ELMHURST HISTORY HIGHLIGHT:
Elmhurst Post Office

A post office was first established in Cottage Hill, Illinois (later renamed Elmhurst) on December 9, 1845. It was located in Hill Cottage, a public house that stood on the north side of St. Charles Road near Cottage Hill Avenue. Over the next ninety years the post office was in several locations including a frame building on Park Avenue.; the Glos Block on the southeast corner of York Street and Park Avenue; the Fischer Building on the northeast corner of York and First Streets; and 109 S. York Street.

The post office was in this building at 101-103 N. York Street, circa 1918 – circa 1924. M2013.1.116

In 1935 the federal government built a post office at 154 W. Park Avenue to serve the people of Elmhurst and the surrounding area. The building, designed by the Chicago firm of Childs and Smith, cost $50,000. It was dedicated in December 1935, and the speakers at the ceremony praised the building's "dignified lines, its spacious quarters for the conduct of postal business, and its beautiful and convenient site." (*Elmhurst Press* December, 1935.)

Rural mail delivery route in Elmhurst, circa 1900. P75.17.1

In 1936, George Melville Smith was commissioned to paint a mural on the east wall of the lobby, above the postmaster's office. This was part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a federal program during the Depression aimed at making art accessible to people and, at the same time, providing work for unemployed artists. Mr. Smith was paid $630 for the mural, titled *There was Vision*, which was hung October 15, 1937. The mural remains in the post office today.

In regards to postal service itself, Elmhurst had a rural delivery service for those who lived on the outskirts of town. However, most residents picked up and dropped off out-going mail at the post office. Free mail delivery was instituted in Elmhurst on July 1, 1918. *The Elmhurst Press* described it as "one of the most momentous events in the history of the town." (June 28, 1918) Local citizens were asked to

install mailboxes and clearly mark their house numbers to assist the three mail carriers who would be delivering the mail.

By Nancy Wilson, Elmhurst History Museum Staff, Updated October 2021