

De Luz Post Office

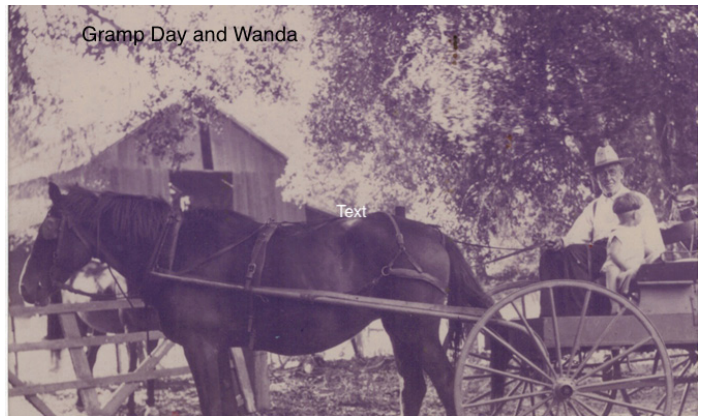
The mail was first carried on horseback from Murrieta to De Luz. Later, when the California Southern Railway was built from San Diego to Temecula, a tiny station called DeLuz was established near the confluence of De Luz Creek and the Santa Margarita River (now on Camp Pendelton). The mail pouch was dropped off there, then carried to De Luz by horse. The archives of the US P.O. Dept. states that the first Post Office was



opened November 1, 1882 under the name DeLuz (one word). Mr. McClure was the first postmaster. Rev. Henry J. Camp was appointed postmaster April 24, 1883 and the post office was moved up five miles to his homestead in 1887.

1882-1891 the Howe Post Office was located close to the Santa Margarita River next to the rail road station located near the current intersection of De Luz Rd and Sandia Creek Rd. The postal service was maintained by any one of several ranchers who became postmaster in his own home. Fred Orvis was one of these early postmasters and lived on what was later the Stoner's property on De Luz-Murrieta Rd. It is presumed the post office was located on his property. From 1890 to 1900 the mail service was at W. W. Wilmot adobe (later the Click's, near the Ecology Center).

People in De Luz had their mail picked up by Gramp Day (Harry Kirk Day), starting as early as 1882. He hauled the mail with his buggy and horse Wanda. People of De Luz Canyon would leave their outgoing mail in the hollow of a big tree that grew near the hotel at Judson Mineral Springs. Gramp Day would take his buggy back and forth to the Howe Post office. Sometimes he would pick up groceries for people in the canyon. "Then we had 9 creek crossings and the grade. He would bring the mail back and either drop it off at people's homes and ranches or put it in the hollow of the tree Several times Gramp Day had to put the mail and any packages on the seat beside him and his feet up on the dashboard as the water came into his buggy." excerpt from a letter by Mrs. W. G. King (Margaret Regan).



In 1910 the Judson Warm Mineral Springs was purchased by Kate S. Regan who remodeled the hotel and turned it into a private residence. The house was built on a hill, with two stories in the front and three in the back. At first the mail was on the second floor and later kept in the basement of the hotel until 1914.

In 1914, De Luz got its own post office. It was built in the Garnsey yard by Mr. Leslie and Louis J. Garnsey. Garnsey served as the postmaster for 16 years. The post office stayed on the Garnsey property for 16 years and it became famous for being "The smallest complete post office in the world". The post office served about 26 families occupying about 25 square miles of surrounding country.



When the railroad washed out in 1916, the mail was no longer delivered by railroad. The mail was delivered to De Luz three times a week by horse and bug-

gy from the West Fallbrook Post Office.

On the grade up from the Santa Margarita River there is was a palm tree fed by a spring. An early pioneer tapped the spring and installed a water trough. Both Wanda and Gramp Day rested in the shade and were refreshed by the spring. The round trip from De Luz to Fallbrook and back was about 24 miles and took at least five hours.

The Alexanders were well known hotel proprietors and bought the home from Kate Regan in 1916. Kate Regan's brother, Mr. Tiffany ran the ranch. The Post Office was rebuilt and moved to the The Alexander's place and stayed in this location for eight years. Tiffany was the new postmaster. In 1930 Tiffany bought the post office building from Louis J. Garnsey and moved it to the wide spot beside the road opposite the old hotel. During the 1930's and on Charles Javes and Jack Gallaher were the mail carriers.

In 1938 Mrs. Alexander sold her home to Dr. Samuel Wilson, but Mr Tiffany obtained permission from Homer McDowell to move his post office across the road from the lovely De Luz School house with Tiffany still the postmaster. In 1939 Mr. Tiffany sold the building to the new post mistress, Chloe Baxter, and it was moved back to it's previous spot at the hotel. She was the postmistress for forty-one years until the postal service to De Luz was stopped. Mrs. Baxter wanted to move her beloved building to the hill above the Garnsey ranch but she felt the grade was too steep for the old building to be moved intact. So it became the property of Dr. Wilson and he moved it to the bungalow next to the old hotel and used as a tool shed. This property was later owned by the Criders. Chloe Baxter was the postmistress until the post office was closed in 1955 and the De Luz community was served by the Fallbrook Post Office by several rural routes.



Mrs. Baxter and the De Luz Post Office

Steve Garnsey getting mail from Mrs. Baxter



De Luz Post Office 1950

Mrs. Chloe Baxter in 1953



Old Post Office before it was rebuilt and moved. The house behind the building is the original Garnsey home.



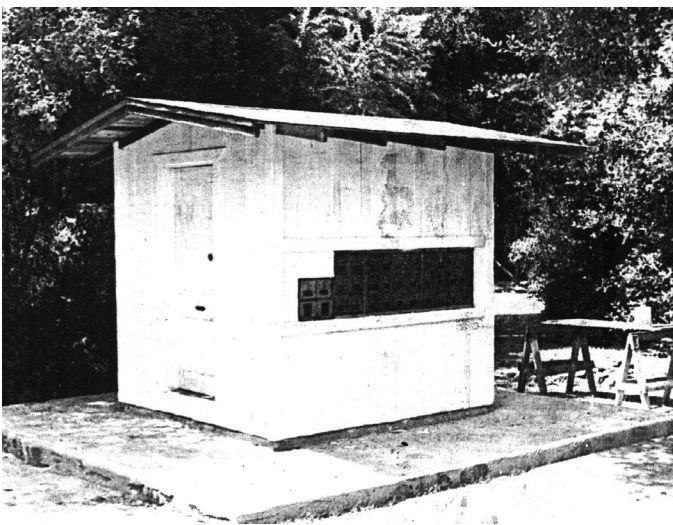
Notice how the boxes are on the left-hand side of the building.



Augustine Fredy and George are hired to repair and rebuild the post office building in 1986 when it is moved from the Crider's place to the Ecology Center in the school's parking lot.



Partially refurbished post office building



Fallbrook Post Office in town 1890



1986 building restored at the Fallbrook Ecology Center. Notice the different position of the postal boxes. Scott Gordon, the present day (2022) teacher at the Ecology Center, pointed this out.

Present day De Luz Post Office

Teddy Garnsey pointing to the place where the old post office was placed on the Garnsey Ranch.

Photo courtesy of the Fallbrook Historical Society



Sources:

Article in the Fallbrook Historian A Quarterly Publication of the Fallbrook Historical Society Summer\2021

https://www.fallbrookhistoricalsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Summer_2021_The-Historian.pdf

The Southern California Rancher article See page 5

Fallbrook/Bonsall Village News February 11, 1999 article See page 6

De Luz Post Office article written by Maie Ellis See page 7

Fallbrook Public School letter to Crider See page 8

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My Days at the Ranch Written and Illustrated by Margie Kersey Book available on Amazon

De Luz, the World's Smallest Post Office

By Philip S. Rush

Tucked away among the high mountains between Fallbrook and Murrieta is the pleasant little settlement of De Luz.

Its chief claim to glory is the fact that it has the smallest complete post office in the world.—(and that's covering a lot of territory.) Equally significant to the casual visitor, however, is the fact that it has no gasoline station, no hot dog stand, no juke boxes. In fact, De Luz really isn't a town, as the post office is the only public building in it, and when you reach this focal point you can't even see many houses or ranches. But there are a lot of them, hidden in little valleys, or perched perilously on the tops of high hills. Some are just humble country homes, others are the hide-a-ways of wealthy folks, who like to live where living is easier and quieter, "far from the maddening crowds."

Even the highway from Fallbrook to De Luz suggests adventure, for after leaving the outskirts of Fallbrook, the pavement soon dwindles away and you are riding on a good, but twisty, narrow decomposed granite road, of which there are few left in Southern California now-a-days. Up steep hills, down others just as precipitous, around sharp bends, now and then a house is sighted, but mostly there is just scenery. Then all of a sudden you come to a wide place in the road and there is the tiny post office. Across the street is the modern and beautiful home of Dr. Samuel Wilson of Los Angeles, and a road sign pointing to the northeast that says Murrieta is 14 miles of more twists, turns, ups and downs. And this road, crossing the San Diego-Riverside county line, is in many places just about as it was in the horse and buggy days of 50 or 60 years ago. Narrow, lined with heavy growth of trees and brush, it winds through little valleys where streams trickle the year round, until it suddenly discovers the pavement that leads directly to the Murrieta post office. The only other road out of the De Luz Valley is a shelf in the mountainside that leads to the old Santa Rosa Rancho via a forestry service fire trail through Redondo Mesa in Riverside County; but this is the sort of road that most drivers avoid unless they have a yen for hazardous traveling.

Nearly two centuries ago (1769 to be exact) the Spanish explorers and settlers arrived in San Diego. After they had explored the coastal section and discovered San Francisco Bay, they fanned out into the mountains north and east of San Diego, seeking sites for missions and grazing lands for their rapidly increasing herds of cattle and sheep. Then, in a few years, some of the more energetic settlers established private ranches, and requested land grants from the Spanish and Mexican rulers. In fact, the private grants and mission establishments claimed virtually all the best land in Alta California. The vast section of fine grazing land that is now the world's largest Marine Corps training center, was once the Santa Margarita y Las Flores Rancho of Pio and Andreas Pico. At one time it embraced some 226,000 acres in what is now San Diego, Orange and Riverside counties. Closely adjoining it on the northeast was the 11 square league Santa Rosa Rancho, granted in 1846 to Juan Moreno, and a little way to the southeast was the Monserate Rancho, granted in 1846 to Ysidro Maria Alvarado, 13,322 acres lying along the San Luis Rey River.

Probably by accident, since no accurate surveys were made by the first settlers, the Spaniards owning

these three nearby ranchos failed to claim the best lands of the whole area—a large tract extending north of the San Luis Rey River to the present Riverside-San Diego County line, and embracing the highly valuable and fertile Fallbrook district, Rainbow, and De Luz. It was a sort of wedge between the three ranchos, or in Spanish "desecho" or the part left over. Similar omissions have been found elsewhere in California but usually the wily Spaniards found ways to stretch their boundary lines so that they included all the best lands. But the Fallbrook-Rainbow-De Luz district was open at the time of the American occupation of California, so was settled mostly by homesteaders, with maybe now and then a squatter or claim jumper.

Nobody seems to know when De Luz first came into public notice as an entity in itself. But it is said that many many years ago a sheep man named Luz brought his herds into the mountains, and the spot became known as El Corralito de Luz, or the little corral of Mr. Luz—who was probably a Basque. For some unknown reason he did not patent the land, or leave any permanent record of himself except in the name of the location and the creek that flows through it. In 1861 a man named Spring squatted on the land, but did not complete title to it. In the 80's a number of persons were attracted to the area, and began homesteading tracts varying up to several hundred acres, and these persons became the first permanent settlers.

Among the earliest permanent settlers in De Luz was Rosseau J. Wilmot, who is said to have first visited the district as a member of the Government survey party of 1878. He was a thrifty New Englander, who homesteaded 160 acres, and later acquired other property; he also carried the mail from Fallbrook to De Luz for some years. His land is now the Bleeker-Mason Ranch of 400 acres.

James Garnsey and Harry K. Day were among the first homesteaders. They were the paternal and maternal grandparents of Felix Garnsey, one of today's most prosperous De Luz ranchers. Mr. and Mrs. Garnsey have a beautiful ranch home, shaded by the same ancient oak trees that years

ago surrounded the first cottages of his grandparents.

One of the most active citizens of the community, years ago, was the Rev. Henry Jay Camp, who came to San Diego in 1876 as an Episcopal rector, and a few years later homesteaded at De Luz and became its second postmaster. He was a good farmer, but found time to act, also, as a missionary rector, working in the tiny congregations of Murrieta, Fallbrook, Temecula, Escondido and Bostonia.

One of the other first homesteaders was Charles E. Rubottom, who received a U. S. Patent to 80 acres near the Garnsey ranch in 1889; E. Hill and Mrs. Ida Thorkelson were other early settlers in the valley, but some believe that the oldest house still standing is that of Mr. and Mrs. B. R. Mosher, at the Diamond S Ranch—the former A. E. Everts home. Several boards in the porch ceiling of this ranch house bear Everts' name and postal address at De Luz, indicating that they were shipped in by mail, either as lumber, or as casings around other merchandise.

The archives of the United States Post Office Department in Washington, D. C., show that the first post office was opened under the name De Luz, November 1, 1882, Louis L. McClure being the first postmaster. Rev. Henry J. Camp was appointed postmaster April 24, 1883, and December 5, 1890, the name of the office was officially changed to De Luz—two words instead of one.

The mail was first carried on horseback from Murrieta to De Luz. When the California Southern Railway was built from San Diego to Temecula, a tiny station called De Luz was established near the intersection of De Luz creek and the Santa Margarita River, and the mail pouch was dropped off there, then carried to De Luz by horse. Now the mail is brought by auto thrice weekly from Fallbrook. Mrs. Chloe Baxter has been postmistress since 1938, and she has a distinction that few postmasters have, of personally owning the post office building, a frame structure 8 feet square, fully equipped for the needs of the 33 families that receive their mail at De Luz.

Agricultural activities at De Luz have always been diversified. From

the time of the first homesteaders the valley has produced grain, fruits grapes, honey, poultry, etc. Most of the ranch residences are hidden under ancient oaks and cottonwoods.

Since its earliest times, De Luz has had a school, and the present ivy covered school building erected in 1926, is unusually attractive. Here Mrs. Catherine Hindorff teaches all the grades from primary through the eighth. The enrollment for 1950-51 consisted of Charlotte Surls, Regis Kinnell, Lee Surls, Dwain Surls, Wanda Surls, Jeanette Brain, Gary Surls and Jerry Jave. The school mascot is a big desert turtle.

Opposite the De Luz school is the attractive ranch home of Mr. and Mrs. Homer McDowell, and there are a number of other nice homes and small ranches nearby including the Surls, Brain, Jave and Holsworth ranches. Among the newer ranchers in the valley is R. C. Fass; and the Mathews ranch, now being developed just below the Riverside-San Diego County line, promises to be an outstanding one.

The most important event in the recent history of De Luz is the fact that the San Diego Gas & Electric Co. has extended its power lines to the valley, and found almost 100 per cent of the population eagerly waiting to be connected with the "juice." Already a number of new electric pumps with sprinkler systems have been installed, and the housewives are enjoying good lighting, electric refrigeration, and many other conveniences heretofore denied all but a few who had individual home electric plants.

De Luz has narrowly escaped complete annihilation by forest fires several times during the last ten years—the latest being a bad fire June 2 and 3, 1951, which burned over 13,000 acres mostly in Camp Pendleton.

And, like the rest of Southern California, De Luz has its worries over water. Ordinarily De Luz creek and its tributaries furnish as much water as the residents require, but the recent government suit to claim all the Santa Margarita watershed (including De Luz creek) for Camp Pendleton, regardless of the original rights of old established ranches, has caused some worry at De Luz. The site of the proposed Camp Pendleton Dam is near the old railway station of De Luz, just below the junction of De Luz creek and the Santa Margarita River, and if built to the height now contemplated, the back waters of the lake may inundate some of the more southerly ranches of De Luz.

While there is a lot of good land that can be cleared along De Luz creek (at a considerable expense), the settlement cannot expand westward because of Camp Pendleton, whose boundaries crowd the road from Fallbrook most of the way. And to the north, is the 90,000 acre Vail Ranch, with headquarters at Temecula, which owns all of the old Santa Rosa land grant except a few acres between De Luz and Murrieta owned by W. H. Saxman and his neighbors. Eastward is the populous Rainbow district, and to the south is the Santa Margarita River, which will become a vast lake whenever the Camp Pendleton Dam is constructed.

The photographer for The Southern California Rancher recently visited De Luz, and obtained a number of pictures of homes in the settlement. These, with views of the school, post office, the roads, etc., are included in the advertisement of the San Diego Gas & Electric Co., which appears on Page 31, of this month's Rancher.



When the California Southern Railway was completed from San Diego to Temecula, excursions were run frequently. This old photo shows an excursion train, stopped in the Temecula or Santa Margarita Canyon not far from De Luz Station. The tracks were washed out in 1884, and again in 1891, and never rebuilt after the second flood.

DELUZ, from page 1

"Don Juan Forster used to put a few cattle in there in the early days along about 1880, 1881 and 1882 and maybe before. Afterwards, Copeland and Neff had a band of sheep there and they camped at the old adobe. Soon after, A.D. Spring located there. Then came Stewart, then Wilmots, V. Riboni and a fellow by the name of Root.

"In the early days the place was known as Corral de Jose de Luz. Forester's vaqueros told me there was a Spaniard or Californian by the name of Jose de Luz who kept stock in there at one time, and had built a corral there. I remember there was a few stubs of post of a corral near the adobe.

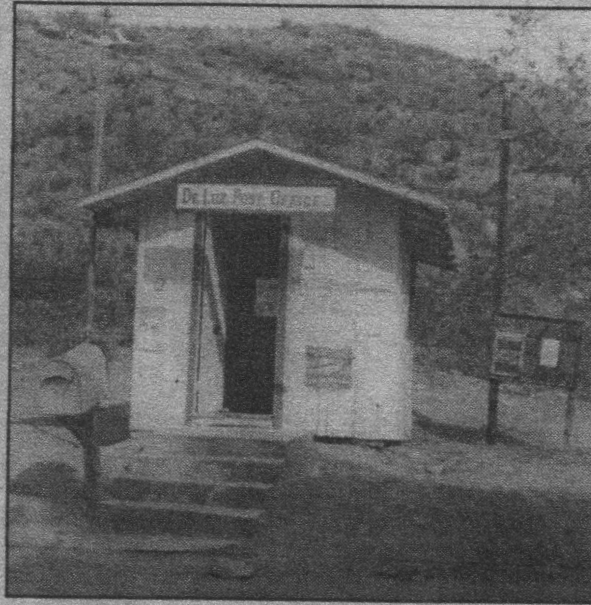
Markham stated: "The earliest documentation of the name of De Luz locally that I have found is on a map of Rancho Santa Margarita dated 1878, which designates the stream, Arroyo Corral de la Luz. This map hung on the west wall of the reading room of the Oceanside Public Library for many years. However I am not sure if it still hangs there for I haven't been in the library in a long time.

The California Southern Railroad was opened for operation from National City to Fallbrook on January 2, 1882. At the time of construction of the railroad, De Luz Station was built at the mouth of Arroyo Corral de la Luz on San Margarita River. This location was well within the boundaries of Rancho Santa Margarita (today's Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton) a mile or so north of the Naval Hospital. It was common practice to name railroad stations after site locations and/or railroad officials. Therefore one is led to believe that the name of De Luz had been established prior to 1882.

It would not be unreasonable to assume that the railroad survey crew obtained a copy of the 1877

homestead records and maps make reference to the area as Corral De Luz. The early Post Office records show that it was 'De Luz Post Office' and opened November 1, 1882, in the De Luz Railroad Station, and that Henry J. Camp was the first Postmaster.

The Postmaster General in Washington D.C., not being familiar with local Spanish names, most likely accepted the name of the railroad station in-as-much as the said Post Office was in the railroad station. You can be sure that the Americans of the Southern California Railroad Company were desirous of Americanizing and shortening names.



The De Luz Post Office in 1950.

From the Rivers Collection

Rancho Santa Margarita map or had a drawing made of it and utilized the names on the map. However, it is understandable that the American settlers would corrupt the Spanish terminology and simply call it De Luz, creek, canyon, etc., or plain De Luz."

Early San Diego County records, U. S. Land Commission,

When the railroad washed out in 1916 and the mail was no longer delivered by the railroad, the Post Office was moved up the canyon within closer proximity to the community that it served. The mail was delivered three times a week by horse and buggy from the West Fallbrook Post Office.

Because of the nature of obtaining material from various sources, Fallbrook Historical Society cannot guarantee the accuracy of all the information this document contains.

For more information about this subject or other Fallbrook history, contact the Fallbrook Historical Society. Visiting hours: Thursdays 1 to 5 p.m. and the second Sunday of each month from 1 to 4 p.m. Special tours can be arranged by calling the museum office, (760) 723-4125 or Don Rivers, (760) 728-7964.

The three museums consisting of the main Fallbrook History Museum, the Historical House and the Gem and Mineral Museum are located at 260 Rocky Crest Road, mailing address: P.O. Box 1375, Fallbrook, CA., 92088.

DELUZ POST OFFICE

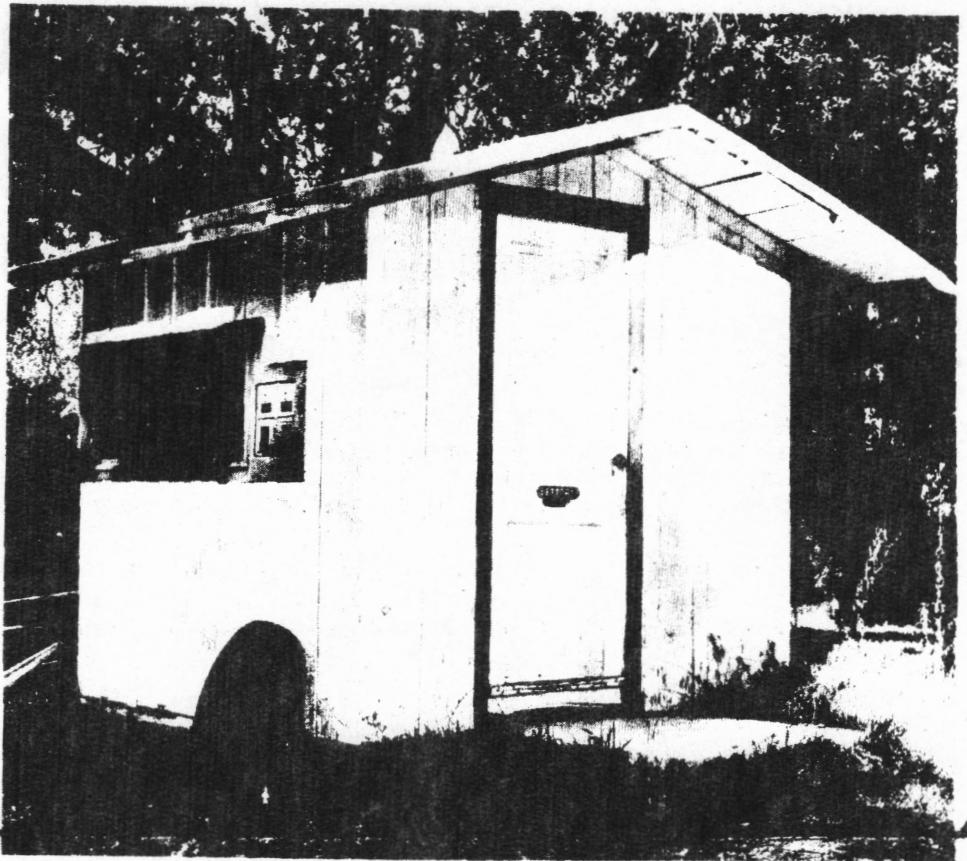
By MAIE ELLIS

DeLuz is located in the mountainous northern section of San Diego County, south of the southern edge of Riverside County. It is not a town but a cluster of ranches lying contentedly in a long high valley with innumerable beautiful oaks rees watered by crystal clear cool streams running all the year around from the surrounding towering mountains.

Legend has it that before postal service was established in DeLuz, any resident going to the village of Fallbrook, brought back all mail for the DeLuz ranchers and placed it in a large hollow of an immense oak tree. It was then picked up from there.

In 1882 postal service was maintained by any one of several ranchers who became postmaster in his own home. One of these early Postmasters was Fred Orvis, living on what is now called the Stoner place. Driving up the DeLuz Road today, one may see the remains of the house still standing, a rock fireplace with its tall stone chimney sturdily resisting the elements.

In 1909 a Mrs. Regan rented the old hotel-site ranch and camped there with her family. In 1910 she bought the 80 acre ranch and remodelled the old two-story hotel building. She built an outside stairway with a tiny room underneath it on



ONE MAN POST OFFICE — In 1914 this eight-foot by eight-foot post office was constructed by L. J. Garnsey who became the first DeLuz postmaster. The office remained open and in service until 1954. On the door of the office is a slot marked "Letters" and on the side of the building are 33 small and one double-sized mail boxes.

the ground floor. This little room became another "home" post office with Mrs. Regan postmaster. Across the DeLuz

Road from her little post office is the spot where later the, as yet, unborn, little DeLuz post office building would sit out its final days in U. S. Government work.

In 1914 the eight foot by eight foot post office building was constructed by rancher L. J. Garnsey on his place under the beautiful spreading oaks. Garnsey was the first postmaster to serve in this small building; and the carrier, fondly known to all as "gramp" Day, continued hauling the DeLuz mail from Fallbrook.

BUILDING MOVED

In 1916 Mrs. Regan sold her ranch to Mrs. Alexander, owner of the Hotel Alexandria in Los Angeles, and her brother Mr. Tiffany operated the ranch. In 1930 Tiffany as new postmaster bought the little building from L. J. Garnsey and moved it to the wide spot beside the road opposite the old hotel site previously mentioned.

In 1938 Mrs. Alexander sold to Dr. Samuel Wilson, but Mr. Tiffany obtained permission from Homer C. McDowell to move his postoffice there across the road from the lovely school house.

In 1939 he sold the building to the new postmaster, Chloe Baxter, who had the much-

ter from 1939 to 1954 or 1955. Thus ended 40 or 41 years of faithful service by the little post office building. The DeLuz territory became part of the Fallbrook postal area, and is presently served by one of several rural routes from Fallbrook.

BECOMES A TOOL SHED

Mrs. Baxter wanted her little building on her ranch upon a hill beyond the Garnsey ranch but decided it could not make the grade, so it became the property of Dr. Wilson who moved it across the road to become a tool shed. The present owners, James and Barbara McManus, still have the ex-post office tool shed. It may be seen there today with a slot in the door labelled LETTER; and on its right side still equipped completely with its trip rows of regulation metal mail boxes; 33 small and one double sized. The boxes are filled from the inside, but the door are outside and handy for "dawn to dark" working ranchers.

Now as to its closing date some say 1954, but Mrs. Fel Garnsey has a copy of a San Diego newspaper printed July 20, 1964 carrying an article and pictures, with a caption "DeLuz Post Office Closed But Is Not Dead Letter". The article stat



Fallbrook Union Elementary School District

321 N. Iowa St. • P.O. Box 698 • Fallbrook, California 92028-0698 • (619) 728-1131

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September 24, 1984

Norman J. Crider
P.O. Box 218
Fallbrook, CA 92028

*Call her
and thank
her - what
kind of a person*

Dear Mr. Crider,

The Fallbrook Union Elementary School District is heavily committed to an outstanding educational program which is being offered to all third and sixth grade students in our district. This program will be held on site at the De Luz School and will commence within the next few weeks.

We are attempting to provide students with "hands on experiences," by utilizing community resources and individuals who have first hand knowledge of the area and its history.

Having traversed the De Luz Road often during the last few months, I have noticed the old De Luz Post Office, which I understand is situated on your property.

Is there any possibility you might consider donating the Post Office to our School District for educational and historical purposes? If so, I feel certain the students would glean a great deal from its presence on the property. We would also do any necessary restoration that the building might require in order to preserve it as well as move it from your property to the De Luz School site.

If you would like to discuss this matter, please feel free to phone me at your convenience at 728-1131 anytime during the working day.

Thank you, Mr. Crider, for your consideration regarding this request.

Sincerely,

Linda Cowan
Linda Cowan
Coordinator of Curriculum
Resources

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