a stationers shop. It was common in those days for a bank to rent out offices for use by other, and usually associated, businesses. Chynoweth lost his job as postmaster when a Democratic U.S. President was elected in 1893, also resigning as editor of the *Rogers Republican*. He rented an office in that same bank, selling insurance and drawing up deeds, mortgages and contracts, and eventually becoming Assistant Cashier at Citizens Bank. Shortly thereafter, L.E. Karnes also rented space in Citizens Bank for his Rogers Real Estate office along the front left wall of the bank.²⁹ Citizens Bank must have been a lively place with all the folks coming in and out to conduct business, do their banking or pick up and post mail, a regular one-stop shop.

John W. Puckett, Postmaster from October 1893 to October 1897 and again from July 1914 to June 1921, was an exception to the trend of postmasters also being the newspaper editor and was also the only postmaster to serve twice, in non-consecutive terms.³⁰ That did not mean Puckett focused solely on the job of being Postmaster. During and in between his two terms as postmaster, Puckett, who came from an old area family who had settled in the Prairie Creek area, served two terms as County Assessor and was a successful stock buyer and farmer.³¹ During his tenure, he took on an assistant postmaster in 1894 by the name of Harry Morgan, brother to the more famous Thomas P. Morgan, poet, writer and humorist. The Morgans had moved to Rogers in 1890 and Harry clerked in several stores before taking the position of Assistant Postmaster where he remained for eight years, serving under both Puckett and Leo Fesler.

The practice of political cronyism, with a new postmaster appointed just about every time there was a new U.S. President, must have been a real nuisance to the citizens of Rogers, never knowing where the post office was going to be from one year to the next!

In between John Puckett's two terms, *The Republican* editors and publishers, Leo Fesler (Postmaster from 10/5/1897 to 6/10/1902) and W.R. Cady (Postmaster from 6/10/1902 to 5/4/1906) held the position. Not much is known about Leo Fesler except he did continue using the same post office in the back of Citizens Bank, while remaining editor of the newspaper. Of Cady, we know quite a bit because of his business ventures and the fact that his son, George Byron Cady was a journalist with the newspaper and an amateur historian. W.R. Cady had been one of the original publishers of *The Republican*. He was a great promoter of Rogers and worked on ways to bring in new settlers to the area. It was Cady who had the idea for the Apple Blossom Festival in 1923. He had traveled to Georgia and seen the Peach Festival and thought it would be a great promotional event for Benton County, which it was. W.R. Cady had one of the largest apple orchards in the area and his large house still stands at the NW corner of New Hope and Monte Ne Road. In addition to being Postmaster, newspaper editor and farmer, he had a store, W.R. Cady and Sons, which sold groceries and animal feed, as well as being a cooperage, making and selling casks and barrel staves.³² We know the post office moved again when he became postmaster to a building on the NW corner of First and Walnut, which was probably part of or adjacent to his store.

Around the time Cady started his tenure, the popular and efficient Assistant Postmaster Harry Morgan resigned his position. We have a lasting tribute to Harry Morgan through the words of Erwin Funk. Funk, editor of the *Rogers Democrat* and friend of Morgan, wrote his obituary in 1912. "[Morgan] is best remembered by our people as assistant postmaster... During his eight years' service in the post office he was perhaps the best known man in Rogers... During the many years that he was living in Rogers, Harry was one of the most popular young men of the town and had an unusually large number of friends. He was quiet and retiring in his manner but a keen observer and *The Democrat* editor [Funk] always found him well posted in all matters of general interest. His death is a matter of regret to all who knew him."

Rural Free Delivery:

Rural Free Delivery – What's that? As mentioned previously, there was no mail delivery to individual residences before 1904. In that year, the Rogers Postmaster had been granted permission to begin Rural Free Delivery, a program that had been inaugurated by the U.S. Government in 1896 to ease the burden on those patrons living in rural areas of having to come into town for their mail or post mail to go out of town. It was not until 1904 that the population of Rogers met the criteria for establishing the program. On April 1, 1904 three new rural mail delivery routes were inaugurated and three mail carriers

hired to supply mail to patrons along those routes. According to Erwin Funk, editor of the *Rogers Democrat* (a newspaper started by Funk in 1896), the new rural carriers were No. 1, Jube Lee; No. 2, J.T. Milligan; and No. 3, J.R. Threet. A month or so later, two more routes were added: No. 4, Schulyer Evans, who was succeeded in October by Charles Lunsford; and No. 5, J.M. Keeth, who was the oldest man on the list. Postmaster Dick Williams, sharing a memory in the 1960s, said Jube Lee served his patrons with a one-horse mail cart in all weather conditions, and finally retired in October 1916 due to ill health. Mr. Lee was the father of Ira Lee who was a postal clerk for the Rogers Post Office under both Claude M. Williams, and his son, Richard E. "Dick" Williams.

Implementation of the new rural mail delivery system was a bit of a bumpy road (no pun intended), rural folks not really understanding at first what it was all about. Within a few months, an article appeared in the *Rogers Democrat* entitled, "Free Delivery a Snap". It provided some examples of the unanticipated problems that arose: The reporter wrote that the mail carrier for Rural Route 2 recently received a letter from a patron reading something like this: "Friend Milligan, As you run the free delivery route by my house, I would like you to bring me a barrel of salt, two sacks of flour, also a ton of coal and three spools of wire, then throw in a set of whipple trees [wagon ties to hook the horses to], two bags of stock food and 100 lbs. of bran under the seat [of the wagon]. Can't you come by Nance's and get two of his large chicken coops and bring them along, then I can have my turkeys caught so that you can take them to town. It wouldn't detain you but a minute. I have 8 cords [of wood] to get to town. Had I better get it out along the side of the road, or will you go into the woods after it? I think this free delivery a great thing for us rural people."

In short order, another article appeared in the *Rogers Democrat*, "New Rules for Mail Carriers". Apparently Postmaster Cady had been bombarded with complaints by his rural mail carriers about what patrons were expecting of them, which he had duly passed up the chain to his superiors. Hence a set of rules for standardizing the conduct of carrier and customer had to be devised. The reporter, upon being given a copy of the new regulations, quoted the U.S. Postal Service directive, "On and after July 1, 1904, carriers on rural free delivery routes will not be allowed to solicit business or receive orders of any kind of any person, firm or corporation, and shall not, during their hours of employment, carry any merchandise for hire, except upon the request of patrons along the route." Apparently, one of the things carriers were asked to do (or paid to do) was deliver packages or advertising matter for firms to folks along the route, postage free. Thereafter, these firms would have to pay postage for the carrier to deliver. The article goes on to state that "carriers, while on duty, are not permitted to carry spirituous

liquors, either for themselves or for accommodation of their patrons.” Rural carriers, henceforth, were also prohibited, by virtue of them being government employees, from conducting business during their hours of employment, such as “book canvassing, soliciting insurance, selling sewing machines or other kindred.” Local purveyors of these types of goods had been complaining that some mail carriers were taking away some of their business and taking advantage of their position.

Rogers’ Population Growth Ushers in a New Era of Sweeping Changes to Postal System

The most important advancement for the Rogers Post Office in 1906, was that it became a Second Class post office. To provide a bit of explanation, the U.S. Postal Service classified its post offices as either First Class, Second Class, Third Class or Fourth Class based on the population of the city it served, volume of mail passing through its doors and the stamp revenues taken in, a First Class post office being the largest. So by 1906, Rogers had met the criteria to move from being a Third Class post office to Second Class. That meant the government would spring for larger premises to better accommodate the growing postal business.³³ So, in 1906, a new Postmaster, W.C. Roberts was appointed by the U.S. President and once again the post office changed location, but this time to its own space between J.W. Bryant Hardware and Furniture and a bank in the Burnham block on First Street, where it remained until 1919 when the new federal building on Poplar was completed. There was a good deal of excitement and anticipation about what the new post office on First Street would be like. An article entitled “To Move Office Soon” appeared in a Rogers’ newspaper on October 31, 1906, describing the new post office and its new location near First and Elm Streets. “It is all of polished oak and is as handsome as can be found in any post office in this section. Entering from the street, one sees the postmaster’s private office, equipped with a handsome roll top desk and easy chairs. Then come the money order windows, call boxes, and window, and then the general delivery window. All lock boxes have the combination locks and there are some 400 of them. At the extreme rear of the lobby are the windows for the rural carriers, where they will hand out mail on legal holidays or such times as it is impossible to go over routes.” The only drawback was the lack of sufficient light making it difficult for some patrons to see their boxes on dark days, possibly requiring the installation of electric lights (so the speculation ran). Even though the office was not going to be ready for a few more weeks, the reporter writes, “The patrons of the office commenced reserving boxes yesterday and the large boxes and preferred positions were snapped up in a hurry. Some want the boxes near the door, while others tried to get under the sky light.”

Mr. W.C. Roberts' appointment as Postmaster marked the end of the era of Rogers' postmasters being newspaper editors. He was a practicing attorney and the attorney for First National Bank which, by the way, was next door to the post office on the corner of First and Elm Streets.³⁴ His advertisement in the 1907 City Directory read, "Deeds, Mortgages and Contracts written with care and acknowledgements taken. Will practice in all courts", P.O. Box 94, Office Phone 63, Residence Phone 68. There were other changes in personnel with the expansion of the post office. Leslie Wilson was appointed Assistant Postmaster and served for 40 years, retiring only in 1946. In addition, Miss Ethel Roberts, daughter of Postmaster Roberts, began as mail clerk in 1906 and continued until she was replaced by her sister, Mrs. Minnie Cowling who presided at the delivery window until her retirement in 1947. It was said of Minnie when she retired that she was one of the most popular clerks in the entire region. A second mail clerk was hired, Mr. L.F. Owens, in 1907.³⁵

Findings of an Official Visit to Benton County by the U.S. Post Office Department:

Following an inspection tour of the area by a Mr. E.R. Cochran, U.S. Post Office Department, he wrote a detailed report to the Division Superintendent in St. Louis in 1906, which included some very interesting judgements of the character of the people inhabiting the area. Cochran, in his report, described the people of Benton County as "in the main fairly well educated there being few throughout the county who cannot read and write. There is, however, a native population who are very conservative. These people cannot be convinced that Rural Free Delivery is not or will not become a source of personal expense to them. They, for this reason, in a great many instances refuse to erect boxes upon Routes which pass directly by their doors daily. There is another, an emigrant class, from the northern states, who have enjoyed the advantages of Rural Service prior to their locating in this county. These people are ardent advocates of the service and are its most liberal supporters."³⁶

Cochran also provided an accounting of railway mail and rural delivery routes for the year 1906. He reported that there were two Railway Mail Service routes going through Rogers: "The Rogers-Grove R.P.O. (Railway Post Office) and the Monett-Paris R.P.O. The Rogers-Grove operated one combination car each way daily [provides no definition of combination car]. Over the Monett-Paris route, the St. Louis evening papers arrived in Rogers in time for morning delivery. These newspapers were delivered through the Rogers Post Office or businesses could get them directly from the railway postal clerk. Regarding rural mail delivery routes, Rogers Route 1 passes the Monte Ne Post Office and Routes 3 and 4 pass the Avoca Post Office and Route 4 goes to the Pea Ridge Post Office."³⁷

The Rogers City Directory of 1907 listed statistics for the Rogers Post Office over a three-month period in that year:

- “500 registered letters and parcels
- Issued 7,200 money orders to be sent away
- About 6,000 pieces of mail arrive daily and 2,000 sent daily
- All First Class mail sent to local rural routes requires a 2 cent stamp
- Rogers has largest post office in Benton County and the only Second Class post office
- Letters sent within Rogers, 1 cent/oz.
- Cost to register a stamped letter, 8 cents”

Free City Delivery:

The next big change in Rogers’ postal history was the inauguration of mail delivery within the city. In 1910, Postmaster Roberts filed a petition with the U.S. Post Office Department to institute this change. An article in the *Rogers Democrat*, written by Erwin Funk on November 24, 1910 entitled, “Free City Delivery – Next Improvement” stated that in order to receive permission for city delivery, a post office was required to take in a specified amount of money based on receipts (amount of money taken in based on sales of stamps, money orders and envelopes). Revenues in 1910 topped that amount (exact amount not specified in article), therefore permission was granted to begin city delivery in 1911. The postmaster was also allowed to hire two new mail carriers at a salary of \$800 each, with mail delivery once a day to the residential section of town and twice daily to the business section.

Prior to 1911, folks who lived in the Rogers city limits came to the post office to collect their mail. The switch to free city delivery ushered in huge changes for the citizens of Rogers, to include their social life. Coming to the post office to get mail almost always brought folks in contact with someone they knew, which would inevitably lead to catching up on the latest gossip as well as purchases of household supplies. Mail delivery right to your door meant one less reason to get out and walk downtown. An article appearing in the *Rogers Democrat* on February 20, 1913 entitled “\$70,000 for Post Office”, pointed out the economic impact of city delivery on local businesses. The article, which concerned the new post office (which was in the bidding process), discussed the equipment in the current post office on First Street, “The businessmen in that part of town helped pay the expense of the new equipment but no one seems to care much now where it goes since the rural and city delivery have robbed it [the post office] of its trade drawing powers.”

However, there were some positive aspects to “home” delivery. Up until 1911, there were no house numbers, only street names. In order to find someone’s house, you had to stop people on the street or knock on doors. One reporter for the *Rogers Democrat* wrote in an article entitled “Free City Delivery”, “Aside from the convenience of a free city delivery, the city will derive much benefit from the numbering of the homes so that a residence can be found without the usual questioning of every passerby.”

Before delivery could commence, the first order of business was to establish house numbers and arrange delivery routes for the carriers. According to that same article, it was decided by the city government that “on streets running east and west the even numbers will be on the north side and the odd on the south side. On streets running north and south the even numbers will be on the west side and the odd numbers on the east side. The mayor and city recorder were to name the streets having no present titles.” The mayor’s office must have been flooded with citizens living on those unnamed streets, requesting the street be named for their family. No wonder Rogers stuck with tree names – less controversial!

Just as with rural free delivery, city free delivery saw its own share of problems arise during implementation. In a newspaper article entitled “Free Delivery Now”, August 3, 1911, a reporter stated that free city delivery seemed to be getting off to a slow start. Two carriers were making deliveries but did not yet have much business. One of the carriers, a C.T. Kirkwood of Brooklyn, NY, was sent on loan by the U.S. Post Office Department to help get the free delivery routes in working order. “People had to sign up for delivery to their home and many folk did not want to go to the trouble of mounting a box on their house or having a mail slot put in the front door. However, the list of patrons was expected to grow rapidly once their box rent at the post office expired – folk would rather walk to the post office to pick up mail than waste money letting a post office box sit idle.”

1911 – 1916: Yet More Changes in Mail Delivery

The first automobile was used for mail delivery in 1911. According to an article in the *Rogers Democrat* by Erwin Funk in 1950, Johnny Rhoads, carrier on Route 5 out of Rogers, was the first rural mail carrier in Northwest Arkansas to use a car. He used a Brush car from March 1911 until sometime in May that year and then had to abandon its use because of the lack of bridges on the creeks on his route. “Rhoads’ Brush was an open car but he had a sheet iron cab built to protect both himself and the mail from rain, and the home-made cab was more useful than decorative”.

Before August of 1912, the post office was open seven days a week. Yes, even Sundays, which demonstrates the importance of sending and receiving mail in those days. It came, therefore, as a great shock when on August 12, 1912, Postmaster W.C. Roberts had a Notice printed in the newspaper justifying the closure hereafter of the post office on Sundays. It's obvious by the tone of the Notice, that Roberts expected a great deal of backlash regarding this change. He makes it clear that he is being officially directed to close on Sundays. The official letter from the U.S. Post Office Department which was reprinted in the newspaper read: "That hereafter post offices of the First and Second Classes shall not be open on Sundays for the purposes of delivering mail to the general public." Roberts emphasizes that the U.S. Post Office Department directive also stated, "special delivery mail is excepted and you [postmasters] will therefore arrange to have on duty a sufficient force to handle this special mail matter promptly." There was an outcry all over the United States regarding Sunday closure, forcing the U.S. Post Office Department to modify the ruling. Rather than locking the front door, disallowing any entrances, as previously directed, the new communication stated that "holders of lock boxes at First and Second Class post offices will have access to them as usual, although no mail deliveries will be made on the street or the post office windows." Mail and newspapers for hotels were to be sorted out by the railway mail cars so that it would be distributed immediately upon its arrival at destination.

A service that we take completely for granted today was not available until 1913. That is the mailing of packages (Parcel Post). The postal service, until that year, only dealt in letters, magazines, and newspapers. The postal service was simply not equipped to deal with anything of bulk. All packages prior to 1913 had to be shipped with a freight carrier, usually by wagon or stage. The decision by the U.S. Post Office Department and Railway Post Offices to handle Parcel Post (packages) had a number of ramifications, especially in terms of infrastructure, and cost the government a good deal of money to implement. Most post offices did not have loading docks or space in which to put packages until they could be sorted and delivered. Space was also limited in delivery vehicles, usually wagons, not to mention the problem for city carriers who delivered mail on foot with a bag strapped over their shoulder. Post offices had to expand and new methods of delivery had to be devised in order to accommodate Parcel Post. In the case of Railway Post Offices, whole new railway cars had to be added to hold all the packages, and warehouses constructed near train depots as depositories until the packages could be picked up by post offices.³⁸ From the patrons' perspective, being able to send packages through the mail was a godsend and a great money saver. The cost to send a package in the mail was a very small percentage of what the same package would cost to send via a freight carrier. A small article appeared in a Rogers newspaper entitled, "First Parcel Post Package Mailed Here Jan. 1,

1913". It announced that a Mr. J.T. Greenfield mailed the first parcel post package sent from Rogers. "It was a six-pound baby carriage and cost 32 cents." That same package would have cost \$1.44 if shipped through a freight carrier. An interesting article in the *Rogers Democrat* entitled "Parcel Post January 1", December 26, 1912, highlighted all the new rules that accompanied the introduction of Parcel Post. The reporter wrote, "Perishables may be sent by the parcels post under specific restrictions as to their containers and also the distance they are to go. Butter, lard, fish, fresh meats, vegetables, dressed fowls, fruits, berries and similar articles likely quickly to decay may be sent for short distances when they are securely packed. Eggs will be accepted for local delivery when they are properly packed in a container, and for any manner when each egg is separately packed in a secure manner. No restriction is placed on mailing of salted, dried, smoked or cured meats, but fresh meat will be transported only within the first zone... Articles that may not be sent by parcels post include intoxicating liquors of all kinds, poisons, poison animals, insects or reptiles; inflammable articles, including matches, explosives of every kind; infernal machines, pistols, or revolvers; disease germs, and obscene, defamatory or scurrilous matter of any nature now prohibited by law; live or dead animals or birds or live poultry; raw hides or pelts; or anything having a bad odor."

A New Government Building and Permanent Post Office for Rogers

Postmaster W.C. Roberts had been campaigning with the U.S. Post Office Department for a number of years to have a new federal building constructed to house the post office, particularly due to the increase in space requirements created by the advent of Parcel Post. A Benton County newspaper article, entitled "After U.S. Building", reported that "Honorable J.D. Floyd [U.S. Representative from this district] introduces Bill in Congress last week that will give Rogers a government building." The bill, if enacted, stated that a suitable lot in or near the business center of Rogers be purchased and a building erected, to include fireproof vaults, heating and ventilating apparatus, to be used as a post office and for other federal government purposes. The building shall not exceed \$70,000, not including the cost of the land. "Postmaster Roberts has been working hard for a building and if it goes through no little amount of credit will go to him." Roberts got his wish when it was announced in 1913 that Congress was to set aside \$70,000 for the construction of a building to house the post office, plus another \$5,000 for purchase of land for a total of \$75,000. In an article written by Erwin Funk in the *Rogers Democrat* of March 1, 1917, he reported that "part of the delay [of the construction of the building] was occasioned by debate over the proposed site and numerous places were considered before the present corner of Second and Poplar was agreed upon." The site that was finally selected, 120 W. Poplar, had been the

wood yard of Fred I. Edgar and contained 5,000 square feet of stacked wood, which obviously had to be moved before construction could begin. An article in the May 11, 1916 *Rogers Democrat* described the location as “the highest and best drained site offered the government.” The site’s large size and nearness to the railroad depot, just half a block away, were most likely also determining factors in its being selected.

The contract for construction of the building of the new post office was awarded on September 5, 1917 to Charles W. Weitz Sons of Des Moines, Iowa, with Jesse Marshall as on-site supervisor and E.H. Toom, U.S. Superintendent. The only local bidder on the project was Charles Juhre, who offered to build it on the lots west of McSpadden’s Grocery Store, located at 206 W. Walnut Street.³⁹

Naturally, the construction of a government building in Rogers was the subject of much interest, gathering large numbers of citizens watching the construction process. Rogers’ citizens displayed mixed emotions regarding the new federal building being built on the corner of Poplar and Second Streets. Some folks felt the government money could better be spent on the war effort. During the period in which it was built, WWI was still raging in the fields of Europe (the armistice would not be signed until after construction was completed). Judging by newspaper articles during that time, those folks worrying about the money being spent on the building by the government did have a point. There was a good deal of scrimping in which all U.S. citizens were expected to participate. For example, one newspaper article, “Ban on Chickens Lifted” announced that the order “prohibiting the killing of chickens is raised effective Friday, April 19.” The federal food administration had imposed the ban in February in order to conserve the chicken supply and increase egg production for the war effort. Another article, “Wheatless Menu Requested”, reported that the food administration was asking “that we do not use any wheat or its products until September First. But it does not mean that householders should return broken sacks of flour to grocers, it would be impracticable to return quantities of less than twenty-four pounds. Small quantities of flour on hand should be kept for use as a binder for various foods that can hardly be cooked without flour and for use in emergencies.” These are just a couple examples of the sacrifice everyone was asked to make during WWI, so it is understandable that there were mixed reactions to the government spending money on a new federal building, regardless of the fact that it was sorely needed for the efficient running of the Rogers postal system.

Nonetheless, construction of the new post office did commence, with the walls going up steadily and each day looking more like the authoritative symbol of power which federal buildings were meant to portray during that time period. The front page of the *Rogers Democrat* on April 18, 1918 read, “New

Building is Tagged". The reporter commented, "Now that the lintel of the main door way to the new federal building is in position and bears the inscription, U.S. Post Office, it will no longer be necessary to explain to the visitor and passer-by that it is not a warehouse or a private dwelling. Some of our people do not seem to be greatly impressed with the architectural beauty of the new edifice, but as a rule the federal buildings of the country are not so noted... One thing is mighty certain: the work is being well done and there will be no question of the quality."

Once the building was completed around January 1919, the building's façade had grown on most people. It was reported in the *Rogers Democrat* in mid-1918 that "most locals these days agree it's one of the most beautiful buildings in Rogers with its fine architectural detail." An article in the *Rogers Democrat* on February 27, 1919 provided a detailed description of the finished product. The reporter noted that the building was ready for occupancy on the first of February "but the non-arrival of some of the fixtures, which are of mission oak, delayed the actual moving until last Saturday, February 22... [and] now stands on the corner of Second and Poplar, one of the most substantial buildings in Rogers." He described the Georgian Revival building as being made of "mat-faced red brick, laid in white mortar; is steam heated, electric lighted, and is modern in every detail; thus affording the force to carry on their duties to a better advantage than ever as everything is now for their convenience."

The new Rogers Post Office opened for business on February 22, 1919. The first staff to inhabit the new post office consisted of J.W. Puckett, Postmaster; J.L. Wilson, Assistant Postmaster; L.F. Owens, Money Order Clerk; F.W. Barnett, K.A. Frost, J.P. Keller, Mailing Clerks; Mrs. Minnie Cowling, General Delivery Clerk; D.F. Johnson, City Carrier No. 1; A.M. Sherrill, City Carrier No. 2; L.A. Baker, Rural Carrier No. 1; E.E. Stanton, Rural Carrier No. 2; J.H. Rhoads, Rural Carrier No. 3; E.T. Huffman, Rural Carrier No. 4; L.B. McGinnis, Substitute Carrier, now overseas (serving in WWI).⁴⁰ Mr. Puckett had assumed the job of Postmaster in 1914 when Mr. Roberts, the postmaster responsible for the building of the new post office, retired. A newspaper article, July 30, 1914, entitled "Roberts Retires Friday", commended Roberts, saying "Mr. Roberts carries with him the best wishes and the congratulations of our people for the successful way in which the local office has been conducted during his eight year term. Mr. Roberts has seen the office make perhaps the greatest gain of any office in this part of the state during these years, and no town of equal size in the state has surpassed it. Mr. Roberts has made an efficient and accommodating official and has been one of the most liberal Rogers citizens in all matters affecting the public welfare... There will be no change in the office force as the local office is entirely under the civil service rules."

Much publicity was written about the new post office. One stand-out article in the *Rogers Democrat* February 27, 1919 entitled, "Most into Rogers' New Government Building", reported that "With the erection of this building is added to the already goodly number of substantial buildings of Rogers, one that stands as a monument to both brawn and brain and one that is without doubt a credit to our city and now that we have a modern up-to-date, clean post office, for the love of Mike, let's keep it that way. If you have to spit, do so before you go in; don't wait until you get up to the delivery window then have to look around for a place to unload before you can make your wants known."

1920s: A Statistical Snapshot of Rogers' Postal Service

The amount of business a post office conducted was a good indicator of the health of a local economy. For example, in 1920, Rogers ranked 26th in population in the State of Arkansas. However, the volume of money order business was second only to Little Rock, with an annual cash turnover in excess of half a million dollars. In 1922, the post office paid out over \$261,000 in money orders and issued around 9,000 money orders [patrons could cash money orders at the post office].⁴¹ To better explain the high volume of business relative to population in Rogers during the early part of the 20th Century, we must look to the fruit industry. Rogers' economic success was due almost entirely to fruit production and the ability of the railroad to transport fruit products in a timely manner nationwide. Northwest Arkansas was one of the largest fruit growers and exporters of fruit and fruit products in the United States. In 1919, five million bushels of apples had been sold in Benton County, at an average of \$1 per bushel. That was the peak year for apple yield and price per bushel.⁴²

The delivery of mail also saw changes in 1920. There were three Star Routes out of Rogers supplying LaRue, War Eagle, Healing Springs and Cave Springs. Monte Ne and Pea Ridge were supplied by Rural Routes 1 and 4 respectively. There were only two mail carriers who supplied the entire city of Rogers.⁴³

A New Generation of Postmasters Take the Helm:

In 1922, George Byron Cady was appointed Rogers Postmaster. He was the son of a previous postmaster, W.R. Cady and a relative youngster. He had previously been an editor/journalist for the *Rogers Republican* and other Southwestern newspapers, as well as assisting his father in the running of the store, the cooperage, and the apple business. G. Byron Cady viewed his appointment as Postmaster as a full-time civil service job and determined to reorganize and streamline the mail service in Rogers.⁴⁴ An article in the *Rogers Democrat*, April 30, 1925, written upon Cady's resignation, stated that "No town in the Southwest had a more aggressive postmaster than did Rogers while Mr. Cady was in active

charge.” During his tenure, Cady completely reorganized the local postal service, adding more routes to rural delivery service, increasing city delivery inside the business district from two to three times daily, added more collection boxes city-wide, increased hours the Stamp, General Delivery and Money Order windows were open, decreasing post office box rent price, and purchasing an electricity driven cancelling machine for money orders, and a stamp cancelling machine, replacing hand powered machines.⁴⁵

Cady was also very interested in the history of the early postal service in Rogers and is responsible for much of what we know about the history of the Rogers post office between 1881 and 1925, interviewing eyewitnesses to its evolution while they were still around. In a lengthy article for the *Rogers Democrat* in October 1922, utilizing writing skills honed as a journalist, Cady waxed poetic when he wrote, “International in scope, local in application, service without stint and efficiency the goal of every effort, the Post Office Department of the U.S. is today without a parallel in business annals.” According to Cady, a description of the early postal system in the U.S. “reads like a legend bodily from the 15th century compared with the present system, the ramifications of which extend throughout every city, village and hamlet, no matter how remote – and reaches the lonely miner, the fisherman on river or bay, the tiller and the toiler in every walk of life, and impartially serving all.” Describing the new post office, Cady stated, “Rogers is very fortunate, the post office being located in a government building built especially for it and designed to meet every need imposed. Fitted with all modern conveniences and equipped with electrical machinery seldom found in an office in a city the size of Rogers”.⁴⁶

It is unfortunate that George Cady’s ill health, later diagnosed as tuberculosis of the spine, shortened his term as postmaster. During his last few years, Cady had traveled to Chicago and Tucson to try to affect a cure to no avail. The very able Assistant Postmaster, Leslie Wilson, kept the post office running smoothly during his absences. Cady eventually resigned just before his death in April 1925, leaving behind his wife, Vivian Kruse (granddaughter of J.A.C. Blackburn and Peter Van Winkle) and a son, Jim, seven years old.⁴⁷ Erwin Funk wrote the obituary for George Byron Cady, saying “Rogers has lost one of its deservedly popular and most promising young men... It is not easy for the *Democrat* editor to write these lines for his heart is sore at the loss of a tried and true friend of more than a quarter of a century’s standing. For some six or seven years the writer [Funk] and Cady were editors respectively of the *Rogers Democrat* and the *Rogers Republican* and during that entire time there was never a serious disagreement or slightest break in their friendship.”

In 1925, Claude McKinley Williams took on the task of filling some rather large shoes in replacing Cady as Postmaster on May 5, 1925. Williams was a relative newcomer to Rogers, having moved here from Boston, Arkansas around 1920. An article in the *Rogers Democrat*, entitled "Claude Williams Gets P.O. Promise: Endorsed by Republican State Central Committee Saturday at Meeting Held in City of Little Rock," stated, "Mr. Williams owes his endorsement for the office of postmaster here to his record as a service man during the recent war [WWI], and his activity in the American Legion since coming to this city several years ago... He was with the Rogers Real Estate Company for some time, and is now in the insurance business [with F.E. Larimore]. Mr. Williams is a popular young man, and if he is our next postmaster, will make a good one." Even though all postal candidates now had to take the Civil Service exam, the Postmaster still had to be endorsed by the reigning political party or sometimes city officials. Following an endorsement, the official appointment by the President of the United States was usually a "rubber stamp". When an election brought in a new President, all new appointments had to be made, thus Williams' was appointed by both Calvin Coolidge (1925) and Herbert Hoover (1930).

According to accounts from people who knew Claude, he was a personable and popular man about town, and a budding politician on the fast track to becoming a leader in the community. He was an officer of the local American Legion, the Masonic Lodge No. 460, the Rogers Rotary Club and the Arkansas Republican Party Committee. Williams was also a devoutly religious man and a member of the Southside Church of Christ where he was a church leader and lay preacher. While Postmaster, Mr. Williams spent his nights working on a Law degree through a correspondence course, and after attaining the Arkansas Bar (licensed to practice law in Arkansas), was appointed City Attorney while serving as Postmaster. He resigned in 1935 to open a law practice at 112 ½ W. Walnut, which later moved to 103 ½ W. Walnut. During his years as a lawyer he worked tirelessly for benefits for WWI veterans and their families and ran for many public offices, but never once winning. He had the misfortune, according to him, of being a Republican in a heavily Democratic region. He married Opal Karnes in 1924. Opal was the granddaughter of L.E. Karnes, owner of Rogers Real Estate Company where Mr. Williams had first been employed upon moving to Rogers.⁴⁸

Mr. Williams was succeeded by William L. Patterson who served a term as Postmaster from May 1934 – November 1937, appointed by President Franklin Roosevelt. Virgil A. Looney took Patterson's place on November 10, 1937, and remained as Postmaster until 1939, when Rogers' very first woman Postmaster took office. Miss Lillian V. Spikes was appointed as Rogers Postmaster on June 15, 1939.⁴⁹ Miss Spikes proceeded to perform outstandingly as Postmaster and remained in office for a total of 14 years and five months, finally resigning due to ill health in 1953. Bob Scott remembers working at the post office as a

teenager during his Christmas breaks in the 1940s. Bob worked on the loading dock, moving boxes into an Army ¾ ton truck which they used to assist with the large amount of package deliveries during the Christmas season. The truck was on loan to the post office from the Rogers National Guard Armory. He remembers Miss Spikes to be very popular around the Rogers social circuit and an excellent bridge player. Dick Williams spoke fondly of Lillian Spikes and kept in touch with her after she retired and sought out her advice on many occasions after he succeeded her as postmaster.

Rogers' Longest Serving Postmaster Ushers in an Era of Mechanization and Modernization:

On November 30, 1953, Richard E. "Dick" Williams was appointed Postmaster by President Dwight Eisenhower. A reporter for the *Rogers Daily News* wrote of Dick as a "widely known young lawyer and war veteran (recently returned from Korea)." Mr. Williams, the son of former postmaster, Claude M. Williams "is a veteran of both World War II and of the war in Korea and he is now commanding officer of the Rogers battery of the Arkansas National Guard... Following his release from service at the close of the war [WWII], Mr. Williams was an active leader in the organization of Battery C, 936th Field Artillery." Dick had married Sally Rand, granddaughter of J.O. Rand of Rand Wholesale Grocer, in 1947. During Dick's tenure, he witnessed modernization of equipment, restructuring of the U.S. Civil Service and the building of a new post office building on Walnut between 7th and 8th Streets, finally outgrowing the building on Second and Poplar Streets. One of the changes during Williams' tenure was mechanization as an aid to processing mail. Mechanized sorting and stamp cancelling machines had been invented and tested in the early 1900s. However, the government's purchase and distribution of these machines was stymied by the Great Depression in the 1930s and WWII in the 1940s. The Rogers Post Office continued to use the method of hand sorting mail into pigeonholes up into the 1960s, as evidenced by the attached photo of Mr. Jack Gracy using this method at the post office on Second and Poplar.⁵⁰

The 1950s saw the decline of the railway mail service and the Highway Act of 1958 created a much improved highway system which allowed mail to be moved by trucks. After 1960, the railroad ceased to carry much of the mail, which was preempted by trucking the mail. In the 1960s, the truck routes were called Star Routes (the same name as the previous wagon and stage routes) but officially changed to Highway Contract Routes in the 1970s.⁵¹ In the early 1960s, the railroad discontinued many of its money-losing passenger trains and Rogers saw the end of the era of passenger and mail delivery trains about 1965. Around 1960, the Rogers Post Office received its first official mail delivery vehicles. They were called a "sit-stand truck", a six-cylinder half-ton (photo attached). The trucks were part of the U.S. Post Office Department's effort to motorize suburban delivery routes. The right-hand drive trucks had a

folding seat so carriers could stand while driving on short runs.⁵² With an ever-increasing residential population, the mail bags had become very heavy to haul around on a carrier's entire route. Residential deliveries had been reduced from two to one delivery each day in 1950, which meant the carrier had double the mail to deliver during his daily route. Many neighborhood carriers, to this day, park their vehicle at the front of a street and still walk the mail from door to door, winding their way back to their vehicle and then repeat as they cover their route. It saves on constant stopping, starting of the truck, then getting out and walking up to each door.

It should not be forgotten that the post office was a federal government building. It and its employees were occasionally called upon for purposes other than normal postal functions. As the building on Second and Poplar Streets was built to withstand bombardment, being built during the WWI, it was a designated air raid and storm shelter for downtown Rogers residents. When a warning siren sounded, local folks would gather down in the basement in the vault/storage area and await the storm or participate in an air raid drill. Brenda Moffat White recalled that "my grandma used to take us to the basement [of the post office] every time we had bad weather." A newspaper article in 1965, entitled "To Distribute Survey Cards", demonstrates an instance where the government had asked the Rogers post office's assistance with gathering needed statistics. In this case, the government directed the postmaster to count livestock. "Five Rogers' rural mail carriers will distribute livestock survey cards along their routes beginning November 22nd... It is therefore important for everyone getting a card to return it completed so the U.S. Department of Agriculture can get a true sampling of the State's livestock count... Carriers assisting in the distribution of cards are to be: Monroe Stephens, Route 1; Milton Scholze, Route 2; Homer Wilmoth, Route 3; William Rogers, Route 4; and Leslie Hamilton, Route 5."

Mr. Williams held the postmaster position so long, that most folks could not even remember a time when he was not postmaster. During his tenure, he oversaw the construction of a new post office, a 9,388 square foot facility on West Walnut between 7th and 8th Streets next to Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, completed in 1961. The need for expansion was due in large part to the move of Daisy Manufacturing to Rogers in 1958. In a June 14, 1960 *Rogers Daily News* article, Williams was interviewed about the new post office plans and the huge growth in the postal business in recent years. Postmaster Dick Williams disclosed that "Rogers' postal receipts had increased nearly threefold during the past 10 years... Williams said that the industrial growth of the Rogers area was one of the primary factors in the big jump in postal receipts. The postal bill of Daisy Manufacturing Co. alone last year was

bigger than the total amount of postal receipts for the entire city 10 years ago. The total postal receipts in Rogers for 1949 were \$65,664 compared to a total of \$181,276 last year [1959]. Daisy's postal bill last year – its first full year of operation in Rogers – came to \$67,000... The office is handling now about 7,000 pieces of mail per day... Ten years ago, the mail handled daily was only about 1,500 pieces.”

During his tenure, both Mr. Williams and the Rogers Post Office received numerous special citations and awards for outstanding service. Williams also oversaw the upgrade of the Rogers Post Office from a Second Class to a First Class post office. Unfortunately, around 1980, the Civil Service implemented a rule which affected postmasters of first class post offices. In its infinite wisdom, the government decided to reduce stagnation of its upper echelon employees by requiring them to move every five years to wherever the U.S. Postal Department felt they were best needed, similar to being in the military. When Williams received notice that he was to be transferred to a larger first class post office (which would have also been a promotion), Dick made the decision to retire in 1981 after serving 28 years as Rogers' Postmaster. He simply did not desire to uproot and move away from Rogers and all his friends and family. A few years previously, he had retired as a Colonel in the Arkansas National Guard where he had been Commander at both Fort Chaffee and Camp Robinson in Little Rock, while serving as Postmaster. Richard E. “Dick” Williams remains to this date, Rogers' longest serving postmaster.⁵³

Memories of the Old Post Office and its Employees:

Luckily, there are still plenty of folks around who remember Rogers Post Office in the 1950s and 60s. Some of them shared their memories with the author. Tom Hughes (of Dick Williams' generation) recalled a nostalgia visit to Rogers after he had moved to Eureka Springs. “Ira Lee, [son of Rogers' first rural carrier] worked there also and one day while I was cruising around, I stopped by there and asked to speak to him. He came to the window and we had a nice visit.” Apparently, not much had changed since the post office's early days as far as mail clerks being friendly and always willing to take time for a good gossip.

Terry Gracy, son of Jack Gracy, a Rogers mail carrier for many years from the 1950s to the 1970s, commented, “I remember getting to ride down the big conveyor belt that carried large mail baskets down to where they were sorted. I thought that was a really big deal for me to get to do that. I also remember going to visit my dad and meeting him at the back dock area when he was on break. Many of the men that I knew when I was in elementary school were men that I knew from the mail carrier area.”

Benny Duncan and Joe Robinson got their start at the post office under Dick Williams while still in high school as part of the Rogers High School Cooperation Education Program. They went to school in the morning and worked at the post office in the afternoon and both of them continued to work for the post office after graduating from high school. Classmates Dennis Kincy and Doug Wierick started their employment at the post office several years later. Benny was in the generation of employees who worked in the new post office on Walnut in the 1960s but remembers old timers he worked with who had gotten their start at the old post office on Poplar. Dan Buttrum, the Assistant Postmaster under Mr. Williams was Benny's supervisor and also a great mentor to him and other new carriers. Benny also remembered Jack Gracy, Bud Goebel, George Price, Andy "Ears" Anderson, and Bill Rand.

Several people fondly remembered the long-time mail clerk, Ears Anderson, but hardly anyone could recall his real name, he had been referred to as Ears for so long. Joan Scott White recalled, "Ears Anderson was a popular postal clerk, always smiling and friendly". Joan also shared that "My husband, Nelson West, worked with your dad [Dick Williams] as well as my Uncle Mack West... When Nelson started he was Superintendent of Mail. Back then there were a lot of veterans and they were given extra consideration for government jobs [making the post office a great place for vets to apply for work under the Veterans Preference hiring rule]. He [Nelson] took his exam in Fayetteville and was a city carrier until his death in 1994. He thought a lot of your dad [Dick Williams]".

Sherry Hill recalled, "My dad, Leslie Hamilton, worked there [old post office] with your dad, Dick Williams, and also at the location on Walnut which is now Cooks. He was a rural mail carrier for Route 2 and Route 5."

This author remembers upon entering the old post office, seeing highly polished floors and lots of woodwork. Everything had brass handles and there were bars on the clerks' windows. "My dad's [Dick Williams] office was to the left when you walked in, with an oak desk and behind it, an oak cabinet with lots of little drawers about the size of 3x5 index cards. To the right of the front door, which was very heavy for a little kid to push open, was a newspaper rack where newspapers were hanging from spindles and, I think, a couple of chairs for people to sit in while perusing the paper. If I was waiting for my dad to get off work so I could hitch a ride home after walking downtown, I would slide down those wide stone architectural features which looked like slides along both sides of the steps. I also remember, at the post office on Walnut, my mom's cousin, Bill Rand was always really friendly with all the customers and also Ears Anderson who was always funny and sometimes had a sucker for me."

End of an Era:

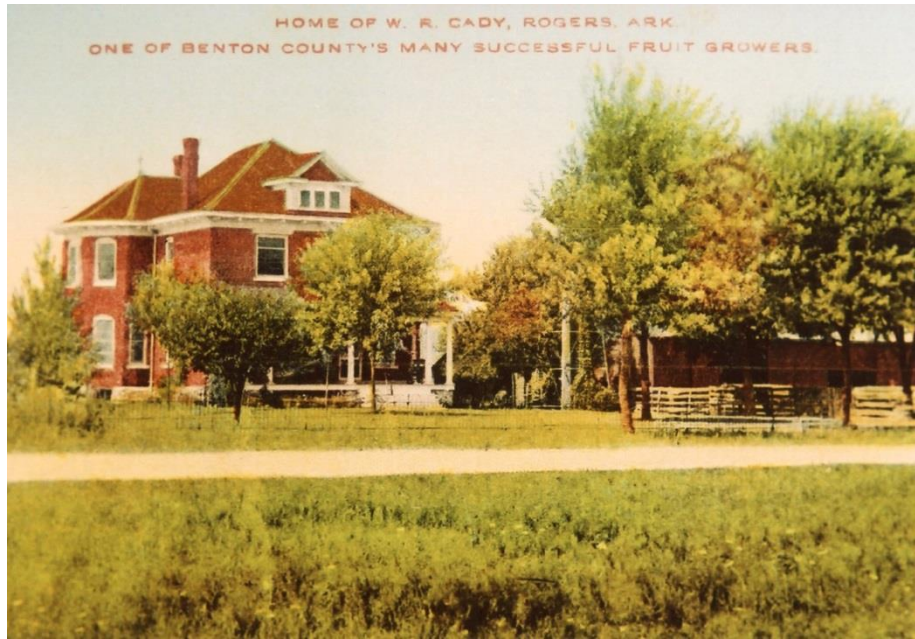
The late 1950s and early 1960s marked the beginning of the modern era in Rogers' postal history. The delivery of the mail into Rogers began to come in by truck rather than by train. The railway car bringing the mail ceased to be a major highlight of each day and folks no longer congregated to watch it come in, be offloaded and brought to the post office where it was duly sorted and handed out. A new and much larger post office was constructed away from the heart of the downtown with its proximity to the railroad depot, which was no longer needed. New industry arrived in Rogers which meant more jobs and increased population. The old post office was repurposed into the new Rogers Public Library and large scale stores sprung up outside of the downtown near new residential developments along Highway 71 West and South. The move to the new post office on Walnut also marks the end of this account of early Rogers' postal history. The old post office is now on the National Register of Historic Places and an icon in historic downtown Rogers. May those who repurpose the building be mindful of its original purpose and cherish its proud history.



Benton County Hardware housed the Post Office in the North half 1883 – 1885, Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum



W.R. Cady & Son Mercantile, ca. 1902. Cady used part of his store space for postal business between 1902 and 1906, Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum



W.R. Cady was Postmaster 1902-1906. His house is still standing on corner of Monte Ne and New Hope Rds.
Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum



Harry Morgan, Assistant Postmaster 1894-1902, Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum

7-30-14

ROBERTS RETIRES FRIDAY

John W. Puckett will take possession of the Rogers postoffice Saturday morning, August 1st, and W. C. Roberts, who retires after eight years years of service as postmaster here, will leave in a day or so for Astoria, Oregon, to join Mrs. Roberts and daughter, Ethel, who with his grandson, Master Dan Cowling, are there at the home of his son, Virgil Roberts. Mrs. Roberts and Dan went to Astoria last fall and Miss Roberts joined them in the spring. They will remain a month or two longer after Mr. Roberts joins them.

Mr. Roberts carries with him the best wishes and the congratulations of our people for the successful way in which the local office has been conducted during his eight year term. Mr. Roberts has seen the office make perhaps the greatest gain of any office in this part of the state during these years, and no town of equal size in the state has surpassed it. Mr. Roberts has made an efficient and accomodating official and has been one of the most liberal Rogers citizens in all matters affecting the public welfare.

Mr. Roberts is the first man that held the Rogers post office for more than a single term. Since the office became a presidential office in the early days, the post masters have been: J. H. Rackerby, H. A. Oakley, W. C. Chynoweth, J. W. Puckett, Leo K. Fesler, W. R. Cady and W. C. Roberts.

There will be no change in the office force as the local office is entirely under the civil service rules.

So long, Mr. Roberts; and a hearty welcome to Postmaster Puckett.

Article on Retirement of W.C. Roberts, Postmaster 1906-1914
Courtesy of Rogers Historical Museum



Site of future Post Office, corner of 2nd and Poplar looking NE, 1917, Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum



Beginning excavations on Post Office, looking NE, 1917, Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum



Beginning construction of Post Office, 1917, looking NE, Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum



Post Office construction, 1918, view of west side, Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum



Post Office construction, 1918, view of east side, Courtesy of Rogers Historical Museum



Construction of Interior, front, facing north, 1918, Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum



Construction of craftsman style clerks' windows, back of building, south side, 1918
Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum



Finished exterior of Post Office, 1918, facing Poplar, Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum

ALONZO STROUD, 204 S

THE ROGERS DEMOCRAT

Volume 44—Number 25

Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas, Thursday, April 30, 1925

CLAUDE WILLIAMS GETS P. O. PROMISE

Endorsed by Republican State Central Committee Saturday at Meeting Held in City of Little Rock

Claude L. Williams was Saturday endorsed for the office of postmaster of Rogers by the Republican state central committee in session at Little Rock. If the Washington connections are working as well as usual, Mr. Williams will soon succeed G. Byron Cady as postmaster here.

Cady Resigns Because of Illness

It has been a matter of deep concern and regret to the many friends of Postmaster Cady that his continued illness has compelled him to resign the position, which he has held in name only since the first of January, 1924. No town in the Southwest had a more aggressive postmaster than did Rogers while Mr. Cady was in active charge.

During the time Mr. Cady was in the postoffice, he effected a complete reorganization, adding many extensions to the rural delivery system, increasing the routes from four to six in number, and had plans well under way for adding the seventh route when he became ill. He reorganized the city delivery service, giving the business district three deliveries daily instead of two, the first at 8 a. m. instead of 9:30. City delivery service was extended to the Fair Grounds addition, North Arkansas street and other short extensions. Additional mail collection boxes and storage boxes were secured and installed through his efforts.

In the postoffice itself, ten and nine hour service was established at the stamp, general delivery and money order windows. A box rent reduction ranging from 25 to 33 per cent was an early innovation. An electric driven cancelling machine for the money orders, the only one in the state outside of Little Rock, was secured from the Department owing to the increased business, and an electric driven stamp cancelling machine replaced the antiquated hand power machine that was in use when he assumed the office.

During the long illness of Mr. Cady, the office has been under the efficient direction of Leslie Wilson, first assistant postmaster, who has been in the local office for many years.

Mr. Williams an Ex-Service Man

Mr. Williams is a comparatively new man in Rogers and owes his endorsement for the office of postmaster here to his record as a service man during the recent war, and his activity in the American Legion since coming to this city several years ago. He is 31 years old and a native of Madison county, which probably was no handicap with an Arkansas state central committee. He was with the Rogers Real Estate Company for some time, and is now in the insurance business. Mr. Williams is a popular young man, and if he is our next postmaster, will make a good one.

Other postmasters receiving endorsements at the same meeting included Decatur, Miss Addie Gilbert, Garfield, George H. Mills, Gentry, Alice R. Beard.

No recommendations were made in offices where the commission of the present incumbent expires after June 1, 1925.

There were no contests for federal offices, all of the present office holders being endorsed for a second term.

The committee adopted a resolution providing for filing with the secretary of state an initiative petition to change the date of holding the

W. F. D. Batjer Leaves Fayetteville to Take Position in Missouri

Fayetteville, April 24.—W. F. D. Batjer, secretary of the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce, officially tendered his resignation to the board of governors today, to accept the secretaryship of the Southeast Missouri Chamber of Commerce, with probable headquarters at Cape Girardeau. Mr. Batjer expects to assume his new duties, which place him in charge of chamber work in eight Missouri counties, May 13.

Mr. Batjer was called to St. Louis by telegram Tuesday and has just returned, enthusiastic over possibilities of the new field, although very reluctant to leave the Arkansas Ozarks.

Mr. Batjer is one of the best known fruit men in the Southwest, and is former president and present secretary of the Arkansas State Horticultural Association. He is a founder of the Northwest Arkansas Apple Blossom Festival and has been a prime promoter in the development of the Arkansas fruit belt. He has had 20 years' experience in fruit growing and 33 years in farming. He was secretary of the Rogers Chamber of Commerce two years before coming to Fayetteville in August, 1923. He will keep his Arkansas interests, including a 50-acre fruit farm at Rogers, and "will continue to boost the Ozarks as the best country in the world."

Mr. Batjer is a director of the Arkansas State Fair Association. As a resident of Fayetteville he has been prominently connected with Farmers' Week and all meetings held here for agricultural interests. Mr. Batjer's new office offers him double his present salary, in addition to an assistant, an equipped office, an annual budget and a car for his exclusive use.

It is but a brief outline of Mr. Batjer's activities that is presented in the above sketch. To say that Mr. Batjer is perhaps the most versatile man ever known in Northwest Arkansas would be putting it mildly. He has served as president of the Rogers and Fayetteville Rotary clubs; he was lay leader for the Episcopal churches of both places; he has held all offices in the gift of the Elks order; for years he was coach of every high school play given in Rogers; he was used as an emergency speaker for every cause under the sun—locally and sectionally, from good roads and agriculture to Liberty bonds and Red Cross. And Rogers will always have a reminder of the Batjer family in the W. M. Batjer American Legion Post, named after his oldest son, who was killed while serving in the A. E. F.

We are sorry that Mr. Batjer is to leave Fayetteville and Northwest Arkansas, but rejoice in the opportunity it will give him for a wider field of service in his chosen line of work, and know that he will still continue to boost for this section in every possible way.

FIRE THREATENED SEVERAL OLD BUILDINGS THURSDAY

For a time last Thursday noon, it looked as though North First street might be in a fair way to lose all of the old frame buildings that have lined the west side of the street for many years. But the danger to the vinegar plant and other property to the north was too great and the fire boys confined the flames to the buildings where they started, albeit they would seem too badly damaged to stand any more patching. The fire was in the block just west of the Frisco freight depot, but the wind was from the south and the danger was to the property on the north, the first building beyond being the Mission building. So dry were the old frames, which included a garage, blacksmith shop and livery stable,

PROMOTION DAY—AVOCA AND BETHEL

Schools of Northeast Section of Benton County Gathered Saturday at Avoca for Promotions

Nothing has ever done more to stimulate interest in the rural schools, and especially in the problem of keeping the young folks in the school until they at least complete the Eighth grade, than the Promotion Day or graduation exercises at various points in Benton county. The idea originated with County Superintendent W. R. Edwards some ten or twelve years ago, and has kept growing under the regime of Supt. F. A. Woods, until this year it requires six programs to afford opportunity for the many pupils who are completing the Eighth grade work.

We cannot give the space to tell of the programs on the west side of the county, but are giving the programs for Bethel school, west of Lowell, which was held last Friday, and that for Avoca, held Saturday. The Democrat editor spent an hour or two at Avoca and found a crowd estimated at about 500, and Supt. Woods said that was about the size of the crowd at the other places. Tomorrow, May 1st, is the date for the exercises at Morning Star, on the highway some seven or eight miles due west of Rogers. They have the longest list of graduates of any place in the county and so may have the largest attendance.

It was ten years ago at Avoca, May 6, 1915, that the Democrat editor attended his first Rural Promotion Day at Avoca. Mrs. Torbett was teacher of the school there that year and made a big success of the event, and the one of Saturday last was the first one to be held there since that date.

A picnic dinner served out doors under the trees was one of the big attractions and served as an opportunity for a little social visiting. Avoca has many plans for the future, which include enlarging the school building as well as building an auditorium large enough to care for gatherings such as that of Saturday, which was all too crowded in the church, where the programs were given.

Morning Program by Avoca School

There was no program by the graduating class as usual, its place being taken on the morning program by an address by Rev. A. A. Dulaney of Rogers.

The program of the morning was given by the pupils of the Avoca grades and was most interesting. It was as follows:

- FAIRIES' FROLIC**
- Queen—Bernice Moore
 - Eight Eyes—Loyal Lyons
 - Honor Fairies—Lola Renfro, Helen Whitmore, Mildred Lee, Anna Helterbran, Floy Lyons, Wilma Gramling.
 - Air Fairies—Ethel Skaggs, Bernice Buttram, Ruth Renfro, Louise Pitts, Sahab Beth Davis.
 - Earth Fairies—Mildred Skill, Eula Graham, Pauline Lyons, Emma Ruth Parker, Velma Parker.
 - Sea Fairies—Mabel Council, Ethel Graham, Grace Gramling, Mary Jane Renfro, Roberta Lyons.
 - Lost Boy, Buddy Lyons.
 - Musical Reading, "Who Did the Courting?" Fred Wyatt.
 - Song, "Caroline," Mildred Council, Letha Rolfer.
 - Reading, "When Grandma Was a Girl," Pauline Lyons.
 - Reading, "Pa's New Car," Marvin Still.
 - Song, "Old Mother Moon," Roberta Lyons, Anna Helterbran, Grace Gramling, Bernice Buttram, Mildred Lee.
 - Musical Reading, "Katy Did," Bernice Moore.
- General School Program**
- The afternoon program was given by the various schools participating.

Schools Southwest of Rogers and West of Lowell Held Promotion Exercises Friday at Bethel

Graduating Class Program

- Song—Lowell Class.
- Welcome—Blanche Kendrick.
- Valedictory, Elmo McClure, Lowell Inventory, Sewell Farrell, Lowell.
- Plano Solo, Winnie Phillips, Bethel.
- Song—New Hope Class.
- Class Will, Frances Graham, Lowell.
- Class Doctor, Jessie Brashears, Lowell.
- Song—Fairview Class.
- Giftorian, John Shackelford, Lowell.
- Resolution of Sympathy, Virginia Coach.
- Address, Mell Kendrick, Lowell.
- Musical Recitation, Laneva Rogers, Fairview.

General School Program

The following program was given at Bethel in the afternoon by the various schools participating, and all grades are represented.

- Welcome Song—five Lowell girls.
- Rec. Frank Sharp, Goad Springs.
- Reading, Howard Bishop, Lowell.
- Drill, Lowell, 6th grade.
- Song, Lowell Primary boys.
- Rec. Ferna Penny, Fairview.
- Reading, Hazel Johnston, Fairview.
- Song, Narva and Ora Stallcup, Bellview.
- Rec. Morgan Sharp, Goad Springs.
- Song, Kenneth Scott, Lowell.
- Song, "Timid Japanese," Lowell.
- Rec. Maywood Beck, New Hope.
- Vacation Song, 4th grade, Lowell.
- Rec. Buddy Green, Lowell.
- Rec. Carlton Bequette.
- "Smile and Say Good-Bye," 6th grade girls, Lowell.

Wins Life Scholarship

In connection with the Promotion Day items we might add that Miss Blanche Kendrick won the Life Scholarship offered by the Fayetteville Business College for the Lowell pupil making the highest grade in this year's graduating class.

8th Grade Graduates

- Oak Grove No. 69—Nettie Hall, Center Corner—Goldie Johnson, Lucille Beard, Opal Beard, Mary Williams, Vivian Aaron, Koran Begley, Lone Cedar—Lean Payne.
- Bethel—Katie Jennings, Clarence Kuehnert, Cina Brown, Cora Gobbie, Winnie Phillips, Elodie Lewis, Tommy Graham.
- Goad Springs—Retha Mabry, Lillian Jones.
- New Hope—Joe Carson, Cecil Crowe, Sprague Sargent, Melbourne Pesch, Mite Beck.
- Fairview No. 57—Wm. H. Price, Jr., Laneva Rogers, Flossie Smith, Lowell—Blanch Kendrick, Mell Kendrick, Vonoy Green, Jessie Brashears, Elmo McClure, Sewell Farrell, Ona Neil, Floyd Ford, Francis Graham, Mable Townsend.

Class "A" Reading Contest

- Crystal McClure, Lowell, first; Rex Lowery, Goad Springs; Larry Stanton, Fairview; May Ward Back, New Hope; Ollie Beasley, Bethel.

Class "B" Reading Contest

- Frances Graham, Lowell, first; Larry Rogers, Fairview; Marie Mabry, Goad Springs.

Arithmetic Contest

- Elodie Lewis, Bethel, first; Flossie Smith, Fairview; Elma McClure, Lowell.

Spelling Contest

- Winnie Phillips, Bethel, first; Blanche Kendrick, Lowell; Hazel Johnston, Fairview; Ethel Todd, Goad Springs; Ragly Sargent, New Hope.

Albert Whitney, Fay Moon, Cordia Ellis, Owen Marler, Ola Hyden, Prairie Creek—Burl Walck, Pauline Conley, Leona Mayo, Paul Miller, Baylis—Mathilda Schmitzer, Stella

Knights and Ty Crowd

While only a crowd that saw cavorting about Tuesday, gay in costumes or costumes as they what it was all it was "time to plaud when the street.

The Dokkies ment of the or Pythias and is meaning Drama Khorrassan. Tuesday was f hating some of the order, i Rogers business by Arkana Te Smith, under etteville lodge.

Fort Smith v with some six wives, sisters i there was a v etteville, as v Springdale and a number of po Most of the v autos. Rain in number away, a wise have been the street to se air numbers.

The ceremony Elks club rooms in the evening at cannot mention program in deta many old friends there were num the fun making jazz orchestra f Fort Smith tran dancers on the tractions.

All of the vis great time and eyed having the

Prairie Creek; ark) James Shub Class "B" F Oscar Threel, nice Moore, Arv field.

Arithmetic Loyal Lyons, Patton, Central; erty.

MORNING

Following is a who will graduate Star exercises Fr Miller—Roy Sh Rocky Comfort Holland.

Droke—John R Alta Langston.

Morning Star Howard Jones. Mt. Olive—Lilli Hiwassee—Beula loway, Ruth Hollo Kenneth Kerr, Vel

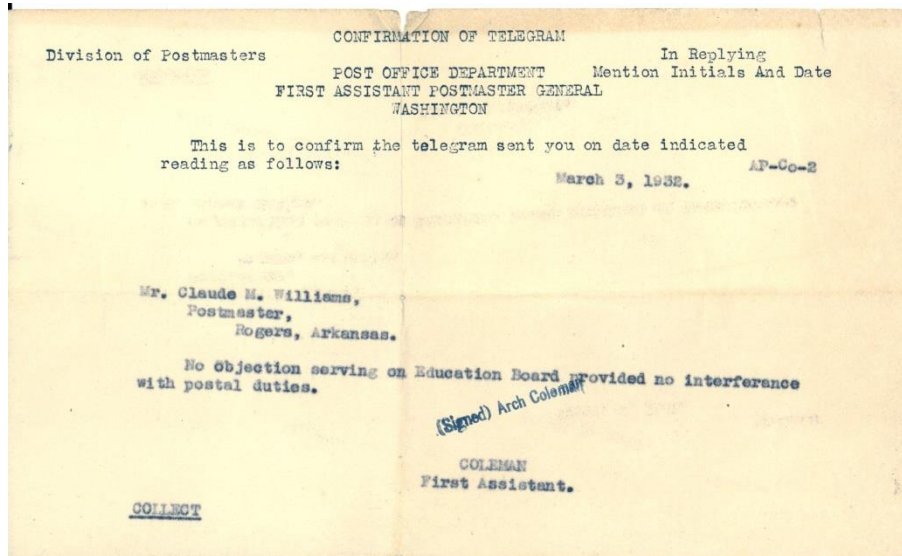
Cross Lanes—T erna Presley, My Liberty No. 5 Beatrice Davis, Kenneth Scott, Ca Dorsey.

Highfill—Jackso Cowden, Aubrey Pine, Robert B. De Burgin Valley Nelson.

Mason Valley—L gene Gholson. Ev Wolfenbarger. Dag Hill—Chad Green, Elsie Howa Mary's Hill—Hug neth Giger, Hazel wood, Myrl Rhodes.



Claude McKinley Williams, Postmaster 1925-1935, at desk in Post Office on Poplar, Courtesy of the author



Telegram from Postmaster General allowing Claude to serve on the School Board, Courtesy of the author

PATTERSON TAKES OFFICE
Rogers, Ark., June 9.—(Special)—Claude Williams who has been postmaster of Rogers the last nine years checked in to his successor Lloyd Patterson Saturday noon. Mr. Williams who studied law during the last years of his term and was admitted to the bar will begin practice and has fitted up offices on West Walnut street. Mr. Williams was elected city attorney at the last election and will serve in that capacity also. 1935

Article on resignation of Claude Williams as Postmaster, Courtesy of the author

**POSTMASTERSHIP
TRANSFER BEING
MADE SATURDAY**

**Lloyd Patterson Take Charge
of Office Sunday, Succeed-
ing Williams**

FOUR-YEAR TERM

**No Change in Personnel As-
signments Contemplated
at Present Time**

After a delay of several weeks, transfer of the Rogers postmastership was under way Saturday, and Lloyd Patterson will assume charge of the office Sunday, succeeding Postmaster Claude M. Williams.

Mr. Patterson's commission was issued May 9 but for some reason was not received by him until Saturday morning. Checking the records preparatory to making the transfer was begun immediately and was to be completed Saturday afternoon.

Mr. Patterson was appointed Rogers postmaster early in May by President Roosevelt, and his four-year term of office will date from May 9, expiring May 9, 1939.

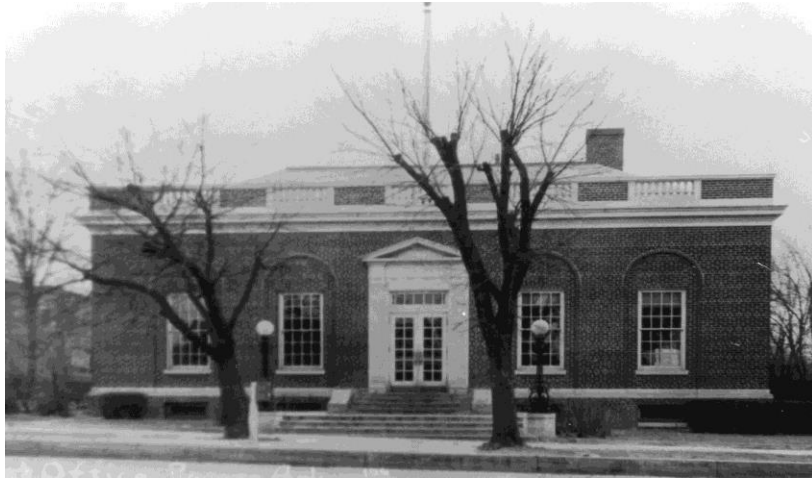
The term of Postmaster Claude M. Williams expired Dec. 7, 1933, but as a result of delay in selection of a successor, he has remained in office, although his resignation was submitted to the postoffice department about the middle of March.

Shortly before Mr. Williams' commission expired, the United States civil service commission called an examination, but the final selection was not made until a thorough investigation was conducted here.

Mr. Patterson said Saturday that no changes in personnel assignment are contemplated at the present time.

Mr. Williams will devote his time to the practice of law.

Article on changeover in Postmaster position from Williams to Patterson, Courtesy of the author



Post Office on Poplar and 2nd, 1930s, Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum



Post Office on Poplar and 2nd, 1955, Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum



Post Office on Poplar and 2nd, early 1960s, Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum



Jack Gracy hand-sorting mail in Old Post Office, early 1960s, Courtesy Terry Gracy



Jane Foster by advertisements in front of Old Post Office, 1957, Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum
Note that the ad indicates a recruitment office inside the Springdale Post Office



Fowler Photo.

Richard E. ("Dick") Williams

Dick Williams To Take Office As Postmaster

Richard E. Williams, widely known young Rogers lawyer and war veteran, has been appointed acting postmaster in Rogers, to succeed Miss Lillian Spikes, resigned, it was announced Tuesday.

The appointment will become effective at the close of business on November 30, according to an authorization received by Williams from Postmaster General Arthur E. Summerfield, by whom the appointment was made.

Mr. Williams will continue to serve as acting postmaster until such a time as an examination is called by the postoffice department to fill the office permanently.

Mr. Williams is the son of Claude M. Williams, Rogers attorney and former postmaster, and Mrs. Williams.

Rogers' new acting postmaster is a veteran of both World War II and of the war in Korea, and he is now commanding officer of the Rogers battery of the Arkansas National Guard. He served as a member of the Air Force in Germany during World War II.

Following his release from service at the close of the war, Mr. Williams was an active leader in the organization of Battery C, 936th Field Artillery, the Rogers unit of the Arkansas National Guard. He was mustered into service with that organization and spent approximately a year with it in Korea.

Miss Spikes tendered her resignation to the postoffice department last July, asking that she be relieved of her duties effective October 31 for reasons of health. Effectiveness of the resignation was delayed a month pending the appointment of an acting postmaster.

Miss Spikes will have served as postmaster here for a total of 14 years and five months at the end of her tenure.

Article on appointment of new Postmaster, Richard E. "Dick" Williams, 1953, Courtesy of the author



Office of the Postmaster General

Washington 25, D. C.

March 30, 1955

Mr. Richard E. Williams
Acting Postmaster
Rogers, Arkansas

Dear Mr. Williams:

It is a pleasure to notify you that the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, has appointed you postmaster.

You are without authority to enter upon your duties pending the receipt of your commission which cannot be issued until the enclosed bond and oath has been returned properly executed.

I congratulate you upon your appointment. It of course carries with it not only an opportunity for important public service, but an obligation to adhere strictly and faithfully to the postal laws and the regulations of the Department. You will be expected to conduct your office in accordance with the highest standards of efficiency.

Sincerely yours,

Postmaster General.

Letter of Appointment of Richard Williams as Rogers Postmaster, 1955, Courtesy of the author

TWO

Deaths & Funerals

RICHARD WILLIAMS

Richard E. Williams, Rogers postmaster, has announced that five rural mail carriers will distribute livestock survey cards along their routes beginning Nov. 22.

Cards will be distributed at random to farmers along their routes. Every box will not receive a card.

"It is, therefore, important for everyone getting a card to return it with complete information so that the United States Department of Agriculture can get a true sampling of the state's Department of Agriculture's livestock count," Williams said.

Facts and figures obtained in the survey are the basis of Arkansas and national inventory estimates of livestock and poultry, size of pig and calf crops, and other facts of livestock production.

Survey results will be widely distributed in 1966 by the Arkansas Crop and Livestock Reporting Service.

Carriers assisting in the distribution of cards are to be: Monroe Stephens, rt. 1; Milton R. Scholze, rt. 2; Homer F. Wilmoth, rt. 3; William J. Rogers, rt. 4; and Leslie B. Hamilton, rt. 5.

Mail Carriers To Distribute Survey Cards

Five Rogers rural mail carriers will distribute livestock survey cards along their routes beginning Nov. 22, it was announced Saturday by Postmaster Richard E. Williams. This story was inadvertently placed in the deaths and funerals column in our Sunday issue.

Every box will not receive a card.

It is, therefore, important for everyone getting a card to return it completed so that the United States Department of Agriculture can get a true sampling of the state's livestock count.

Facts and figures obtained in the survey are the basis of Arkansas and national inventory estimates of livestock and poultry, size of pig and calf crops, and other facts of livestock production.

Survey results will be widely distributed in 1966 by the Arkansas Crop and Livestock Reporting Service.

Carriers assisting in the distribution of cards are to be: Monroe Stephens, rt. 1; Milton R. Scholze, rt. 2; Homer F. Wilmoth, rt. 3; William J. Rogers, rt. 4; and Leslie B. Hamilton, rt. 5.

Articles appearing during Dick Williams' tenure, ca 1965, Courtesy of the author



Rogers Post Office Receives New Delivery Vehicles, a Stand-Sit Truck, early 1960s
Photo Taken behind the Post Office on Poplar facing Newt Hailey Ford and old newspaper building
Courtesy of the author

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- ¹ “Star Routes”, in *U.S. Postal Service* (May 2007); available from www.usps.com/postalhistory, 2015.
- ² Funk, Erwin, “History of Rogers Post Office”, *Rogers Daily News* (1956), 11.
- ³ “Robbery”, in *U.S. Postal Service* (May 2007); available from www.usps.com/postalhistory, 2015.
- ⁴ “Early Mail Carriers”, in *U.S. Postal Service* (May 2007); available from www.usps.com/postalhistory, 2015.
- ⁵ *History of Washington County*, Shiloh Museum ed. (Springdale, Arkansas, 1989), 156.
- ⁶ Minkle, Donald, *Chasing the Butterfield Mail Stage* (self published, 2005).
- ⁷ “Mail By Rail”, in *U.S. Postal Service* (August 2008); available from www.usps.com/postalhistory, 2015.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ “A Dangerous Job”, *Rogers Democrat*, reprint of communication from Postmaster General Cortelyou (January 10, 1906).
- ¹⁰ Sikes, Louise, Bio of B.F. Sikes in *History of Benton County*, Benton County Heritage Commission, ed. (Dallas: Curtis Media Corp., 1991) 101.
- ¹¹ Cady, George B., untitled, unknown Rogers newspaper (October 1922), clipping.
- ¹² “Postmasters by City: Rogers Post Office, Benton County, Arkansas”, in *U.S. Postal Service Postal History*; available from <http://webpmt.usps.gov/pmt003.cfm>, 2015.
- ¹³ Funk, Erwin, “History of Rogers Post Office”, *Rogers Daily News* (1956), 11.
- ¹⁴ “Postmasters by City: Rogers Post Office, Benton County, Arkansas”, in *U.S. Postal Service Postal History*; available from <http://webpmt.usps.gov/pmt003.cfm>, 2015.
- ¹⁵ “Postmasters in the Mid-19 Century”, in *U.S. Postal Service* (May 2007); available from www.usps.com/postalhistory, 2015.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ “When Democrats Were in Flower”, in *New Traditions* (Week of October 18 through October 25 1981), 13.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Funk, Erwin, “History of Rogers Post Office”, *Rogers Daily News* (1956), 11.
- ²² Benton County Heritage Committee, ed., *History of Benton County, Arkansas* (Dallas: Curtis Media Corp., 1991) 101.
- ²³ “Postmasters by City: Rogers Post Office, Benton County, Arkansas”, in *U.S. Postal Service Postal History*; available from <http://webpmt.usps.gov/pmt003.cfm>, 2015.
- ²⁴ Cady, George B., untitled, unknown Rogers newspaper (October 1922), clipping.
- ²⁵ Collins, Marilyn, *Rogers, The Town That Frisco Built* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 63.
- ²⁶ Untitled newspaper article about J.H. Rackerby, source of clipping unknown.
- ²⁷ Benton County Heritage Committee, ed., *History of Benton County, Arkansas* (Dallas: Curtis Media Corp., 1991).
- ²⁸ “Postmasters by City: Rogers Post Office, Benton County, Arkansas”, in *U.S. Postal Service Postal History*; available from <http://webpmt.usps.gov/pmt003.cfm>, 2015.
- ²⁹ Based on author’s own family history research. Robin is the 2nd great granddaughter of Leonadus “L.E.” Karnes.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ “Squire Puckett Served for Over 40 Years as Justice of the Peace”, *Rogers Daily News* (July 1, 1990) and “Puckett for Sheriff”, *Rogers Democrat* (December 16, 1903).
- ³² Black, J. Dickson, *The History of Benton County* (Little Rock: International Graphics Industries, 1975).
- ³³ There is no factual evidence of whether the government or the postmaster paid the rent for the premises. The equipment was purchased by local businessmen.
- ³⁴ Commercial advertisement in *Rogers City Directory*, 1907.
- ³⁵ Funk, Erwin, “B.F. Sikes, Postmaster at Cross Hollows, Handled Mail for Rogers”, *Rogers Daily News* (1950).
- ³⁶ Cochran, E.R. “General Description of County Service, Benton County, Arkansas”, a report following an inspection tour in *Handling the Mail in Benton County Arkansas 1836-1976*, Phillips, George H. (Siloam Springs: Benton County Historical Society, 1979).
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ “Mail By Rail”, in *U.S. Postal Service* (August 2008); available from www.usps.com/postalhistory, 2015.
- ³⁹ “\$70,000 for Post Office”, *Rogers Democrat* (February 20, 1913).

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- ⁴⁰ Funk, Erwin, "Move into Rogers' New Government Building", *Rogers Democrat* (February 27, 1919), front page.
- ⁴¹ Cady, George B., untitled, unknown Rogers newspaper (October 1922), clipping.
- ⁴² Black, J. Dickson, *The History of Benton County* (Little Rock: International Graphics Industries, 1975).
- ⁴³ Cady, George B., untitled, unknown Rogers newspaper (October 1922), clipping.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ *Obituaries of Benton County Arkansas*, Vol. 7, 1923-1925, Barbara Easley and Verla McAnnelly eds. (Bowie MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 1996), 257.
- ⁴⁶ Cady, George B., untitled, unknown Rogers newspaper (October 1922), clipping.
- ⁴⁷ Funk, Erwin, "George Byron Cady", obituary, *Rogers Democrat* (May 21, 1925).
- ⁴⁸ Author's own family history research and numerous materials collected and preserved by Claude Williams, her grandfather.
- ⁴⁹ "Postmaster Transfer Being Made Saturday", *Rogers Daily News*, undated clipping.
- ⁵⁰ "Postal Mechanization and Early Automation", in *Publication 100 – The U.S. Postal Service – An American History 1775-2006*, available from <http://aboutusps.com/publications/pub100>, 2015.
- ⁵¹ "Star Routes", in *U.S. Postal Service* (May 2007); available from www.usps.com/postalhistory, 2015.
- ⁵² "Photo Gallery: Vehicles", *U.S. Postal Service, Our History* (2016), available from <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-istory/vehicles-gallery-details.htm>, 2016.
- ⁵³ Author's own family history as related by Dick Williams, her father.