

# Post Office

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Location: 52 Main St. South, Seaforth, Ontario

Year built: 1911-1913

SEAFORTH POST OFFICE exhibits features of Romanesque Revival architecture: the square clock tower and the round-headed windows, echoed by the tower cornice. It was built on a standard plan designed by architects at the Department of Public Works. The standard plan was for a corner lot, but no suitable one was to be had in Seaforth, so the plan was modified placing the tower to the side of the front. The main section is a 2½-storey rectangle with mansard roof.



Note the rusticated stone foundation and the use of the white stone in the banding

The Department of Public Works also used a standard plan for the layout and construction of its post office buildings. Most post offices built between 1897 and 1914 were constructed of brick on stone foundations with a wooden framing system, and lath and plaster walls. The floors and stairs were wood, except for the concrete basement floor and tile bathroom floor. The interior is unadorned, apart from the simple, moulded plaster cornice. In the main post office area. The main floor was usually left as a large

open space for the post office proper. All post office buildings had a caretaker's apartment located on the top floor.

Despite the restrictions posed by a standard design, individual buildings were tailored to their surroundings. Seaforth Post Office was not only adapted to the site and the scale of the buildings around it; but to the Second Empire design of the Cardno Block directly across the street, and the town hall further down Main Street. The Post Office has a balanced façade and a projecting central tower in keeping with the main features of these two buildings.

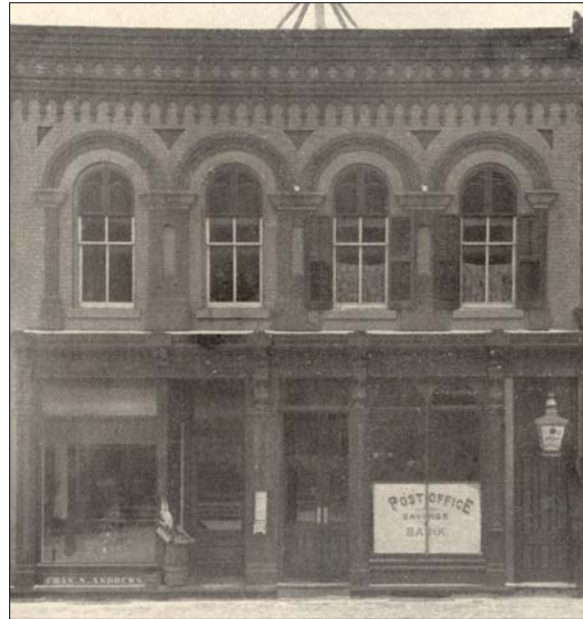
The Post Office was built during a time of economic prosperity. Seaforth was one among many small southern Ontario towns to prosper from a national shift toward

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an economy base more on industry and manufacturing. Seaforth had many things to recommend it for the site of a new post office building. It was on a direct railway line between the two busy ports of Goderich and Buffalo. The transportation of goods was a main income source for the town, goods such as the products of its salt wells, woolen, flour and flax mills, sawmill, foundry and cabinet factory. It was an important market town and had been a postal station for many years. There were two telegraph offices and two daily newspapers. As an outport of Goderich, Seaforth collected customs revenues as well as post office revenues.

Seaforth applied to the federal government for a post office and customs building in 1908. The government purchased the land on February 8, 1909 at a cost of \$4,000 and the contract to build was signed July 4, 1911. The building was completed in 1913.

The first post office in Seaforth was opened on December 1, 1859 with Alfred M. Patton as postmaster. It had been moved to Seaforth from Harpurhey. There is no record of its exact location in Seaforth at this time. From 1863 to 1869, the post office was in the James Dickson Block, the first brick store built in Seaforth at the corner of Main and St. John Streets (now the home of Nifty Korner's). In late 1869 the post office was moved south on Main Street to the north store of the newly built Samuel Dickson Block where it was until 1913.



The Post Office when it was located in the Samuel Dickson Block at 87 Main Street South, now home to L.J. LaPlante, Optometrist.

Since the 1860s, various stage routes were used to deliver mail. One of the earliest was a daily stage route from Seaforth to Wroxeter leaving Seaforth at 4 pm, arriving in Wroxeter at 10 pm; the return trip was made the next day. In the 1870s, if the postmaster could not deliver a letter due to an inadequate or illegible address, he would have a list of names published in the local newspaper.

Rural Route service - R.R. #1 Seaforth - was introduced in 1909. Horse-drawn vehicles were in use into the 1930s, weathering the elements to deliver mail on the rural routes.

W.M. "Marsh" Stewart, who for several years had the contract to deliver mail from the train to the Post Office, made his last delivery on Saturday, September 29, 1956. A new mail bus service was started October 1, 1956.

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