THE OREGON COUNTRY

**Celebrating 150 Years
Saint Paul Post Office
97137
1874 - 2024**
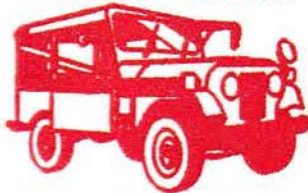
St. Paul, Oregon 97137
Celebrating 150 Years
Post Office
June 24
1874 - 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Saint Paul, Oregon Post Office Celebrates 150 Years
by Tim Bergquist

Introduction

On June 24, 2024, the St. Paul, Oregon post office celebrated 150 years of continuous service. This article provides information about that celebration, but first background on the town, the church, and the post office is provided. I organized the celebration and enlisted the support and sponsorship of the St. Paul Mission Historical Society, of which I am a member of the board of directors.

The Town

St. Paul was one of the first white settlements in Oregon, settled in about 1830 by French-Canadian trappers who were former employees of the Hudson Bay Company. It is named after the Roman Catholic Church which was dedicated in 1839. It was on the main road through the Willamette Valley and provided much agricultural products to towns downriver and to California via steamboats that would stop at St. Paul, or Mission Landing. The town in Marion County is at the center of French Prairie in the Willamette Valley and is approximately eight miles west of Woodburn and nine miles south of Newberg on Oregon Highway 219.

The town was not incorporated until 1901. The St. Paul Historic District, the central part of town with 88 acres containing 63 properties, was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. As of the 2020 Census, there were 434 people in the town. Agriculture is still a major industry in town and today's crops include grapes, hazelnuts, grass seed, nursery stock, and of course, hops. The St. Paul Rodeo held for four days around the 4th of July each year since 1936 is a major event in the town.
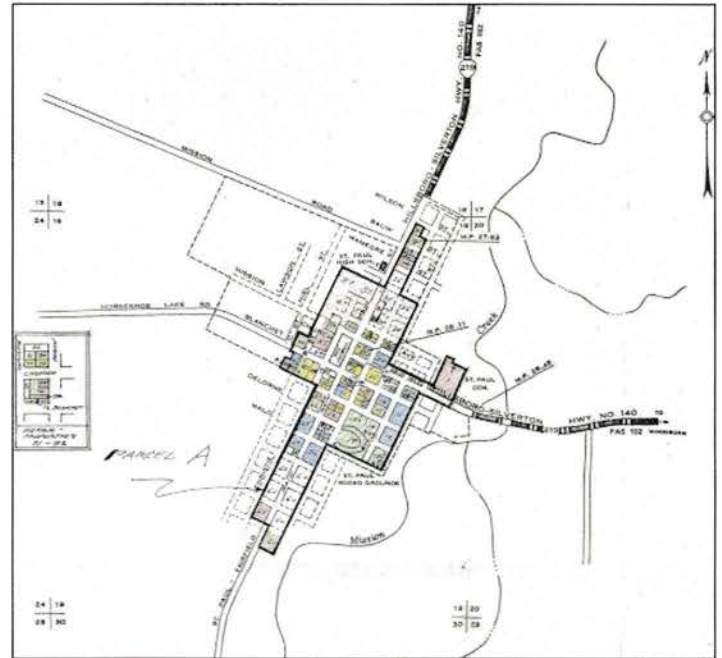
The Church

In 1836 the French-Canadians settlers built a 30-by-70-foot log church at St. Paul. A replica of this original wood church is shown below.

After four requests for a priest, Fathers Francois Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers, arrived at Fort Vancouver in November 1838. Father (later Archbishop) Blanchet celebrated the first Catholic Mass on January 6, 1839, the Feast of the Epiphany, and dedicated the church to St. Paul. Hence the name of the town.
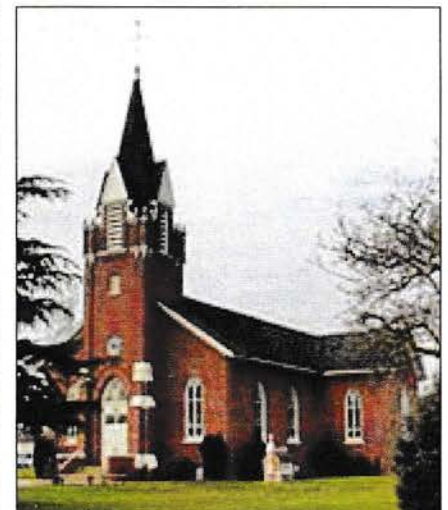
A new church was built using about 160,000 bricks that were fired on site. This church, dedicated on November 1, 1846, was 100 feet long and 45

Historic district, as submitted in the application for historic status.

feet wide with two 15-by-15-foot side chapels. The building was designed in the shape of a cross and had an 84-foot-high bell tower, a distinctive landmark. The church bell was cast in Belgium. The church was severely damaged in the March 1993 earthquake. Because of the building's historical significance, the parish decided to restore it, and the walls were taken down and rebuilt with concrete and steel before reinstalling the original bricks. The church was rededicated on November 5, 1995. It exists today pretty much like it did in 1846; it is the oldest brick building in the Pacific Northwest. The church was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. The church celebrated its 185th

Replica of 1836 church. (Image courtesy of St. Paul Mission Historical Society). and the current St. Paul Catholic Church. (Author's photo)

anniversary in 2024.

From 1844 to 1850, on land about one mile west of St. Paul, Father Pierre DeSmet of the Jesuit order established the St. Francis Xavier Mission, which served as the mission headquarters for the Pacific Northwest. But it proved too remote a location and the priests moved to California, where some of them founded Santa Clara University. The land where the mission was located was sold to my great-great grandfather in 1871, and remains in the Connor family today. Mission Landing is also part of the family property.

The Post Office and Postmasters

In 1850 Charles Ray bought the Oregon City-to-Salem mail route, which passed through Champoeg and St Paul. It was the only wheeled mail route in the Oregon Territory. Later that year, the Salem-St. Paul-Champoeg stage route was established by the Territorial government. Beginning in 1851 steamboats began docking at Mission Landing, one mile west of town.

The first post office in St. Paul was established on June 24, 1874, with John F. Theo B. Brentano as the postmaster. For a time, the post office was in the store of Emmett Kirk who was postmaster from 1887 to 1899.

The current post office is located at the southeast corner

The first post office in St. Paul.
Courtesy St. Paul Mission Historical Society.

*The current post office in St. Paul.*

of Main and Blanchett streets with the address of 20180 Main Street NE. The building was dedicated on November 4, 1961.

St. Paul has zip code 97137. Shown below is the boundary map of the current zip code area. It is bounded on the north and west by the Willamette River. It includes the old post offices of Champoeg (1850 to 1864 and 1880 to 1905), Newellsville (1864 to 1880), and Saint Clair (1859 to 1860 and 1868 to 1869).

Table 1 is a list of postmasters of St. Paul since 1874. The list was initially obtained from Steven Kochersperger at the USPS in April 2015, and recently updated through the Postmaster Finders webpage. Peter I. McDonald was the longest serving postmaster at 34 years (1911 to 1945). My uncle, Gerald (Jerry) P. Connor, Jr, was postmaster from 1945 to 1956. Joe McKay, a distant cousin of mine, was a prominent citizen of St. Paul and the second longest serving postmaster at 27 years (1958 to 1985). Joe was also a founder of the St. Paul Mission Historical Society. Coleen Nolen has been the current postmaster since 2022.

The 100th Anniversary

Joe McKay organized a celebration to mark the 100th anniversary of the St. Paul post office. The program for the 100th Anniversary of St. Paul Post office shows an envelope he developed that was cancelled on June 24, 1974 with a special cancellation on Scott 1509. The cachet shows a picture of the first postmaster J.F.T.B. Brentano and an image of the first post office.
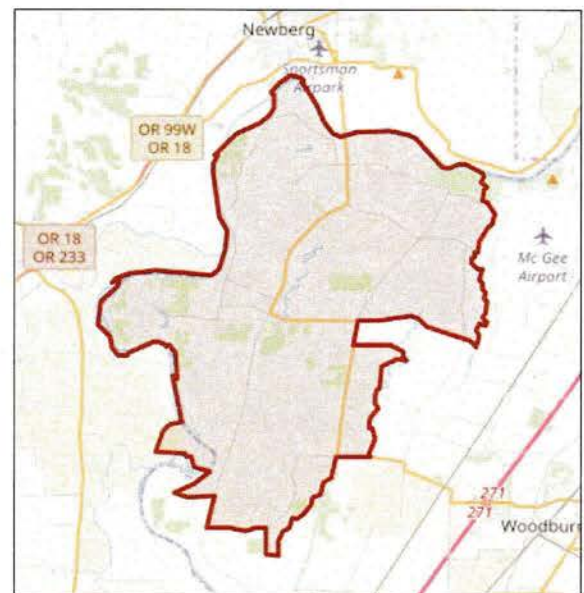

Boundaries of the 97137 zip code.

Postmasters of Saint Paul

Name	Title	Date Appointed
John F. Theo B. Brentano	Postmaster	06/24/1874
Charles O. Pellard	Postmaster	05/17/1881
Robert E. Kirk	Postmaster	02/23/1887
Joseph L. McDonald	Postmaster	12/28/1899
Peter I. McDonald	Postmaster	03/16/1911
Gerald P. Connor, Jr.	Acting Postmaster	07/31/1945
Gerald P. Connor, Jr.	Postmaster	07/17/1947
Elizabeth A. Faber	Acting Postmaster	10/19/1956
Joseph D. McKay	Postmaster	03/19/1958
Judy L. Davis	Postmaster	09/14/1985
Diana J. Maus	Officer-In-Charge	06/26/1996
Nicholas J. Hager	Postmaster	08/17/1996
Janice Abraham	Officer-In-Charge	02/27/2004
Pamela A. Ashley	Postmaster	06/12/2004
Steve R. Sanks	Officer-In-Charge	09/10/2007
Kevin Peterson	Officer-In-Charge	01/04/2008
Barbara G. Walters	Postmaster	04/12/2008
Kathryn Lentz	Officer-In-Charge	09/15/2009
Mary C. Nielsen	Postmaster	06/30/2012
Richard Wood	Officer-In-Charge	
Marilyn K. Fulton	Postmaster	11/01/2014
Colleen A. Nolen	Postmaster	08/27/2022

The back page of the program for St. Paul's 150th birthday was this table of the postmasters for the office. It has been re-created here for clarity.
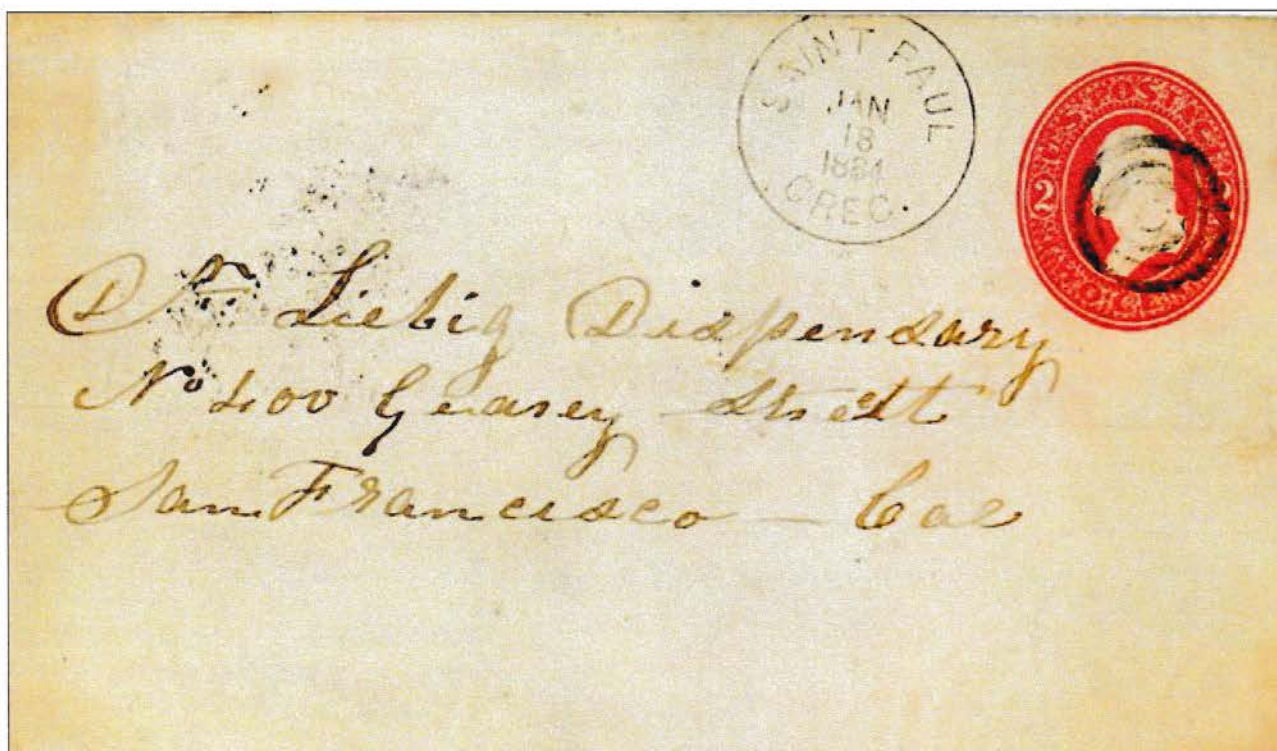
Saint Paul, Oregon, 1884 cds with target killer on cover to San Francisco. At the time it was sent Charles O. Pellard was postmaster.   Courtesy Bill Beith.

The 150th Anniversary

On Monday June 24, 2024, a celebration was held at 1 p.m. behind the St. Paul post office to recognize the 150th anniversary of the establishment of that post office. I organized the celebration. I first contacted the board of directors of the St. Paul Mission Historical Society in April 2024 to see if they wanted to sponsor the event, which they agreed to do. Next a local member of the board and I met with the postmaster to get her approval and support, which she enthusiastically provided.

I submitted an application in May 2024 for a pictorial cancellation to the postmaster, who forwarded it to the regional office in Portland. The illustrated cover shows the final version approved by the USPS (note that the date June 24, 2024 is missing, but is required by postal regulations). I then created a cachet for both a large and small envelope and purchased two rolls of the 2022 U.S. flag stamp, Scott 5656. The cachet shows the first and current post offices.

Another member of the board contacted the St. Paul JCs who provided $200 to support the event. Thanks to yet another member of the board, articles about the upcoming event were published in two local newspapers: the *Newberg Graphic* and the *Woodburn Independent*. In addition, an announcement was placed in the St. Paul Catholic Church bulletin.

I created a bi-fold 5.5 inch by 8.5-inch program in Microsoft Publisher that listed the participants and included several images. I served as MC. Members of the board helped set up (and later take down) the tables, canopy, chairs, and sound system. The invocation was given by Reverend Scott Baier, pastor of the St. Paul Catholic Church, and then Mayor Marty Waldo and Postmaster Colleen Nolen spoke. I also picked up an exhibit frame from the Salem Stamp Society and displayed my stamp exhibit titled *St. Paul, Oregon 97137: Its Postal History Since 1874.*

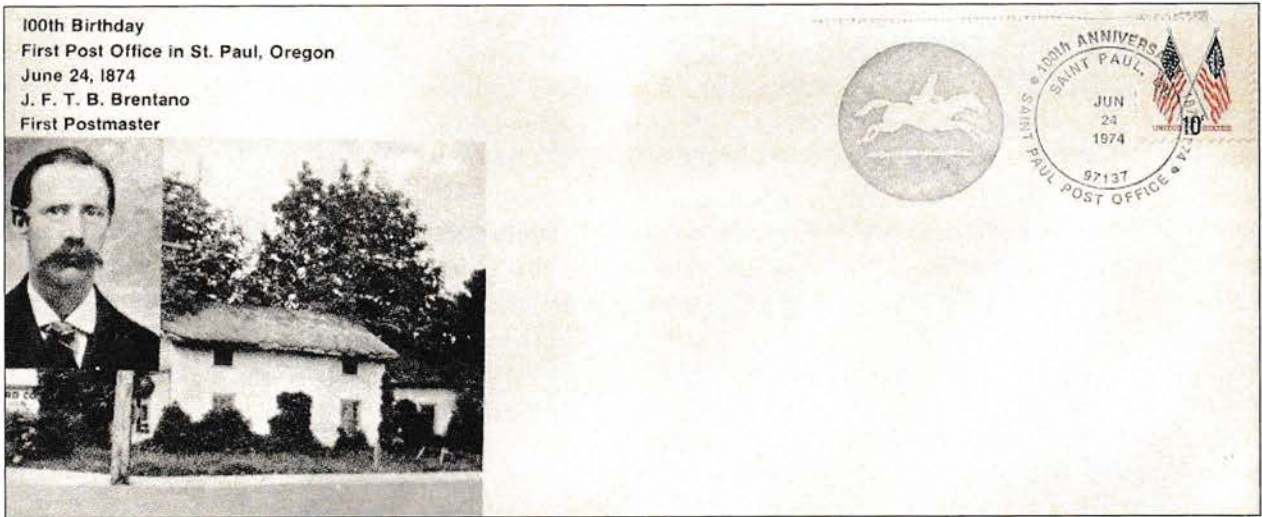Finally, there was a cake and cookies along with bottled water, provided by my sister. I placed on the cake two tiny postal vehicles I purchased from the USPS. There were about 40 people in attendance. The celebration lasted about 30 minutes.

Summary

The celebration was a joyful event marking the 150th anniversary of continuous service of the post office in this town that is one of the earliest white settlements in the state of Oregon. Although it has been overshadowed by other cities, it has a rich history, and the post office is most definitely a part of that.

References

Bergquist, Timothy M. "St. Paul Roman Catholic Church." March 2015. http://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/st._pauls_church/#.VQxg9GxOVLM

Bergquist, Timothy M. "St. Paul." July 2015. https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/st._paul/#.XTuKWntlCM8

Bergquist, Timothy M. "St. Paul Rodeo." January 2020. https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/st-paul-rodeo/#.XhfSYSN7mM9

Bergquist, Timothy M. "The Role of Mission Landing in the White Settlement of the Willamette Valley of Oregon," *ACE Day Proceedings 2014-2015.* Eugene, OR: Northwest Christian University, 66-86. (thesis for history degree).

Bergquist, Timothy M. *St. Paul, Oregon 97137: Its Postal History Since 1874.* Single-frame Exhibit at PIPEX 2021. (updated from 2019, show cancelled in 2020).

Brown, Judy, and Calvert, Jennifer (eds.) *From Wild Meadows... and Days Remembered: A Cooperative Oral History Project of St. Paul Residents and the St. Paul High School Class.* Volume 1 (2000), 2 (2001), 3 (2002). St. Paul, OR.

Celebrating with Pictorial Postmarks. United States Postal Service, Washington, D.C. Publication 186, 2007.

Corning, Howard McKinley. *Willamette Landings.* Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 3rd ed., 2004.

List of Postmasters. United States Postal Service, Washington, D.C. https://about.usps.com/who/profile/history/postmaster-finder/postmasters-by-city.htm

McKay, Harvey J. *St. Paul, Oregon 1830-1890.* Portland: Binford & Mort, Publishers, 1980.

Munnick, Harriet D., and Warner, Mikel D, (eds.) *Catholic Church Records of the Pacific Northwest: St. Paul, Oregon 1839-1898 Volumes I, II and III.* Portland: Binford & Mort, Publishers, 1979.

Cake for the 150th Anniversary of St. Paul post office, with two miniature postal vehicles.

This envelope commemorates the 100th anniversary of the founding of the post office in Saint Paul, Oregon. It was cancelled on June 24, 1974, with a special cancellation on Scott 1509. The cachet shows a picture of the first postmaster J.F.T.B. Brentano and an image of the first post office.
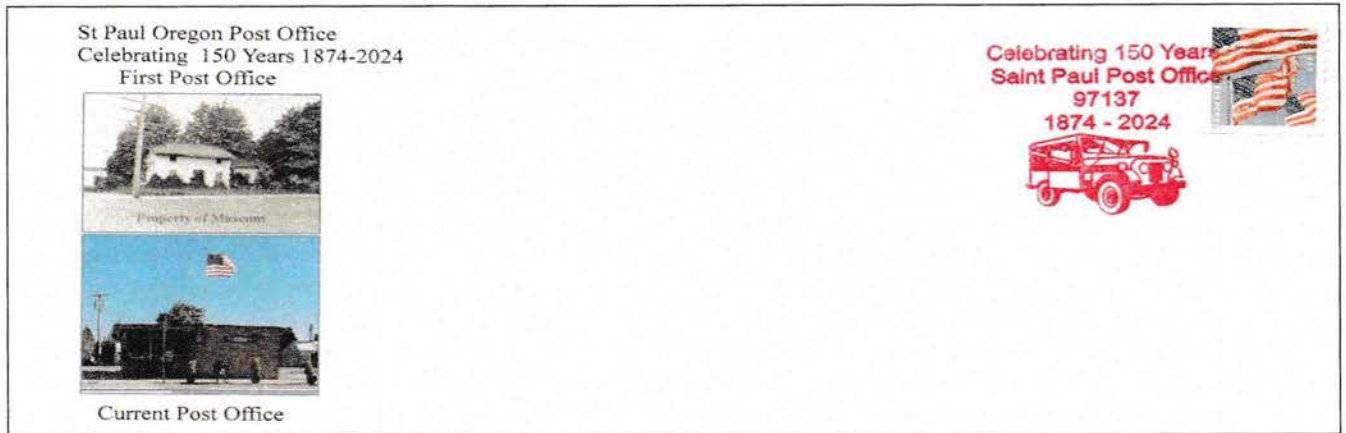
Envelope with cachet and pictorial cancellation approved by USPS for the 150th Anniversary of St. Paul post office.
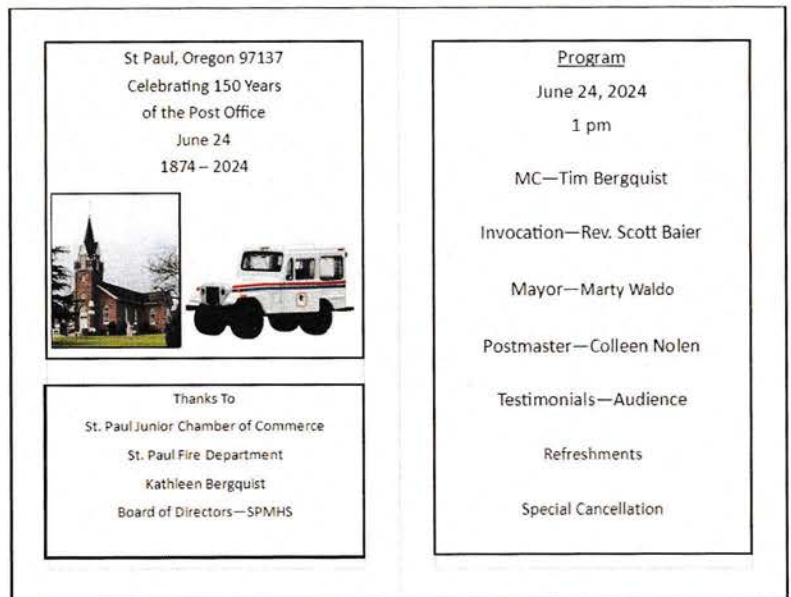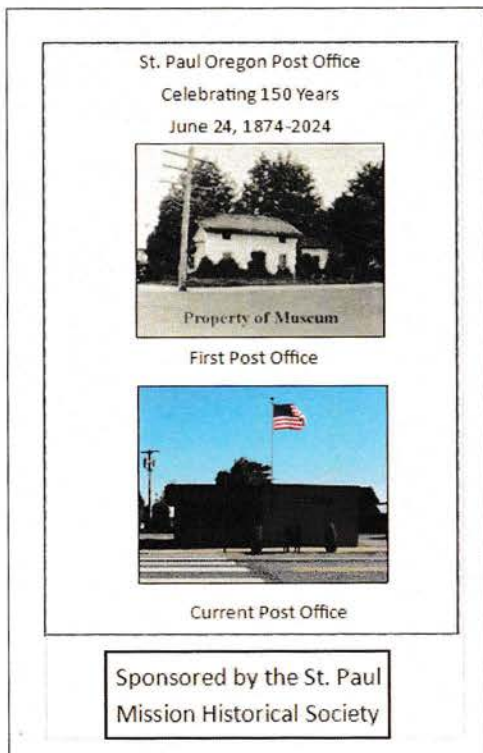
Program for the 150th Anniversary of St. Paul post office.
Sponsored by the St. Paul Mission Historical Society.