



Felton Postmaster Ken Burke, right, had the help of four former Felton postmasters Monday in blowing out 100 candles on the Felton

Post Office's centennial birthday cake. The post office was founded by Hubbard W. McKoy on Dec. 14, 1870. Giving the assist, left to right, are

Hubbard W. Reiter, 1966-68; Oliver Parkison, 1941-56; Jack Humbert, 1956-58; and Clarence "Duch" Rengstorff, 1961-66.

# Felton Post Office Marks Centennial Year Of Service

By BILL NEUBAUER  
Sentinel Staff Writer

A century of providing continuous postal service to the Felton area was celebrated Monday with brief ceremonies at the Felton Post Office on Gushee Street.

Former postmasters Oliver Parkison, Clarence "Dutch" Rengstorff, Jack Humbert and Harvey Reiter joined Postmaster Ken Burke in a successful effort to extinguish 100 candles on the centennial cake. Some 40 history buffs and employees ate the cake, and reminisced for a time about the olden days. Then, for the 101st consecutive year, the Christmas mail rush was given primary attention.

Attendees included Ted Rolff, president of the Felton Businessmen's Association; Mrs. George Huchcroft of the Felton Fire Department Women's Auxiliary; Loren Kibby, postmaster at Mt. Hermon, and Mrs. May Ley, representing one of Felton's oldest families.

Burke said: "On our bicentennial we'll be prepared to do a better job. I'll be 139 years old then, and that celebration won't sneak up on us on short notice, as this one did."

Burke said that by 2 p.m. the post office had issued more than 700 centennial covers, which were provided by the Valley Press, a weekly newspaper, when it became apparent that red tape would prevent the post office from making usual arrangements for commemorative covers.

"We'll easily stamp more than 1,000 covers before 5 p.m.," Burke said. "A lot of people want these as souvenirs."

An answer to a question in The Sentinel Sunday on where Felton's first postoffice was opened on Dec. 14, 1870, was answered as follows by Tom McHugh, a longtime county resident and historian and former publisher of newspapers in Santa Cruz and San Lorenzo Valley:

"The property rented by McKoy from Walter Cooper and J. M. Merrill of Santa Cruz was located four parcels south of the present corner of Highway 9 and Felton-Empire Grade Road. This property was in later years the property of A. B. Crown, where Costella's Chalet is now.

"I am inclined to question that McKoy was awarded the postoffice in exchange for an offer to haul the mail without charge from Santa Cruz. I don't think the U.S. government would make arrangements of this kind. I worked on historic material with Leon Rowland, former city editor of The Sentinel and a county historian, and I had a lot of respect for him. But I have had an opportunity since his death to do more research and I think McKoy was probably paid for his work."

McHugh, who lives in Brookdale, is writing a history of Santa Cruz County.

Mrs. Ley said that George Ley, her father-in-law, who was postmaster in 1910-12, came to the Felton area from Germany in 1885-86, and was both in the lumber business and a partner in the Russell & Ley general store that was torn down a few years ago to make room for the Foster's Freeze on the corner of Highway 9 and Mt. Hermon Road.

George N. Ley, Mrs. Ley's late husband, became a county supervisor. "Our children, Les, Don and Maybelle, are third-generation members of the family," she said. "My grandchildren, Marsha, Rhodna and Jennifer are the fourth generation to live here."

Parkison, 85, oldest living Felton ex-postmaster (1941-56), said that when he took the job Felton was little more than a "crossroads" but that it began to build up shortly thereafter as World War II defense plant workers

in the San Jose area came flocking to the valley in quest of housing.

"I enjoyed every day of the slightly more than 15 years I was postmaster," Parkison said. "We helped to build up the community. It was a lot of work. Back then we were only allowed to pay helpers 69 cents an hour. Since workers could get \$1.50 per hour in the defense plants, my wife and I ended up doing a lot of work."

According to Humbert, another ex-postmaster (1956-58) the Felton Post Office established the first rural carrier route in the valley in 1948. Humbert was the carrier.

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