



Cornville Historical Society

E-MAIL NEWS

P.O. Box 1200, Cornville, AZ 86325

CENTENNIAL COUNTDOWN EDITION

February 2012

The mission of the Cornville Historical Society is to gather, preserve and share information about the history of rural life within the Cornville postal area from 1860 to the present. This is the eighth and LAST in a series of "Centennial Countdown" articles. We hope you have enjoyed reading about Cornville's history. HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ARIZONA!

History of the Cornville Post Office

By Judy Miller



Throughout its history, there have been questions about how Cornville got its name. Many versions have been published and many possibilities discussed. During the last two years, the Cornville Historical Society took on the task of determining how the community was named and has published a new report, *"History of the Cornville Post Office"*. The report is a compilation of known facts and possibilities about post office establishment, site locations, postmasters, and a special feature about Cornville's most well known and longest used "centennial" Post Office.

Most stories about how Cornville got its name are variations of a theme that the Post Office Department made a mistake. As the stories go, the intent was for the community to be named for a settler named "Cone", "Coane" or maybe "Cohn", but the application was misread by the Postmaster General's Office, where the name Cornville was assigned instead. Published stories have also included discrepancies about postmaster names and dates.

The report examines possibilities, Post Office Department regulations and records, news articles and other evidence to piece together the most likely story. As a result, we now know that Henry Mortimer C-o-n-e was the settler who wanted a post office, but rules in place at the time necessitated a change in the application. The thinking may well have been, *"If it can't be named after a person, then why not name it after the great corn growing in the area?"* Whatever the reason, it is very clear that the name assigned by the Postmaster General was clearly intended—and CORNVILLE it is!

Cornville's Name: *The Most Likely Story*

The Cornville Post Office was officially established by the Postmaster General on July 9, 1885, at the suggestion of pioneer Henry Mortimer Cone; and the first post office was located on or near the site of his homestead entry on Oak Creek at a place that later became known as Page Springs (*now part of the Page Springs Fish Hatchery*). Under Post Office Department application instructions in place at the time, the proposed name "Coneville" was not accepted and "Cornville" was assigned instead. George A. Kingston was officially named the first postmaster, possibly as an agent or messenger for Cone. However, the postal service was actually run by (Henry and) Mina Cone for twenty months until April 2, 1887, when Samuel C. Dickinson was officially named as the second postmaster. The post office was then moved to Dickinson's homestead several miles south on Lower Oak Creek (*near where Living Waters Retreat Center is now located*).

Post Office Locations: *Probably Eight*

There were probably eight separate locations where Cornville postmasters lived and carried out their work. In the early days, from 1885 to 1909, mail arrived by stage and postmasters worked out of their homes. In 1909, Charles S. Chick built the first real post office on Cornville Road (*where Windmill Gardens is now located*); and, in 1914, he moved the building across the road (*where Banker Insulation is now located*). The building served continuously as the post office



Cornville Post Office (circa 1960)

until 1961. *Then*, the next post office was built by Postmaster Mary Cornelison-Booth just up the road (*where Vince's Little Star Restaurant operates today*). After she resigned, the post office moved back across the road into rental space in the Cornville Market building. Former Postmaster Dorothy LaRue said, "We got crowded out ... We couldn't function any more", so a new post office was constructed and opened in 1985 at its current location. At that point, the post office had 462 boxes and 280 home delivery customers.

In the early 1900s, mail was carried by horseback along established routes in the area. In the 1920s, riders took mail to Sedona and back. By the 1940s and 1950s, contractors delivered mail by pickup truck from Cornville to Flagstaff and back—on routes that included Page Springs Road, Red Rock Loop, Sedona and Oak Creek Canyon. Today, the Postal Service still hires contact drivers to deliver mail to 1,892 customers on rural routes. However, over 1,100 residents still maintain post office boxes; and visits to the Cornville Post Office are part of their daily routine.

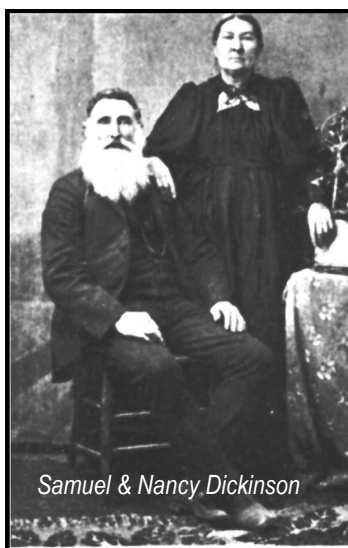
Roster of Cornville Postmasters

Name	Appointment Date
1. George A. Kingston	July 9, 1885
2. Samuel C. Dickinson	April 2, 1887
3. Elijah Lay	July 13, 1905
4. Anna N. Hart	November 27, 1905
5. Charles S. Chick	January 8, 1909
6. Jessie M. Chick	January 20, 1932 (Acting) March 25, 1932
7. Mary K. Cornelison-Booth	September 30, 1961
8. Carrie E. Hill	October 24, 1975 (Clerk) May 21, 1977
9. Frances R. Baxter	June 12, 1981 (OIC)
10. Dorothy H. LaRue	October 3, 1981
11. Danita Keith	August 31, 1995 (OIC)
12. Patrick Shamrell	November 25, 1995

Postmasters: *Twelve in All*

Little is known about first Postmaster George A. Kinston. Perhaps he was an agent who submitted the post office application on behalf of area settlers. Perhaps he was a political appointee—not uncommon in the Post Office Department at that time. It is also possible that he was an affiliate of the stage company who had the contract to deliver the mail. Maybe all three! We do know that his name appeared in the news as a delegate from the Upper Verde to the Republican Convention in 1886; and it was reported later the same year that he was admitted to practice at the bar. So we know, at least, that George A. Kingston was an aspiring lawyer and politician in the Verde Valley at the time the Cornville Post Office was established in 1885.

Second Postmaster Samuel Dickinson came to the Verde Valley with the Bristow Wagon Train in 1875 and settled on



Samuel & Nancy Dickinson

Lower Oak Creek, (*near where Living Waters is now located*). Third Postmaster Elijah Lay's homestead was just up the creek. Anna Hart was downstream a few miles on Chick (*now Loy*) Road. In the early days, Cornville was a noon stage stop between Fort Verde & Jerome, where riders could rest, have a meal, and change horses.

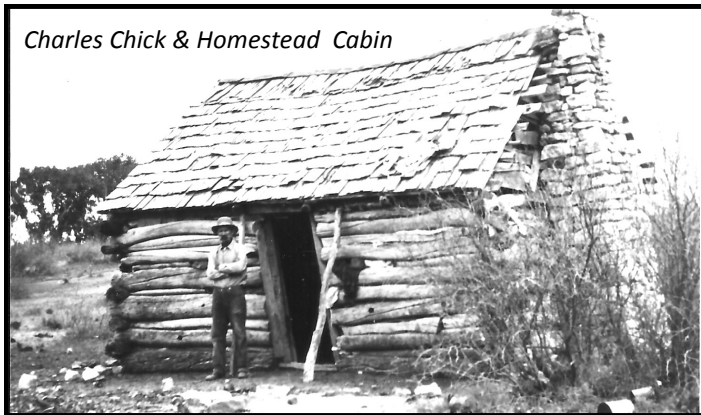
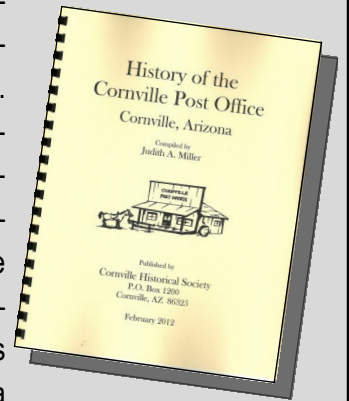


Elijah Lay

“Charles S. Chick was the last Cornville Postmaster in the Arizona Territory,” said his daughter and Phoenix resident Margaret Chick Miller, “because he served at the time Arizona became a state...” Chick had already settled the land that would become the heart of old Cornville. He started working on his homestead in 1894 and received his patent for 160 acres in 1901, when he was 31 years old. After establishing the first real post office in Cornville in 1909 (see photo on page 1), he married Jessie

Postal History Report Now Available

The publication “History of the Cornville Post Office”, now available from the Cornville Historical Society, is a 44 -page report that traces the community’s postal history from 1885, when it was officially named by the Postmaster General, to the present. The document is a compilation of known facts and possibilities, including new information about how Cornville got its name, historic locations of post offices, stories of early postmasters, and a special feature about Cornville’s “centennial” Post Office. . The report includes a map of post office locations and more interesting details. Readers are invited to add information to further complete the history. Copies are \$10.00 each (plus \$2 for mailing). Send payment to Cornville Historical Society, P.O. Box 1200, Cornville, Arizona 86325.



Charles Chick & Homestead Cabin

Mae Cox in 1914 and moved the post office across the road, eventually adding rooms for a home and store.

When Charles died in 1931, Jessie became Cornville’s sixth Postmaster, and she served until she retired in 1961. Together, the Chicks served the community for over fifty years. When asked about her mother, Margaret Chick Miller said, “...all she did was work. I never heard her complain. She would work in that Post Office and she raised four girls.”



Jessie Chick

Feature: Cornville’s “Centennial” Post Office

After its years of use as a post office and home for the Chick family, the “Old Cornville Post Office” was sold to Banker Insulation, the company that still occupies the site. Banker later donated the post office to Rainbow Acres, who made it a part of its “old west” in Camp Verde for several years. When the old town was sold, the structures were auctioned; and the post office was purchased by Van MacDonald of Camp Verde. Now, the old structure rests on vacant land between Cottonwood and Camp Verde.

Even though the building now sits abandoned, it can be said that it was built in 1909 and was Cornville’s post office at the time Arizona became a state. It was moved once in 1914; it served the Cornville community for over 50 years from 1909 to 1961; and was the residence for Chick family members for many more years. Then it survived two more moves. Now, 113 years after its original construction, the remains of the building still exist a few miles away from its original post. Thus, it truly qualifies as Cornville’s “Centennial” Post Office!



The Old Cornville Post Office—*A Pictorial History*

Top left: 1920's; Top right: *Arizona Highways*, September 1958; Middle Left: Benton Henry Painting, circa 1960;

Middle Right: 1980s; Bottom left and right: November 2009

