

# Stratford History - Always Amazing

By David Wright, Editor  
Stratford Historical Society's  
UPDATE

David Brooks was Stratford's third postmaster serving from 1803 until October 1841 and, again, from February 1843 until 1857. The interruption in Postmaster Brooks' continuing service was, apparently, occasioned by the Executive branch changing from the Democratic party to the Whig party. Mr. Brooks was loyal to the Van Buren leaning branch of the Democratic party. John Tyler became President of the United States in April of 1841 and was a loyal Whig. Tyler appointed a new Postmaster General in September of 1841 who, likely, didn't care for Mr. Brooks' brand of politics. Filling Mr. Brooks' postmaster duties during his interruption in service was one I. J. Booth of whom little is known.

Mr. Brooks took his postal duties quite seriously. So much so that when *Lippincott Illustrated Magazine* wrote a feature article covering Stratford in July 1879, the writer could not resist reflecting on life in the town of Stratford under the guiding hand and watchful eye of Postmaster Brooks.

*Is there anywhere now in the land such a*

*post-office as he kept in a little store, where the sunniest and pleasantest corner was provided with cushioned seats for the comfort of the venerable men who "most did congregate" to meet the arriving postbag? This generation knows nothing of the pleasurable excitement of having a mail come in. There are nimble fingers and miraculous methods now-a-days, and papers and letters are whisked into boxes which show one at a glance what is in store. No such convenient and undignified proceedings were possible when Mr. Brooks was in power. From the moment his trembling old hands grasped the bag and slowly inserted the key until a litter of letters and papers from East and West and North and South was spread on the counter before him, he gradually swelled with importance and solemnity. His was no careless guardianship: marvelous precautions would he taken lest the letters should get into wrong hands when they left his own; in fact, from the fierceness of his look and attitude, one might have supposed that he regarded the claimant of a letter as an intruder on his own rights. Gathering the packets into his hand and expanding his lungs to their fullest, he would begin (often interrupting himself by truculent observations on bad ink and bad writing) to read off the names, peering at*



The large white arrow on the [Stratford town map of 1824](#) (above) shows the location of David Brooks' store and post office (about 2278 Main Street today), or approximately at the site of the former This 'n' That Consignment shop.

*each superscription through his heavy-bowed spectacles, holding the missive first at arm's length, then directly under his nose. The happy recipient on hearing his name called would shout "Here!" when the old postmaster, after indignantly surveying the aspirant from head to foot, evidently longing to pronounce him an impostor, would make a reluctant surrender.*