

## ESTERO POST OFFICE

"ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SERVICE"

ESTABLISHED: MARCH 26, 1895

The first Estero Post Office was housed in the front of the Koreshan Unity General Store and it opened for business on March 26, 1895. The postmaster was George Hunt, a member of the Koreshan Unity.

In 1905, the Post Office was housed in a building next to the Estero River on the west side of US 41. On December 4, 1924, it moved into the new store building which burned to the ground on January 4, 1938. The Post Office was moved back inside the Koreshan Unity Store. The post office boxes were placed on the outside of the building. A new Post Office was built on the south side of the store some time later. The small building still remains today.

Antonio Fernandez brought the mail from the train at the Seaboard Coastline Railroad depot, located at the railroad crossing on East Broadway, by car to the Post Office. The Seaboard Coastline Railroad later became the Atlantic Coastline Railroad. The depot was dismantled in 1939. In 1940, Jack Schuler won the bid to bring the mail by truck to Estero, Bonita, Naples, Royal Palm Hammock, and Everglades City. He held the contract till 1944.

Carl Luetlich was the first "boat" mail carrier. From 1920-1923, he carried the mail three days a week to Punta Rassa, Black Island, and San Carlos Point. Later, Allen Andrews, the Koreshan News-printer, carried the mail by boat. The boats were named "The Victoria" and "The Cracker Bay". They were owned by the Koreshan Unity.

Antonio Fernandez was the maternal grandfather of Henrietta Davenport who later became "Officer-In-Charge" of the Post Office and was a clerk until her retirement in the mid 1970's. He was also the great-great maternal grandfather of present day clerk Kay McCullers. Carl Luetlich was the paternal grandfather of Mrs. Davenport.

Subsequent Masters of the Post in order were: Ada Price, sisters Rosa Gilbert and Anna Lewis (who's home still remains as part of the Koreshan State Recreational Area), Marie Fisher (the last Koreshan member to be Postmaster), Docia Anderson, OIC Henrietta Davenport, Ralph Marshall, OIC Eileen Davis, Charles Block, OIC Kay McCullers, William Slevin, OIC James Derringer, and Larry S. Ellis.

The Post Office moved to the San Carlos Park area in the mid 1960's and back to its present site in August, 1983. The Koreshan Unity at one time owned the property that the Post Office now occupies. It was through the diligent work of Hedwig Mitchell, former president of the Koreshan Unity, that the Estero Post Office returned to Estero proper.

We wish to thank Jo D. Bigelow, president of the Koreshan Unity Corp., her historians Sean Milks and Sara Rea, and support staff Evelyn Horne, Lorraine Norman, and JoAnn Schuler. Special thanks to Della Smith, Vickie Fernandez, and former Postmaster Charles Block.

For further historical facts about Estero, visit the Koreshan Unity College of Life located on Corkscrew Road. It is open 7 days a week. Many thanks to Hedwig Mitchell for her valiant life-time efforts in preserving the history of our community.