

## **Neither Rain, nor sleet, nor dark of night...**

The cover picture on our 2009 calendar features Kinmundy's Illinois Central Depot—note the iron wheeled wooden wagon and the old semiphore (signal pole) in front of the depot. About 80 yards to the north of the depot was the mail pick-up standard which was used by the RPO (Railroad Post Office) car in retrieving the dispatch. Mail deliveries for fast moving trains were packed in a mail pouch with two large metal rings on each end to secure the bag to the pick up standard. The mail pouch was stuffed with mail, having a leather collar around the center section to absorb the impact of the hook of the express train traveling at high speeds which if all went well picked the mail pouch from the pole as it traveled by. The pouches needed to be carefully balanced to keep from sliding off the catchpole. Occasionally such accidents did happen, and mail was run over, entailing a tedious pick up at trackside, as the train rolled on down the track.

Our 2009 Christmas ornament will feature this Illinois Central Depot scene with appropriate Christmas decorations surrounding it. This Christmas ornament will be the third of our series of Christmas ornaments sponsored by the Kinmundy Historical Society. Hopefully we will continue through the years ahead to use yet another railroad scene for continuing our series of railroad scenes for our yearly ornament. Our two railroads, the I.C. (Illinois Central) and the C. and E.I. (Central and Eastern Railroad) were so important to the success of our town of Kinmundy providing exceptional transportation facilities in both passenger service as well as freight. Our other depot, the C. and E.I. also was a busy one with mail also arriving there and being dispatched. Our two depots are both gone now, and how we wish they could have been preserved, as they were such a historic part of Kinmundy and contributed so much to the town's growth and the source of so many jobs to its citizens. Ticket booths were in each, and passenger trains stopped to both pick up and let passengers off. Station agents were employed there to oversee shipping out produce raised locally—Easter lilies for one thing. Also many jobs on maintaining the miles of tracks were the livelihood of many heads of families. They were called the section gang, and their jobs were dirty ones as they walked the tracks, carrying their lunches and water.

The first post offices were always in homes. Kinmundy's first one was in the home of William B. Eagan at 211 East Third Street, and Mr. Eagan was also our first postmaster. He was postmaster from July 14, 1857 and served only until June 18, 1861. Later the post office was in the 200 block of Madison Street (our main street) between Bargh's Drug Storeroom on the south and Mahan and Motch's Grocery Store on the north. There were two windows—one small and one much wider to hand out the larger packages. In the spring, many boxes of baby chicks arrived for the area farmers. Mail was sorted, picked up by agents at each of the two depots—the C and EI and IC, hung on hooks above the tracks, and the arriving trains picked it up as they came through. Our present post office was built in 1962 and is located at 109 West Third Street.

In the beginning positions were political appointments. At that time, the postmaster job was given to someone of the party of the elected President of the United States. If in the next election, the opposite party won, that postmaster was out of a job! Our list of postmasters having served Kinmundy shows how often the position changed hands. During Democratic Presidential years, a Democrat would be appointed

postmaster and vice-versa when Republicans came into power. Our early history here in Kinmundy is an example, as some postmasters were replaced in two or three years, some there for many years as our listing shows. The Post Office changed from being by political appointments in the 1970's to the system now in effect. For postmasters of the past, it was mandatory that they live within the city limits. The Garrett's, for instance, owned a farm within the Kinmundy mailing area but was forced to move into the city. Floyd was first appointed acting postmaster and was subject to fulfilling the requirements of the job. If found qualified, both the House of Representatives and the United States Senate voted on the permanent appointment. The postmaster was expected to be a member of the community, helping with all the activities and being available at all hours to be contacted by the public.

When mail bags were discharged from the RPO car the vacuum of the train would sometimes pull them under the train. There were many times during Floyd's years here that the mail pouch actually was run over by the train! That meant Floyd, Helen, Rex, Reed and Ray hurried to the railroad tracks and picked up each piece of mail. First class letters were tediously taped together and the sender contacted with the information.

Today the mail is delivered and picked up by trucks from regional locations like Carbondale, Centralia, and Effingham. This is done on a schedule that allows the local post offices to sort their mail for daily deliveries in the mornings and into rural route deliveries. Outgoing mail is picked up also by truck and routed back to the regional offices in the evening. Kinmundy's last pick-up is at 4:15 with Cheryl Pemberton of Salem as the postmaster.

### **Postmasters Through the Years**

POSTMASTERS	DATE OF APPOINTMENT
William B. Eagan.....	July 14, 1857
Leonard D. Shilling.....	June 18, 1861
Benjamin H. Pearson.....	April 13, 1864
Randolph C. O'Bryant.....	March 23, 1868
Thomas W. Haymond.....	December 15, 1868
William T. Coleman.....	March 29, 1869
Daniel C. Moore.....	January 6, 1873
John F. Donovan.....	December 5, 1876
Thomas W. Williams.....	August 18, 1885
Richard F. Lawson.....	April 2, 1889
Fred J. Nirider.....	April 28, 1893
Daniel Gunn.....	May 20, 1897
John F. Donovan.....	December 18, 1901
Fred O. Grissom.....	June 27, 1914
George H. Bargh.....	February 24, 1923
Fred O. Grissom.....	August 23, 1933
Richard R. Atkins.....	July 1, 1947
Floyd Garrett.....	November 20, 1964