

Thanks very much, Paul, for the kind introduction and for all the work you have done to bring this about. You've made it easy. Thanks too to the Philatelic Society of Lancaster County (pronunciation!) for having me. And very special thanks to each and every one of you for showing up! As a member of the Houston Philatelic Society, I have been fortunate enough to have been regaled on Zoom many times by Charlie di Como and Paul Petersen. So I thought that I would return the favor, at least I hope it's a favor.

My topic is a response to Charlie's presentation to our society on Pawling, NY. Like Charlie, I have a very strong interest in communities – who founded them and why, how they grew or perhaps disappeared, etc. In fact, my number one collecting passion is covers from discontinued post offices in Texas.

#2 SLIDE OF BACKGROUNDS

Just a little bit of **PERSONAL AND COLLECTING BACKGROUND** relating to the topic of this presentation. I am a self-avowed “history nut” who taught the subject for over four decades. I am also blessed (or cursed, take your choice) with the “collecting gene.” So collecting stamps and postal history was a “natural” for me. My research and collecting of COVERS started back in the summer of 1978 when a friend of mine and I travelled to 13 nearby Texas counties to visit the post offices still operating there. We wound up driving through some communities that I realized once had post offices of their own. My research and collecting interests were stirred up, and the next thing I knew, my collecting and research had grown from the original 13 counties to the entire state – no fewer than 254 counties, the most by far of any state in the country. After over 20 years the result was a lot of covers and this CD-ROM.

#3 SLIDE of CD-ROM + Alphabetical list of all the postmasters who ever served in Texas

#4 SLIDE OF ANDERSON COUNTY (the first alphabetically)

NOW TO THE INTEGRAL STUFF – THE PRESENTATION AT HAND. Recently I decided that, armed with the information that I had at hand, it would be great fun to go one step further and head out into as many counties as possible and

visit and photograph the locations of all the ***independent*** post offices (not stations or branches) which had ever existed in the county – from Spanish days to the present. I found a friend, not a collector but a fellow history aficionado who loves photography as well, to accompany me.

#5 SLIDE OF COUNTIES VISITED

Here's a map of the 37 counties which we have traversed so far, one with as few as 7 total post offices, one with as many as 67. We have chosen to focus on counties that for the most part have not been affected by urban sprawl.

It turned out to great fun – getting off the highways and onto the byways to see these counties thoroughly – the dirt roads to the off-the-beaten-path rural sites, the occasional wildlife, ramshackle buildings, chats with postmasters and other residents in the areas, etc. And this joy is what I wanted to share with you this evening. It is something that anyone can have fun doing, no matter how small in scale the venture might be. So I thought I'd spend some time with you about where to find the necessary information and how I plot such a trip.

#6 SLIDE OF IDENTIFYING THE POST OFFICES

The labor of identifying the post offices that existed in each PA county has already been done for you, and wonderfully so, by Thomas Mazza on the Pennsylvania Postal History Society website. Just for fun I have chosen to briefly focus on a delightfully named post office in Lancaster's own back yard.

#7 SLIDE OF B-H-POST OFFICES

#8 SLIDE OF MAZZA'S PAGE FOR BIRD-IN-HAND

If you wish to go to the original primary source you can find the *RECORD OF APPOINTMENT OF POSTMASTERS* on Ancestry.com – Advanced Search.

#9-10 SLIDES of B-I-H in RAP

Keep in mind that these are OFFICIAL dates of the postmaster's appointments; the post office might very well have opened or closed a little earlier or later than the dates given.

#11 SLIDE OF IDENTIFYING THE LOCATIONS

This one can be much tougher. Their location is often very elusive, compounded by the fact that Texas is not surveyed into townships and sections but rather by metes and bounds. Many post offices came and went in a matter of years, or even months – both during the Republic and statehood eras.. They may never have represented a community but rather just a neighborhood, and might have been lodged in somebody's long-gone home or general store. They may have a name concocted by the postmaster himself and unrelated to any local name – maybe for a daughter or a previous home in another state or a favorite horse.

The major primary source, although it can be disappointing at times, is the US Post Office's *SITE LOCATION REPORTS* which spans the 1870s to the 1950s. Before a post office could begin operation it had to be approved by the US POD. That approval process centered around a formal application which the prospective postmaster would submit – an application which asked about the desired name, the location of the nearest existing post offices, the closest creek and river, and the nearest railroad, among other things. The applicant was also *supposed to* provide a map of all this.

#12 SLIDE OF B-I-H SITE LOCATION REPORTS

<https://www.archives.gov/research/post-offices/locations-1837-1950.html>

Sometimes the applicants did not know the information or chose not to go to the trouble to provide it. And the reports do not cover those post offices which came and went prior to 1875. So secondary sources are often very valuable. These can include:

#13 SLIDE OF SECONDARY SOURCES

#14 SLIDE OF PLOTTING THE TRIP

Now that you have the names and sites:

I start with an overall **county highway map** and plot the PO sites and MANY roads – those that lead directly to the sites but also others in case I get lost or

change the itinerary because of road construction or whatever. Make sure your car's reverse gear is working well.

Things can be quite busy. For example here's the NE quadrant of Liberty County,

#15 SLIDE OF LIBERTY COUNTY - NE

For simplicity's sake I have chosen the one with the fewest post offices - 7

#16 SLIDE OF MENARD COUNTY – as you can see there is a whole lot of very little here.

#17 SLIDE OF ITINERARY: Then I work up an **ITINERARY**

Then I use one more map for - a detailed view of each post office each post office, using **GOOGLE EARTH**. For DPOs I use Google Earth's **topographical** maps and look for things like clusters of houses, cemeteries, crossroads, churches (thank god for Baptist churches which were often named after their community), road signs that bear the name or a hint, etc.

For existing offices I use the Google Earth **road** maps, since they can show you the exact street where the post office is - very important for larger cities.

I arrange these maps in the order we reach the sites. We use the large road map to reach the general area, then we use the Google Earth maps for a more precise location.

#18-19 2 SLIDES OF THE ERNA (TOPO) AND MARENGO/HEXT (ROAD) SITES - our first three stops as we entered the county.

#20 SLIDE OF TAKING THE TRIP

#21-22 2 SLIDES – EXPEDITION (NOTES, SOME REWARDS)

Note: At this point I have finished with the details on how to get started. What's ahead of us at this point are the highlights of an actual trip – to show some of the rewards. It is to my mind entertaining and fun, but given the passage of time if you would like to duck out at this point, I understand.

#23 SLIDE OF A TRIP:

Okay – let's take a trip!

I have chosen a recent trip that involved three counties – Gillespie, Kimble, and Menard. Bill and I live a couple about 2 1/2 hours from each other. This one was getting pretty far away from me so I stayed the night at his place before we ventured forth.

And here are some slides of the postal history that attracted us to these three counties and some of the neat things that we encountered on this trip.