

EARLY MAIL

The Verona post office was located on East Railroad Avenue in the 1950's. It wasn't very large, but handled a lot of mail. The Verona Post Office area included all of Verona, part of Oakmont hill, Plum Township and Penn Hills . Mail delivery as I remember was delivered two times a day in the 1940's and 1950's. There were a lot of postmen working on the inside of the post office. Mail was sorted out constantly. The mail from Pittsburgh was sent by train with the railroad tracks directly across the street from the post office. The train was usually a passenger train and at times a coal car train. It came out of Pittsburgh heading for Oil City. The freight train did not stop to drop off the mail. There was a hook located about two feet from the rails. A large canvas bag was hooked on the outside of the engine and as it passed the upright hook in Verona, the bag was released as it hit the hook contraption. This was a daily operation.

In the Christmas season in the 1950's, the Post Master would visit the high school and extend part time jobs in the post office to the Junior and Senior boys. The work would be in the post office building for a variety of jobs. In my junior year my cousin Jerry and I volunteered for the positions, but only three seniors were selected. The following year we did the same application and were picked. This was a nice paying inside job for seventeen-year olds. We started on the weekend before the 1952 Christmas and then during our Christmas vacation. The Post Master was Rudy and Assistant Post Master was Les. An exciting part of the job was waiting outside for the train to pass heading north in the early AM. There were a lot of wall clocks in the post office and we were instructed to be outside before the 7 AM freight passed through. At home we had to get up earlier than the regular school day. We would walk down the hill, down Center Avenue through the main Street. It was still pretty dark.

We would grab the bag, sometimes pretty heavy with mail and take it in and empty the contents on a table with large trays on it. We, along with other employees, would sort the mail out by streets serviced by the Verona Post Office. The mail would be placed in separate street trays. The finale process would be to place the mail in pigeon holes of home addresses finishing by 10 AM. The walking postmen would gather their assigned sequenced mail for the morning deliveries. By that time, the local mail was then being cancelled by machine and the process would start again for the afternoon deliveries. We were sort of proud to be working there but some of our non-working classmates saw it as a demeaning activity maybe because it was our Christmas holiday time off. I think we worked a total of seven to eight days. The hourly pay was not much, but we thought it was great, although we didn't get paid until the week after Christmas and by check.

Even though no one could really see us working in the back rooms, we were honored to make sure that the mail got through.

Frank W. Santucci, November, 2014