

A Tale of Two Post Offices from our Sun Cities Past -- Ed Allen

A Post office, but No Residents – Recognizing the value of a Sun City postmark, the Webb people gave a high priority to opening a post office in the new Sun City. They succeeded in opening a postal station in the Greenway Drug Store in the Grand Center on April 4, 1960, four days before the first homeowners moved in.

Mrs. Mary Garretson was the first postal clerk. When buying their home on the busy January opening weekend, Mary made a casual remark about hating to give up her bookkeeping job in Phoenix. The next day she was contacted by the Webb people to be trained as postal clerk for the new station. She started work five weeks before she and her husband moved into their new Sun City home.

The April 4 opening was a gala event co-sponsored by the Arizona Society of Topical Philatelists and DEVCO. The Sun City postmark was the first new one in the state in several years, and hundreds of special first-day covers were printed for the occasion.

Right from the start, the major user was the Webb public relations office. They brought in stacks of mail almost daily to be given the Sun City postmark and sent to prospective buyers throughout the country. Initially, residents had to come to the Post Office to pick up their mail. Pressure grew for home delivery and the question of curbside mailboxes vs door-to-door delivery caused the first community squabble.

On July 1, 1962, the post office moved to its own building on 103rd Menke Funeral Home), and in May 1976, moved to its present location at 98th and Bell.

Plenty of Residents, but No Post Office – By contrast, Sun City West residents had to wait 12 years before they got a full-service post office. While a small postal station was opened in 1980 in Today's Swim and Patio Furniture Store (present home of Bob's), residents had to drive to the Sun City Post Office for many services.

In 1990, the SCW Kiwanis Club headed a petition drive that netted 11,000 signatures in less than three weeks. A resident, Virginia Smith, had been a former Nebraska congresswoman, and took the petitions to the U.S. Postmaster General. Looking it over, he responded, "I had no idea there were so many people out there!"

He came to SCW on a fact-finding mission in 1991 and was presented with a videotape showing the cars lined up waiting for a parking space at the SC Post Office, along with the little-used Youngtown Post Office. It also pointed out that SCW was the 16th largest community in Arizona and that there were 115 post offices in smaller towns throughout the state.

The answer came back that the Postal Service would expand the existing sub-station, which had moved to Lakeside Florist and open a second sub-station in Bob's V&S Variety Store. Finally in 1992, Senator DeConcini announced a \$5-million line item had been included in the general appropriations bill. It passed both houses and was signed by President Bush. A new, full-service post office was opened in SCW in February 1995 – 17 years after the first residents moved in!



Postmistress Garretson receives key to office from Phoenix Postmaster while (now Tom Austin, Webb's activities coordinator, looks on.



Prime movers for the a Post Office in SCW: (l-r) Howie Wilson, Virginia Smith, and Wayne Titus



First day covers, commemorating the openings of the SC and SCW Post Offices.