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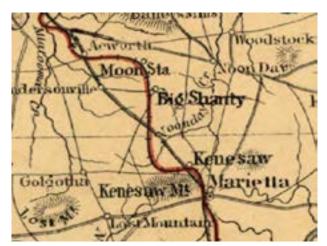
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The building that now houses Trackside Grill served as the Kennesaw Post Office from 1963-1974.

Kennesaw Post Office Remains Important Community Fixture

BY ANDREW J. BRAMLETT

A post office named Kennesaw was established Aug. 8, 1853, under Postmaster William M. Croft. Official records show the name of this first post office being spelled "Kenesaw," with a single "n." At that time, what we call the city of Kennesaw was a small community named Big Shanty, so where was this post office? Before the Civil War, maps show Big Shanty and another community to the south called Kennesaw or Kenesaw. This lost community would have been in the vicinity of the overflow parking lot at Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park.

This 1865 map by the U.S. Coast Survey shows "Moon Stat.," "Big Shanty" and "Kenesaw."

On June 6, 1854, the post office's name was changed to Moons and likely moved north of what is now Kennesaw to Moons Station during this time. It is unknown who Moons Station was named for, but it later played a small role in the Great Locomotive Chase. The site of the station is near Baker Road. The post office only stayed at Moons Station for five years, and on April 30, 1859, it moved to "Big Shantee," a misspelling of Big Shanty.

The post office kept the Big Shanty name for almost a decade, but on Jan. 25, 1869, the name officially was changed to Kennesaw. The first postmaster under the new name was Nelson Timleck. As with the earlier Kennesaw Post Office, this location might have been different than our city, as one map from the 1880s shows "Kennesaw P.O." to the west of Big Shanty.

During the next few decades, information about the Kennesaw Post Office was limited. An article from the Sept. 11, 1902, edition of the Marietta Journal details Kennesaw's three delivery routes: one more than 20 miles long, one more than 23 miles long and one more than 28 miles long. There are very few known details about what the post office was like during this decade, except that in 1906, the postmaster "received a new cabinet with lock and call boxes."

In 1911, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) was hoping to decide on the spelling of our community:

Kennesaw or Kenesaw. One of the sources it consulted was Postmaster T.J. Hardage, and it was partly thanks to his advice that the USGS chose to spell it Kennesaw. (After a similar process in 1895, they had decided to spell it Kenesaw.)

One decade later, in 1921, thieves broke into the post office and stole "$105 in cash and stamps."

Details about the postmasters have survived. In 1912, they were paid $571 a year, and by 1934, their salary had been raised to $936. Among the people who served as Kennesaw postmasters, several stand out. Lemuel Kendrick was postmaster from 1856-1865 and was one of Big Shanty's most influential residents. Sylvanus J. Baldwin, who was a veteran of the Civil War and was wounded at the Battle of Kolb's Farm, served as postmaster in 1895. The previously mentioned T.J. Hardage was our first mayor and served as postmaster between 1899 and 1911. The first woman to serve was Carrie Plyant, who was acting postmaster in 1934. The first woman to be a full postmaster was Nancy Kemp Ellis, appointed in 1939.

Perhaps no postal employee in Kennesaw is more fondly remembered than Helen Odom. During World War II, Odom worked as an electrician at Bell Bomber Plant in Marietta. At the war's end, she was laid off and was asked to help at the Kennesaw Post Office during the Christmas rush. Several accounts mention the post office had no bathroom when she was hired. Odom became postmaster in 1949 and served for the next 23 years.

In 1952, the post office moved to a new location. The building was the former home of Kennesaw State Bank and was a welcome change, as it was equipped with a bathroom. The post office relocated to a purpose-built facility, which cost $23,000 and was near the building then serving as city hall, in December 1963 and was dedicated the following year. In September 1964, house-to-house delivery service began, and the first letter carriers were Betty Chumley and Jack Weeks. By 1969, the building already was too small, so the decision was made to move again. The new facility — now home of Hester Dental — opened in 1974, and the old building went through a number of owners before becoming Trackside Grill.

The post office moved to its current location on Duncan Drive in 1988. Another ZIP code — 30152 — was added in 1995 to accommodate demand. For almost 170 years, Kennesaw residents have relied on the post office, which remains one of our most important community fixtures.

Andrew Bramlett is vice president of the Kennesaw Historical Society and an honorary member of the Kennesaw Cemetery Preservation Commission.

This undated photograph shows the Kennesaw Post Office from 1952-1963, when it occupied the former home of the Kennesaw State Bank. Photo courtesy of Sara Dick.

Postmaster Helen Odom accepts an American flag from Congressman John W. Davis, right, at the dedication of the Kennesaw Post Office in 1963.

Hester Dental was home of the Kennesaw Post Office from 1974 until it moved into its current facility on Duncan Drive in 1988.