

Tiniest Office Wants Postmaster

Midget Federal Building Takes Trip on Truck

By EDWARD M. SKAGEN

Walter H. Tiffany is seeking a successor for the postmastership of the world's smallest postoffice at De Luz, Calif. For the last year he has been looking for a suitable head for the 576-cubic-foot federal building that serves the San Diego mountain community 11 miles northwest of Fallbrook.

According to Mr. Tiffany the position is difficult to obtain and more difficult to get rid of. The prospective postmaster must first get the consent of the residents before a commission will be granted him, then, if he wants to quit the job, he must find someone to carry on the work. There have been a few applicants, but they wanted to commercialize the position and for the most part lived in a different part of the state.

BUILT IN 1882

The postoffice was first built in 1882 and was put in charge of L. G. McCluer. It was named after a rancher called Luce, but was gradually changed to De Luz, Spanish words meaning "of light" or "of inspiration." At first it had no roof and the mail was carried on horseback from the railroad at Santa Margarita. Now automobiles make the trip three times a week.

It first became generally known to the world when a stranger stopped one day and talked with Mr. Tiffany. "That's the smallest postoffice in the world," he told the postmaster.

The stranger's name was Robert Ripley of "Believe It or Not" fame. A few days later its picture appeared beside that of the largest postoffice in the world in New York City.

Mr. Tiffany says that blindness and deafness are rapidly making him incapable of handling the mail he receives from all over the world asking for canceled envelopes and stamps. Besides the 30 families which have modern combination lock boxes in the outside wall of the office, thousands of requests are received from collectors and curio seekers. Once, says the postmaster, he had so much mail he could not move about the office.

NO ONE WANTS JOB

No one in the community wants the job and when Mr. Tiffany moved recently he had to load the federal building on a truck and move it with him. The Automobile club road signs have not yet caught up with the new location and the postoffice seems almost lost in the shade of the great oaks around it. "People didn't like the idea of the office's moving at first," says



The smallest postoffice in the world (top) at De Luz, near Fallbrook. Walter H. Tiffany, the postmaster, is shown below.

Mr. Tiffany, "and I had to write Jim Farley about it. He wrote back and said it was all right, but for me to get a petition signed by the residents. I got it."

Tiffany likes people; he likes to talk with them about the old days—dentistry, railways, newspapers and politics. For two years he was a dentist in Ohio, then he went to Chicago and started building railroads. Then he got asthma and came to California. He supervised the installation of the first engines and electric trolleys in San Diego, in the days when four iron rails graced the dirt street called Broadway.

DREAMS OF OLD DAYS

Tiffany wants to sit back among his great oaks, smoking his cigars and dreaming of the days when he offered friends \$100 if they would teach him to smoke a pipe. He chuckles heartily at their futile attempts.

San Diego county, he says, cured his asthma. He plans to die here, peacefully and happily as he has lived since he first settled in De Luz, 21 years ago. Blindness and deafness have taken away the enjoyment of running the smallest complete postoffice in the world, but he still likes to talk about his seven years as postmaster, and with the aid of his nurse, Mrs. Edna L. Beck, he plans to run it until he finds someone to take over where he leaves off.

The drive through De Luz is most beautiful and many discover the little postoffice just by chance.



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