

Bernice Guest	1947
Jack Bull	1948
Neil McMillan	1948
Catherine McMillan	1949
Mrs. Reta Stover	1950
Norma Gilbert	1952
Margaret Crawford	1954
R. J. Innis	1956
Mrs. Margaret Charlton	1957
Mrs. J. Pogue	1958
D. Murphy	1957
James Gliddon	1959
Mima Eddie	1959
Marlene Taylor	1960
Wilfred Smith	1961
Jo Ann Carter	1963
Marilyn Moore	1965
Terence Wister	1967
Patricia Miller	1968
Karen Tucker	1966
Dora Sisco	1966
Margaret Secord	1966

BELMONT'S POST OFFICE HISTORY

Our new post office opened for business on the 15th of March, 1971. Moving day was Saturday as predicted. Villagers were unanimous in their description of it as a lovely new building - stainless steel boxes and little round table and lime green woodwork. It feels and smells new and cityish. The air conditioning and spacious grounds will be appreciated later on. But it doesn't have the same feeling of hominess and comfort that the old one had.

The post office is the latest in a line that extends as far back as 1853.

On April Fools Day, 1853 Belmont's first post office was established by Mr. Squire Manning in the house on the corner of Highway 74 and the 6th Concession of North Dorchester where Mr. and Mrs. George Weaver now live. Squire Manning was the Postmaster here. Mr. Prouse from Plymouth, England was the carrier of the mail. Later Mr. Olmstead did this with a stagecoach.

Incidentally, Mr. Prouse named this intersection Plymouth after his hometown in England, as he was homesick.

Later at a date that is uncertain to everyone, the Post Office moved to Belmont to the house on Main Street now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Jas. E. Jenkins. Mrs. John Gilbert (Marion) Odell lived there with her family. Her son, William Henry Odell, was the first postmaster there and later his brother Peter, who was a bachelor, took over the position. Mrs. Blanche Turner, who now lives on Washburn Street, clerked there at that time.

Later, a Mr. Wilkins bought this building and the Odells moved one door south to the house now occupied by Mrs. Jas. Tribe. The Odell brothers were uncles of Mrs. W. C. Barons, who now resides on Main Street beside the I.O.O.F. Hall. She was Miss Dora Carrothers at that time and worked at the post office in the Tribe house when her uncle Peter Odell died. Other clerks who worked at this post office for Odell's were a Miss Garry Smith who lived with the Wilkins who bought the former post office next door. She later went to the U.S.A. Another was Anabelle McLaughlin who is thought to reside in St. Thomas now.

After Peter Odell died in 1914, Mr. Wesley Venning bought the building and took over the postmaster position. His daughter Nellie, now Mrs. Ernest George of Highway 74 north of Belmont, had finished school and was not old enough to go to normal school. Dora Carrothers taught her to clerk and so she worked there that year. Her sister, Leda Venning, now Mrs. J. C. Jenkins, took over Nellie's job and worked there until she married. After Mr. Venning was postmaster he had an "L" shaped addition built onto the north side of his house. It extended out to the sidewalk. Another Nellie Venning (no relation to first) took over Leda's job and worked there until 1939 when Mr. Venning died. Mr. J. C. Jenkins, a farmer and Leda's husband, bought the "L" shaped post office and took it to his farm and used it as an implement shed about 1940. Later this house was bought by Mr. and Mrs. Jim Tribe who had come to the village in 1937.

Mr. Harold Archer was the new postmaster after Mr. Venning died and the post office was moved to his house on Main Street where it remained until last Saturday. Originally it was in the southeast corner of the house. There was a door in that corner that has since been taken out. Mr. Archer's wife, Lilly (nee Betterley), helped him there as long as her health permitted. In November, 1957, the operation moved to the addition that Mr. Archer built on the north side of his house. This was our post office until now. He retired in 1963 after 24 years service. Mr. Archer passed away last December after a long illness. His son, Gordon, and his daughter, Ellen, still live at the post office home. Mrs. Harvey Collard, now of Aylmer, worked at this post office and Mrs. Clarence Cornish is presently employed by the post office.

Mr. Thomas Frankland, our present postmaster, took over his duties in July, 1963. His wife, Edith, helps him. The Rural Mail Carriers presently employed are Mrs. Helen Begg and Mrs. Mabel Easton, Mrs. Muriel Anger and Mrs. Verna Legg.

HOTEL HISTORIES

In 1835 there wasn't any Belmont. The site was part of Joshua Odell's farmyard -- Lot 1, Concession 7, Westminister. Joshua came from Lower Canada in 1811. After twenty years he opened a hotel in London, but soon moved back to Westminister to the farm, which became the site of Belmont.

In the early 1840's Joshua broke up his farm into building lots, opened a hotel, and Belmont had been born.

Joshua Odell was buried in the "Fifth Concession Burial Ground" at lot 1 - Concession 5 of Westminister. The stone bears the name of Joshua Odell, 1785-1862, Belmont's first founder, and his wife Cornelia Palen 1789-1877.

The next tenant was John Gill Odell, probably a son of Joshua Odell, 1842-1856.

Mr. Copeland was owner from 1856 - 1860.

Lewis Olmstead 1860-1875

George Olmstead 1875-1882.

Mr. Kennedy 1882 - 1887

John Charles 1887

Around 1860 the hotel took the name of the Olmstead House, which did a thriving business at the time, especially on the Cattle Fair Days, both over the bar and with their excellent 25¢ dinners. Also, people would drive to Belmont and stay at the hotels to get to market early. One of the old pioneers recalled the curfew bell which rang at noon, 1 o'clock, 6 and 9 o'clock by Mr. Fonger, the blacksmith, in front of the Olmstead Hotel.

The story is told of how Fred Goldsmith, a member of Old London Tecumsehs baseball team, demonstrated the first "curve ball" to be thrown in a baseball game in Belmont in 1877.

The demonstration was arranged to take place on the Olmstead lawn in front of the Olmstead House, which at that time sat back from the main street with considerable lawn in front.

The doubting Thomases at Belmont were forced to admit that a man could throw a baseball and make it curve.

The second tenant's name to be located after Mr. Olmstead was John Charles, 1887, who kept a large livery stable as well as running the hotel. His three children Louie, Kathleen and

John were raised there and attended school in Belmont and remained here until adults. Louie succumbed to young Dr. MacIntyre's charms and was married here in Belmont. Many amusing tales are being told by some of the older residents who remember gay times and experiences in the old Hotel.

The following are names of successors - Mr. Webb Cloes, Archie Jones, Charlie Dubrick, Fred McBaine, Mike Hambly, Otto Wintermute, Nic Kennedy and Fred Dodgson.

The old hotel was sold to the government and torn down in 1968. It is to be replaced by a fine new Post Office.

Before selling the hotel to the Government Mr. Dodgson had retired in 1966, after closing the restaurant, and was living in the residential rooms above. (His term 1948-1966)

There were 3 or 4 taverns in Belmont in 1857. One was owned by Mr. Prowse, one by J. G. Odell and one by Donald McKellar. The McKellar Tavern which was a combination store and tavern stood near the site of the Bank of Nova Scotia and was burned down. Another tavern was the Cramer House where the present Post Office stands. Dyer's Store was north of the Cramer House and you could buy anything then from a needle to a good suit of clothes.

J. B. Davidson in 1952 had practised law 64 years and was the "Dean of all Lawyers" in the district and had practised under six different sovereigns. Beginning in 1888 and retiring in 1952 with his son taking over the practise.

John Prouse, is named as Hotel Keeper of the Plymouth Hotel-1862. The "Craig's Shed" belonged at one time to the Plymouth Hotel, also a small home which belonged to Olive Weaver.

With each passing year the number of district people who can remember events of the early days decreases, and when their knowledge is not recorded, in premanent form, the result is void in the overall account which we have attempted to write.



DOBSON, RESTAURANT, 1968



ICE STORM JANUARY, 1968