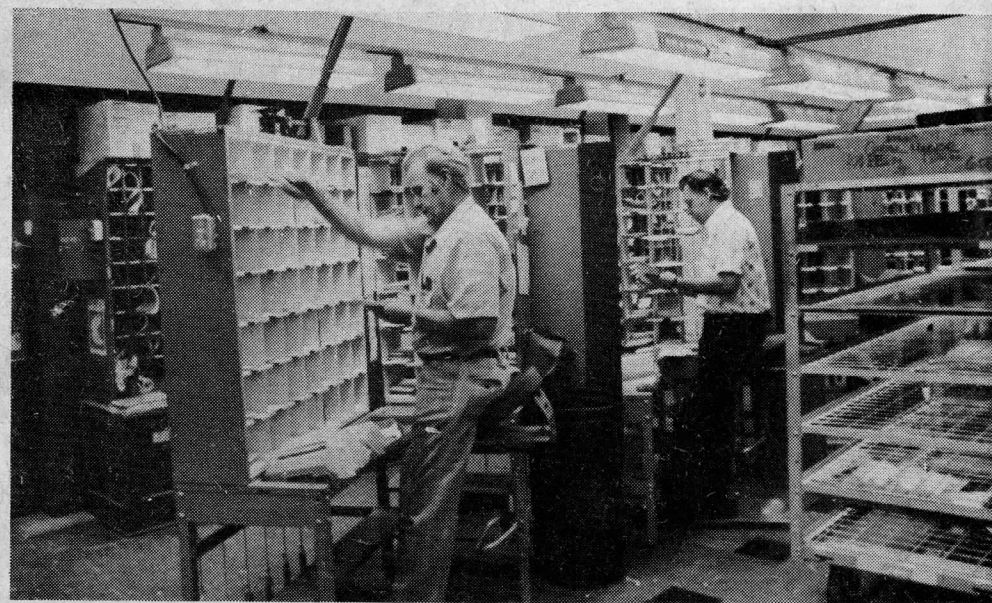




CUSTOMERS line up at the service counters inside the Carmel post office at mid-morning. (photos by George T.C. Smith)



SORTING THE MAIL is a particularly important task since there are no home deliveries in Carmel's central district. Joe Haney (left) and Bob Young put up the day's mail.

Whither the Carmel post office?

By FRANK BRUNO

CARMEL CANINES must feel deprived.

Where else in the country can a dog not feel the exuberance of chasing a mailman down the street?

Ever since long ago when the city fathers decided another quaint chapter to Carmel's existence would be to institute the postal box system of mail delivery, Carmelites have been trooping down daily to 5th Avenue and Dolores Street.

"I've been getting my mail here for 25 years and hope to keep getting it for another 50 years!" announced Carmel resident Margaret Masters. "We don't like numbers on our homes, neon signs and we like to get our mail at the post office."

What might well seem as inconvenience to those who are used to home delivery, the Carmelite (especially veterans) wouldn't have it any other way.

"I've been coming down here for 37 years," said resident Carl Bensberg. "I like it better this way. You know, it's kind of like the town pump, the way you get to see people you wouldn't ordinarily see. It's a nice walk for me."

Postmaster Sam R. Haley hasn't had any problem with residents being dissatisfied with the system in his two years at the post office. "The only time I've ever

had complaints was when someone new to the area moves in and expects their mail delivered to their home. I've only had about two or three like that over a period of two years."

Haley also agrees that the people seem to take pride in the fact their city takes a different approach to mail delivery.

"People here believe it's a quaint way to do business," added Haley.

Haley mentioned that the Postal Service also saves a "lot of money" by not having a home delivery system in Carmel.

"If we changed to home delivery now we would have to hire eight or 10 more people for sure," the postmaster stressed. "And I know we couldn't do it in this building right now."

There is a shortage of post office boxes, resulting in a waiting list for those who do not have one. They, in the meantime, have to pick up their mail in general delivery.

"The biggest single complaint we have with our operation is parking," said Haley. "We don't even have adequate room for our employees to park their cars."

Therein lies the two problems that the Carmel post office faces: a lack of parking, plus a lack of space to carry out the operation under pressure of growing demand.

THAT'S WHY Carmelites will be watching especially closely to see what postal officials decide to do, if anything, about plans to move the post office to Sunset Center.

The plan, which is more than one year old, was the first proposed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, when that branch of the federal bureaucracy handled real estate matters for the Post Office.

But, as of July 1, the real estate function has been turned over to the Post Office.

If postal officials decide to move forward with the plan, which has not yet been decided, they will again contact city officials about it. But no formal proposal to have the post office moved there is before the city at this time.

"The whole thing could go over next year, and we could sub-lease if this were to happen," said Sam Fraser, real estate representative for the district postal office in Sacramento.

Although the possibility of moving to Sunset Center has been proposed, no decision has been reached, he said.

"Everything is merely being considered."

One of the factors which interests postal officials about a move would be an increase in parking spaces from the current space of 6,000 square feet to some 40,000 square feet if the post office were moved.

The reasons originally proposed for the move were two-fold:

-- A desire to get traffic off the streets and into a parking lot to provide more room for mail sorting and delivery functions.

-- The need for more space occasioned by the rapid increase in the volume of mail processed in Carmel.

But whatever postal officials have up their sleeve, they would have to go through the city planning commission and city council, where public hearings would be held. No such hearings are scheduled at this time.

"I wrote the site selection analysis for the Corps of Engineers," said Fraser. "Something could happen next month or several months from now depending on consideration of acceptance."

It is the policy of the post

office to acquire property, but in this case it is not possible because the area considered is entailed by municipal bonds. The city is not empowered to turn over the land to the post office or anyone until 1989. But the land can be leased up until this time.

"After that, I assume the post office would make some kind of an effort to acquire the grounds and have complete ownership of the grounds and building," Fraser said.

Since no formal proposal has come before the city, the exact impact on Sunset Center is not known.

"I have absolutely no idea what the impact on the Sunset Center would be in terms of parking or anything until I see a proposal," said Sunset Manager Frank Riley.

"We can't give any better service at the present time in

our present building," mentioned Postmaster Haley.

Most people are so delighted with the fact that they can pick up mail at a place where they can meet old friends that it makes no difference to them where it is located.

"If they move it to Sunset it would make just as nice a walk for me," said Bensberg.

It seems that the main concern of people in Carmel is that no home delivery be instituted.

"I like it very, very much, it's somewhat of a tradition in Carmel," said August Nieto.

"It's good," enthused 40-year Carmelite John Canoles. "I wouldn't want this system changed by any means."

It appears that Carmel canines will be out of luck for a long, long time to come.

All Because We Don't Have Home Mail Delivery

A Fresno business man, Edwin M. Eaton, who has a Carmel home, filled the back page of his company magazine with an appreciation of the Carmel house naming tradition. His article follows:

THE PRESIDENT'S MONTHLY LETTER

One of the greatest charms of Carmel-by-the-Sea has always been its rustic village atmosphere. Built in pine woods bordering the beautiful Pacific Ocean, it has few sidewalks, street lights or other civilized aspects of the normal American town. Where trees grow in the streets, they are left unmo- lested. Traffic must detour around them.

In order to maintain the friendly small-town custom of meeting friends at the Post Office, the Carmel "natives" have insisted upon having no mail collections nor mail delivery within the city limits. This forces everybody to go to the Post Office for mail.

Since mail is not delivered, it has never been felt that house numbers were needed. As a consequence, most houses bear either the name of the occupant or an appropriate name for the house itself. This has led to considerable originality. It is interesting and amusing to walk about the picturesque village, noting the names people have chosen for their homes.

Many Houses are named for some feature of the site, as for instance "Twin Pines Cottage," "Oak Bower," "Wild Lilac" and "Sheltering Pines." Other names reflect the attitude of the owner. There is "Fancy Free," "Toujour Gai" and "Dunmovin." One house bears the name "It's Ours" while nearby is "The House of Hours." Some houses are named for their physical characteristics, like "Stonehouse" and "Rockbottom."

Carmel lots are mostly small (40x100 feet). This has led to the building of many tiny houses whose size is reflected in such names as "The Half Pint," "Demi Tasse," "Wee Haven" and "Nut Shell." Then there is the little house that has just been done over and named the "Bug's Ear." Probably the tiniest house of all is called the "Molecule."

The beach and sea are the sources of such house names as "Sea Urchin," "Sandpiper," "Sand Box," "Low Tide," "White Caps" and "Sunset."

The ship motif appears in some

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houses either in name or construction. There are anchors, propellers, ship's lanterns and hawsers. One house with a steep stairway has heavy rope banisters. Some of the nautical names are "Upper Deck," "Crow's Nest" and "Land Ho!"

The summer house which a Fresno contractor built for himself has a sign over its gate, "This is the House that Jack Built." The Walls family appropriately calls home "The House of Walls."

A house with a wordier sign than most, gives a hint of the trouble that the influx of tourists has caused home owners. The sign says "This House is Not for Rent and Not for Sale."

Of course there are many homes with Spanish names, such as "Casita Mia" (My Little House), "Las Ondas" (The Waves), "Muy Contento" (Very Happy) and "Casa Manana" (House of Tomorrow.) Next door to "Casa Blanca" is a new home which its owner with a sense of humor has named "Costa Plenty."

Some years ago a Fresno professor built a home near the beach where he hoped to retire. He called it "At Long Last." Another house is called "Right Ending," another "Shangri-la" and another "Snug Harbor." Perhaps the most appropriately named home in Carmel is that of a retired mathematics professor. During his forty odd years of teaching mathematics he, too, had looked forward to a little house by the sea where he might spend his later years. At last he achieved his goal. The little Carmel house to which he has retired bears a name plate with a geometric triangle in a circle and the words "After Math."

Cordially yours,
Edwin M. Eaton,
President