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Progress To Claim Bowdens Post Office This Spring

The Duplin County crossroads local news center soon will fall to modern times. Bowdens' post office will distribute its last letters, circulars, magazines and catalogs some time in the spring.

The smallest country post offices have been disappearing for several decades as rural population declined, roads and delivery service improved and more widespread ownership of cars and trucks made travel to larger trading centers easier and faster.

In the horse-and-buggy and Model T Ford days of the early 20th century, a drive of four or five miles over muddy country roads could eat up a respectable part of a day. A country store every few miles was a necessity, and a post office added to the trading post's convenience and prestige.

In places like Bowdens, along U.S. 117 between Warsaw and Faison, the post office attached to the general store was the country news center and nerve center.

The stores usually sold everything from horse collars to the latest patent medicines for croup. Stocks included clothing, shoes, dry food, staples, canned goods, many farm and garden tools, many hardware items, tin pans, dishes, washboards, tubs, soaps and the iron kettles and pots prevalent in earlier times.

Many carried livestock and poultry feed items and fertilizer.

The Bowdens post office was part of this scene. It was part of the old Parker Store, separated by a partition and served by its own front door. Today, the store stands empty, a relic of the bygone era. A mailbox leans against one of the pillars holding the roof over the old paved entryway. A large outdoor thermometer provides easy temperature reading on one side of the front.

The post office sign reading "U.S.

Post Office Bowdens, N.C., 28322" decorates the other side along with a hanging plant and an outside light. Inside, one wall features an old-time, real-wood wall clock, complete with an advertisement for Coca Cola: 5 cents.

Aleatz P. Jordan stamps mail in the post office as she has since 1952. She plans to retire in the spring, and that will be the end of the office.

The Bowdens name will be continued, she said. Mail for the Bowdens area will be distributed by a rural carrier from the Warsaw post office. It will be addressed to Bowdens recipients by their box number, and, although the Bowdens name will remain part of the address, the old zip code will not. The area will be part of the Warsaw zip code of 28398.

Mrs. Jordan does not anticipate retirement. "This is my life. I've either been in the store or the post office all my life," she said.

The first postmaster was Daniel Bowden in 1874. The town was named after a General Bowden who lived nearby.

Mrs. Jordan succeeded her father, Henry A. Parker, as postmaster in 1952. He owned the store and ran the post office for many years. The store closed in 1981 after 111 years in business. Parker succeeded W.E. Fussell as postmaster.

The post office has 78 boxes and served 75 families. Its biggest mail customer is the Georgia-Pacific Corp.

Mrs. Jordan said the office was supposed to have been closed in September. A letter-writing campaign among community residents opposing the loss of Bowdens' identity helped delay the closing. The result was that the Bowdens name will be retained on the addresses of mail to the community.



Bowdens Post Office Along NC 117, North Of Warsaw



Postmistress Aleatz Jordan Stamps Mail

Liberty Hall Plantation Christmas Based On Tradition

The brightly lit tree, gaily wrapped gifts, stockings hung by the chimney — much of our modern-day Christmas celebration has roots in the customs of our European forefathers. Still, settlers in the New World found ways to make the holiday their own, especially in the South. The Kenan family was one of the many families who borrowed tradition, but also personalized their Christmas celebration.

Actually, if the first Pilgrims had had their way, Dec. 25 would be just like any other day on the calendar. In 1620, the Puritans at Plymouth Colony banned Christmas celebrations, connecting the holiday with the Anglican reviving of the England they had left behind. One dissenter, though, Captain Christopher Hones of the Mayflower, did open a barrel of beer for the occasion. Connecticut law was even more specific, prohibiting "the making of fashion with Christmas Day being a day of balls, toasting the success of their tobacco plantations, and enjoy-friends. In the early days, gifts were given only to children. Christmas trees" were unknown to mid-19th century Americans. Uniquely American is the tree that reaches from floor to ceiling. In Germany where the Christmas tree originated, the evergreen was set on the tabletop. If an evergreen was not available, the early pioneers made do with sassafras or oak trees.

Original to America is the community tree. Up until about 1900, only one in five families had a Christmas tree of their own. Instead, an evergreen was set up in the school house, church or town hall for everyone to decorate and enjoy.

Another familiar holiday plant, previously known only south of the border, became Americanized. The U.S. ambassador to Mexico brought the showy scarlet plant home to South Carolina in 1829 and so Joel R. Poinsett gave the poinsettia its name.

By adopting and adapting the different customs of its inhabitants, America has created a "melting pot" holiday, as spirited as spiritual and all of these traditions are considered when Liberty Hall and its support buildings are decorated each year for the holiday season.

Open house activities at Liberty Hall are scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 15 from 1-5 p.m. and there is no admission charge. The house will remain decorated for guests and tours throughout the holiday season. For more information, call 296-0522.

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East Duplin Teacher Named Tops In Science

Mary Ann Grady of Beulaville has been named one of 11 district winners of the Distinguished Service in Science Education awards recently presented by the N.C. Science Teachers Association.

She had previously been named outstanding science teacher and teacher of the year for Duplin

County. A teacher at East Duplin High School, she has 38 years of teaching experience and is a district director of the N.C. Science Teachers Association.

The district awards were presented during the group's 17th annual state conference in Raleigh Nov. 7-9.

Municipal Association Elects Brown

Alex Brown, mayor of Greenevers, was elected chairman of the Duplin Municipal Association during its recent annual meeting in Rose Hill.

Clarence Brown, a Rose Hill town commissioner, was named vice

chairman. Ethel T. Boney, Greenevers town clerk, was named secretary-treasurer.

Retiring as chairman is Arnold Duncan, a Rose Hill town commissioner.

Names Penney Chairman Duplin Board Says Wait For Vote

The Duplin County Board of Commissioners turned down a request Monday to authorize a \$10 million school bond referendum.

School Board Chairman Carl Pate and Superintendent L.S. Guy asked the board to authorize the referendum. They said they would like the referendum to be held in March.

Under North Carolina law, county school boards are not able to levy taxes or call for bond issue referendums. They must come to county boards of commissioners for public funds.

Commissioner W.J. Costin moved to authorize the referendum. He stipulated it should be held during the May primary. The motion died for lack of a second.

"The school board is elected just like I am and its members seem to think the bond issue is needed," Costin said. "I think the people should make the decision."

Other commissioners said they wanted more time to study the matter.

Pate said he would like to have a referendum in March because he believes the bond referendum will

stand a better chance if it is the only question on the ballot.

Commissioner Allen Nethercutt said few people vote in such referendums. "Back when we held a watershed referendum only four percent of the electorate turned out. I'd like to see all the people involved," he said.

"I believe in pay as you go and I thought we'd been doing a pretty good job," said Commissioner D.J. Fussell.

Guy said with a bond issue, the people using schools 15 years from now would be paying for them.

Fussell noted such a bond issue would cost \$800,000 in interest right at the start. "Give us 8 or 10 years and we think we can do it (without a bond issue). We can keep the rain off your head and keep you warm," Fussell said.

A state study of school facilities called for spending \$17.9 million for improvements. The state plan faced strong objections in hearings throughout the county. The school board eliminated a consolidated North Duplin-James Kenan High School from the plan, reducing the projected cost to about \$11 million.

The county has obligated \$1.5 million for expansion of James Kenan High School. The work is in progress.

Features of the school board's plan include new elementary schools at the B.F. Grady and Chinquapin sites and a new middle school at Beulaville. It would also include some additions to North Duplin schools, a band room at the Charity school near Rose Hill and an auditorium at Wallace-Rose Hill High School.

Dovie Penney, the first woman elected to the Board of Commissioners, will head the board in 1986, the final year of her first term.

Mrs. Penney of Wallace was named chairman by the other commissioners at the Monday annual organizing session. She succeeds Calvin Coolidge Turner. The board named D.J. Fussell of Rose Hill as vice chairman to succeed Mrs. Penney.

Duplin County property owners will receive notice of their new tax value assessments early next year. John Rudd of Pearson Revaluation Co., which is making the revaluation of property in the county, said the

work is nearly completed. "New valuation notices will be mailed about the first of the year," he said.

State law requires that property be revalued for tax purposes every eight years.

The use-value schedule for farm land will be available from the state at the next board meeting. The schedule can be used for farm land if a farm owner elects to have his real property tax rate based on the agricultural use of his land rather than the market value that is normally required.

"We know that farm land value is down. It is 30 percent below what it was six months ago," Rudd said.

"I don't want to encourage anyone, because even though it has dropped it still is not down to the listed value of 1978. There's going to be some problems. They'll fire off complaints at the county store, but if they come to see us we can explain what's going on," he said.

"We try to find the market value of the land. The people are concerned about the tax. The tax rate hasn't been set. The commissioners set the tax rate," Rudd said.

Kenansville Jaycees Sponsor Toys For Tots

The Kenansville Jaycees are sponsoring Toys for Tots this Christmas. The Jaycees are accepting new and used toys at Dean Teachey's barber shop in Kenansville. The toys will be distributed to needy children with the assistance of the Duplin County Social Services. Toys will be accepted until December 18. For more information contact Randy Shoup or any member of the Kenansville Jaycees.