

Town Post Office

According to then-postmaster John Cole's history published in the Town's [1966 Annual Report](#), West Newbury's post office was established on August 22, 1820. This was about a year and half after West Newbury itself came into being—and long after establishment of Newburyport's post office in [1775](#), when the Postal Service began. Until 1921, Postmaster Cole said, West Newbury had a “small village Post Office conducted by a local merchant, who dispensed mail with groceries, together with a bit of local gossip or sage advice. The arrival of mail at the village store was quite a social event with the townspeople gathering for mail and a great deal of neighborly conversation.”

[Rural Free Delivery](#) (RFD) began in West Newbury in 1903. Postmaster Cole reported that some resisted this change “because it reduced the quorum around the cracker barrel and the pot belly stove, but it did bring the mail to the farms out back via horse and buggy, or just horse, and sometimes on foot, depending on the roads and weather conditions.” It was not until 1942 that the Town began numbering addresses on side streets.

Over its first century, West Newbury's was a [4th class post office](#), meaning that the postmaster was paid on commission, receiving a percentage of the value of stamps sold and canceled. Under the auspices of Harriette L. Smith, its first female postmaster, the post office was upgraded to third class status, based on business volume, on July 1, 1921. Exactly 30 years later, during the tenure of Mary E. Cooney, the Town's second woman to serve as postmaster, West Newbury's post office became busy enough to reach second class. Although classes of post offices were [eliminated in 1975](#), many townspeople would argue that our local post office is by now a first class operation.

For much of the post office's history, postmaster positions were [political](#). Civil Service tests and nonpolitical hiring were introduced in the 1900s. As reported in the [Boston Globe](#), controversy erupted in 1915, when former postmaster and then-current local Democratic Party chair Daniel

Cooney (who sought the job himself) contested the appointment of William Merrill (who scored highest on the Civil Service test). Cooney alleged that Merrill, notwithstanding his prior service as Town tree warden, moth inspector, and library trustee, was not only a recluse whose personality would not suit the position, but also insufficiently Democratic for the Wilson administration.

Upon examination, a postal inspector declared Merrill eccentric but acceptable—a point hotly contested by enraged Democrats after Merrill allowed his predecessor, Republican Hiram Poore, to stay on as clerk, with Mrs. Poore as deputy postmaster. After 6 months in the position, Merrill resigned on August 22, 1915. He wrote, “I'm a poor man and the salary of postmaster of this town is a considerable item to me financially, but, rich or poor, I have no right to hold an official position under an Administration which is neutral in this great world conflict when I ... believe that the United States should aid England and her Allies.”

Merrill's would-be successor, [Herbert Carleton](#), proved far more controversial. In January 1916 Carleton caused the [Emery Sisters](#) to withdraw their offer of a new library building and a free Town water distribution system using the Artichoke. He protested the gift on the grounds that it might impede efforts to find a use for the Carr Post as a library. Days later, the [Boston Globe](#) carried the headline, “LOSES GIFTS OF ABOUT \$300,000: West Newbury Angry At Objector; People Now Oppose Carleton For Postmaster.”

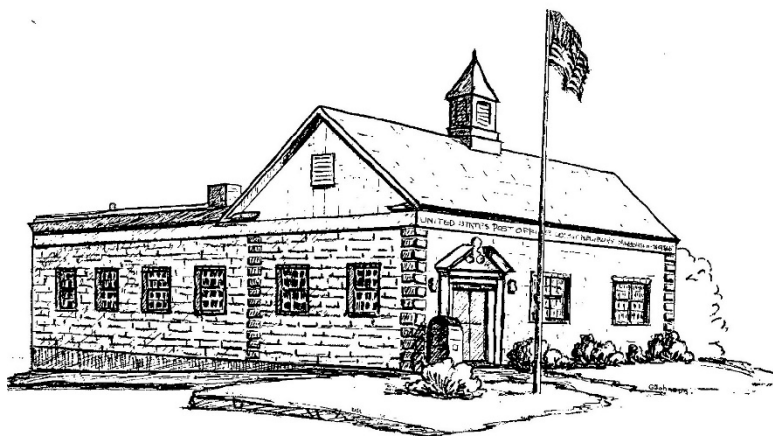
Although the post office was moved among various spots over time, without question it anchored Post Office Square, West Newbury's commercial center. According to the Town's [1978 Annual Report](#), “As the administration changed in Washington, so did the Post Office in West Newbury, from Bailey's store to Cooney's store next door” Both buildings were razed in 1964 to make way for the current post office building, a modern structure for the [era of the ZIP code](#), which was introduced in 1963.

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The Boston Globe 9/1/1915

*West Newbury Post Office
Source: 1966 Annual Town Report Cover*



Post Office Square c. 1880, center 2 of 4 buildings at left alternatively housed the post office Source: Town Offices

11/9/1907 West Newbury stamped post card



West Newbury Postmasters

1820 to 1862

Thomas Hills
Daniel Pillsbury
John C. Carr
Daniel Nichols
George Giles

1862 to 1902

Benjamin Edwards, Jr
Charles C. Moseley
Michael Bartlett
Henry T. Bailey
Daniel Cooney
George H. Bailey

1902 to 1973

Hiram R. Poore
William Merrill
Harriette L. Smith
Henry O. Bailey
Mary E. Cooney
Daniel C. Leary
John F. Cole

1973 to 2021

Phyllis F. Harris
Elise B. Heinrichs
Laura J. Tyrrell
Daniel L. Zoeller
Susan A. Lewis
John Schoonmaker
Deborah A. Santarpio