Aldie Post Office - 200 years

“At one time, there were 81 post offices in this county – one at every crossroads,” according to Franklin Payne, former postmaster for Aldie. Today, there are far fewer, but the post office here is still going strong in its 200th consecutive year.

Franklin, still a very visible presence in all manner of local enterprises and service efforts, may be the best known of the former postmasters. He served from 1957 through 1986, most of that time in the current building. But the post office had a long history even before Franklin.

The original post office in 1811 was located a few feet to the west, in one section of Narrowgate (the current residence of the Withers family). Elizabeth Stover, Postmaster during the Civil War, once spirited a Confederate soldier out of Narrowgate dressed as a woman, during a period when the Union Army controlled Aldie. The Post Office later was collocated with the phone company switchboard, in a building across the street which no longer exists, in what is now the Methodist Church parking lot. After that, it relocated to the drug store (now Diamonds and Rust), and then to a general store owned by Willie Goode. When Goode’s store burned down in 1929, the post office moved to Partlow’s Grocery, where it remained until 1960.

From 1941 through the early 1960’s, the Aldie Post Office was one of the regular stops for “Highway Post Office Number One,” a specially-outfitted bus on which postal employees would sort and cancel mail on a daily trip from Harrisonburg, VA to Washington, DC. The bus dropped the mail bags on the porch of Partlow’s store, as there was no room inside. There, Samuel Ish would sort and prepare it, assisted by Mrs. Ish until she retired in 1949 due to ill health. It was then that Julia Sowers became the clerk, and she served in that role until the early 1960’s. She was followed by Pat Everett.

The capacity of the small area in Partlow’s was exceeded by 1960. Franklin Payne worked the last few years at Partlow’s, then oversaw the move to the current building and hosted the dedication ceremony, featuring flags, congressmen, preachers, boy scouts and the VFD Ladies Auxiliary.

Mail carriers during this period included Ira Carter, Jack Atkinson, Bill Eaton, Guy Jackson (also a clerk), Jack Hutchison, and David Alexander. They followed in the steps of William T. “Tulloss” Costello, who delivered the mail in Aldie for 49 years before retiring in 1965. He recalled starting his route in 1906 on horseback, leaving from the old telephone building, and riding 18 miles each day. Later, he hitched his horse to a two-wheeled dog cart and made his rounds that way, snow depth permitting.

When Zip codes came to the postal system, Aldie was assigned 22001. With growth, the zip was changed to 20105 in the mid-90’s. Aldie now serves over 4,000 families, and a carrier annex in Catfishin has been added to manage delivery routes. Current Postmaster Don Carpenter splits his time between the two locations. Clerk David Pate serves the Aldie population with the same excellent service established by the tradition of all those who went before.

Postmasters, year started:

- Peyton Cook – 1811
- Edmund Tyler – 1829
- Edwin Stover – 1844
- John Green – 1849
- Elizabeth Stover – 1854
- Jonah Hood – 1865
- Dollie Hood – 1871
- John F. Simpson – 1881
- John R. Hutchison – 1886
- Fannie A. Simpson – 1889
- Mary F. Palmer – 1893
- Gasquit deZerega – 1912
- Ellis Popkins – 1914
- William E. Goode – 1919
- Samuel T. Ish – 1929
- Franklin Payne – 1957
- Susan Cornelius – 1987
- Linda Goldsmith – 1992
- Donald R. Carpenter - 2005