



FLORIDA POSTAL HISTORY JOURNAL

Promoting Philately in the Sunshine State



Vol. 24, No. 2

May 2017

Whole No. 65

Evinston, Florida 32633

By Phil Eschbach

Evinston, situated on the Marion-Alachua County line near Orange Lake, is over 130 years old. The post office was chartered in 1882, the same year the railroad and depot were built. However, an early Spanish mission, built in the 1500s, was located nearby. Prior to that, Native Americans roamed the area for thousands of years. It is said that one early settler in the area named Baxter traded with the Natives in the early 1800s. Probably the first early permanent settlers were the Reeves, from North Carolina, arriving around 1875. Shortly after, another family, the Wolfendons, arrived from Wisconsin. Then the Evins family arrived in the early 1880s from South Carolina. The Evins-Wood house (see photo), built in 1886 by William Drayton Evins, still stands today and has been restored by a descendant, Ashley Wood. Captain W.D. Evins, for whom the town is named, farmed much of the land in the area, as did the other settlers and their children.



Figure 1

Evins-Wood house today, built in 1886 by Captain W.D. Evins.

The current post office is in the old store (see *Figure 2* and *Figure 3*) which was built in 1882 as a warehouse for the railroad. It was sold in 1884 to J.S. Wolfendon when he was appointed postmaster. The first postmaster was George Center, appointed February 28, 1882. The second postmaster was Robert Bass, appointed August 20, 1883. Joseph Wolfendon, who also bought the store, was appointed on July 16, 1884. The current structure passed through several hands and was first used as a store by owner John Hester around 1900. From 1882 to 1913, the post office was located in several places, including the old store. But in 1913, H.D. Wood became postmaster (*Figure 4*) and the post office finally landed in the store where it remains uninterrupted to this day. Wood and his brother-in-law Robert Creswell Evins (H.D. Wood had married Captain Wood's daughter, Anna) had purchased the store in 1905 from John Hester who had to leave town quickly because he shot and killed a

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man in a boxcar across from the store, the result of an argument.

After H.D. Wood, the next postmaster and store-owner was his son, Robert P. Wood (*Figure 5*), followed by his brother Fred Wood (*Figure 6*). Robert Wood had sold the store to his brother, Fred, and brother-in-law, Paul Swink. Ever since the store became known as the “Wood and Swink Store,” even though Swink sold out to Wood two years later. Fred Wood remained postmaster from 1933 to 1979. He was the longest serving post-



Figure 2
The Wood & Swink store in 1967.



Figure 4
H.D. Wood, postmaster 1913-1930.



Figure 3
The Wood & Swink store as it is today.



Figure 5
R.P. Wood, postmaster 1930-1934.



Figure 6
Fred Wood, postmaster 1933-1979.

master in Florida -- over 44 years. His son, Freddie Wood, inherited the store and his wife, Sue, became the postmaster after her father-in-law in 1979 (*Figure 7*). She was postmaster until 2010. So the store has remained in the same family for over 100 years and the postmaster position was in the family for nearly 100 years as well.

The first railroad through Evinston, built in 1882,