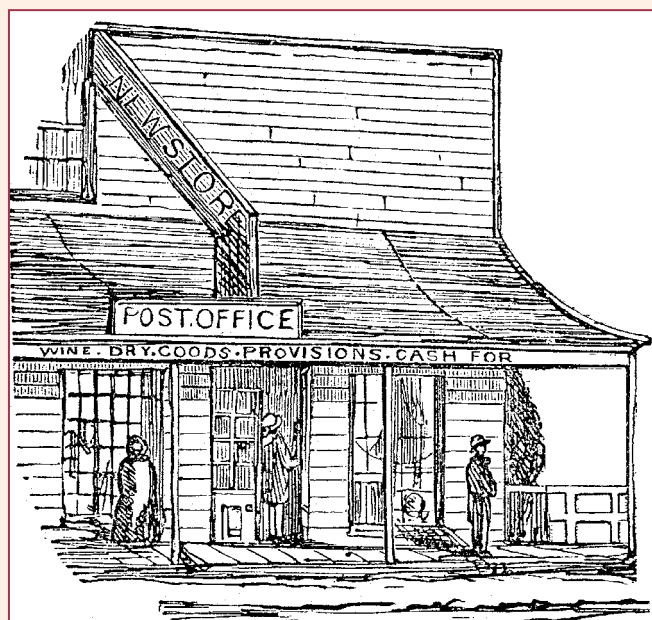# HISTORIC
PORT PERRY
POST
OFFICE

Landmark Building for 150 Years

Port Perry Post Office

Researched and Published by J. Peter Hvidsten

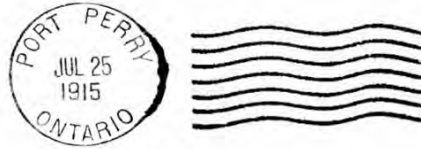Published 2018

HISTORIC
PORT PERRY

POST
OFFICE

A history of postal service in Port Perry, and the surrounding townships, from its infancy in the 1840s to the present.

By J. Peter Hvidsten

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Part One

Mail Delivery To The
Back Townships

Letters were hard to secure in the back townships in the early years after Reach Township was opened. But in 1827 a system of letter carrying was started. Donald Cameron, a settler in Thorah, proposed to the settlers who lived on the line that a man might carry letters between the front and back townships and be properly paid for his trouble.

An application was made to the Postmaster General and a permit was granted. Kenneth Campbell commenced his travels, walking to and from the front once a fortnight. In addition to a fixed amount secured by subscription, he received a small payment for the letters and papers which he carried to the settlers. The nearest postoffice and store was then kept by Mr. Warren a mile and a half to the east of Whitby Town.

Next a jolly old Englishman named Thomas used to carry the mail along this route on horseback. Those who were not on this mail route often had to wait a long time for their letters, and one man is said to have found a letter awaiting him which had been lying in the office for a year.

In 1836 the first store in the township was opened by Captain George Leach, an Englishman, in what is said to have been the first frame building built in the township. In 1840 Mr. Leach opened a post office in his store becoming the township's first postmaster, receiving twice a week mail delivery.

The Prince Albert postal depot was called the Reach Post Office until 1863, and it was the distribution centre for all mail for the settlements to the north in Reach, Brock Township and Victoria county. The mailman, William Thomas, brought the mail on horseback once a week from Oshawa to Prince Albert, then travelled north on Old Simcoe Road.

Where Port Perry now stands, was formerly an Indian Reservation, which was known by the early settlers as Scugog Village. In 1851 Joseph Bigelow and his twin brother Joel, opened a general store in the village and in 1852 the village was renamed Port Perry, after Peter Perry who was a prominent merchant and grain buyer of Whitby and the man who created the plans for the village. This was the same year that Bigelow's store was opened, with Joseph Bigelow was appointed the first postmaster.

The opening of Port Perry post office in 1852 was followed the same year with post offices opeing in Manchester and Epsom and a daily stage was started between Whitby and Port Perry.

Post Offices Past
1852-1912

Port Perry's first post office operated from Bigelow's wood frame general store (left) located on the north side of Queen St. in the centre of town. At this time, prior to the arrival of the railway, a mail stage delivered the mail to Port Perry from Whitby.

Mr. Bigelow retired as postmaster in 1869, after serving the community for 17 years and the next man to take over the postal service was Henry Gordon, a grain merchant from Manchester who later became the first treasurer of Port Perry. Mr. Gordon, operated the post office from the Gordon & Shaw dry goods store, located in a building at the southeast corner of Queen and Perry St. The building was known as the Willard Block (bottom left) but it is currently the location of the Royal Bank.

In August 1871 work commenced on a new two-storey brick post office. When it was completed, postmaster Gordon moved the post office to the new building on the northwest corner of Queen and John Street, the location of Scugog former War Memorial Library building.

It operated from this location until the early 1900s, when it was moved to a temporary location at Rose & Co., in the Leonard Block at corner of Queen and Perry Street.

It also moved into a storefront in the Willard Block (bottom right) on the southeast corner of Queen and Perry Street, for a short time.

Port Perry Post Office, Queen and John Street.

Rose & Co., the Leonard Block

Willard Block, southeast corner of Queen and Perry Street.

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First Post Offices and Postmasters

Borelia:
   Borelia Post Office - J. W. Morris, 1863

Cartwright Township:
   Caesarea Post Office - James Caesar, 1857
   Blackstock Post Office - William Vance, 1857
   Purple Hill Post Office - 1882

Port Perry Village:
   Port Perry Post Office - Joseph Bigelow, 1852

Reach Township:
   Epsom Post Office - Anson T. Button, 1852
   Greenbank Post Office - George Horn, 1852*
   Manchester Post Office - William Powson, 1852
   Prince Albert Post Office - J. Leach, 1840
   Saintfield Post Office - William Sanders, 1869
   Utica Post Office - Duncan McKercher, 1853

Scugog Island:
Scugog Island Post Office - Isaac Finley, 1869

* Exact date and first postmaster not all confirmed, but those listed were the first postmasters listed in historic records.

Post Office Timeline

• **December 1910** - Mr. F. L. Fowke, Ontario South M.P., notified Reeve Hutcheson that plans for the new post office will be ready for inspection in January.

• **February 1911** - Mr. George Rose received a color sketch of the new post office which shows a clock tower on the two-storey brick building.

• **May 1911** - Reeve Gerrow received a letter from Mr. F.L. Fowke, M.P. stating that advertising for tenders to build the new post office will be issued soon. Mr. Yarnold began surveying the property for the new post office.

• **December 1911** - Contractor Trick of Oshawa has the work of building the Post Office well in hand. It is proposed to work all winter, using a fire to keep the mortar from freezing.

• **April 1912** - Work on the post office was being delayed due to the bad conditions of the roads, which made it impossible to haul sand for concrete work.

• **July 1912** - The cornerstone of the new post office, in which Mr. Airey has carved a simple maple leaf, was set at the northwest corner of the building, under the tower.

• **September 1912** - Brickwork has started on the new post office and it is progressing nicely.

• **March 1913** - Work has begun on the interior finishing of the post office.

• **June** - It is expected the new post office will be ready for occupation by the beginning of September.

• **October** - The post office to be moved into the Armouries, at the rear of the new post office, until the proper building is completed. The clock for the tower has been shipped from Liverpool, England

• **April 1914** - Samuel Graham becomes the first caretaker of the new Port Perry post office building.

• **March 1916** - The old Post Office building at Queen and John St., owned by the late Alex Palmer goes on for sale by auction on March 30.

• **November 1918** - The War ends on November 11, 1918. Port Perry celebrates with a half mile of torchlit autos decked for festivities, along with the Port Perry band and returned soldiers marching to Manchester and back. Celebrations, including a huge bonfire at the rear of the Post Office and rockets shooting across the scene.

• **December 1918** - Thanks to the efforts of S. Jeffrey and C.C. Jeffrey, the Post Office has improved mail service adding an outgoing and incoming route. It will necessitate running a stage route between Port Perry and Myrtle.

• **November 1920** - Two German machine guns and a trench mortar, will be received in Port Perry. Plans are to mount the war mementoes in front of the post office.

• **February 1922** - The German Field gun has arrived and is now on view in front of the Post Office. It is of five inch bore and had a range of three miles.

• **March 1926** - Ex-servicemen from the area met at the Armouries in the basement of the Post Office to form a club for veterans of the war.

• **February 1930** - George Hull takes over as postmaster at Port Perry post office from Mrs. Orde, who has carried on since the death of her father John W. Burnham one year ago.

• **July 1940** - Formation of a volunteer Home Guard for Port Perry, Cartwright, Scugog and Reach with headquarters at the Armouries in the Post Office. J.E. Jackson, O.C. More than 100 sign up first week.

• **December 1943** - Port Perry Post Office handed an average of 20,000 letters per day in December and did 50 percent more business in 1943 than in 1942.

• **January 1958** - Corporation purchases land behind Post Office for $1,500.

• **1965** - Charles Brignall hoists Canada's new red Maple Leaf flag to the top of the Post Office on Monday February 15th

• **July 1971** - It was announced that Port Perry Post Office, a landmark for over 60 years, will be replaced with a new modern building, scheduled to open in March 1972.

• **May 1972** - Due to increasing incidents of vandalism, it was decided to close the lock-box lobby of the Port Perry Post Office each night at 7:00 p.m.

• **January 1973** - Lake Scugog Historical Society launches campaign to save the Post Office. More than 1,500 residents sign petition and "Stop Work" is issued on Post Office.

• **March 1973** - M.P. Norm Cafik announces the Post Office will stay and will be expanded and renovated.

• **October 1973** - Work to begin on post office renovations. Service a present location to cease on Saturday, October 27. Temporary post office set up in the basement of the Masonic Hall.

• **June 1974** - Restoration, renovation and expansion for Port Perry's 58 year-old Post Office get underway. Work to include a 3,600 sq. ft. addition to the rear and side of the building. Lowest bid for work was $269,408.

• **April 1975** - The clock on the Post Office was repaired after being out of commission for many years.

• **July 1982** - Mr. Robert Walker, a resident of Brooklin is the new postmaster of Port Perry Post Office. He replaces Bruce Hull who held the position for 24 of his 37 years with the postal organization.

• **December 2009** - Roof of tower and post office building replaced.

Part Two

Port Perry's
New Post Office

After being elected Reeve of Port Perry in 1884, postmaster Henry Gordon resigned his position as after serving as the town's postmaster18 years. He was succeeded by John W. Burnham in January 1884, who was 32 years old when he assumed the important position.

Just months after becoming postmaster, the entire commercial sector of Port Perry was destroyed by fire, but with the post office at the west end of the business secrtor, it was saved from destruction.

This early 1900s picture shows the old wooden fence which hides the property the new post office would be built in 1912.

Although most of the buildings were rebuilt before years-end, one parcel of land stood vacant in the centre of town for more than 25 years, surrounded by an old wooden fence which had become an eyesore in the town.

Finally, in 1910, the federal government purchased the vacant propety for a post office building.

Plans about the construction a new post office for Port Perry were first published in April 27, 1910 edition of the Port Perry Star. The local paper announced that the Neil Sinclair property had been selected as the site for the building and $5,000 was set aside for additional estimates for the work.

News of the post office being building on the site was warmly recieved by the community, but it wasn't until February 15, 1911 that local officials finally got a glimpse of what was to come.

A colour sketch was presented to members of council showing the front elevations of the building. The sketch showed a two-storey brick building with substantial stone foundation and a clock tower over 50' high on the west side.

This tower has provision made in it for a clock and such an addition to the very creditable building proposed would be most acceptable," wrote the *Port Perry Star* editor. The plan also revealed there were to be two entrances and the upper storey would contain apartments for the caretaker.

The town council approved the plans and

May, and one of the area's most respected surveyors, William Yarnold began surveying the property. A few months later, a contract to build the post office was awarded to the W.J. Trick Company of Oshawa. Work on the impressive structure got underway in the fall of 1911. Mr. Trick proposed to work all winter, using fire to keep the mortar from freezing

After a good start, construction slowed throughout the winter months, despite the contractors use of fire to keep the mortar from freezing.

In April 1912, work was delayed again, due to the bad conditon of the roads, which made it impossible to haul sand for concrete.

In July 1912 small official cermony was held as the cornerstone of the new post office, on which was carved a simple maple leaf, was set at the northwest corner of the building under the tower. Work continued throughout the summer and by September the masons began to lay bricks.

The wooden fence had been removed when this picture was taken on Queen Street, about 1911, before post office construction got underway.
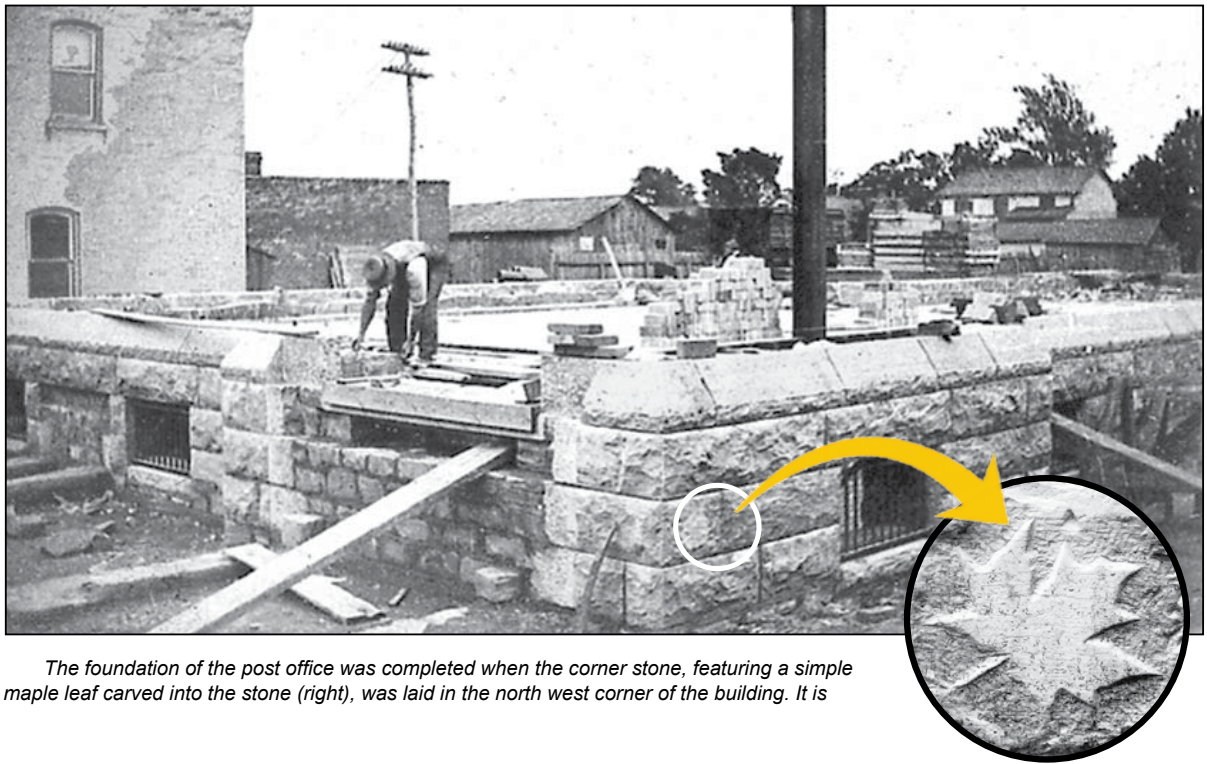
With exterior construction moving ahead favourably, work finally began on the interior finishing in March 1913. Expectations were that it would be ready to open in September. But this was not to be.

More delays later that year, made it necessary to open the post office in the Armouries Hall, the one-storey structure constructed to the side and rear of the main post office building in October 1913. A short term measure until the building could be completed.

The Armouries Hall was one-storey without a basement. It was divided into an armoury room 20'x26', commissioned officers rooms, and lavatories. The main entrance was from an door set back from the front of the post office, running along the west side of the building.

The clock, which was built and shipped from Derby, Enland, was installed in April 1914. It was wound manually once a week by Samuel Graham, who was the first caretaker of the building.

John Warren Burnham, the first postmaster in the new building, began is career as a postmaster in Port Perry in 1884. He held the postion for 45 years until his death in 1928.

John Warren Burnham, about 1890. He served as postmaster for Port Perry Post Office from 1884 to 1928.

The foundation of the post office was completed when the corner stone, featuring a simple maple leaf carved into the stone (right), was laid in the north west corner of the building. It is

STRANGE BUT TRUE

More than five decades before Canada proudly adopted a single maple leaf for its new flag, a very similar maple leaf had been used by the federal government as its symbol.

In July 1912, a small official cermony was held as the cornerstone of Port Perry's new post office was set into place at the northwest corner of the building under the tower. Carved into the white dressed stone was a simple maple leaf, very similar to the one on Canada's the new flag.

Whether a coincidence, or intended we will never know, but the choosing of a single maple leaf half a century after it was used to celebrate the construction of Port Perry's new post office, is indeed a mystery.

On February 15, 1965, Canada officially raised its beautiful new red and white maple leaf flag over the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa on February 15, 1965. On that same day, Port Perry Post Office caretaker Charles Brignall hoisted Canada's new red Maple Leaf flag to the top of the post office.

Going unnoticed by those witnessing the new flag proudly raised above the town was the small white maple leaf, 60 feet below, carved into the foundation 52 years earlier.

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*The partially completed Port Perry Post Office in 1912, with the one-storey
Armouries Hall entrance to the right of main building.*

Construction Details

Foundation:
    Walls made of 2' thick, white dressed stone.

Basement:
    10 ft. high under entire building.

Tower Height:
    61 ft., ground to top of the tower.

Clock:
    Located 26 ft. from ground

First Floor:
    14 ft. high walls with 14 large windows.

Second Floor:
    Ceilings 11.6 ft. high, and equipped with lavoratories.

Exterior Walls:
    17 inch thick on ground floor, 13" inch thick for second floor and tower.
    Used 300,000 red bricks.

Interior Space:
    The ground floor of the post office was divided into three main sections:

• Working space - 23' 5" in. by 173".

• Public lobby - 8'3" deep by 23'5" long.

• A hallway 8'8" ran the full length of the back of the building to the mail entrance on the west side.

• The second floor had anoffice for the Inland Revenue and three other large general offices.

• The third floor contained complete apartments for the caretaker.

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The Amouries Building

Before the new post office was constructed, there were a number of wood building on the south end of the property. One of these, for many years, served as an armoury for training volunteers and militia

When the Post Office was built in 1912, a large single storey building was constructed, attached to the post office building. It was used as an Armoury during both world wars. The Home Guard and other wartime groups were trained here during WWII.

The space was also used as the home for the Boy Scouts organization which got its start in Port Perry in 1917.

In March 1926, WWI veterans and servicemen from Port Perry and surrounding districts met at the Armouries of the Post Office to discuss forming a club for veterans of the war.

In July 1940 the Armouries became the headquarters for a volunteer Home Guard for Port Perry, Cartwright, Scugog and Reach. More than 100 young men sign-up during the first week. One month later there was a National Registration for Canadians. Everyone over 16 years of age was requried to register by August 21, at Town Hall or the Armouries.

~

The Post Office and Armoury is valued for its good aesthetic and functional design. The striking feature of the asymmetrical massing of clock tower and office block is characteristic of the distinctive federal post office designs of the early 1900s.

BLACKSTOCK ARMOURY

The laying of the corner stone of the new Armouries building in Blackstock village took place during November 1913 Mr. J. H. Devitt with a silver trowel laid the corner stone.

These pictures show the entrance to the single storey Armouries building, to the side and back of the new post office. Entrance to the Armouries was through a door, set back on west side of the building.

Part Three

The Tower Clock

The clock tower of the Port Perry Post Office has been a familiar landmark in the town since it was constructed in 1914.

For more than 100 years, the clock on the post office tower has been keeping time.

Anyone who frequents the downtown has probably walked by this familiar landmark hundreds of times, but have no idea what keeps the large hands ticking behind those four large white faces. To all but the few who have maintained it over the past century, the timepiece is a mystery.

Port Perry's clock began its life on September 26, 1913, when J. Smith and Sons of the Midland Clock Works in Derby, England received an order for a clock for the new post office. The company's historic sales registers describes the order as a "Turret Clock with four - 4'0" dials striking hours on an 800 lb. bell".

The assembly was shipped from Liverpool, England to Montreal in October 1913. Here it was loaded onto a train to continue its journey to Port Perry.

The new post office opened for business on Friday, January 2, 1914, but it wasn't until April that year that mechanics finally installed the clock.

In mid-May 1914, the local newspaper *(Port Perry Star)* reported, "The post office clock has started to strike, but it is far too modest and gentle about telling the hours. Its voice must have been trained in a ladies' seminary, and is "cultured".

This was publisher Samuel Farmer's criticism of the bell, which could barely heard unless you were outside the building.

In a second comment a few weeks later, Mr. Farmer wrote, "The clock has scarcely formed the habit of running regularly yet. Sometimes it 'strikes' and sometimes it goes 'on strike' and then of course, it neither goes, nor strikes."

But despite it's rocky beginnings, the century old timepiece continues to sweep the large hands

Copy of the original order for a Turret Clock with four, four foot dials and an 800 lb. bell, from the J. Smith and Sons of the Midland Clock Works in Derby, England.

The bell and striker can be seen in this picture taken in 2013, with the clock and tower in the background.

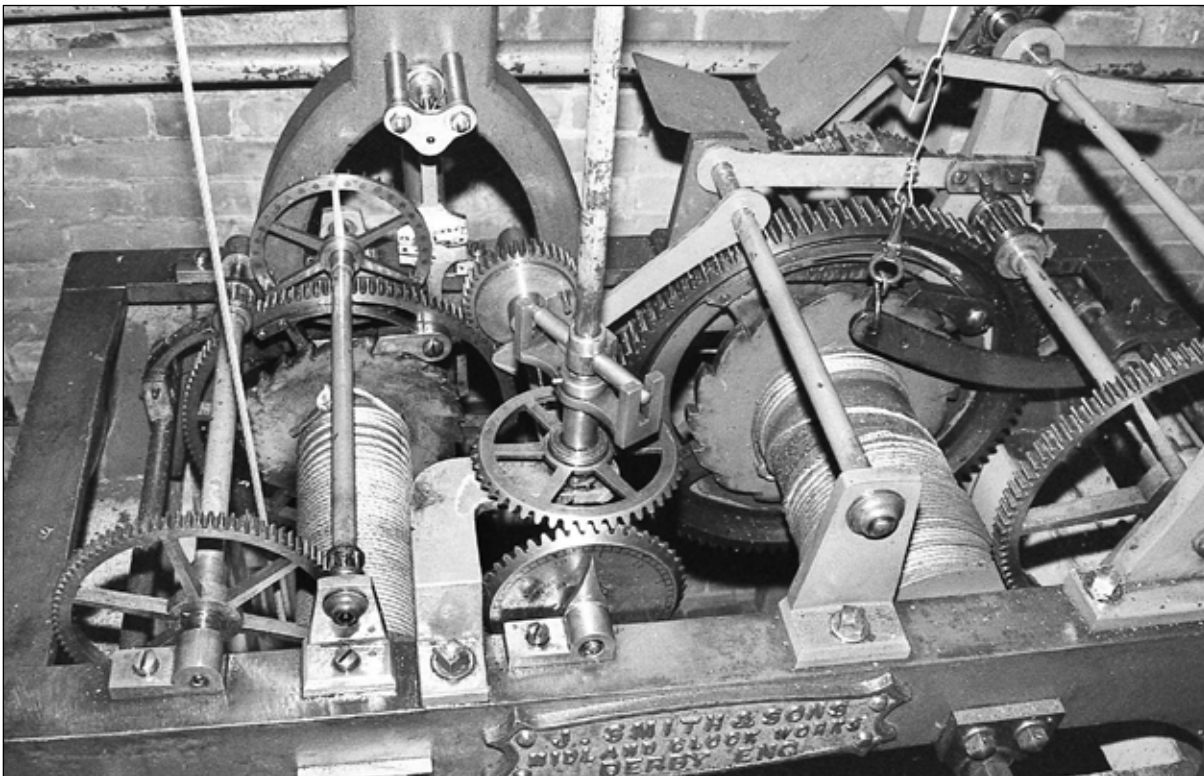around its handsome face 26 feet above Queen Street.

The intricate mechanism, which keeps those hands turning, is made of cast iron with bronze or brass gears and steel shafts. The clock mechanism is composed of two distinct train gears, a time train (for the clock) and striking train (for the bell).

Each of the four, 4' diameter clock faces is assembled from hand painted glass (similar to stained glass). The glass faces are set in a black iron frame with lead cames and Roman numerals. The large sweeping minute hand is 3'6" inches in length and the hour hand slightly shorter at 2'6" long.

As with all mechanical devices the post office clock has had its share of problems during the past century, including numerous interruptions for service and repairs,

In 1975, during a renovation of the old post office, the clock was repaired after being out of commission for many years.
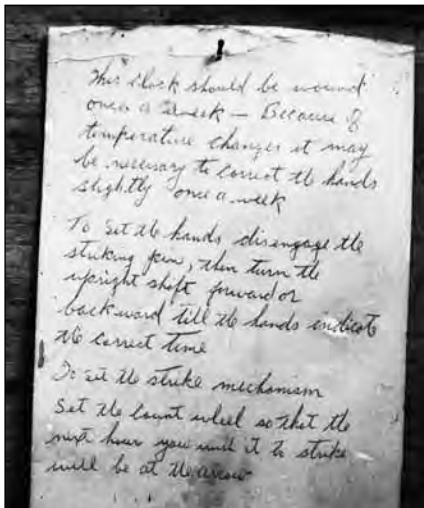
The Port Perry Post Office celebrated its centenary in January 2014 with little fanfare.
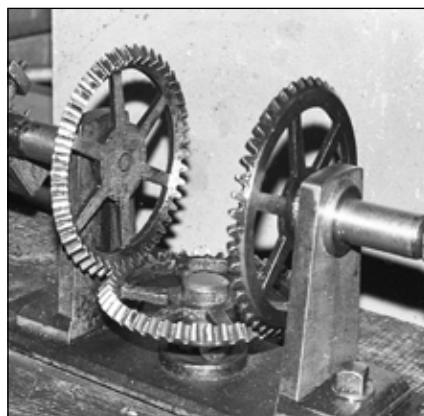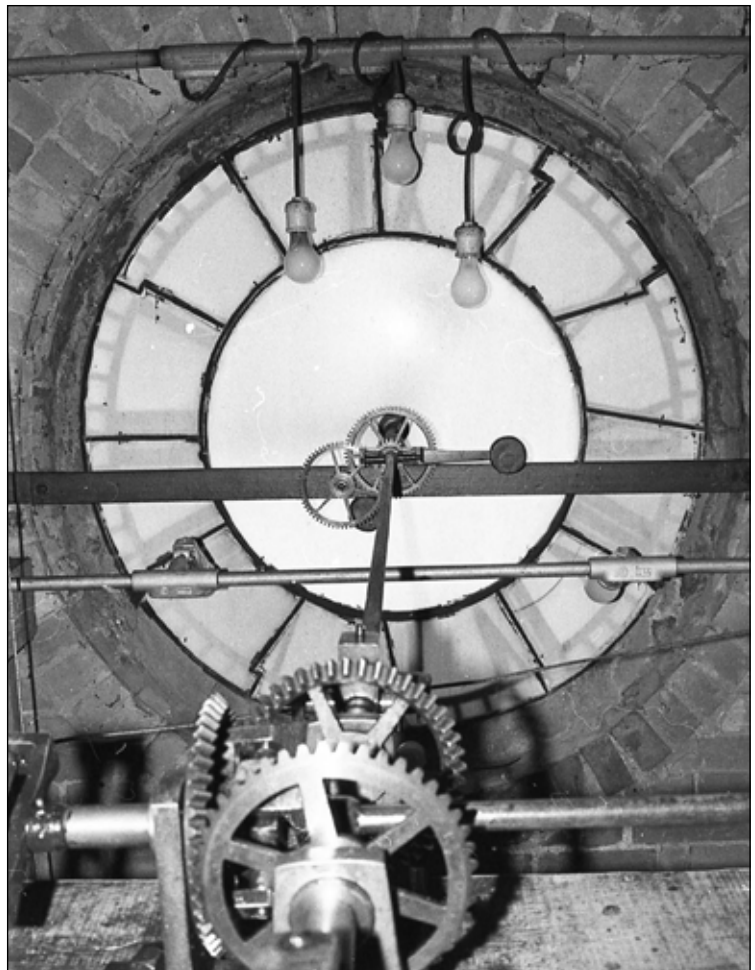

This simple, yet precise mechanism is the heart of the clock. It had to be wound by hand by the post office caretaker approximately every six days.

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A long rod with brass gears attached to the face of the clock, turns the hands of the clock.

Instructions left by one of the caretakers tells how to set hands and to wind the clock.

The brass gear assembly, left photo, turned a long rod which is connected to the hour and the minute hands on the the face of the clock (above). Illumination for the clock at night is by three light bulbs hanging above the clock.

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Part Four

One Hundred Years

Port Perry postmaster George Hull, left, his son Bruce and wife Lila, all work at the local post office. They took time in February 1953 to reminisce about their time at the post office, which has been serving the public for 100 years locally.

Quietly and without ceremony or celebration Port Perry's Post Office marked 100 years of mail service and started on the second century, sometime during 1952.

Postmaster for almost a quarter of a century at that time from 1852 when the post office was first established here is George Hull, show started his 24th year in that position on February 1. Mr. Hull as far as history reveals is about the fifth person to hold the position which includes an impressive list of men including original postmaster Joseph Bigelow, who was also Port Perry's first Reeve.

Mr. Hull succeeded John Burnham who died in 1928 as official post master in 1930. In that period, Mrs. Marion Orde assumed the position. Prior to that a Mr. Hurst served the position for a number of years and one or two others are believed to have filled the post.

The post office and mail service have come a long way since those early pioneer days of 1852 when post offices sprung up her and in Manchester and Epsom. Prior to the railroad days, which have come and gone, the mail was brought from the front to the back township once a fortnight.

The present building, which was under construction around 1912, is almost 40 years old. Very few structural changes have taken place in that time but the amount of mail that passes through has greatly increased. "The volume of mail is tremendous to what is was", says Mr. Hull. "I think DeNure Bus Lines has a lot to do with the increased populations here as many working in Oshawa settled here because of the good bus service.

The scarcity of number of boxes and the cramped quarters of the post office is a good indication of the growth of the village, district and the amount of mail. "The first 10 to 15 years I was here there were always

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one-third of the boxes empty. Now they are full and we have a waiting line of 30 people", pointed out Mr. Hull. There are 354 boxes now and the new additions planned for the future call for an extra 75 boxes.

Biggest changes in the system of handling mail was the advent of the automatic cancelling machine which Mr. Hull purchased himself in 1937. "I bought that at a Postmaster's Convention at Orillia for $235. Now-a-days it would cost $1,250, so I figure I made money. Now we would be lost with it." Mr. Hull says his extra employees didn't have too much work to do when the machine came in and the arduous task of hammering away with the canceling stamp was no longer necessary. it speeded up service considerably especially at Christmas during the annual big rush.

The post office down through the years has just about been "a family affair" with the Hulls. Besides Mr. Hull who caries out the many duties despite a war wound which almost severed his right arm, Mrs. Hull and son Bruce and daughter Joyce, all have grown up with the mail. Son Bruce has been senior clerk for seven years, Joyce was an employee for five years and his wife, Annie Eliza Hull, who works during the peak hours is an "old hand" at the game. She learned to handle mail at Lorne Park, near Port Credit where her father was the first post master.

Lorne Park was also where George and "Lila" Hull first met and were married. After discharge from military hospital in 1925 they came to Port Perry and coincidentally Mr. Hull purchased his present home on Queen Street, right next the large brick home of Albert Midgley, which was the first post office in the district when Borelia was separate from this corporation. "I often tell the folks downtown that I don't live in Port Perry, said Mr. Hull, "I live up here in Borelia."

A trip from Borelia to Port Perry, four or five years ago, stands out in his memory as one of the times the mail almost didn't get through. he waded through snow to his waist to reach the post office but no mail arrived at the spot for a week. "When it finally did come in there were 80 bags and we worked to two or three the next morning to get the mail sorted.

Mr. Hull also reminisced bad to the pre-war days when the "Nip and Tuck" chugged in daily with the mail. "Billy Cook used to bring the mail up from the station three times a day at nine, one and five. he was always on time." This service was curtailed some time before the rails were torn up in 1939. Now-a-days, Ivan Gray drives "the stage" twice a day to Myrtle to pick up the mail.

Stamp sales today are of course way up over the earlier days, but except for the special issues the denominations are just about the same. Mr. Hull says the days have gone since many tried to use old stamps twice, but states that he still sees the old Queen Victoria stamps come through. He can't recall the penny-post in his days, but when he started out the most letter took three cent stamps, which is quite a change from the 9d or 18 cents required for a letter to or from the old country in the days of Port Perry's first post office.

At that time undelivered letters or poorly addressed letters were advertised in the papers. Now they are kept for 30 days and then turned-over to the Dead Letter office. Some of the confusing letters are intended for Perry Station and other similar names.

On two occasions Mr. Hull states that thieves entered the post office and removed the safe. The first time Chief George Holmes disturbed them and they left the safe on the steps and escaped. The second time was more successful as the thieves took the safe which contained $1,500 in stamps and postal notes and $375 in money.

Mr. Hull says he has had some very faithful assistants in his 23 years on the job and referred especially to Rose Cornish who was a clerk for many years and Agnes Gooderham and Irene Leahy. Charlie Brignall is the present caretaker and he succeeded Frank Smith and George White who handed that job for a long time.
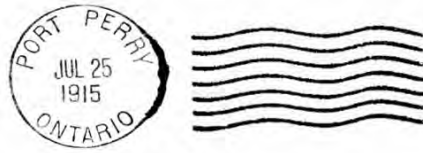
On the rural mail delivery, Mr. Hull recalled several servants in the past. Two men, Herb Hope and Charles Gerrow died on the job.

"The mailman's slogan has been changed to − "the mail must go through if the roads are open - and they do when humanly possible. Presently serving on the 'rurals' most for their second or third terms are: Hugh Strong, RR4; Norman Yeo, RR3; Grant Hunter, RR2, and Clarence Graham, RR1.

A automatic cancelling machine, circa 1925, similar to the one purchased by George Hull.

Part Five

Post Office Interiors

-An interior view of the beautiful wood interior and lobby of the Port Perry Post Office as it looked in 1953. It is believed this was the original interior installed when the post office opened in 1914. There were different wickets for picking up mail for General Deliver. Wicket to the right was A-L, and to the left M-Z. There were also business mail boxes to the left of the picture.

Interior of the Port Perry Post Office prior to 1970 when extensive renovations were made.

Interior of the Port Perry Post Office about 1970. Postmaster Bruce Hall and clerk Betty Terrett are seen in this picture of the remodelled interior.

Mary Hardy, left, and Edna Ingram (librarian) get their mail from one of the new boxes in the renovated Post Office about 1970.

Renovations on the interior of the Post Office in March 1975, when the lobby and service area underwent a complete upgrading.
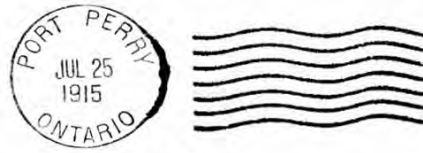
Interior of the Port Perry Post Office in December 2017

Interior of the Port Perry Post Office in December 2017

Part Six

Postmasters
Past & Present

As important as the post offices of Port Perry and townships, where the postmasters.

Mail service to Port Perry began here just over 152 years ago with the arrival of the first mail stage from Whitby.

First established here in 1852, with Joseph Bigelow as it's postmaster, the post office operated from Bigelow's wood frame general store, located around 183 Queen St. At this time, prior to the arrival of the railway, a mail stage delivered the mail from Whitby.

Mr. Bigelow retired as postmaster in 1869, after serving the community for 17 years.

A Mr. Hurst was the and the next man to take over the postal service for a number of years. He was followed by Henry Gordon, a grain merchant from Manchester who later became the first treasurer of Port Perry.

Mr. Gordon, operated the post office from the Gordon & Shaw dry goods store, located in a building at the southeast corner of Queen and Perry St. The building was known as the Willard Block but it is currently the location of the Royal Bank.

In August 1871, Mr. Gordon moved the post office to the newly constructed, two-storey brick building at the corner of Queen and John St., just east of the old War Memorial Library building. This building later served as Port Perry first library.

After being elected Reeve of Port Perry in 1884, Mr. Gordon resigned his position as postmaster after a term of 18 years. He was succeeded by John W. Burnham.

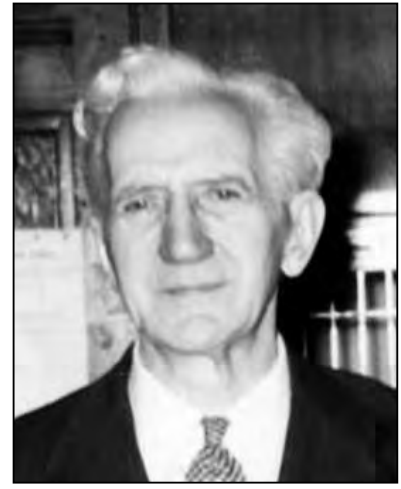When Mr. Burnham arrived in Port Perry from Whitby he was 22 years of age. Ten years

Joseph Bigelow
Postmaster 1852 - 1869

John W. Burnham
Postmaster 1884 - 1928

Marion Orde
Postmaster 1928 - 1930

George Hull
Postmaster 1930 - 1958

later he was appointed postmaster, a position he held until his death in 1928, a total of 45 years. Mr. Burnham was one of the most highly respected citizens of Port Perry and is said not to have missed a day from his duty during his years as postmaster.

Following his death, his daughter Marion (Burnham) Orde took over the duties of postmaster until February 1930. She was the first woman to have held the title of postmaster.

During John Burnham's tenure as postmaster, the post office was located in temporary sites at Rose & Co. at corner of Queen and Perry St. (Piano Cafe). During the 1880s it was also located in a storefront in the Willard Block (now Royal Bank building).

Next to become postmaster was George Hull, who took over from Marion Orde.

The post office became a family affair for the Hulls during his years as postmaster. His wife Lila, daughter Joyce, and son Bruce all worked either full

time or part-time at the local postal facility.

In 1953 George said that the biggest change in the mailing system was when they purchased an automatic cancelling machine, which helped speed up service. At that time the post office had 358 boxes and there were 30 people on a waiting list.

George Hull held this position until 1958 when his son Bruce assumed the roll. Bruce Hull held the position for 24 years of the 37 he spent working at the local post office.

In 1982, Bruce Hull retired and Robert Walker assumed the position of postmaster for Port Perry. Mr. Walker hailed from Brooklin and he held the postion for 20 years before retiring.

Following Mr. Walker's resignation in 2002, Alana Murphy was elevated to postmaster, making her the second woman to hold the title of "postmaster". Ms. Murphy continues in her duties as postmaster to this day.
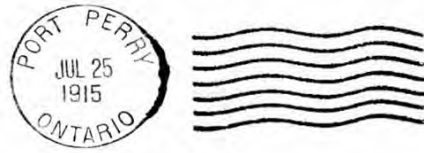

Bruce Hull
Postmaster 1958 - 1982

Robert Walker
Postmaster 1982 - 2002

Alana Murphy
Postmaster 2002 - 2018

Part Seven

Saving The
Post Office

In July 1971 the residents of Scugog were shocked to hear that Port Perry's stately Post Office was slated for demolition and a modern building constructed in its place. The government announced that it would tear down the 1914 structure and build a brand new, state of the art, single storey, glass and aluminum building on the site of the old Canadian Legion building immediately behind the Post Office.

As soon as the announcement was made a number of citizens in Scugog decided to voice their opposition to the move. Many regarded the Post Office as a landmark building on Queen Street, an essential part of the town's heritage streetscape.

Among those who raised opposition was Bob Archer, who had owned the Pontiac-Buick dealership in Port Perry, before retiring in 1968. He acted as Liberal candidate Norm Cafik's driver as he campaigned

Sketch of the proposed new Port Perry Post Office in 1972.

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Robert Archer

Bill Brock

Norm Cafik, M.P.P.

M.P. Norman Cafik shows an artists rendering of the proposed new Port Perry post office building to Georgia Brock and Sylvia Diamond in July 1971. Postmaster Bruce Hull can been seen over the shoulder of Mr. Cafik.

around the riding in the 1968 election. Cafik's campaign was highly successful and he took his seat in Ottawa as the M.P. for what was then the Ontario Riding.

Archer contacted Mr. Cafik and expressed his concern over the pending demolition of the old Post Office. Cafik himself already had concerns about the demolition of the heritage building.

Meanwhile the Lake Scugog Historical Society, led by its president and founder, Bill Brock, decided to organize a petition to save the Post Office.

The petition argued that the building was solid and the cost of renovating it would be considerably cheaper than tearing it down and building a new structure. It also argued that "The street with its double row of Victorian buildings would not look right with a small, match-box style single storey modern building in the middle."

The petition was available in the Post Office and within two weeks over 1,000 signatures had been collected. When M.P. Cafik heard of the petition he immediately expressed his support for the ideals of the petition and called on the minister responsible, Arthur Laing, the Minister of Public Works.

With the petition in hand he was enabled to ask the minister to prepare a "thorough estimate on the cost of renovating Port Perry's existing Post Office" as opposed to its demolition and replacement.

On March 28, 1973, news broke that: "Mr. Cafik, after making strong representation to the ministers of Public Works and the Post Office, insisted that this historic landmark be preserved. As a

result of consultation, agreement has been reached to this effect."

Port Perry's only newspaper at the time, the *Port Perry Star*, reported that "The front façade of the building will be maintained and that the expansion will consist of major internal renovations. A major extension of the side and rear of the building will be completed, but Mr. Cafik has insisted that the construction be performed in such a way as to be harmonious with the original architecture."

The community celebrated at the news. The government began the task of drawing up plans for the renovations and additions. Work on the revision of the 1914 building began in June 1974.

While the renovations and additions were being made, the Post Office was temporarily relocated in the basement of the Masonic Hall, beside the old Town Hall.

The Port Perry Star
November 20, 1974

Post Office restoration gets underway

Port Perry's 58 year old post office will received a facelift that will bring in a number of renovations without destroying the historical and architectural character of the exterior.

Gerrit Construction Co. of Bowmanville won the contract with a bid of $269,408. The post office has been closed since October, when staff moved to the Masonic Lodge basement, after finding the old buildings heating system inadequate.

A year ago the post office had been saved from demolition through a public campaign, when 1,500 signatures on a petition stayed the decision to demolish it.

A statement issued by Public Works, Canada, says that the renovations will provide a functional up-to-date environment without destroying the historical character of the exterior. The renovations include a pueblo lobby, mail lobby, work space and loading platform. Air conditioning and an updated heating system will also be installed.

Besides, an additional 3,600 sq. ft. of accommodation will be created by extending the building to the rear and on one side. The building is scheduled to be completed by December of 1974.

November 20, 1974

The clock in the tower of the post office will be back in working order as soon as the renovated building opens for business. Postmaster Bruce Hull said there is a good size bell in the clock and people will once again be able to tell time when the clock strikes. Charlie Brignall, who has been caretaker for 23 years, said the clock stopped about five years ago(1969). When it starts up again, it will still be hand wound with a big crank. The clock was installed in 1914.

Wednesday, April 9, 1975

After about 1.5 years of handling the community's postal business from a makeshift, substitute post off in the basement of Masonic Temple, the post office will move back into the old, newly-renovated post office in downtown Port Perry.

Postmaster Bruce Hull said operations at the rented Masonic Hall will stop officially at 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 12 and begin at the post office on Monday, April 14, 1975.

Construction underway on post office in November 197.

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Opening Ceremony

A traditional cutting of the ribbon marked the official opening of the renovated post office building in Port Perry on May 25, 1975. From left are, Public Works Canada Area Manager, J. Maley; Norman Cafik, Ontario M.P.; Lawrence Malcolm, Scugog Township mayor and postmaster Bruce Hull.

Post Office Officially Opened

A short but pleasant ceremony attended by officials of the different levels of government, as well as the public officially opened the newly renovated post office in Port Perry.

On hand for the opening, on Saturday, May 25, 1975, was M.P. Norm Cafik, representatives of the public works and post office departments, Scugog Mayor Lawrence Malcolm, Durham Region chairman Walter Beath, and others.

Mayor Malcolm, in his opening remarks, invited those in attendance to take a dip in the lake if they get too uncomfortable, due to the heat. "We have a lake right downtown, and its quite pure," he said with a smile.

Mayor Malcolm commended the federal government and the local people who got behind the project, saying that the federal building such as this one has a tendency to "set the pattern" for other projects. "If it was ultra modern you probably wouldn't be able to recognize the community in the future."

In his remarks, Mr. Cafik said that after he realized, when the project was first suggested, that he could loose as many votes saving the post office as he could tearing it down, so he figured he might as well do what he felt was the right way.

And that was to keep it, he said, but he still had the Government of Canada to fight. He said the post office helps to preserve the character of Port Perry. "And that's very important," he said.

Norm Cafik speaks during the opening of the post office.

Before the 1974 renovations there were two sets of steps. At left, steps to the exterior mail box, and right, steps to go into the post office.

During renovations, the platform was extended over to the letters box between to the windows, eliminating the steps

Residents line up in the newly renovated post office lobby after it officially opened in April 1975.

Part Eight

A Photo Album
Post office through the years!

1914

1920s

1927

In 1922 two German field guns, used during Word War I, arrived as a war gift from the government to Port Perry.
One of the field guns was put on display in front of the Post Office. The second gun was placed in Palmer Park.

1935
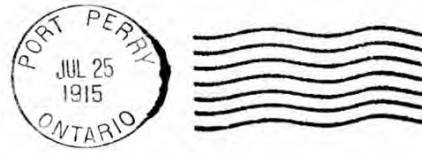

1942

1968

1974

1982

1991

1999

Part Nine

Renovations

The first major restorative work on the Port Perry post office since it was saved and renovated 35 years ago, got underway in the fall of 2010.

Since escaping demolition in the 1970s the building had been neglected by its owners, the federal government, but finally work got underway on repacing the ugly, rusted roof panels.

A year after replacing the old panels on the clock tower roof a year ago, crews were back on site in November 2011 removing and replacing the remainder the panels on lower portions of the roof.

Post office gets new roof

Much needed work got underway last month on repairs to Port Perry's historic, but deteriorating post office building. A central landmark in the town, the post office has been in dire need of refurbishing for a number of years. This past summer painting got underway on the window and door frames, followed by repairs to cement steps and ramps. Finally work got underway in December repairing the rusty roof which has been an eyesore for quite some time. Thankfully it will be returned to its original glory in the not to distant future.

Far left shows the top of the Port Perry Post Office, taken in 1914 shortly after it opened, with the finial post cresting the tower roof.

The large finial post, left, which has graced the top of the tower was removed in 2010 while work was being done on repairing the roof.

Below, work crews place the refurbished post atop of the clock tower, after the new roof panels had replaced the rusted old panels.

PORT PERRY
POST OFFICE