

BUILT HERITAGE | JULY 2024

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# PEROT POST OFFICE

## 9 QUEEN STREET



*The Perot Post Office was in pristine condition when this photograph was taken in 2015.*

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By Linda Abend and Margie Lloyd, Bermuda National Trust

*This is part of a series of architectural articles by the Bermuda National Trust that will highlight some of Bermuda's endangered historic buildings.*

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Bermudians walk past this building daily but most would be hard pressed to tell you its history other than perhaps its recent use as a Covid testing centre. Now known as the Perot Post Office, the two-storey Georgian-style building was built sometime around 1850.

In January 1819 William Bennett Perot became Hamilton's third postmaster. He lived at Par-la-Ville, now the Bermuda Library and Historical Society Museum, the house built by his father William Perot and uncle James on the five-acre property they owned just outside the western boundary of the new town of Hamilton. He first ran the post office from a room in his home.

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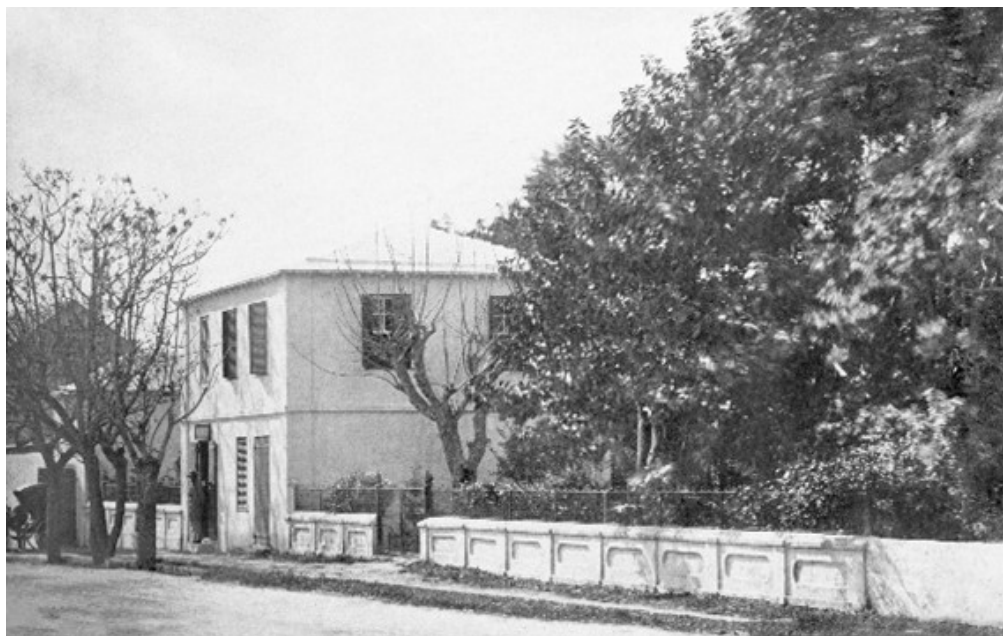
Terry Tucker in *Beyond the Rubber Tree* suggests that it was one of William Bennett's four sons, James Elliston Perot, who wished to return to Bermuda to live who constructed the building and occupied the upper floor.

The ground floor space was shared with pharmacist James Bell Heyl until 1857 when Heyl moved into his newly-built apothecary building. Besides his duties as postmaster Perot was a prolific gardener and had some 52 varieties of fruit-bearing trees on his Par-la-Ville property. He was an alderman for the Corporation of Hamilton and helped to convince them to buy the town's first fire engine. He died in 1871.



*The balconies of the two buildings are connected by a bridge on the upper floor. An outside staircase was removed in 1958. Murray Jordan Album (circa 1890s), Bermuda Archives.*

William Bennett Perot is internationally known as the creator of Bermuda's first postal stamps. Issued between 1848 and 1865 they were his solution to putting a stop to people dropping off letters without the one penny postage. Today, Perot stamps are prized by collectors and each is worth in excess of \$100,000.



*An early photograph taken in the mid to late 19th century. Courtesy of Mark Emmerson.*



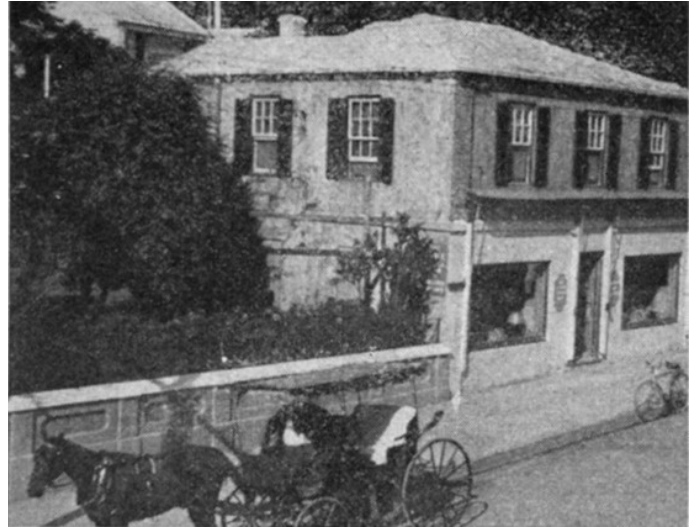
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After Perot's retirement in 1862 the building continued to be used as a post office until 1869 when a new post office was built on the corner of Reid and Parliament streets. Perot's building then housed a variety of shops selling dry goods and shoes. It continued to be owned by Perot family descendants until 1900 when the entire Par-la-Ville property was sold to the Corporation of Hamilton.

Artist sisters Kate and Ethel Tucker moved into the Perot building in November 1912 selling their hand-painted Christmas cards and art novelties. Their Little Green Shop would remain a popular tourist spot until 1958 when the Corporation of Hamilton decided to turn it back into the Perot Post Office in celebration of Bermuda's 350th anniversary.

Restoration work was overseen by artist and interior designer William Harrington who had worked with Wil Onions on the new City Hall. The building's two plate glass windows were replaced by regular ones having panes and shutters. A keystone and fanlight were added above the front door. Inside, some of the original cedar ceiling beams were left exposed. Also exhibited were antique pharmaceutical items from the period of James Heyl's co-tenancy. The Perot Post Office was re-opened on January 1, 1959.



*The ground floor façade of the old store was altered in the early 20th century. Plate glass windows were more suitable for retail space. Beautiful Bermuda Guidebook 1947.*



*The Tucker sisters' Little Green Shop rented the ground floor from 1912 until 1958. Internet image.*







*Currently shutters are missing and ficus is growing out of the eaves. The building has been vacant since Covid testing in it ceased.*

Perhaps a sub-post office in this location is no longer viable. Sending postcards and hand-written letters is a thing of the past. It is a shame to see this lovely building stand empty and slowly deteriorate. Queen Street shops see heavy foot traffic and residents and visitors pass this building daily. The Royal Gazette recently reported that by January 2025 the Bermuda Tourism Authority will have to move from its current Hamilton visitor centre. It has been suggested that the Perot Post Office building would be a perfect location. This seems an excellent idea - surely visitors would enjoy learning about Bermuda in the environment of a historic building rather than in a shipping container.

***For more details on William Bennett Perot and his famous postage stamps see:*** *The Bermudian*, Horst Augustinovic, excerpted from *Rambling Notes of a Bermuda Philatelist*; *Bermuda Biographies*, Meredith Ebbin; *Hamilton, Town and City*, Bermuda's Architectural Heritage Series. Other sources: *The Royal Gazette* 7 Mar 1848, 7 Dec 1886, 27 Dec 1893, 23 Nov 1912, 11 Jan 1958, 12 Oct 1958, 2 Jan 1959, 24 Jun 2024.

