

# USPS: Postal Service Looks to Make Change in August

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\$15.9 billion loss and defaulted on its pension plan contributions. USPS has also reached its borrowing limit, Donahue said.

"It's put a tremendous financial pressure on the postal service," he said.

The postal service previously had cut costs by eliminating 193,000 jobs and consolidating 200 mail processing centers. The service cutback will enable the postal service to cut more jobs, which Do-

naheue says can be done through retirements, buyouts and routine attrition.

"We take no tax dollars. We do not want tax dollars," he said.

Under the new schedule, post office hours will not change and post office boxes will continue to receive Saturday delivery, Donahue said. The postal service expects growth in package delivery as e-commerce expands, he said.

"America's mailing habits are changing," Donahue said. "This

makes common sense."

The six-month lead time will allow businesses to adjust their production and delivery schedules, he said.

Donahue said surveys indicate the public supports five-day delivery. The plan should have little impact on speed of delivery except for items that would have been delivered on Saturday, Donahue said.

Last year, under pressure from Congress and local communities,

the cash-strapped agency dropped plans to close thousands of post offices across the nation, instead deciding to trim operations at 13,000 offices.

Saturday has the week's lowest daily volume and more than a third of U.S. businesses are closed Saturday, USPS reports. Most businesses and households surveyed in a national Gallup Poll indicated Saturday would be the least disruptive day to eliminate mail delivery.

USPS has faced billion-dollar deficits since 2007 attributed to a combination of the bad economy, the Internet and mandatory pre-funding of retiree health benefits.

The agency in November reported an annual loss of a record \$15.9 billion for the last budget year. The financial losses for the year, which ended Sept. 30, were more than triple the \$5.1 billion loss in the previous year. Last year the agency was forced to default on billions in retiree health benefit prepayments to avert bankruptcy.

The agency's biggest problem - and the majority of the red ink in 2012 - was not due to reduced mail flow but rather to mounting mandatory costs for future retiree health benefits, which made up \$11.1 billion of the losses. Without that and other related labor expenses, the mail agency sustained an operating loss of \$2.4 billion, lower than the previous year.

The health payments are a requirement imposed by Congress in 2006 that the post office set aside \$55 billion in an account to cover future medical costs for retirees. The idea was to put \$5.5 billion a year into the account for 10 years.

That's \$5.5 billion the post office doesn't have.

No other government agency is required to make such a payment for future medical benefits. Postal authorities wanted Congress to address the issue last year, but lawmakers finished their session without getting it done. So officials are moving ahead to accelerate their own plan for cost-cutting.

The Postal Service is in the midst of a major restructuring throughout its retail, delivery and mail processing operations. Since 2006, it has cut annual costs by about \$15 billion, reduced the size of its career workforce by 193,000 or by 28 percent, and has consolidated more than 200 mail processing locations, officials say.

They say that while the change in the delivery schedule announced Wednesday is one of the actions needed to restore the financial health of the service, they still urgently need lawmakers to act. Officials say they continue to press for legislation that will give them greater flexibility to control costs and make new revenues.

## Gaines Post Offices Have Long History

By Gaines Co. Museum Staff

The Gaines County Museum, Seminole branch, is researching post offices that have been in the county and has compiled 15, of

which three are still operating.

The oldest post office was Cansey, which operated from April 14, 1890 to February 6, 1892. George W. Cansey served

as postmaster. Next was Eclipse, from August 12, 1903 to February 15, 1915. H. T. Hodge was its first postmaster.

William B. Austin was postmaster for the post office at Caput from December 19, 1904 to January 22, 1906. At that time he moved his store to Seminole and continued to serve as postmaster here. The Seminole post office is currently located at 210 SE 3rd, and current postmaster is Billy Hernandez.

The Bessie post office operated from March 7, 1905 to May 14, 1910, with James C. Dean as postmaster. The Loop post office began January 13, 1906 and continues to the present, with Cheryl Butchee of Seagraves as remote manager. It is located at 895 SH 83 East.

The Trixie post office operated from April 9, 1908 to June 30, 1910. Tom Ross, later convicted of murdering two state cattle inspectors, was its postmaster. That same year the Logsdon post office opened June 23, 1908 and operated until August 30, 1919; Minnie W. Logsdon was its postmaster.

Sam J. Blythe was postmaster for the Blythe post office, which operated from September 11, 1909 to February 6, 1921. The name was later changed to Seagraves, and on October 27 of that year, the Seagraves post office opened. It is at 105 Main, and the

postmaster is Cheryl Butchee.

The Craddock post office was short-lived, from March 5, 1909 to February 15, 1911. Ida Thompson was its postmaster. The Parkinson post office was also brief, from August 24, 1912 to April 15, 1914; Samuel E. Parkinson was its postmaster.

The Hatchton post office operated from July 17, 1917 to December 31, 1921. John B. Hatchett was its postmaster. White City's post office opened May 31, 1940 and closed October 15, 1951; Walter A. Kaddatz was its postmaster.

The Ashmore post office also opened in 1940, on July 19. It operated until February 29, 1948. Bella J. King was its first postmaster.

If anyone has authentic postmarks from any of these post offices, the Gaines County Museum would be delighted to use them in a display. Please do not cut them from the envelope, but bring the whole envelope. Also, if anyone knows where these post offices were located, please call the museum at (432) 758-4016 and let us know.

The Seminole museum is located at 700 Hobbs Highway. Roy Lynn Barnes is director. The museum is open each weekday from 8-12 a.m. and 1-5 p.m. Visitors of all ages are welcome anytime.

Leo's Lance...

## Violets and Ice

Leo Copeland  
Seminole Sentinel

Here is a Valentine's Day thought. Valentine's Day is about love. It's about chocolate and it's about flowers. I like love, I like chocolate, and I like flowers. The three seem to go together. This article is about flowers, but it is about love, as well. You'll have to supply your own chocolate. I call it, "Violets and Ice."

It was one of those infamous ice storms in Coke County. The ice was so thick on the power lines that many of them collapsed under the weight. Ice was everywhere.

My front porch was covered with at least an inch of solid, slick ice. I was looking down carefully, watching my steps lest I should fall and break something besides the thick ice. This was when my eyes fell upon something which brought a broad smile to my face and a warm feeling to my heart.

There, in the flower bed beside my front step, peaking up through the covering of thick, clear ice was the smiling faces of my little sweet violet flowers.

You see, these little flowers were very special to me. They were a gift from a very dear friend. She was in her eighties, and her spirit reflected the sweetness and the beauty of these little flowers. Her name was Mrs. Jesse Key, but we knew her as "Sister Key."

For many years this lady had invited the little girls of her community into her home when school was out for the summer. It was a neighborly thing, something like a summer camp for the girls. Sister Key taught them from the Bible how to be keepers at home and how to treat their future husbands and children. She taught them to sing little girl songs with uplifting lyrics. She took them into her kitchen and taught them to make cookies and other treats. They went into her flourishing

flower garden and selected the most beautiful, cheerful blooms, and she taught them to make lovely little flower arrangements.

Armed with these flowers and goodies they had made with their own hands, she took them around to visit the elderly and shut-ins in the community. The girls would present their gifts and sing their little songs, leaving the folks with their spirits uplifted, and perhaps a tear of joy in their eyes. What a splendid example of love she was for those girls, and for everyone else who knew her.

When she found out my wife's first name is Violet, she gave me a start of those sweet, little violet flowers from her flower garden. I planted them carefully in my flower beds and they flourished. They really didn't need much care. After a while I paid less attention to them but they continued to flourish. I hadn't noticed they were blooming until that day of the ice storm. It was very cold. There were power outages and tree limbs broken down everywhere. I would have expected my violets to have been frozen, black and dead, but there they were, smiling brightly through the ice, in full bloom.

I thank God for the beauty of flowers, especially for sweet violets. Three women who are special to me were named "Violet." My sweet mother-in-law, my fabulous wife, and my charming oldest daughter. They, along with my other two daughters and grandchildren, reflect the loveliness of those sweet little flowers to my mind.

With Valentine's Day upon us, I couldn't help but reminisce about this time in my past. It seems those little flowers held a message for me. "No matter how bleak the weather, or bad the situation, there is still beauty and loveliness to be found in our world. You just have to look beneath the icy coverings. Love still blooms."

Valentine's Day is a special time for reflecting and expressing love and gentleness to those special people in our life. A time to dream, and plan for a happy future.

A time for married people to recollect those warm feelings we felt when we first fell in love. Remember the hope and expectations and plans we once cherished, and to re-commit ourselves to the one we love.

My wish is for you all to be able to see sweet violets smiling through the icy troubles of life!

Happy Valentine's Day from all of us at the *Sentinel*.

## EMS Morning Call Program

Do you know of someone who is a widow/widower/shut-in couple who may need regular checking?

The Seminole EMS Dept. may be able to assist through their "Morning Call" service.

Created in the 1980's, "Morning Call" is a program in which members of the Seminole EMS Dept. make routine morning telephone calls to widow/widower/shut-in couples in and around the Seminole community, who may not have any other local, personal contacts with family members or others.

"The purpose of the program is to make sure (widow/widower/shut-in couples) are checked on, on a daily basis, just to ensure they are doing okay and aren't in need of any medical attention," said Bryan Taylor, Director of the Seminole EMS program.

Eligible persons for the program must reside either within the Seminole city limits or within a four mile radius of Seminole.

Candidates who are interest in the program may contact the Seminole EMS Dept. at (432) 758-8816 for application.

The application process includes an in-home interview between the candidate(s) and EMS personnel, in which some information -- such as emergency contact numbers, a listing of medications and existing medical conditions -- will be gathered.

For more information about the program, contact the Seminole EMS at (432) 758-8816.

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