



GEORGINA

Early Post Offices

SUTTON Prior to mail delivery in 1831 many Georgina residents travelled to Newmarket to get their mail. While there, they could buy provisions and see to any other business. There is evidence of private couriers working in the area between Beaverton and Lake Ontario as early as 1829. The “Georgina” Post Office was opened on July 6, 1831 with James O’Brien Bourchier named postmaster. He was 34 years old. He remained postmaster until his resignation in 1868. His son, John Raines Bourchier, took up the post and continued in that role for over 28 years, until 1897 when he was inexplicably replaced by Henry Treloar.



John Raines Bourchier, no date; GPV&A

The newspapers cried foul and could not understand what may have been the reasoning behind replacing JR Bourchier. One area correspondent commented that it was all just “political jobbery”. Evidently Bourchier himself didn’t understand the reasoning, stating that “during his long term of postmastership the only letters that were tampered with or stolen was at the time of the late robbery of the mail bags.”

Examining postal records today, we learn that there was a robbery of the mail bags destined for Toronto. This took place on January 3, 1897. Evidently, Mr. Townley was the mail contractor and his store was in the same building as the Post office and accessible to it through a shared door which was rarely kept bolted. The mail bags (containing “so much money”) were kept on the floor of Townley’s store overnight. Detectives cast suspicion towards Bourchier, and though no charges appear to have been laid, or blame clearly cast, Bourchier was immediately replaced by Treloar in the role of postmaster for Sutton.

KESWICK & ROCHE’S POINT The date of the first post office in North Gwillimbury can be ascertained from a document entitled: “A list of new offices in Lower and Upper Canada commissioned and put into operation by me on the 6th January 1836- with the name of the Sub Deputies and a Statement of the expenses to be incurred for Couriers &c &c.”, signed by Thomas Allen Stayner, Her Majesty’s Deputy Postmaster General for British North America.

Offices	Province	Post Masters	Situation of Offices	Charge for Couriers	Post-Masters Salaries	Remarks
Keswick	U.C.	B.W. Smith	†	£30 per annum ¹	‡	§

†Township of North Gwilliamsburg, Home District 15 miles North from Holland Landing

‡These Postmasters receive the customary Allowance of Twenty per cent. on the net Postage collected by them.

§These Offices are all situated in well settled parts of the Province, where Post Accommodation has been earnestly desired.

¹[This amount includes Beaverton P.O.]

The “Keswick” post office was not actually situated at the Keswick town site (what we refer to, today, as Roche’s Point). This was not pointed out to post office officials until 1862, when Mr. Martindale wrote to the Deputy Postmaster General and notified them that the Keswick PO was not actually at the “Village of Keswick”, but at Medina, some miles further south.

There was application in 1860 for a post office at present-day Roche’s Point under the name of “Lakehurst”, and again in 1869 under the name “Roach’s Point”. Both unsuccessful for unknown reasons. Roche’s Point was granted a post office in 1870, to be “served by a daily mail in summer from Bell Ewart [by boat, across Cook’s Bay] and Keswick in winter provided such service can be obtained at an estimated cost of not more than from \$80 to \$100 per annum”. Richard Flood was the first postmaster there. In November, 1871 a fire at the office destroyed the postage stamps.

In 1894 there was a petition for change:

POSTAL CHANGES.- The people of North Gwillimbury are petitioning the Post-Master General to change the name of Roach’s Point Post Office to Keswick and also to change the present Keswick office to Medina. The people at the Point are perfectly justified in their request because the original survey gives it that name. As to Medina there is nothing registered in that name, though it is stated that the late Hy. Draper, who was clerk of the township for many years, gave that name to the place when he laid out some village lots many years ago. If the Post offices are changed in the name it will cause a little confusion for a while, but two or three years would overcome the difficulty.

The change never came; an erroneously named or placed post office in 1836 caused the Village of Keswick to “move” south to the present-day intersection of Church Street & Queensway North.

PEFFERLAW For many years, William Johnson (who is lauded as the founder of Pefferlaw) tried to convince the administrators of the province to set up a post office in Pefferlaw. He argued that the current route from Toronto to Newmarket and to Sutton was slow and a new route between Whitby (Windsor Harbour) and Mara would serve Pefferlaw wellⁱ- Windsor Harbour had been declared a point of entry on Lake Ontario, and the Windsor Road was being constructed linking it to the north. This is approximately the route of Highway 12.

After years of letter writing, Johnson didn’t get his post office. He died on March 28, 1851 and his daughter Jean was the first Post Mistress at Pefferlaw on May 6, 1851.

ⁱ Rosenthal, Max. "Early Postal Service East of Toronto." *Maple Leaves- Journal of the Canadian Philatelic Society of Great Britain* Vol. 12, no. 2 (December 1967): 46-47. Accessed January 31, 2018. <http://www.canadianpsgb.org.uk/mpl/mpl-1967-12-v012n02-w110.pdf>.