

Blaine Post Office, A Family Affair

1976

Typed by Dean Bones January 22, 2023

Sixty-two years! You might rightfully call that a lifetime. It WAS for the little Blaine Post Office which existed from June 1, 1892, to January 31, 1956. How can a whole life story be told in a few lines of type?

This might also be called the story of the Smith Family. The Blaine Post Office was started by William Smith, and one of his descendents closed the post office over 62 years later.

William Smith was born in England in 1841 and at an early age took to the life of a seafaring man. He came to America, and with his maritime experience was able to join the U.S. Navy April 6, 1862, at the age of 21.

He became a gunner's mate on the *USS Baron de Kalb* and the *Great Western*. However, he served only 1 hitch before being honorably discharged in 1865 at the age of 24.

He then went to Kansas to farm, and in 1873 met and married Nancy Cobb of Sedan, Kansas. The young couple traveled by covered wagon to Waverly, Spokane County, Washington, where Smith became a grain farmer.

During the next 13 years the family was increased by 2 sons and 3 daughters, one of who was Nellie. When she was 5 years old her father, William, abandoned the Eastern Washington farm and took the Smith family to Tillamook County where they settled on timbered land along the Nestucca River.

At first he family lived in tents while timber was being cut to erect a log cabin. All about was a deep forest of giant Douglas fir; so Smith set up a sawmill on the river bank. He was able to secure a post office 2 years after his arrival on the banks of the Nestucca. In that year of 1892, James Gillespie Blaine was running for president of the United States. He was an ex-senator of Maine, Secretary of State, and quite a popular candidate. So Smith chose Blaine as the name for his little post office.

However, Smith was not destined to have a long postmaster's career. He relinquished the post office on January 17, 1894, to James Patterson and devoted himself to his business. One day in 1895 even though seemed to

Blaine Post Office, A Family Affair

1976

Typed by Dean Bones January 22, 2023

be in evident good health he was stricken with a heart attack and died at the age of 54!

For the next 26 years Blaine Post Office saw a succession of postmasters serving relatively short terms. Edwin L. Cady served from March 3 to November 20, 1898; Marion A. Cady served until July 23, 1901; James Patterson served from July 29, 1901, until Anna Howser, Mrs. J.J. Howser, was named postmater on July 17, 1903. She was succeeded on February 2, 1909, by Lienella Downing whose short term ended when Lydia Creecy was appointed postmaster on February 16, 1910.

Mrs. Roxy BUNDY Coulson served only from July 22, 1911, until July 31, 1913, and John S. Wilmot served from August 1, 1913, until Harry O. Quigley's appointment on April 29, 1919.

During these postmasterships there were changes in quarters of the post office. In some instances the post office had crammed space in a residence of the postmaster. But eventually more ample space was provided in stores. The first general store was erected at the crossroads of the Nestucca River and Moon Creek by John S. Wilmot about 1913, and there the post office was given a prominent place.

On August 4, 1920, Earl Reuben Ayer succeeded Harry O. Quigley as postmaster and continued to operate the post office in the Wilmot store until about 1925 when Mr. Ayer built a new store situated across the street from the Wilmot store.

Into his new store the post office was transferred. It was there to remain until its discontinuance. The general store functioned as all general stores did in small communities by supplying the needs of the farmers, loggers and timber workers. Ice cream cones were served to the children at \$.05 each. Cascara bark gathered from trees by landowners was taken in trade or paid for in cash by the storekeeper.

Earl Reuben Ayer had been born on June 22, 1883, of Alvin and Mary Jane Ayer at Stannard, Caledonia County, Vermont. When a small lad his parents came west to Colorado and then by covered wagon in 1900 to Tillamook County.

Blaine Post Office, A Family Affair

1976

Typed by Dean Bones January 22, 2023

Nellie Smith, William Smith's daughter, was born at Waverly, Washington, on March 10, 1885, and was only 5 years old when the family moved to Tillamook County and only 10 years old when her father died. She attended a school which had been built at Blaine, and at the age of 22 years she married Earl Reuben Ayer on September 18, 1907, at her mother's home in Blaine. Consequently Earl Reuben Ayer's appointment as Blaine's postmaster returned the post office to members of the Smith family.

Mr. Ayer died quite suddenly on May 13, 1937, and his widow continued in charge of the post office until she was officially appointed postmaster on June 18, 1937.

After serving 18 years as Blaine postmaster Nellie retired and was succeeded by her daughter, Mrs. Alma Laverne AYER Spidell. So as granddaughter of William Smith, Blaine's first postmaster, Mrs. Spidell was the last to have charge of Blaine Post Office concluding 37 years of control of the Blaine Post Office by the Smith family.

The earliest mail service to Blaine was from Beaver by horseback. The Beaver Post Office located on the main north-south road along the coast was less than a year old having been established August 22, 1889, by Benjamin H. Bunn when the Blaine Post Office opened. Later Blaine had mail service by trucks of the Tillamook-Portland Auto Freight Company. Still later a star route between Tillamook and Grande Ronde supplied mail by motor car. With the discontinuance of the Blaine Post Office its patrons have had to have mail supplied by a route from Beaver.

Most present day maps show Blaine, and it can be found by driving to the crossroads eight miles east of Beaver. *(Note that in 2023 the distance from Beaver to Blaine is 6.7 miles. db)* The store which last contained the post office is still here, but it bears no "Post Office" sign and has a modern appearance.

The surrounding hills which enclosed the Blaine community have survived the nakedness of logged-off land, and a new forest is flowing over them.

Blaine Post Office, A Family Affair

1976

Typed by Dean Bones January 22, 2023

The Nestucca River flows clear and cold singing its way to the ocean as it cascades in its rocky bed.

Mrs. Nellie Ayer, now in her 90s in 1976, has a residence in a mobile home at Beaver. *(This information contributed by Ethel Borba.)*