



MITCHELL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Second Quarter 2016

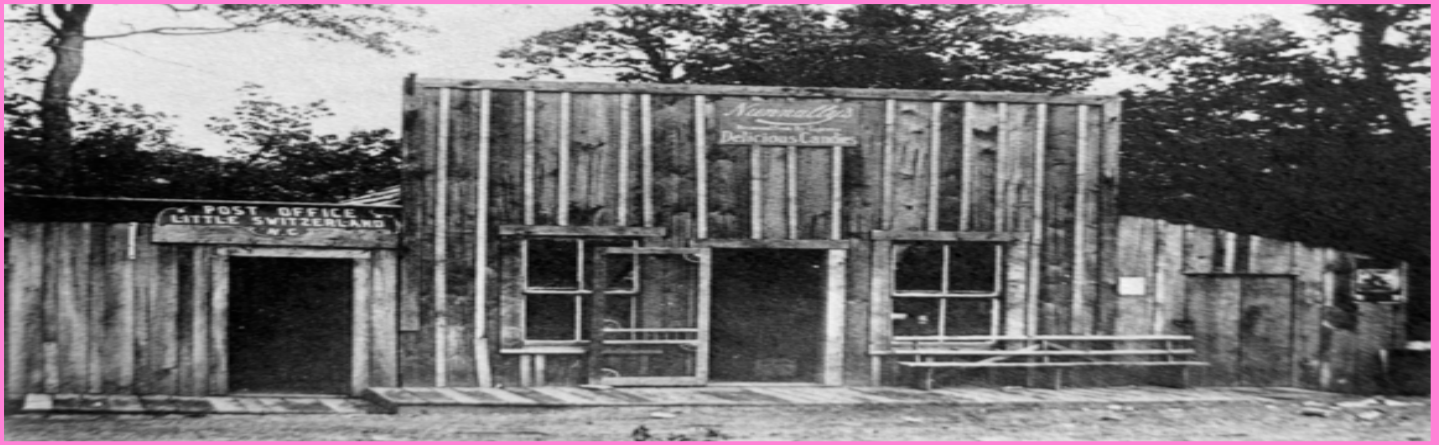
Mitchell County Historical Society Awards 1st Annual Scholarship

This spring the Mitchell County Historical Society awarded its first annual scholarship to Troy Jamison Burleson, a 2016 graduate of Mitchell High School. Our scholarship is awarded to a high school senior who demonstrates an interest in Appalachian studies, including, but not limited to history, music, art, folk culture, and economic or community development. The student should demonstrate a desire to pursue this interest at a higher educational level and express a desire to eventually live and work within Appalachia.

Jamison Burleson, in addition to being a scholar with a GPA above 4.0 and actively involved in his community, is an athlete and a hunter/fisherman. He also plays the fiddle, taking lessons with Rhonda Gouge, local musician extraordinaire. Jamison plans to attend Catawba Valley Community College for two years and then transfer to NC State University for a degree in mechanical engineering. Jamison is the son of Charles A. and Elissa R. Burleson.



Board members (standing) David Biddix, Rhonda Gunter, Bruce Koran; (seated) Chris Hollifield, Inez McRae, with MCHS scholarship recipient Troy Jamison Burleson



Little Switzerland Post Office, now in McDowell County but briefly in Mitchell, sat where the gift shops are now, across from Switzerland Inn. Photo likely taken after 1910

YOU'VE GOT MAIL !

The United States Postal Service today serves the citizens of Mitchell County with mail coming into and going out of three post offices: Bakersville, Penland, and Spruce Pine. Through the years, however, there have been as many as 93 distinct post offices in our county, according to the North Carolina Postal History Society.

When Mitchell County was formed in 1861, post offices previously within Yancey County included Bakersville, Boonford, Childsville, Fork Mountain, Grassy Creek, Green Mountain, Ledger, Red Hill, and Spruce Pine. The Spruce Pine P.O., called Rose's Creek when it was established in 1856, was renamed Spruce Pine in 1859.

Mail to Green Mountain and Boonford was discontinued in 1936 and 1951, reverting to Yancey County; when Flinty Branch (1866-84) and Hunt Dale (1900-51) shut down, their mail was also routed through Yancey. Cranberry Forge, in Watauga County prior to 1861, was in Mitchell County until 1911.

First in McDowell County, Mitchell for a time had a P.O. named Mount Mitchell, a station on the Clinchfield Railroad; "mail was carried daily the four miles to or from the station by horse-drawn hacks from Switzerland Inn that met guests arriving on the train."

Mitchell Post Offices

Names of one-time post offices in Mitchell County include Barnett, Brighton, Brummetts Creek, (later called Brummet and then Tipton Hill), Forbes, Herrells, Lunday, Peppers, Street, and Webb. Another P.O. was at Poplar Township, which was originally called Hollow Poplar for the landmark tree there. Tradition holds that Bandana was named for the signal looked for by train engineers, and Relief was named for a popular mail-order medicine, "Hart's Relief."

One P.O. saw several name changes; it was Fork Mountain from 1861 to 1879, when it was renamed Cloudland, but called Wilders Ferry for about a month in July 1880. In August the Cloudland name came back until 1907, when the mail there was routed through Roan Mountain, TN. Records show that several other P.O.'s lapsed for a time and then were reestablished after some months or even years. Was there no mail, or did no one step forward to serve as postmaster?

The Glenn P.O. was in operation for only 10 years, as records show it was discontinued in 1895 to Armstrong in McDowell County. Little Switzerland, also in McDowell, took over Phenoy mail service in 1919, but Mitchell County almost had a Switzerland P.O. Ida C. Jones was appointed postmaster in 1910, but the order was later rescinded.

The Spruce Pine P.O. gradually took over mail delivery from several small operations, such as Altapass, Elsie (earlier Keenersville), Estatoe, Kalmia, Lotta, and Mica. Delivery of the mail to small P.O.'s, including Buladean (first known as Wilders and then Magnetic City), Clarissa, Ewart, Glen Ayre, Hawk, Hawk Mine, Honeycutt, Kona, Little Rock Creek, Toecane, and Wing, was consolidated to the Bakersville P.O.

Avery County Breaks Away

Prior to 1911 and the formation of Avery County, there were additional post offices in Mitchell, such as Aaron (later Montezuma), Altamont (name changed from Trout), Avery, Cranberry Forge, Crossnore, Elk Park, Frank, Grasslands (combined with Altamont), Hale (1889-1911), Hughes (changed from Lineback), Ingalls, Linville Cove, Loggy, Minneapolis, Old Fields, Plumtree, Pyatte, Saginaw, Senia, Spear, Vale, and Valley.

In 1880-1881, Mitchell County had a post office named Jules Ford, with Heseekiah T. Elliott the only postmaster before mail was routed through the Saginaw post office. Kawana was another P.O. for a time (1894-1905) before deliveries also went through Saginaw. The P.O. at Yellow Mountain operated from 1873 through 1879, while the one at Lew lasted only a few months in 1911, just before Avery County's formation. When Linville P.O. was in Mitchell, it was for a time called Clay, and then it became Porcelain.

. P.O. Location Mysteries

Who out there knows where the post offices of Bliss (1910-13), Swope (1887) and Top (1916) were located? Eugenia must have been near Frank, as deliveries diverted there in 1891, after only two years in operation. Mitchell County almost had a post office at Calico, but the order was rescinded after one month in 1903; William B. Green was postmaster at Lois for three months in 1908 before that office closed. Where were Calico and Lois? Other short-lived P.O.'s were at Roadside (1884) and Roar

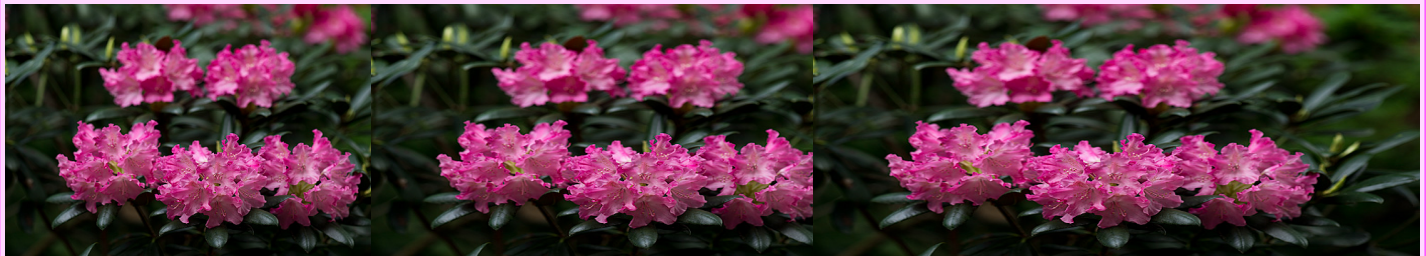


Early photo of the Post Office at Penland from the Becky Davis collection, posted on the web site of the Mitchell County Postal History Society.

During the Civil War, 1861-65, the Confederate States of America operated post offices in Bakersville, Cranberry Forge, Grassy Creek, Ledger, and Spruce Pine. Absence of a federal appointee in Childsville and Fork Mountain 1861-65 suggest CSA operation; Childsville was near Calhoun, which was briefly Mitchell's county seat. Mail service was frequently disrupted during the Civil War, and a dearth of finances and personnel hampered operations.

Numerous Mitchell County women – close to 90 – were selected as postmasters (their official title, though they were sometimes referred to as “postmistress.”). Golda R. Grindstaff was Kalmia's only postmaster (1937-54); Retta Jarrett Gibson served at Bandana for 29 years, until the P.O. closed in 1958. Of Kona's 8 postmasters between establishment in 1916 and close in 1953, five were women.

If you are interested in checking out the history of Mitchell County post offices, consult *POST OFFICES AND POSTMASTERS OF NORTH CAROLINA: COLONIAL TO USPS*, published in 1996 by the NC Postal History Society. This publication may be perused in the office of the Mitchell County Historical Society.



Don't forget to join us Monday night, June 20 at 7PM in the Historic Courthouse to hear DR. LLOYD BAILEY discuss WORLD I and THE SOLDIERS OF TOE RIVER VALLEY!

We strive to make our programs relevant and exciting, at the same time pursuing our mission of providing information that is historically significant to Mitchell County---and to make its citizens aware of their heritage.

We remind you that all events are FREE to the public, but we wouldn't be able to have these programs without the generous donations of the public and our members. Please consider an annual membership with us: \$20/Individual and \$25/ Family. (Members receive a 15% discount on our items for sale in the office.)

You may come by the office (Weds. – Sat., 10 to 4) to buy a membership, or see us at any of our events. We are located in the Historic Courthouse in Bakersville, 11 N. Mitchell Ave., Bakersville, NC 28607. Phone for information: 828-688-4371.