

**THOMAS BERNARD SMITH AUSTIN**  
*Awarded the Imperial Service Order Medal*  
by  
Nancy Findlater Cutway UE

**Solomon Austin** (c1744-1826) was a Loyalist who settled in Woodhouse Township, Norfolk County after the American Revolution. Solomon and his wife Joanna (Thomas) had nine children.

Their youngest child, **Moses Austin**, was born in 1801: the only member of his family born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Moses, like most men of his time, was a farmer; but he also worked as a blacksmith, shoeing horses and repairing metal tools for his neighbours in Townsend Township, Norfolk County, in the little community of Tyrell.

Moses and his wife Mary (Misner) also had nine children. Their second son, Edward Henry (1828-1897) joined his father in the blacksmith business, and eventually took it over after Moses died in 1857. Like his father, Edward also farmed: blacksmithing was not a full-time business, only “on demand”.

**Edward Henry Austin** married Sarah Ann Smith, also a descendant of Loyalists. In fact she had two great-grandfathers who served in the same Queen’s Rangers regiment as Solomon Austin. One might therefore think that when Edward and Sarah Ann had sons they would have named them after Loyalist ancestors, but such was not the case. Their first son was called James Henry, sharing his middle name with his father. A second son, who died young, was named Charles. They named their third son after Sarah Ann’s father, so the little lad’s full name was **Thomas Bernard Smith Austin**.

Some time between 1871 and 1875, Edward Austin suffered a catastrophic fire that burned down his blacksmith’s shop and forge. It was disastrous for the entire neighbourhood, since by 1871 Edward was employing five men and one boy, and paying wages totalling \$1,600 per year – a large contribution to the local economy. Rather than rebuild in Townsend Township, Edward and Sarah moved their family to Hamilton, in Wentworth County, and Edward began working as a carpenter.

I don’t know if other factors contributed to the decision to leave Norfolk County, but perhaps Sarah wanted to leave behind the scene of a personal tragedy for her son, Thomas B.S. Austin. When young Tommy was about 8 or 9 – that would have been around 1864 – he was helping with the harvest when his right hand got caught in some piece of machinery and was mangled. The doctor was called, but the fingers and hand had to be amputated in order to save Tommy’s life. It may be that the fire in the 1870s was the deciding factor, but likely Tommy’s parents were aware that he might cope better and have more employment choices in a city rather than on a farm, where two good hands were required for every chore.

Thomas was quickly able to get employment as a letter carrier. That was probably an ideal job for him: he could easily reach into the bag hanging down his right side, using his left hand, and pull

out the letters to put into mail boxes or through slots in front doors. The steady work meant that he could save up some money and propose to his sweetheart, Clara Magen: they were married on June 5, 1878 in Hamilton.

Having one hand was clearly no drawback for Thomas and he was given increasing responsibility. His skills in management and personnel dealings must have stood out. In March 1892, according to a report on Post Offices across Canada included in the 1894 Sessional Papers of Parliament, he was appointed Superintendent of Letter Carriers, having worked for the post office since 1875.

In fact, Thomas B.S. Austin served the Post Office so long and so well, he was awarded an Imperial Service Medal in November 1905 “in recognition of your meritorious services in the Dominion of Canada”.

The letter accompanying the medal is dated 17 November 1905, but it arrived in Hamilton some time in early 1906. By that time Thomas was too ill with the diabetes that killed him two months later (June 28, 1906) to attend the Post Office for the presentation, so the Post Master and other staff visited his home for the presentation.

Thomas and Clara had eight children, including my grandfather, Russell Henry Austin (1888-1968). The Imperial Service Medal and original letter are framed and hanging in my home.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT.—OUTSIDE SERVICE.  
HAMILTON Post Office—Continued.

Name.	Present Rank.	Date.	Present Salary.	Date of Birth.	Date of First Appointment.
			\$ cts.		
Winckler, Julia.....	3rd Class Clerk.....	1 Feb. '93	440 00	18 June '52	5 Dec. '90
Austin, Thomas Bernard S..	Supt. Letter Carrier....	25 Mar. '92	800 00	15 Nov. '55	10 May '75
Fearnside, John Henry.....	Letter Carrier.....	10 May '75	600 00	18 Aug. '58	10 May '75
Coates, Henry Mansfield....	do .....	20 Oct. '76	600 00	25 Oct. '22	20 Oct. '76
Fielding, Charles Walter W.	do .....	3 Nov. '76	600 00	16 Oct. '56	3 Nov. '76
Wilson, Joseph.....	do .....	14 Nov. '76	600 00	11 Mar. '49	14 Nov. '76
Gardner, John.....	do .....	17 Jan. '78	600 00	24 Dec. '30	17 Jan. '78
Stratton, Robert.....	do .....	4 July '78	600 00	25 Oct. '32	4 July '78
Dowrie, David Cook.....	do .....	24 Aug. '81	600 00	25 Oct. '56	24 Aug. '81
James, William Henry.....	do .....	28 June '82	600 00	5 Oct. '55	28 June '82
Frank, Emil.....	do .....	28 June '82	600 00	28 July '59	28 June '82
North, John Webster.....	do .....	21 Sept. '83	600 00	14 Sept. '53	21 Sept. '83
Springate, George.....	do .....	4 Dec. '83	600 00	20 June '63	29 Nov. '83
Sevier, Edward.....	do .....	7 Jan. '84	600 00	21 Aug. '44	31 Dec. '83
Mundy, William Antipas ...	do .....	10 Mar. '84	600 00	19 Nov. '52	4 Mar. '84
Strongman, William.....	do .....	1 Aug. '85	600 00	25 Nov. '63	1 Aug. '85
Lawrence, William.....	do .....	9 Nov. '85	600 00	5 Jan. '50	9 Nov. '85
Charters, James.....	do .....	26 Dec. '85	600 00	21 May '59	24 Dec. '85
Hanlon, George Patrick....	do .....	12 Mar. '87	570 00	6 April '92	12 Mar. '87
Phillips, John.....	do .....	12 Mar. '87	570 00	6 Dec. '50	12 Mar. '87
Thomas, James Reece .....	do .....	12 Mar. '87	570 00	17 April '48	12 Mar. '87
Nunn, William.....	do .....	1 July '87	570 00	17 Sept. '53	18 June '87
McFarland, William.....	do .....	13 Feb. '89	510 00	24 May '62	6 July '87
Hodd, Frank.....	do .....	10 Apr. '89	510 00	3 Apr. '61	16 Mar. '89
McKeown, James Alexander.	do .....	6 Jan. '90	480 00	31 July '56	16 Dec. '89
Rolston, Edward.....	do .....	12 Apr. '90	480 00	15 Dec. '65	7 Nov. '89
Cox, James Arthur.....	do .....	8 Nov. '90	450 00	10 June '68	16 Oct. '90
Towers, George Trail.....	do .....	8 Nov. '90	450 00	9 Feb. '48	29 Oct. '90
Cochrane, Thomas.....	do .....	31 Aug. '91	420 00	9 Nov. '66	11 Apr. '91
Bale, Thomas.....	do .....	27 Nov. '91	420 00	30 May '48	19 May '91

## FAITHFUL SERVICE

### T. B. Austin Receives Recognition from the King.

The imperial service order medal, awarded by the king of Great Britain for long service to Thomas B. Austin, formerly superintendent of letter carriers in this city, was formally given to him yesterday afternoon at his home, Blake street. Mr. Austin was too poorly to go to the postoffice, where the presentation would otherwise have taken place, in person. It was so by the direction of the chief postoffice superintendent Adam Brown, postmaster, accompanied by H. A. Eager, assistant postmaster, John H. Fearnside, superintendent of letter carriers, and the following from the letter carriers' department: Messrs. McFarland, McDonald, Strongman, Stipe, Springate, Chartris and Bale, made the presentation.

Mr. Austin was surrounded by his wife and family and some intimate friends when the presentation took place. Mr. Brown spoke of the honor of receiving such a medal, which came to comparatively few. The king had awarded it in recognition of long and faithful service, and the seal of the package in which the medal had arrived was to be broken by the recipient himself. This was done by Mr. Austin, whereupon Mr. Brown pinned

it on Mr. Austin's breast. In doing so he spoke of the pleasure it gave him to see Mr. Austin decorated thus for long service, and he referred to him as not only having faithfully discharged his duty for many long years, but having been courteous and obliging in the responsible position he had occupied. Mr. Brown was pleased to say that Mr. Austin was a man who would honor the decoration, as well as it honoring him. He trusted Mr. Austin's health would soon improve, and that he would be spared long to his wife and family. The medal was something that gold could not buy, and those who came after him would look on it with pride as signifying faithful and honored service.

Mr. Austin feelingly replied, and he said this was one of the happiest incidents of his life. He thanked Mr. Brown for his kind words, and the staff for showing such regard for him as to attend the presentation.

Prior to pinning the decoration on Mr. Austin, Mr. Brown read a letter from the secretary of the Imperial Service Order, which accompanied the medal. The decoration is a badge or medallion of silver and enamel, bearing on one side the imperial and royal cipher, and on the reverse side "For faithful service," both in dark blue enamel on a plaque or shield of silver, surrounded by a wreath of laurel, surmounted by the imperial crown.

Mr. Austin was thirty years in the postoffice service.