

# Area city's name started

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**PETERSBURG** — Most tales of Petersburg begin with "It was named after a man named Zack Peters."

Captain Zack Peters of the U.S. Army was stationed in Floyd County five miles north and east of present-day Petersburg. His wife, Margaret Peters, since there was no post office for miles, applied for and got the job of postmaster for a mail station. On Sept. 29, 1895 her isolated home became the post office for the area.

In 1890 Ed M. White traveling alone in his covered wagon halted his team some 10 miles from the present townsite. Shortly thereafter he moved his wife, children and brother into a dugout on this land. Later he traded the land for a homestead a few miles northeast of the site that would become Petersburg and near the original post office in the Peters' home.

**IN A FEW YEARS** White owned a ranch and cattle. During one of the area round-ups, White was injured when his horse fell as he was turning the herd. As the Peters family had moved on and there was no postmaster, it was suggested that White take over the job as postmaster since he could no longer work cattle. This was in 1896. At the same time White had purchased the land where the city of Petersburg is now located. It was not until 1902 that he moved his family — and the post office — to the townsite land. The Whites established their home in what is now the northeast part of town and the post office was placed in a bedroom of their home.

Residents in the area had to travel to Plainview to the north or Estacado to the south to purchase supplies for farming and food for their families and traveling was not easy. White saw the need of a trading post and began bringing loads of supplies back to sell when he made trips into Plainview for the mail. The supplies he brought home would be traded for chickens or eggs or whatever people had to trade and he would pick up more merchandise next trip. This general store and post office was soon taking up his whole house so he built a larger

structure to house the store and post office.

Seeing the need for more business, White offered a town lot free to anyone who would build and maintain a business on it. Soon there was a drugstore and a blacksmith shop and a town had begun to grow.

**SOMEHOW THE** name Peters had stuck with the post office and somewhere through the first few years someone added a "burg" and the town's name wound up as Petersburg.

In 1892 the first wheat crops were about ready to harvest when little grasshoppers began to hatch out all over the area, over all the crops, pastures, everywhere on the plains. The 1892 wheat crop was harvested by these grasshoppers.

Clyde Martin, the first child born in Petersburg, was the grandson of White and born in the building used for the post office. He carried the mail for Rt. 1, Petersburg for 48 years before he retired.

In 1897 school was organized with the building being located on the Martin homestead just east of town. The first brick school was constructed in 1917 just south of the present school. It was later used as a bus barn until it was destroyed by fire.

**MRS. SAM** (Oneta) Mason arrived in 1919 to teach in the four-room building. She said there were no free books, no lunchroom and no football at that time. The school, however, was the center for entertainment. Youths and adults depended on parties, school programs and community singing at the school house. There were very few cars, so buggies, horseback or walking was the accepted mode of travel to the schoolhouse and elsewhere.

The present Petersburg Elementary School was erected in 1927, the junior high built in 1935, high school built in 1953 and the primary building in 1957. Since then, new rooms, more facilities and an enlarged auditorium have put the whole teaching plant under "one roof". A person can go into the east door of the primary building, walk one block west and two north and leave through the north entrance of the high school.

In 1916 Lib Claitor purchased a twin windmill (two wheels) from an agent and had it erected on a spot about where the Wesley Rudisell residence is now. Claitor thought he had a good well but this windmill pumped such a tremendous amount of water it soon pumped the well down to pumping mostly sand and the leathers soon wore out. He had put in a six-inch pipe and was going to use it to irrigate his crops. He did some irrigating before the well played out.

A.W. Waddill also had one of these twin windmills on his farm and he had an eight-inch pipe in the well. His played out in a short time too because they were poorly built. These two windmills perhaps gave people in this community an idea that irrigation from wells was possible if the wells were sunk deeper in search of bigger water supplies.

**THE CHURCHES** in Petersburg began meeting in 1908 at the schoolhouse. The First Baptist congregation was organized in July of that year with 11 charter members. The Methodists became organized in 1911, also with 11 charter members. Both congregations met at the schoolhouse with the preachers alternating.

Church of Christ members met in a home until they got a church and pastor. In a few years all the churches were self-supporting and had a goodly number of attendants. There is now a Spanish Baptist Church, The Hopewell Baptist Church, The Nazarene Church, Main Street Church of Christ, East Side Church of Christ and the Catholics. All churches work together in an active Ministerial Alliance.

In 1927 a charter for the City of Petersburg was applied for and received. Charles Schuler Jr. was elected mayor. City commissioners were R.A. Jefferies and Roy McDaniel. Schuler owned and operated Schuler Implement and an undertaking business until 1948. Jefferies was the banker and McDaniel owned a garage and automobile dealership. Mayors since then have been A.R. Main, K.V. Underwood, O.R. Lemons, Oscar White, Winston Watkins, Clarence Thorpe, John Hughes, Warren Embree and Delbert Williams. In 1962 the city

government changed from a two man commission to a five man council. Since that time, Everett Perry, Carl Newton, Glenn Foote and John Perry have led the city.

**IN THE SPRING** of 1921, Jefferies, then an employee of American National Bank of Amarillo, got together with a group of Petersburg men to reorganize and open the bank that had been closed earlier. This was to be his first venture into banking business on his own. The only bank robbery he ever had was in Petersburg when a 17-year-old boy came in and asked for money. When he left, Jefferies who knew the youth had been using a toy pistol, chased him down and got the money back. This past year Jefferies sold his interest in the Petersburg bank. John Hughes and Grady Kelly have been the only other bank presidents in Petersburg until this year when the ownership changed and A. Moody was hired to act as President for the First State Bank of Petersburg.

Joe Goodner settled just south of Petersburg in 1908 where he lived until a few years ago when he moved to Plainview. He will be 102 this year. He paid 1 dollar an acre for the land. Wheat was the main crop produced because of the dry land; it was not until several years later that people started irrigating. The first cotton produced in the Petersburg area had to be hauled to Vernon to be ginned — a trip by wagon that took several days.

**GOODNER'S** place was the "relay station" for the mail back that operated from Old Emma to Plainview. The mule team was changed at his place and he looked after them for 10 dollars a month which was fairly "big money" in those days, and came in handy in supplying needed items for the farm and home.

In 1920 Ernest R. Gibson established the Petersburg Journal along with several other area papers. The paper was purchased by Tom Suits in 1945 and he kept the community informed for years. In 1961 Russell and Boots Grimes established the Petersburg Post and the city had two newspapers for awhile, but the Petersburg Post is the only



## from Peters Post Office

local paper at this time.

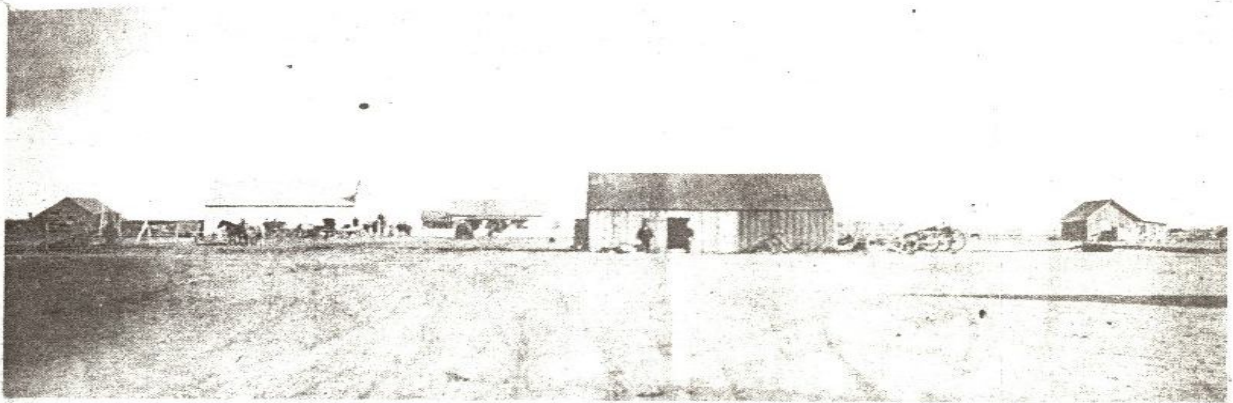
One of Petersburg's oldtimers is Mrs. Matt Gregory who has made numerous scrapbooks on

the town's history.

Attractive city offices with a sheriff's office and police station; water department and

meeting rooms, a public library with 5,200 volumes and enough business to take care of almost any need, a small clinic with Dr.

D.J. Truitt to take care of one's ills, and 1,300 friendly citizens with a rich background make up the town of Petersburg.



**PETERSBURG IN 1906** — The scene is Petersburg in 1906, eleven years after it was founded. The structure at left is the Ed M. White general store, next is former Ed M. White home. The large

building is Taylor's Blacksmith Shop. The two buildings on the right were dwellings. None of the buildings are standing today.



