

CHESTER TIMES – December 15, 1905

THE POSTAL HISTORY OF DARBY BOROUGH – Office Established in the Town Nearly One Hundred Years Ago

The Darby Progress has the following sketch of the postal business in the borough:

A year ago, December 12, 1904, in the midst of a severe snow storm then raging Darby post office was moved into its present commodious quarters in the handsome post office building then just completed by our energetic townsman, Captain Albert F. Damon, the erection of which has been started in August previous.

The erection of the building was at the suggestion of Postmaster Magnin, who had been looking about for more suitable apartments for the handling of "Uncle Sam's" mail. He had tried in vain to get capitalists interested, and finally pointed out the possibilities to captain Damon, who lost no time in securing a purchase option of the corner lot at Ninth and Main Streets, known as the Pearson homestead, and shortly afterwards building operations began and were pushed rapidly to completion, thus giving to Darby one of the largest, finest and most commodious office buildings and public hall to be found in Delaware County.

The apartment designed for the post office met with the approval of the Post Office Department, and a lease of ten years was effected between the United States Government and Captain Damon. Postmaster Magnin lost no time in getting into the new quarters, and, above stated, one year ago moved from the old post office, now occupied by the five and ten cent store, being the first tenant to occupy the new building, which is now practically filled with various business enterprises, the moving of the post office being effected without the people of the borough being aware of the change and without disarrangement or delay in the handling of the mails.

ESTABLISHED 95 YEARS AGO – It is a fact, not generally known, that the post office now occupies the exact site where it was when the Darby Post Office was first established on January 1, 1810, ninety-five years ago. Previous to this time the nearest post office station or relay, was Leach's Hollow on Darby Road, now Fifty-second and Woodland Avenue, the other at the White Horse Tavern on the Chester Pike, the mail for the residents between these two offices being handed out by the postman in the mail coach or on horseback at convenient points along the route, including the Bell Tavern at Cobb's Creek, and the Buttonwood in Darby.

The post route at that time was from Philadelphia to Baltimore, thence to Washington, and the mails were carried in the mail stage with armed guards and sometimes by postmen on horseback. The mails continued to be carried in this manner until the building of the Philadelphia and Darby Horse Railway, which then took the contract to carry the mail, until the building of the Pennsylvania Railroad, about thirty years ago, when the carrying of the mail was transferred to the railroad company and delivered at Darby station, being conveyed from the station to the post office by messengers who secured the positions by contract with the Government as lowest bidders under what is known as the Star Route System.

This mode of receiving and dispatching mails from Darby continued in vogue until April 26, 1897, when a contract was made with the Philadelphia Traction Company, and since that time, mails to and from Darby have been handled on the United States Mail Trolley Cars. The last messenger to carry mails to and from the post office to the station,

and who held the position for a number of years was William McFadden, who died a few years ago.

**DARBY'S FIRST POSTMASTER** – The Darby post office was established under the administration of President James Madison, who appointed Benjamin Pearson postmaster of Darby on June 1, 1810, and the post office was opened by Mr. Pearson at his home in the frame building at the corner of High and New Streets, now Ninth and Main Street.

Benjamin Pearson, was the father of Alice Pearson, who continued to reside in the old homestead, where she was born up to the time of her death, April 9, 1902, about a year  
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Appointed Captain Albert Magnin postmaster of Darby, but he did not enter upon the duties of the office until September 1, 1900, when having fitted up the store room now occupied by the five and ten cent store, with a complete new post office equipment, removed the post office to that location where it continued until December 12 of last year, when it was moved to its present quarters.

Captain Magnin's first appointment by President McKinley was during a recess of the United States Senate and when that body adjourned on March 4, 1901, his confirmation had not been acted upon, thereupon he was reappointed by President McKinley on March 17, 1901, and continued to serve as postmaster under that appointment until May 24, 1902, when he was again appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt and confirmed by the United States Senate.

Since Postmaster Magnin took charge of the office the business of the office has doubled in volume in all branches. On July 1, 1904, the office was raised to the grade of second class, and during his incumbency it has been an international money order office.

Postmaster Magnin came from Philadelphia to Delaware County at an early age and engaged to work for the late Archie Anderson of Lansdowne, then a milkman at Garrettford and attended the public schools at Garrettford. About a year afterward he engaged as a farm boy with James Hannum a farmer on one of Dr. George Smith's farms, near Garrettford, with whom he remained until the breaking out of the Rebellion, and on April 13, 1861, at the age of fifteen, he enlisted as a private in Company D, Colonel Small's Twenty-sixth Regular Pennsylvania Volunteers.

In December 1863, he re-enlisted in the field at Brandy station, Va., as a veteran-volunteer and shortly afterward was transferred to Colonel Biles' Ninety-ninth Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, and in January 1865, was again promoted and transferred to Colonel Moore's Two Hundred and Third Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, and assigned to staff duty of the second Division, Tenth Army Corps, and mustered out July 24 1865. He served throughout the war period through the grades from private soldier to captain, and was wounded in the battles of Fair Oaks, Chancellorsville and Petersburg. He served five years as clerk in the Philadelphia Post Office, was twice selected to the Pennsylvania Legislature and for the past sixteen years has been the owner and editor of The Progress, which he founded in 1859.