



The SHIRETOWN CONSERVER

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society
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The Great Post Office Scandal of 1917

How Dover and Foxcroft ended up with only one Post Office



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There were once six United States post offices in the towns of Dover and Foxcroft. Now there is only one. West Dover had a post office until 1872. South Dover and Dover South Mills had post offices until 1898. East Dover post office closed only in 1955. The towns of Dover and Foxcroft each had a post office until 1917. This is the story of how those two post offices merged into one.

Dover had a post office as early as 1839. Foxcroft's Post Office began as early as 1843. The Dover Post Office was in Merrick Square in the Woodbury block - at the corner of East Main Street and Essex Street. Old Timers in Dover-Foxcroft might remember this building as the Merrick Square Market. It burned in the late 90s. The Foxcroft post office for many years was with the telegraph office in the Hale block in Monument Square at the corner of Main Street North Street and Lincoln Street. (Today it's a pizza parlor). By 1911 the Post Office had moved across the street to larger quarters on the ground floor of the Opera House.

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The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society

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From the Piscataquis Farmer

"GOOD AND BAD SIGNS."

—1847—

When will signs and Wonders cease? –
 Not till the destroying angel shall clip short the thread of time, and the heavens be rolled together as a scroll. Not a day passes but we will see good and bad signs, as the following will show: -

It is a good sign to see a man enter your sanctum with a friendly greeting, 'Here's two dollars to pay for my paper.'
 It is a bad sign to hear a man say he's too poor to take a paper – ten to one he carries home a jug of 'white eye' that cost him half a dollar.

It is a good sign to see a man doing an act of charity to his fellow men.
 It is a bad sign to hear him boasting of it.
 It is a good sign to see the color of health in a man's face.
 It is a bad sign to see it all concentrated in his nose.

It is a good sign to see an honest man wearing his old clothes.
 It is a bad sign to see them filling the holes in his windows.
 It's good sign to see a man wiping the perspiration from his face.

It's a bad sign to see him wipe his chops as he comes out of cellar.
 It's a good sign to see a woman dressed with taste and neatness.

It's a bad sign to see her husband sued for her finery.
 It's a good sign for a man to advertise in the papers.
 It's a bad sign for the sheriff to advertise for him.
 It's a good sign to see a man sending his children to school.

It's a bad sign to see them educated at evening schools, on the public square.
 &c, etc, and so forth. – Goshen Dem.

Clearing-Up Sale.



During our stock-taking we found there were several broken lots in Men's, Youth's and Children's Suits. These are all of good quality and style, but we wish to clean them out at once, and in order to do so, have made prices that will move them quickly. In the Children's line there are Suits that we have been selling at \$2.50 to \$4.50, upon which we have placed a uniform price of \$1.75, sizes 5 to 11. In the Gents' line the sizes run large, but the price is small enough to make a good average, and you can have your choice of the lot for only \$4.50. Come now if you would improve THE OPPORTUNITY of the season.

Sanford Ritchie
 UNION SQ.,
 Dover, Maine.



(1916)

The person who went home Saturday night with a decent umbrella instead of the wreck with which he left home, can change back, if he wants to, by calling at the OBSERVER office. If he doesn't care to return the one he got in the exchange he can come and get the one he left.

(Editor, 1905)

(Post Office, continued from page 1)

It is important to remember that at this time, there was no mail delivery in the villages. Outside of the village, there were two Rural Free Delivery routes. But inside the villages, people had to physically walk to the post office to send and receive the mail (very few people had horses or cars!). By 1916 the center of business for Dover had shifted from Merrick Square to Union Square, so “through a special dispensation of the post office department collections were made before every mail at boxes in Union Square and at the Blethen House”.

For a period of 75 years the two post offices, Dover and Foxcroft, even though less than a mile apart did business for the Two Towns. But in 1916 that all began to change.



The Dover Post Office in Merrick Square (about 1910)

Ever since the Civil War the town, like the New England and the nation as a whole, was Republican in politics. But in 1912 Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat, became president. During his first term, in early 1916, he replaced the long-time (Republican) postmaster, Arthur Dinsmore, with a Democrat, Bion B Anderson. Shortly after the appointment of Mr. Anderson as postmaster we find in *The Observer* this notice from Liston Evans, the proprietor of the *Observer* (*The Observer* was probably the largest user of the Dover Post Office).

An Appreciation. Now that A. A. Dinsmore has completed a term of 16 years as postmaster of Dover, I want to give a personal opinion of his administration of the affairs of the office. During the greater part of these 16 years I have gone to the office for the mail, usually two trips a day, which has put me in rather close touch with the postmaster and his clerk, yet I cannot recall in all that time anything but uniform courtesy and accommodation and very rarely a slip in the handling of my mail.

My best wish for postmaster Anderson is that he may be able to administer the Affairs of the office as well as Mr. Dinsmore has; if he can do better, its patrons will be indeed fortunate.

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(Post Office, continued from page 3)

Things appeared to have run smoothly for several months until in December of 1916 we find this notice in The Observer.

Dover post office will be moved. Postmaster Anderson has received orders from the post office Department to move the Dover post office from Merrick Square to his building on South Street next below the Mayo block. The change can be made as soon as the building can be got ready.

Mr. Anderson believes that the change should be made to provide better quarters for the office and to bring it to the business section of the village.



The Bailey Block, as a Post Office, about 1920
(Now part of the True Value Hardware Store)

“To his building on South Street”?? What’s that? Well in 1912 Mr. Anderson purchased the building known as the “Bailey Block”. A large three story building, it housed at various times a dry goods store, a creamery and other shops. By 1916 it was completely vacant. Today that building is part of the True Value store at the corner of South Street and Main Street. It’s the Green Building to the rear of the main building on Main Street..

Needless to say the proposed transfer of the Post Office to this site was a real surprise to most of the citizens of Dover. The article went on to say:

There has naturally been strong opposition to the change on the part of the people near Merrick Square who will have to go much further to get their mail or depend on the rural free delivery.

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(Post Office, continued from page 4)

Since there was still no free delivery in The Villages, perhaps as an inducement by Postmaster Anderson to make the switch of post office easier, we see this article in The Observer on December 28th.

Shall Dover have free Village delivery? Postmaster Anderson has taken up with the post office Department the matter of free delivery of mail in Dover Village by carrier and feels sure that it can be brought about if the citizens meet the requirements which are to have the houses numbered, provide suitable receptacles for the mail and have the sidewalks kept in good condition. Mr. Anderson has been working for this for some time and hopes the citizens will cooperate with him in bringing it about.

If Mr. Anderson thought this was going to satisfy the good citizens of Dover, he was mistaken. Within a couple of weeks the angry townspeople organized a special town meeting to discuss the topic. This article appeared in the January 18th issue of the *Observer*.

Dover's special town meeting. Voters make an emphatic protest against removal of post office. Central Hall was filled to the doors Saturday afternoon when the citizens of Dover gathered to discuss the proposed removal of the post office from Merrick Square to South Street. There was a large representation of voters, with residents of the village and of the surrounding country, and the gallery was filled with ladies and citizens of Foxcroft. They considered a resolution to be presented to the United States Post Office department at Washington. [The resolution read (in part)]:

“whereas, there is reason to believe that said post office department has authorized said change of location without full knowledge of the existing conditions in said town, the said department is now uninformed of too many important and material facts involved, therefore be it

Resolved: that we, the inhabitants of the town of Dover, in special town meeting assembled, do hereby enter our emphatic protest against such change of location, and do hereby request and strenuously urge that a further investigation of the conditions within said town of Dover be made, and in order to better promote such investigation, that a public hearing be ordered by said Department, to be held at said Dover at such time such inhabitants may have an opportunity to fairly present their views upon this most important matter.”

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(Post Office, Continued from Page 5)

Many prominent Dover citizens spoke on the topic. Among them was W. C. Woodbury, the son of C. H. B. Woodberry (who many years before had himself been the Dover Postmaster and, truth be told, just happened to be the owner of the Merrick Square post office building). The article continues

The reading of this report was followed by W.C. Woodbury who took up the matter from a mathematical standpoint, showing that if the office were removed to South Street, in the course of a year a patron below Merrick Square would have to travel the distance from Dover to New York City, or about 500 miles, in extra mileage. He also showed how much time the extra travel would take and converting time into money, showed what the extra travel would cost the patrons of the office.

During this meeting a discussion occurred concerning a proposal by a group of citizens to erect a new post office at the corner of Pearl and Essex streets. But postmaster Anderson, it was discovered, had written a letter to the post office Department averring

“...that the movement to erect a new building was purely partisan, and that the promoters were all Republicans and that Congressman Guernsey, who owned a large amount of property near the proposed site, had headed the subscription with a liberal Sum.”

George E Howard, said that:

“His firm was one of the few business houses around Union Square doing a considerable amount of business and patronising the Dover office. He said that through a special dispensation of the post office Department collections were made before every mail at the boxes in Union Square and at the Blethen house, a service which was a great convenience, but that the present incumbent of the office had reduced the collections, thereby causing much trouble.”

Clearly the good citizens of Dover were not happy with Mr. Anderson's apparent attempt to profit by his new position!

The article closed with:

...it was moved that the Selectmen and town clerk count the votes and they announced that there were 195 votes in favor of the resolution and none against it. The ladies in the gallery were given an opportunity to express their opinion and by an overwhelming majority supported the resolution as read [*women couldn't yet vote, but they were agitating for the vote - a story for another issue of the Conserver*]. The meeting was remarkable for its seriousness. The citizens look upon the proposed change in the location of the office as of grave importance and very little levity was manifested. It was also remarkable for the little personality used although many of the speakers feel very strongly on the matter.

In the same issue of the *Observer*, appeared a little article stating that the post office situation will be reopened. Congressman Guernsey was informed of the action of the town at the special meeting Saturday afternoon and on Tuesday afternoon W. C. Woodbury received the following telegram from him: “in view of the action of the town, department will reopen and thoroughly investigate post office situation.” (Cont'd Page 7)

(Post Office, Continued from Page 6)

Evidently 100 years ago the federal government could move with lightning speed, for in the very next issue of the *Observer* on January 25th, we see this article:

Hearing on Dover post office removal. The courtroom was filled to overflowing Friday afternoon at the hearing on the proposed removal of the post office which was held before inspector Hart of the department. Among those who spoke were the following

Mr. Sawyer, the foreman of the Brown Mills, said: 'in the mill 250 operatives are employed, three fourths of whom pass through Merrick Square on their way to and from work and hence are served by the post office as now located. If it were moved it would seriously inconvenience those people.'

L. A. Wilson said he lived on Essex Street in Foxcroft, but had been a patron of the Dover office for 32 years, since he was a half mile nearer then to the Foxcroft office. He frequently gets his mail on his way home from work - a privilege which he would not have if the office were changed.

C. W. Brown said he did not wish the inspector to get the idea that the lower part of the village was really the "Dead End" for in reality it is the life of the village.

J. T. Lucci said when his father moved to Dover in 1853 the post office was in the store now occupied by Dyer brothers and for 64 years it had remained in that or the adjacent building.

W. C. Woodbury offered the following statement which was unanimously agreed to. The people have not asked for the change in location. They do not want the change. The change is one which will accommodate no one.

More than a dozen other people made comments at the hearing, but the article concludes by saying 'postmaster Anderson was not represented and no one spoke in favor of the proposed change.'

Clearly nobody in Dover favored the move. But, alas, a week later, we read.

The post office situation. Anyone who has had the idea that the lower end of Dover Village is a "Dead End" must revise their opinion as it is very much alive over the post office situation and grows more alive every day.

The people felt very certain after the hearing before inspector Hart and after he had made a careful canvas of the Business and Professional men, that he would report against the removal of the office from Merrick Square, for the sentiment so far as the public knew was strongly against it, and there was great surprise and disappointment when it was known his report favored the change to South Street.

The *Observer* of February 8th had more news, this time for the citizens of both towns:

The post office situation. Village delivery to be established March 1st. The passive interest of Foxcroft people in the local post office situation became active when a report was circulated Wednesday afternoon that the post office Department had suggested that the Foxcroft office be discontinued because the Dover office would be so near that town when moved to South Street. That proved, however, to be a false alarm and the excitement had subsided by the last of the week. A village delivery will begin about March 1st with two deliveries in the business section and thickly settled residential sections and one on the more sparsely settled streets.

(Continued on Page 8)

(Post Office, Continued from Page 7)

This did not seem to calm the populace. The very next week February 15th this article appeared in *The Observer*.

Post Office Fight. ...The theme of Village free delivery does not appeal to the people. ...The people of Dover do not propose to go back to the old Stagecoach days of mail delivery, but they are willing to handle their own mail and can easily do so if the post office is kept as at present in Merrick Square. Never has any local question so stirred the people of the Town. Republicans and Democrats are united and all political differences are forgotten. The feeling of indignation is intense and is growing all the time.

In reading the issues of the *Observer* during this period, one gets the impression that Editor, Liston Evans, was generally a level-headed, mild mannered gentlemen. But over this issue, he seems to have let his temper flare. Even though he would personally benefit by having the post office moved from Merrick Square to just around the corner from the *Observer* office, he fired off this article on March 1st:

The Dover post office question. The Dover post office matter is fast becoming a Statewide scandal, and has in fact gone beyond State limits as two Boston dailies have just taken the matter up in their columns. In this boasted "Land of the Free and Home of the Brave" the present situation is difficult to understand. The average citizen oft times wonders whether he is asleep and afflicted with nightmare or if we are drifting back to primitive conditions with a return of chaos and old night. In any event there is something decidedly wrong when one man can overrule the desires and wishes of a whole community, bringing about conditions that would not be tolerated today in any other nation, on the face of the globe

The removal of the Dover Post Office from its present location to the old Creamery building would materially benefit but one person - the owner and present postmaster, Mr. Anderson. Removing the post office to his unused building near the Foxcroft Town Line, virtually giving this last named town two post offices, postmaster Anderson obliges a large majority of Dover citizens to walk from 1 to 3 miles extra each day for their mail,.

The Citizens of Dover still hope that it will be settled and settled right, and as it is so manifestly wrong to make such a change as Mr. Anderson proposes, they will fight the matter to the last ditch.

That must have had some effect because on March 15th we learn that the Post Office Department had suspended the move.

Things were quiet on this matter for several months. However, on July 19 the *Observer* printed this article:

Post Office situation. A new development important to Foxcroft. A letter: Washington DC. July 16th, 1917. To the Honorable Charles W Hayes, Foxcroft Maine.
Dear Mr. Hayes
I have just had a talk with the Postmaster General about the Foxcroft post office. He tells me that the department have definitely decided to consolidate the two offices and have one post office at Dover... I do not think that anything further can be done in the matter. I am sorry that I was not able to do anything for you. Sincerely, Frederick Hale. (Cont'd 9)

(Post Office, Continued from page 8)

Wouldn't you have hated to be in Mr. Anderson's shoes then? He not only had the citizens in Dover angry at him, but by the summer of 1917, the folks in Foxcroft were angry with him; and to top it off, even kindly Liston Evans was fit to be tied!

On August 2nd The *Observer* printed this article

Foxcroft Post Office. The post office Department has notified the Foxcroft postmaster that the lease of the Foxcroft office will be cancelled November 1st at which time the office will be consolidated with the Dover office.

Congressman Hersey today introduced a bill for the erection of a federal building at Foxcroft, Maine, with an appropriation of \$40,000 for site and building.

The bill asks that the Dover post office be abolished when the new structure is completed, thus combining the post offices of Foxcroft and Dover. It is understood that the citizens of Dover agree to the proposed change provided a suitable Federal Building is the result. There is but one post office under the name of Foxcroft in the entire United States, and that is the one in Maine, while there are 27 post offices in the country listed officially under the name of Dover.

Of course, the new "Federal Building" had to wait until 1936 for construction to begin as a WPA project in Foxcroft.

The citizens of Foxcroft, up in arms, were not about to give up easily. On October 11th, the *Observer* printed this letter from their Congressman, Ira Hersey, part of which reads:

"I filed the petition recently received from you containing some 500 names of patrons of the Foxcroft post office protesting against the proposed consolidation and expressed to the post office Department a warm disapproval of the proposed action and asked for a public hearing before the matter was finally decided."

But to no avail, The Post Office department did not relent and the consolidation was ordered to continue. The October 18th issue of the *Observer* carried this article:

Dover's new post office. Speculation concerning Dover's post office came to an end Monday when notices were found in the Merrick Square office announcing that on and after October 16th the business would be done at South Street. The change was made that evening, the tolling of the bell at the Brown Mills, expressing the feelings of the people in that vicinity in relation to it.

It was an undisputed fact that there was great need of a more commodious and better equipped office and although the change of location has been strongly opposed, it has been the means of giving Dover an office of which it may well be proud, for postmaster Anderson spared no expense in its equipment and inspector Olsen pronounces it the finest third-class office he was ever in.

So, it seems that editor Evans was, if not converted, at least somewhat mollified and, in any event, decided to make the best of a bad situation. To add insult to injury, the very next week the paper announced that the postage rate for letters would go up to three cents, and postcards to two cents (although within the district, the old two cent and one cent rates would remain). That same day the paper announced the routes and times of delivery for the twice daily delivery in Dover and Foxcroft. The article stated, in large type, "THERE WILL BE NO DELIVERY AT THE WINDOW OF ANY MAIL CARRIED BY THE CARRIERS. Patrons should accept either carrier service or box service."

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Annual Dues

Many thanks to all those who have sent in their Historical Society dues for 2018. We really appreciate having you as a member. If you haven't sent in your dues yet, please do so now so you can continue to enjoy all of the benefits of membership in the Historical Society, including receiving copies of the *Conserver*.

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society – Membership Application Form

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street: _____ City/State/Zip _____

E-Mail: _____

Annual dues are \$10 per person and \$7.00 for senior memberships. Please make checks payable to: Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, 874 West Main Street, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426. Dues cover January to December. If you are giving a gift membership, please include the name and address and we'll gladly notify the recipient of your gift.

(Post Office, from Page 9)

One last article on November 8th announced: **Foxcroft Post Office Discontinued**. With that, the villages were finally reduced to one single, reasonably centrally located post office (albeit an inconvenient walk for almost everyone in both towns!). The East Dover Post office lingered on until 1955 when it too closed. By that time of course the new Post Office in Foxcroft had long been in operation.

Bion Anderson (1876-1946), the much reviled Postmaster, lived in the old John Mayo house on East Maine Street (later the Koritsy house and now the "Varney Insurance Office"). In 1910 he ran as a Democrat for Register of Deeds, which position he held until 1915. He served for a single year in 1923 as a selectman for the town. After an early stint in the dry goods business, the rest of his business life was in the Insurance Business. For many years he handled the local business of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. He remained in this business until just before his death in 1946.

Ironically, in a fine postscript to our story, Mr. Anderson only served as Postmaster for a few more years. In 1924, (under a Republican President), Arthur Dinsmore was reappointed postmaster, a position he held for another 12 years.



Message from Mary

Things have quieted down at the Society after a very busy summer and fall. We can now concentrate on making plans for next year! Thoughts on now on the new display in our back room as we are taking down the World War One display which has been up and viewed for about four years. It seems like just the other day we were setting it up! The new display will be focusing on some of the businesses that were in town, such as the spool mill, Brown Mills, Cushing Perfection Dyes. If you have any artifacts that you'd like to share let me know. I am starting to collect things in our collection but will set up the display itself in early spring.

This quiet time is used by me to do research and write up some articles for our *Shiretown Conserver*. I'd love any suggestions you might have for stories for upcoming publications.

The Blacksmith Shop is now closed for the season. We had a successful summer there with visitors and demonstrations. Thank you Dave Lockwood for another wonderful year.

I'd like to wish every one of our members and their families a happy and healthy holiday season. 2019 is just around the corner!

Sliding in Dover Village
(From the *Observer*, Feb 3, 1916)

On account of several accidents which have barely escaped causing serious damage to persons on the streets of Dover, the selectmen have thought it necessary to take some steps to confine the coasting to certain prescribed streets. They therefore forbid sliding on Main street, High street, that part of Court street between High street and Main street, Pearl street, that part of Pleasant street between Union square and the Dover schoolhouse, and Harvey street; also have forbidden coasting on all sidewalks within the town. This leaves Pleasant street from Dover schoolhouse to the brook at the lower end of town and Court street from High street down Lawrence street open where those desiring to slide may enjoy the sport.

...any persons sliding on any of the streets where sliding is forbidden subject themselves to a penalty of \$5.00 and the forfeiture of their sleds. And the selectmen have notified all police officers and constables to enforce this regulation.

Our Corporate Sponsors

A grateful thank you to the following businesses whose funds support the Society and its efforts to preserve our history. When you shop or see these folks, please tell them 'thank you' for their support!

Ellen Anderson, D.P.M.
Family Eyecare
Green Door Gallery
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Maine Highlands Federal C/U
Mallett Real Estate
Steinke and Caruso
Rowell's Garage
Mark Stitham, M. D
Sean Stitham, M.D.

Thank you all!

Items Available

We thank Calico Corner Gift Shop on West Main Street for stocking our ornaments and DVD's. Please stop by their store and support this local business.

Glass Christmas ornaments: \$6.00 each (add \$4.00 for shipping)

- 2008 – Blacksmith Shop
- 2009 – Observer Building
- 2010 – Central Hall
- 2011 – Thompson Free Library
- 2012 – Foxcroft Academy
- 2013 – The Blethen House
- 2014 – Pleasant Street School
- 2015 – Mayo's Mill
- 2016 – Piscataquis County Court House
- 2017 – Brown Mills
- 2018 – (Old) Mayo Hospital

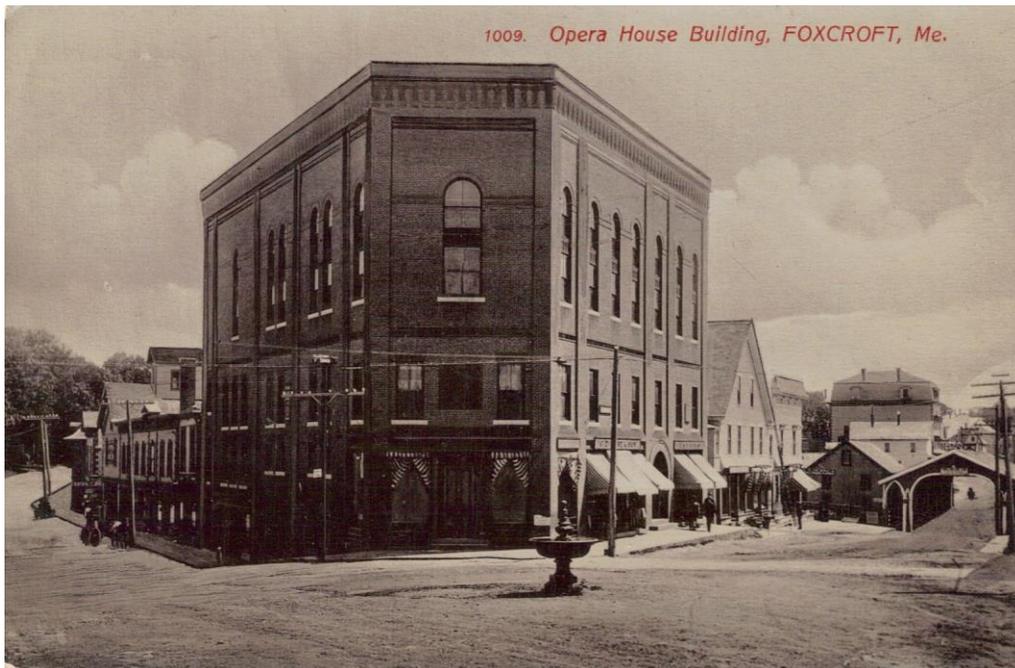
DVD's : Glimpses of Dover and Foxcroft - \$10.00 (add \$3.00 for shipping)

Memories of Central Hall/Lou Stevens - \$15.00 (add \$3.00 for shipping)

Dover-Foxcroft throws: \$40.00 (add \$8.00 for shipping)

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(The Foxcroft Post Office, until 1917, was on the ground floor on the left side)