

Postmasters in the 1800s

A postmaster is the person who ran the post office in a town. It was usually a man. There were very few post offices. Many post offices were inside of general stores or other businesses. The owners of these stores were good at keeping records, and that is why they were appointed post masters.



Postmasters were appointed by the Postmaster General of the United States. They were in charge of receiving, sorting, and then sending mail where it was supposed to go. If a person wanted to mail a letter, they would bring the letter to the post office. The postmaster would make sure it was sent to the correct place.

Most people did not have mailboxes at their homes. The postmaster would keep letters at his store until people came to collect them. Often, news of mail was announced at church or in the local newspaper so that people would know there was a letter awaiting them.

Mail was charged according to the number of sheets of paper used. Usually the receiver of the letter paid a cash fee when the letter arrived. In later times, people used postage stamps.

Since most communities did not have house numbers or sometimes even named streets, addressing letters was a somewhat haphazard process, resulting in the following addresses:

Polly Hull	or	Brenda Hull Stone	or	James Hull
Hull House		General Store		near Chautauqua Lake
Lancaster		Clarence		Erie County

Bibliography:

<http://www.archives.gov/research/post-offices/>

<http://postalmuseum.si.edu/systemsatwork/1885.html>

"Word Gets Around" Worksheet

