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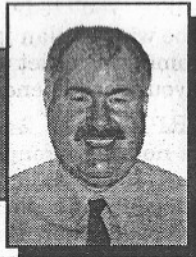
History

Windham Center Post Office is one of the oldest in nation

Part One of Three

Windham Center's federal post office may well be one of the oldest in the United States to operate continuously from the same general locality.

There has been a settlement on Windham Green since the



Tom Beardsley

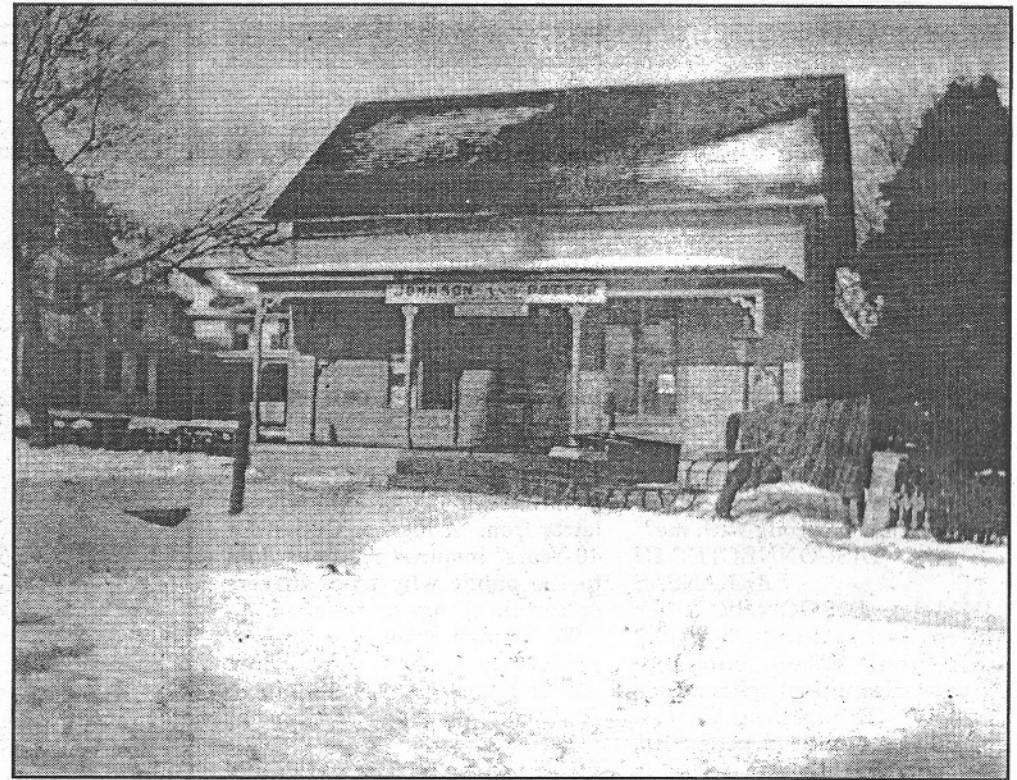
1690s, and Windham village became an important postal station during the Colonial years thanks to its convenient location on New England's transport network. Postal riders and stagecoaches from Hartford, Boston, New York and New London dropped off their mail deliveries at local taverns.

In 1639, the General Court of Massachusetts established a law to provide a Colonial postal service based upon the English system where coffeehouses and taverns were repositories for mail. In 1726, Windham Green was established as the county town, furthering the need for efficient postal communications between northeastern Connecticut's towns. Riders and

stagecoaches distributed the dramatic increase in letters, papers, and memorandums from and to Windham's taverns and law offices and businesses.

In 1691, the year before Windham was established, the British Crown created a centralized postal service in America. Five postmasters held the position until 1753, when King George II appointed Philadelphia's Postmaster, Benjamin Franklin, as the Crown's Joint Postmaster General for the American colonies. Franklin revolutionized the service by introducing postal stations, mileposts, shorter and improved routes and night postal riders. In 1760, he reported a surplus to the British Post Master General, a first for the American colonies. New London became the distribution point for all eastern Connecticut mail.

By the 1760s, Windham Green was an important economic and political center. The controversial 1753 plan organized by the Susquehanna Co. to claim northeast Pennsylvania for land-starved northeastern Connecticut residents, began in Windham Center. The controversy filled the bags of postal riders as they delivered the news across the northeast, and soon afterwards the Battle of the Frogs story was spread far and wide by the Colonial postal system. The establishment of the Middle Boston Post Road in the late 18th century



Francois J. Gamache

The Windham Center Post Office is pictured during the winter of 1919-20, when shared the country store premises of Johnson and Potter.

added to Windham's importance in the nation's early postal network.

On July 26, 1775, Benjamin Franklin was appointed Postmaster General, the first appointed under the Continental Congress. Shortly after the adoption of the Constitution in May 1789, an Act temporarily established a post office and cre-

ated the Office of the Postmaster General. Further federal Postal Service Acts in 1790, 1791 and 1792, made detailed provisions for an efficient post office and postal system, and the Windham Post Office was organized in 1795, on the basis of its long Colonial history.

Continued Next Week

... in life