



Post Office Menzies – 1897

*Extract from “No Sign of the Time” a collection of stories of the Menzies district compiled by B & P Rogers which can be purchased from the Menzies Visitor Centre [visitorcentre1@menzies.wa.gov.au](mailto:visitorcentre1@menzies.wa.gov.au)*

The Progress Association organised a post office and provided some staff, but the town very quickly outgrew this makeshift arrangement. An official postmaster was appointed, S.R.H. Roberts, and when he arrived he found an inventory – “1 hanging lamp, 1 box nibs, 4 sheets foolscap, 940 unclaimed letters, 727 unclaimed papers, 4 bills”.

Roberts described his post office building as being roughly built with hessian, divided into two rooms 11 x 14, one for the office and one for sleeping. Two doors made from boxes, chimney of mud brick, no lining, no flyscreens, very hot in the day and perishing cold at night. Impossible to work inside in the hot weather, and the rain came through the hessian which was of poor quality and attached to rough bush poles. There was no floor except for dust two inches deep. He brought boxes with him to sort mail and papers into, but had no table or chair and no materials with which to make any, though he had the promise of more boxes arriving. He brought his own camp bed, pillow and rugs, and also a small clock.

Roberts contracted typhoid fever shortly after arriving in Menzies, and official from the Warden’s Courts looked after the mail. Chas Fisher replaced Roberts in November 1895. The telegraph line from Coolgardie was opened in December, providing a communication link which was greatly appreciated by the residents.

Early in 1896 the iron building which replaced the tents also became inadequate. Crowds waiting for mail would fight to get near the window, and the building often rocked upon its foundations. The staff were overworked and underpaid and Fisher sent an urgent telegram requesting permission to employ additional staff. He also asked for increases in salary to compensate for the drawbacks of

living in an isolated community. The Department so far had reluctantly paid some hospitalisation and doctor's fees, plus two lots of undertaker's fees. The Mayor also wired to the Premier supporting Fisher's demands and a new post office was build and better living quarters provided for the staff.

S.R.H. Roberts was Colonel of the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion A.I.F. in World War 1, D.S.O. and V.C. and became Deputy Director of the Posts in Western Australia. Chas Fisher who followed Roberts became Superintendent of Mails in Sydney. The chief telegraph operator, Peter Kennedy, later became a Deputy Director in South Australia.



Menzies Post Office Staff circa 1897