



The  
**United  
States  
Postal  
Service**

*An American History*  
1775 – 2006

**T**HE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE is an ongoing story of enormous depth and breadth, rooted in a single, great principle: that every person in the United States – no matter who, no matter where – has the right to equal access to secure, efficient, and affordable mail service. For more than 231 years, the Postal Service has delivered on that promise, transforming itself to better serve its customers. *The United States Postal Service: An American History* tells this story and introduces you to people, events, and developments affecting postal and national history.

For centuries, our universal mail system has strengthened the bonds of friendship, family, and community. Our system has encouraged civil discourse, disseminated information, and bolstered the national economy – both as the hub of a vital industry and as a trusted courier of the nation’s and world’s business.

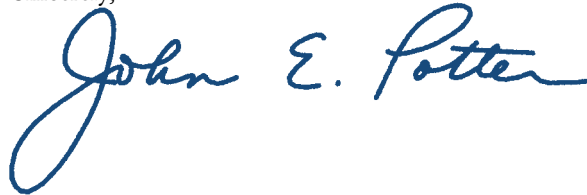
The Postal Service has seized upon and immediately investigated new technology to see if it would improve service – mail distribution cases in the 18th century; steamboats, trains, and automobiles in the 19th century; and planes, letter sorting machines, and automation in the 20th century. Today, computerized equipment helps sort and distribute hundreds of millions of pieces of mail each day.

We have worked with customers to better understand and serve their changing needs and to keep them informed of how best to utilize our services. We want to provide quick, easy, and convenient service. This history gives you a look into what that has entailed over the years.

Above all, the history of the United States Postal Service is about the men and women whose daily efforts have provided our nation with the finest, most efficient mail service in the world. United States postal workers take pride in processing, transporting, and delivering the mail to the people of our great country.

I hope you will enjoy reading this history of the United States Postal Service. It is a story that we continue to write every day – together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John E. Potter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

John E. Potter  
Postmaster General

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**O**n July 26, 1775, members of the Second Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, agreed

*That a postmaster General be appointed for the United Colonies, who shall hold his office at Philad<sup>a</sup>, and shall be allowed a salary of 1000 dollars per an: for himself, and 340 dollars per an: for a secretary and Comptroller, with power to appoint such, and so many deputies as to him may seem proper and necessary.*

*That a line of posts be appointed under the direction of the Postmaster general, from Falmouth in New England to Savannah in Georgia, with as many cross posts as he shall think fit.<sup>1</sup>*

This simple statement signaled the birth of the Post Office Department, the predecessor of the United States Postal Service and the second oldest federal department or agency of the United States of America.

# COLONIAL TIMES

In early colonial times, correspondents depended on friends, merchants, and Native Americans to carry messages among the colonies. However, most correspondence ran between the colonists and England, the Netherlands, or Sweden – their mother countries. It was largely to handle this mail that, in 1639, the first official notice of mail service in the colonies appeared. The General Court of Massachusetts designated Richard Fairbanks' tavern in Boston as the official repository of mail brought from or sent overseas, in line with the European practice of using coffee houses and taverns as mail stations.

Local authorities operated post routes within the colonies. Then, in 1673, Governor Francis Lovelace of New York set up a monthly post between New York and Boston. The service was short-lived, but the post rider's trail became known as the Old Boston Post Road, part of today's U.S. Route 1.

Governor William Penn established Pennsylvania's first Post Office in 1683. In the South, private messengers, usually slaves, connected the huge plantations; a hogshead (a barrel 43 inches high and 26 inches in diameter) of tobacco was the penalty for failing to relay mail to the next plantation. As plantations expanded inland from port regions, so did the communications network.

Central postal organization came to the colonies only after 1692, when Thomas Neale received a 21-year grant from the British Crown, whose settlements dominated the Atlantic seaboard, for a North American postal system.<sup>2</sup> Neale never visited America. Instead, he appointed Governor Andrew Hamilton of New Jersey as his deputy postmaster general. Neale's franchise cost him only six shillings and eight pence a year but was no bargain. He died heavily in debt in 1699 after assigning his interests in America to Andrew Hamilton and another Englishman, Robert West.

In 1707, the British government bought the rights to the North American postal system from West and Andrew Hamilton's widow. The government then appointed Hamilton's son John as deputy postmaster general of America. He served until 1721, when he was succeeded by John Lloyd of Charleston, South Carolina.

In 1730, Alexander Spotswood, a former lieutenant governor of Virginia, became deputy postmaster general of America. The appointment of Benjamin Franklin as postmaster of Philadelphia in 1737 may have been Spotswood's most notable achievement. Franklin, only 31 years old at the time, was a successful printer, publisher, and civic leader. He would later become one of the most popular men of his age.

## 18th Century Tavern

*In colonial times, overseas mail often was brought to taverns and coffee houses.*





Two other Virginians succeeded Spotswood: Head Lynch in 1739 and Elliot Benger in 1743. When Benger died in 1753, Benjamin Franklin and William Hunter, postmaster of Williamsburg, Virginia, were appointed by the Crown as joint postmasters general for the colonies. Hunter died in 1761, and John Foxcroft of New York succeeded him, serving until the outbreak of the Revolutionary War.

During his time as joint postmaster general for the Crown, Franklin made important and lasting improvements in the colonial posts. He began to reorganize the service, setting out on a long tour to inspect Post Offices in the North and as far south as Virginia. New surveys were made, milestones were placed on principal roads, and new and shorter routes were laid out. For the first time, post riders carried mail at night to speed service between Philadelphia and New York.

Thanks in large part to Franklin's efforts, the colonial posts in North America registered their first profit in 1760. When Franklin left office, post roads operated from Maine to Florida and from New York to Canada. Mail between the colonies and the mother country operated on a regular schedule, with posted times.

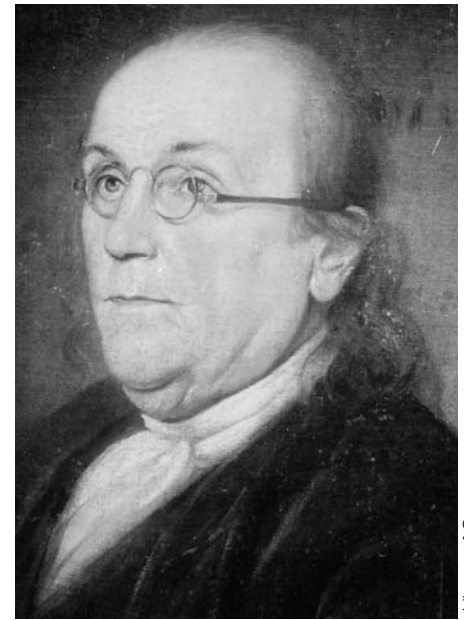
The Crown dismissed Franklin in 1774 for actions sympathetic to the

cause of the colonies. Shortly after, William Goddard, a printer, newspaper publisher, and former postmaster, set up the Constitutional Post for intercolonial mail service. Colonies funded it by subscription, and net revenues were to be used to improve mail service rather than to be paid back to the subscribers. By 1775, when the Continental Congress met at Philadelphia, Goddard's post was flourishing, and 30 Post Offices operated between Williamsburg and Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

The Constitutional Post required each postmaster to hire only reputable post riders. Each post rider had to swear to secure his mail under lock and key. As for the Crown's service, Goddard warned:

*Letters are liable to be stopped & opened by ministerial mandates, & their Contents construed into treasonable Conspiracies; and News Papers, those necessary and important vehicles, especially in Times of public Danger, may be rendered of little avail for want of Circulation ...<sup>3</sup>*

The Constitutional Post afforded security to colonial messages and provided a communication line that played a vital role in bringing about American independence. ■



Library of Congress

**Benjamin Franklin  
by Charles Willson Peale, 1787**

The last known portrait of Franklin.



**18th Century Post Route Map**

A version of this map appeared in Herman Moll's Atlas Minor, published in London in 1729. The map's legend, "An account of y<sup>e</sup> Post of y<sup>e</sup> Continent of N<sup>th</sup> America," describes weekly mail service to and from the 13 Post Offices, including "the 3 Great Offices ... Boston, New York & Philadelphia."

# THE POSTAL SERVICE BEGINS



Three weeks after the battles of Lexington and Concord, the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in May 1775 to plan for the defense of the colonies against British aggression and “to take into consideration the state of America.”<sup>4</sup> The conveyance of letters and intelligence was essential to the cause of liberty. A committee, chaired by Benjamin Franklin and including Samuel Adams, Richard Henry Lee, Philip Livingston, Thomas Lynch, and Thomas Willing, was named to consider the creation of a postal system.

The committee reported back to Congress on July 25, 1775. The Continental Congress agreed to the committee’s recommendations on the following day, creating the position of Postmaster General, and naming Franklin to it. Richard Bache, Franklin’s son-in-law, was named comptroller, and William Goddard was appointed surveyor.

Under Franklin and his immediate successors, the postal system mainly carried communications between Congress and the armies. Postmasters and post riders were exempt from military duties so service would not be interrupted.

Benjamin Franklin served as Postmaster General until November 7, 1776. He was in office when the Declaration of Independence created the United States in July 1776, making Franklin the first Postmaster General of the United States. America’s present Postal Service descends from the system Franklin placed in operation.

## EARLY POSTAL LEGISLATION

In 1781, Congress ratified the Articles of Confederation. Article IX addressed postal issues:

*The United States in Congress assembled shall also have the sole and exclusive right and power of ... establishing or regulating post offices from one State to another, throughout all the United States, and exacting such postage on the papers pass-*

*ing through the same as may be requisite to defray the expenses of the said office ...*

Postmaster General Ebenezer Hazard, serving from 1782 to 1789, created new east-west post routes as the population expanded westward, including a route to serve the frontier town of Pittsburgh. Although he devoted most of his energies to developing inland service, Hazard also reestablished monthly mail service to Europe, which the war had disrupted.

Authorized by Congress in 1785 to contract with stagecoach companies to carry mail on heavily traveled routes, Hazard established a regular mail route via stagecoach between Boston and Portsmouth, New Hampshire. President George Washington criticized Hazard when he substituted riders on horseback on some routes to improve service and reduce costs. Washington supported the use of postal allocations for subsidiary purposes and looked at coaches as giving “a facility to the means of traveling for strangers ... a circumstance highly beneficial to any country.”<sup>5</sup>

During Hazard’s tenure the entire postal headquarters staff consisted of himself, a secretary/comptroller, an inspector of dead letters, three surveyors, and 26 post riders. He wrote a friend about his job’s demands:

*... I have not had time for proper relaxation, and, in three years past, have not been to the distance of ten miles from this city. I once hired a clerk, but found my salary was not equal to that expence in addition to the support of my family, and was obliged to dismiss him.*<sup>6</sup>

At Hazard’s suggestion, Congress passed the Ordinance of October 18, 1782, revising and codifying postal laws and regulations. The ordinance gave the federal government a monopoly on mail, restricted censorship to times of war or when specifically ordered by the Postmaster General or Congress, and allowed post riders to carry newspapers at moderate rates.



## THE CONSTITUTION AND THE POST OFFICE

In June 1788, the ninth state ratified the Constitution, which gave Congress the power “To establish Post Offices and post Roads” in Article I, Section 8. A year later, the Act of September 22, 1789 (1 Stat. 70), continued the Post Office and made the Postmaster General subject to the direction of the President. Four days later, President Washington appointed Samuel Osgood as the first Postmaster General under the Constitution. A population of almost four million was served by 75 Post Offices and about 2,400 miles of post roads.

The Post Office received two one-year extensions by the Acts of August 4, 1790 (1 Stat. 178), and March 3, 1791 (1 Stat. 218). The Act of February 20, 1792 (1 Stat. 232), continued the Post Office for another two years and formally admitted newspapers to the mails, gave Congress the power to establish post routes, and prohibited



postal officials from opening letters. Later legislation enlarged the duties of the Post Office, strengthened and unified its organization, and provided rules for its development. The Act of May 8, 1794 (1 Stat. 354), continued the Post Office indefinitely.

The Post Office moved from Philadelphia in 1800 when Washington, D.C., became the seat of government. Two horse-drawn wagons carried all postal records, furniture, and supplies. ■

### Stagecoaches

Beginning in 1785, the Continental Congress encouraged the use of stagecoaches to transport mail between Post Offices to subsidize the growth of stagecoach lines. Although more costly and sometimes less suitable for mail transport than a rider on horseback, stagecoaches were favored when awarding mail transportation contracts until 1845.

## Ebenezer Hazard, Postmaster of New York

Ebenezer Hazard was postmaster of New York from October 5, 1775, until about January 1777, when he was appointed surveyor of the (national) Post Office.

On November 14, 1776, Postmaster Hazard petitioned the Continental Congress for a salary increase, noting his previous year's salary was “by no means a compensation for his services” due to the extraordinary costs associated with the war.<sup>7</sup> Hazard hoped that his friend, the Reverend John Witherspoon, a member of the Continental Congress, would intercede on his behalf, and wrote to Witherspoon of the financial and physical challenges he faced. The general Hazard refers to is George Washington.



*I shall only observe, that the word ‘incidents’ used in our quarterly accounts ... certainly can mean nothing more than those incidents which are usual in time of peace; such as office rent, firewood, sealing-wax, etc., and cannot justly be construed to include the extraordinary expenses occasioned by the present war, which could not have been foreseen at the time of the institution of a Post Office by Congress.*

*... The necessity of keeping the office near Head-Quarters arose from the importance of the General's despatches, and his being near the centre of the Army, who are almost the only persons for whom letters now come per post. The General has doubtless informed Congress of his different removals. In each*

*of these I have followed him; and I am sorry I have reason to say, that so little attention has been paid to me as a gentleman, or respect shown to the Congress's commission with which I am honoured, that I have been obliged to follow him on foot. I do not mean even to hint a reflection upon the General, whom I esteem and respect. Furnishing me with a horse did not belong to his department; but those whose business it was have not treated me genteelly. However, lest it should be said that I was unfaithful in my office, and to convince his Excellency of my readiness to oblige him, and serve the publick, I submitted to this indignity, and the fatigue consequent upon it, although it was not my business, as a Postmaster, to follow the Army like a sutler.<sup>8</sup>*

A sutler was a peddler who followed an army and sold to it.



## Benjamin Franklin, First Postmaster General



Born in Boston in 1706, Benjamin Franklin left school at age 10 to work in his father's candle shop.<sup>9</sup> In 1718, Franklin apprenticed to his brother James, a printer and founder of Boston's *New England Courant*. Franklin read voraciously, contributed anonymous articles to his brother's newspaper, and managed the paper while his brother was imprisoned for a political offense. At 17, Franklin ran away and ended up in Philadelphia, where he found work as a printer. Franklin started his own print shop by 1728 and purchased *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. His wildly successful *Poor Richard's Almanack* secured his fortune.

### Postal Career Begins

Franklin was appointed postmaster of Philadelphia by the British Crown Post in 1737. Newspaper publishers often served as postmasters, which helped them to gather and distribute news. Postmasters decided which newspapers could travel free in the mail — or in the mail at all.

Postmaster General Elliott Benger added to Franklin's duties by making him comptroller, with financial oversight for nearby Post Offices. Franklin lobbied the British to succeed Benger when his health failed and, with Virginia's William Hunter, was named joint postmaster general for the Crown on August 10, 1753.

Franklin surveyed post roads and Post Offices, introduced a simple accounting method for postmasters, and had riders carry mail both night and day. He encouraged postmasters to establish the penny post where letters not called for at the Post Office were delivered for a penny. Remembering his experience with the *Gazette*, Franklin mandated delivery of all newspapers for a small fee. His efforts contributed to the Crown's first North American profit in 1760.

In 1757, while serving as joint postmaster general, Franklin went to London to represent Pennsylvania's government. In 1763, back in the colonies, he traveled 1,600 miles sur-

veying post roads and Post Offices from Virginia to New England.

In 1764, Franklin returned to London, where he represented the interests of several colonial governments. In 1774, judged too sympathetic to the colonies, he was dismissed as joint postmaster general.

### First Postmaster General under the Continental Congress

Back on American soil in 1775, Franklin served as a member of the Second Continental Congress, which appointed him Postmaster General on July 26 of that year. With an annual salary of \$1,000 and \$340 for a secretary and comptroller, Franklin was responsible for all Post Offices from Massachusetts to Georgia and had authority to hire postmasters as necessary.

### Founding Father of a New Nation

In 1776, Franklin worked with the committee that created the Declaration of Independence, then left for Paris to secure French support for the war with England. The treaty of alliance he negotiated in 1778 was vital to the success of the American Revolution. Later, Franklin helped negotiate the peace treaty with Great Britain.

Franklin returned to Philadelphia in 1785. He attended the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and lived to see the Constitution adopted. He died April 17, 1790.

Franklin was a man of many talents. He helped establish a library, fire company, academy, philosophical society, militia, hospital, and better streets and street lighting in Philadelphia. His scientific contributions included a study of electricity and lightning, theories of heat absorption, measurement of the Gulf Stream, and invention of the lightning rod, bifocals, and the Franklin stove.

Biographer Carl Van Doren wrote:

*In any age, in any place, Franklin would have been great ... (N)umerous as his achievements were, they were less than he was.*<sup>10</sup>

## Abraham Lincoln, Postmaster



Library of Congress

Lithographed and published  
by Edw. Mendel.

Two postmasters became U.S. Presidents later in their careers — Abraham Lincoln and Harry Truman. Truman held the title and signed papers but immediately turned the position and its pay over to an assistant. Lincoln was the only President who had served as a postmaster.

On May 7, 1833, 24-year-old Lincoln was appointed postmaster of New Salem, Illinois. Lincoln served until the office was closed May 30, 1836. The *United States Official Register*, published in odd-numbered years, dutifully records A. Lincoln as receiving compensation of \$55.70 in the 1835 volume and \$19.48 for one quarter's work in the 1837 volume. Besides his pay, Lincoln, as postmaster, could send and receive personal letters free and get one daily newspaper delivered free.

Mail arrived once a week. If an addressee did not collect the mail, as was the custom, Lincoln delivered it personally — usually carrying the mail in his hat. Even then, Lincoln was “Honest Abe.”

According to Lincoln's biographer, Benjamin P. Thomas:

*Dr. A. G. Henry, one of Lincoln's closest friends, and himself postmaster for a time at Sangamontown, told Isaac N. Arnold that when the New Salem office was discontinued Lincoln had on hand a balance of some sixteen or eighteen dollars which he brought with him to Springfield. Perhaps the Post Office Department overlooked this small sum, for not until months later did an agent call on Lincoln to collect it. During the intervening time Lincoln had been financially hard-pressed, and Dr. Henry, who was present when the agent called, was afraid that Lincoln might not have the money. Henry told Arnold:*

*“I was about to call him aside and loan him the money, when he asked the agent to be seated a moment, while he went over to his trunk at his boarding house, and returned with an old blue sock with a quantity of silver and copper coin tied up in it. Untying the*

*sock, he poured the contents on the table and proceeded to count the coin, which consisted of such silver and copper pieces as the country-people were then in the habit of using in paying postage. On counting it up there was found the exact amount, to a cent, of the draft, and in the identical coin which had been received. He never used, under any circumstances, trust funds.”<sup>11</sup>*

### Other Famous Postal Workers

John Brown

*Abolitionist, postmaster, Randolph, PA*

Bing Crosby

*Singer and actor, clerk, Spokane, WA*

Walt Disney

*Producer, substitute carrier, Chicago, IL*

Charles R. Drew

*Scientist and surgeon, part-time special delivery messenger, Washington, DC*

William Faulkner

*Novelist, postmaster, University, MS*

Samuel L. Gravelly

*First African-American admiral, railway mail clerk*

Will Hays

*President, Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Postmaster General*

Sherman Hemsley

*Actor, clerk, Philadelphia, PA, and New York, NY*

Conrad Hilton

*Businessman, postmaster, San Antonio, NM*

Harry Hooper

*Baseball Hall-of-Famer, postmaster, Capitola, CA*

Rock Hudson

*Actor, letter carrier, Winnetka, IL*

Sidney Lanier

*Poet, clerk, Macon, GA*

Charles Lindbergh

*Aviator, contract airmail pilot*

Bill Nye

*Humorist, postmaster, Laramie, WY*

Knute Rockne

*Football coach, clerk, Chicago, IL*

Adlai E. Stevenson

*Vice President, First Assistant Postmaster General*

Noah Webster

*Lexicographer, special agent*

Richard Wright

*Author, substitute clerk, Chicago, IL*



# THE POSTAL ROLE IN U.S. DEVELOPMENT



**T**he 19th century saw the growth of the United States. The Post Office Department, the communications system that helped bind the nation together, developed new services that have lasted into the 21st century and subsidized the development of every major form of transportation.

Between 1789, when the federal government began operations, and 1861, when civil war broke out, the United States grew dramatically. Its territory extended into the Midwest in 1787 through the Northwest Ordinance, reached down the Mississippi River and west to the Rocky Mountains after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, and stretched to the Pacific coast by the 1840s. The country's population grew from 3.9 million people in 1790 to 31.4 million in 1860.

The Post Office Department grew too. The number of Post Offices increased from 75 in 1790 to 28,498

in 1860. Post roads (roads on which mail travels) increased from 59,473 miles at the beginning of 1819 to 84,860 by the end of 1823. By the end of 1819, the Department served citizens in 22 states, including the newest states of Illinois (1818) and Alabama (1819).

These new territories and states, as well as established communities, pressed the Post Office Department for more routes and faster delivery. The Department met these needs, expanding its service and developing ways to move mail more quickly. By 1822, it took only 11 days to move mail between Washington, D.C., and Nashville, Tennessee.

In 1828, there were 7,530 Post Offices and 29,956 postal employees, mail contractors, and carriers, making the Department the largest employer in the executive branch. Because the Department awarded a large number of jobs and contracts, the Postmaster

## The United States in 1857



General's power grew as well. President Andrew Jackson recognized the potential for patronage and, in 1829, invited William T. Barry of Kentucky to become the first Postmaster General to sit as a member of the President's Cabinet. Barry's predecessor, John McLean of Ohio, had been the first Postmaster General to refer to the Post Office, or General Post Office as it sometimes was called, as the Post Office Department, but the organization was not specifically established as an executive department by Congress until June 8, 1872 (17 Stat. 283).

By 1831, postal employees accounted for 76 percent of the civilian federal workforce. Postmasters outnumbered soldiers 8,764 to 6,332 and were the most widespread representatives of the federal government.

As the country grew, people in new states and territories petitioned Congress for even more post routes, regardless of their cost or profitability. The Post Office Department, and thus the federal government, had to decide whether to subsidize routes that promoted settlement but did not gen-

erate enough revenue to pay for themselves or to operate in the black. The Department struggled with this issue. With congressional support and keeping fiscal responsibility firmly in mind, the Department ultimately made decisions in the 19th century that reflected public service as its highest aim. It funded post routes that supported national development and instituted services to benefit all residents of the country.

The Post Office Department also simplified rates in the middle of the 19th century. Before that time, postage was based on the number of sheets in a letter and the distance a letter traveled. Families, friends, or businesses further distant paid more to keep in touch. For instance, from 1799 to 1815, it cost:

- 8 cents/sheet sent 40 miles or fewer
- 10 cents/sheet sent 41 to 90 miles
- 12 1/2 cents/sheet sent 91 to 150 miles
- 17 cents/sheet sent 151 to 300 miles
- 20 cents/sheet sent 301 to 500 miles
- 25 cents/sheet sent more than 500 miles

In 1845, the Department began charging rates essentially based on weight and whether a letter was going more than or fewer than 300 miles. In 1855, the rate structure was three cents for a letter weighing a half-ounce and traveling up to 3,000 miles, which included most of the United States and its territories. Letters going farther than 3,000 miles were charged postage of ten cents per sheet.

The Act of March 3, 1863 (12 Stat. 704), based postage for a letter on its weight and eliminated all differences based on distance, thus providing universal service to customers no matter where they lived in the country.

The act also created three classes of mail: First-Class Mail, which embraced letters; second-class mail, which covered publications issued at regular periods; and third-class mail, which included all other mailable matter. ■



Library of Congress

## Alexis de Tocqueville

In 1831, Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville began his travels in America, a journey that led to his classic book, *Democracy in America*. He wrote of the mail:

*I traveled along a portion of the frontier of the United States in a sort of cart, which was termed the mail. Day and night we passed with great rapidity along the roads, which were scarcely marked out through immense forests. When the gloom of the woods became impenetrable, the driver lighted branches of pine, and we journeyed along by the light they cast. From time to time we came to a hut in the midst of the forest; this was a post-office. The mail dropped an enormous bundle of letters at the door of this isolated dwelling, and we pursued our way at full gallop, leaving the inhabitants of the neighboring log houses to send for their share of the treasure.<sup>12</sup>*





# MOVING THE MAIL

## STEAMBOATS

In 1811, cutting-edge technology met up with the nation's mail system, and there was no looking back. Fast-moving steamboats began traveling the rivers, replacing packet boats, rowboats, and rafts as a means to carry mail.

Beginning in 1815, operators of steamboats and other craft had to deliver the letters and packets they carried to local postmasters within three hours of docking in daylight or two hours after sunrise the following day. By the 1820s, more than 200 steamboats regularly served river communities, and the Post Office Department issued contracts for these vessels to carry mail. In 1823, Congress declared waterways to be post roads. Use of steamboats to carry mail peaked in 1853 prior to the expansion of railroads.

Even before gold was discovered in California in 1848, the Post Office Department had awarded contracts to two steamship companies to carry mail between New York and California. The aim was to get a letter from the East Coast to California in three to four weeks, but this goal often was missed. Mail traveled by ship from New York to Panama, moved across Panama by canoes and mules, then went on to San Francisco by ship. When the Panama Railroad was completed in 1855, it eased

transit across the isthmus, but a speedier method was needed to move mail.

As early as 1848, some overland mail reached California, if erratically, via the military. Scheduled, semiweekly overland service began September 15, 1858, with a contract to John Butterfield's Overland Mail Company, using the 2,800-mile southern stage route between Tipton, Missouri, and San Francisco. The specified running time was 24 days, but it often took months.

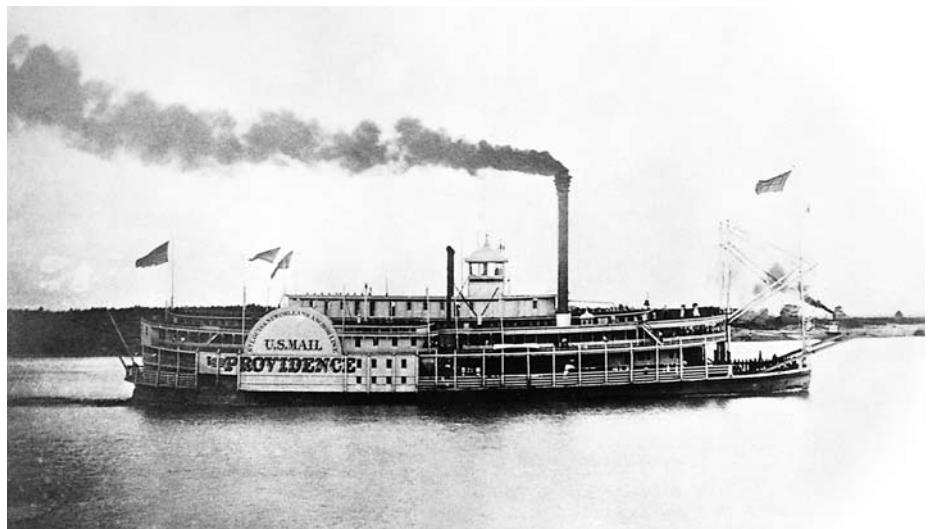
Californians felt their isolation. For example, Los Angeles learned California was admitted to the Union six weeks after the fact. Three years later, an article attributed to the *Los Angeles Star* (October 1, 1853) asked its readers:

*Can somebody tell us what has become of the U.S. mail for this section of the world? Some four weeks since it has arrived here. The mail rider comes and goes regularly enough, but the mailbags do not. One time he says the mail is not landed in San Diego; another time there was so much of it the donkey could not bring it, and he sent it to San Pedro on the steamer — which carried it up to San Francisco. Thus it goes wandering up and down the ocean ...*

Faster transportation to the Pacific coast was needed.

## Steamboat

Carrying mail, passengers, and freight, the City of Providence traveled the Mississippi River from St. Louis to New Orleans from 1880 to 1894.



E. B. and N. Philip Norman Collection, Mss. 1084, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA

## THE PONY EXPRESS

American transportation pioneer William H. Russell advertised for hostlers and riders to work on the Overland Express Route via Salt Lake City in March 1860.

Russell had failed repeatedly to get the backing of the Senate Post Office and Post Roads Committee for an express route to carry mail between St. Joseph, Missouri – the westernmost point reached by the railroad and telegraph – and California. St. Joseph was the starting point for the nearly 2,000-mile central route to the West. Except for a few forts and settlements, the route beyond St. Joseph was a vast, unknown land, inhabited primarily by Native Americans.

Many thought that year-round transportation across this area was impossible because of extreme weather conditions. Russell organized his own express to prove otherwise.

With partners Alexander Majors and William B. Waddell, Russell formed the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company. They built new relay stations and readied existing ones. The country was combed for good horses – hardy enough to challenge deserts and mountains and to withstand thirst in summer and ice in winter. Riders were recruited hastily but, before being hired, had to swear

on a Bible not to cuss, fight, or abuse their animals and to conduct themselves honestly.

On April 3, 1860, the Pony Express began its run through parts of Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and California. On average, a rider covered 75 to 100 miles daily. He changed horses at relay stations set 10 to 15 miles apart, swiftly transferring himself and his mochila (a saddle cover with four pockets or cantinas for mail) to the new mount.

The first mail by Pony Express from St. Joseph to Sacramento took ten days, cutting the overland stage time via the southern route by more than half. The fastest delivery was in March 1861, when President Abraham Lincoln's inaugural address was carried from St. Joseph to Sacramento in 7 days and 17 hours.

On July 1, 1861, the Pony Express began operating under contract as a mail route. By that time, the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company was deeply in debt. Though it had charged as much as \$5 a half ounce for a letter at a time when ordinary U.S. postage was no more than ten cents, the company did not make its operating expenses.

The Pony Express officially ended October 26, 1861, after the transcontinental telegraph line was completed, and became an enduring legend.



### The Pony Express

*The Pony Express rider galloping across the Plains and through far-flung settlements holds a permanent place in the American imagination even though the Pony Express ran for only 18 months, from April 1860 to October 1861.*



## The Confederate Post Office Department

The Post Office Department of the Confederate States of America was established February 21, 1861, by an act of the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States. On March 6, 1861, the day after Montgomery Blair's appointment by President Abraham Lincoln as Postmaster General of the United States, former U.S. Congressman John Henninger Reagan was appointed postmaster general of the Confederate States of America by Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States.

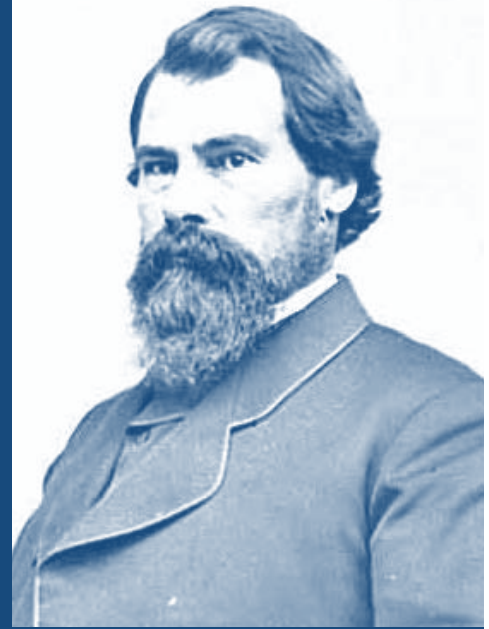
South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas already had seceded from the Union. In the following months, Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and most of Tennessee followed suit. Reagan instructed southern postmasters to continue to render their accounts to the United States as before until the Confederate postal system was organized. Meanwhile, he sent job offers to southern men in the Post Office Department in Washington.

Many accepted and brought along their expertise, as well as copies of postal reports, forms in use, postal maps, and other supplies.

In May 1861, Reagan issued a proclamation stating that he officially would assume control of the Post Office Department of the Confederate States on June 1, 1861. Postmaster General Blair responded by ordering the cessation of United States mail service throughout the South on May 31, 1861.

Although an able administrator headed the Confederate Post Office Department, its mail service was continuously interrupted. Through a combination of pay and personnel cuts, postage rate increases, and streamlining of mail routes, Reagan eliminated the postal deficit that existed in the South. But blockades and the invading Northern army, as well as a growing scarcity of postage stamps, severely hampered postal operations.

Federal mail service in the South gradually resumed as the war came



**John Henninger Reagan**

to an end. By November 15, 1865, 241 mail routes had been restored, and by November 1, 1866, 3,234 Post Offices out of 8,902 in the South were returned to federal control.

Postmaster General Reagan was arrested at the end of the war but later was pardoned and eventually made it back to Congress, where he became chairman of the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads.

### The DeWitt Clinton

*The DeWitt Clinton, the first train in New York to carry passengers and one of the first locomotives built in the United States, ran from Albany to Schenectady, a 17-mile distance, in less than an hour on August 9, 1831. The Post Office Department was quick to use this new technology to move mail.*



## MAIL BY RAIL

Some three decades before the Pony Express galloped into postal history, the “iron horse” made its formal appearance. In August 1829, an English-built locomotive, the *Stourbridge Lion*, completed the first locomotive run in the United States on the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company Road in Honesdale, Pennsylvania. The next month, the South Carolina Railroad Company adopted the locomotive as its tractive power.

In 1830, the Baltimore & Ohio’s *Tom Thumb*, America’s first steam locomotive, successfully carried more than 40 people at over ten miles per hour. This beginning was considered less than auspicious when, in late August 1830, a stage driver’s horse outran the *Tom Thumb* on a parallel track in a race at Ellicott’s Mills, Maryland. Later, however, a steam locomotive reached the unheard-of speed of 30 miles per hour in an 1831 competition in Baltimore.

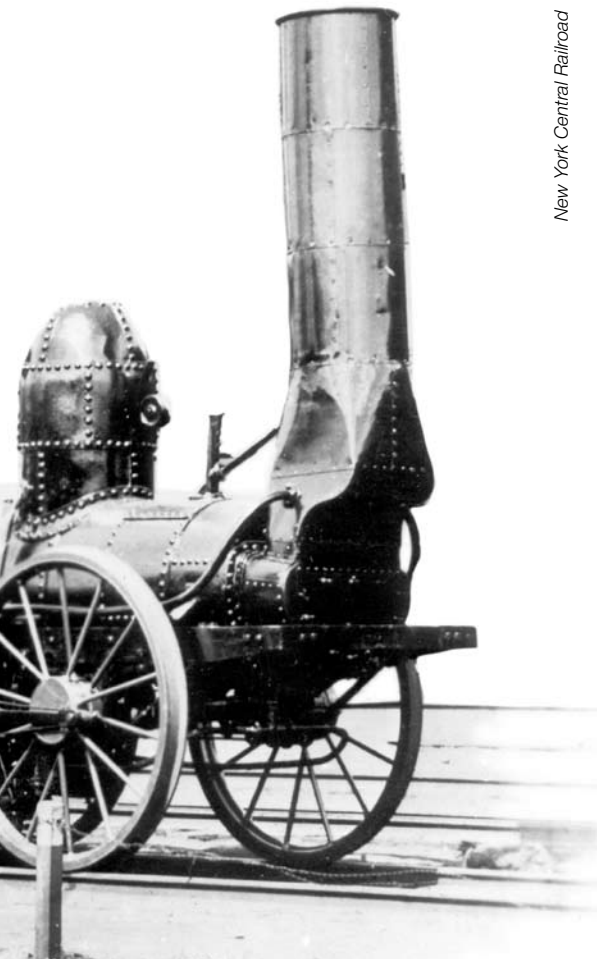
The Post Office Department recognized the value of rail to move

mail as early as November 30, 1832, when stagecoach contractors on a route from Philadelphia to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, were granted an allowance of \$400 per year “for carrying the mail on the railroad as far as West Chester from December 5, 1832.”<sup>13</sup> Although the Department apparently awarded several contracts for rail transportation as a part of stagecoach routes in succeeding years, the Postmaster General listed only one railroad company as a contractor during the first six months of 1836, for Route 1036 from Philadelphia to Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania.

The Department appointed the first route agent, John Kendall, nephew of Postmaster General Amos Kendall, to accompany the mails between Albany and Utica, New York, in 1837. An Act of July 7, 1838, designated all United States railroads as post routes, and railroad mail service increased rapidly.

In June 1840, two mail agents were appointed to the Boston-Springfield route, “to make exchanges of mail, attend to delivery, and receive and forward all unpaid way letters and packages received.”<sup>14</sup> The route agents opened the pouches from local offices, separated mail for other local points on the line for inclusion in the pouches for those offices, and sent the balance to distributing Post Offices for further sorting. Gradually, the clerks began to make up mail for connecting lines and local offices, and the idea of sorting mail on the cars evolved.

In 1862, William A. Davis, head clerk of the St. Joseph, Missouri, Post Office, began the first experiment in distributing mail in railroad cars on the Hannibal-St. Joseph run. Although this practice expedited the connection with the overland stage at St. Joseph, it was discontinued in January 1863. On August 28, 1864, the first U.S. railway post office (RPO) route was established officially when George B. Armstrong, Chicago’s assistant postmaster, placed a car equipped for general distribution in service between Chicago and Clinton, Iowa, on the Chicago and North Western Railroad. Similar routes were established between New York and Washington, D.C.; Chicago and Rock Island, Illinois; Chicago and Quincy,



New York Central Railroad



Illinois; and New York and Erie, Pennsylvania.

When railway mail service began, the cars were equipped primarily to sort and distribute letter mail. By about 1869, other mail was being sorted. Parcel Post service, added in 1913, soon outgrew the limited space aboard trains. Terminals, established adjacent to major railroad stations, allowed parcels to be sorted then loaded into mail cars and RPOs for transport to cities and towns.

In 1930, more than 10,000 trains moved mail. Following passage of the Transportation Act of 1958, which allowed the discontinuance of money-losing passenger trains, mail-carrying passenger trains began to decline rapidly. By 1965, only 190 trains carried mail, and by 1970, the railroads carried virtually no First-Class Mail.

On April 30, 1971, the Post Office Department terminated seven of the eight remaining routes. The last railway

post office, which operated between New York and Washington, D.C., on Penn Central/Conrail, made its final run on June 30, 1977.

Highway and air congestion and an increase in the weight of catalogs and advertising mail during the 1980s led to renewed rail use. Amtrak carried mail on many trains, and freight trains pulled flatcars holding trailers full of mail. In 1993, Amtrak and the Postal Service reintroduced the RoadRailer<sup>®</sup>, special intermodal equipment that could travel on highways and on rails without having to be hoisted onto a railroad flatcar.

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, rail transportation of mail helped close the gap caused by temporary disruptions to commercial air service.

Although Amtrak stopped carrying mail in October 2004, the nation's freight railroads continue to carry mail through their intermodal service. ■

### **The Mississippi**

*The Mississippi, an early steam engine, was built in 1834.*



## Owney, Mascot of the Railway Mail Service

On an autumn day in 1888, a shaggy pup took his first step toward becoming a postal legend when he crept into the Albany, New York, Post Office. Postal employees allowed him to stay and named him Owney.

At first, Owney stayed close to the Post Office, but he soon began riding mail wagons to the train depot and then rode the railway mail car down to New York City and back to Albany. As Owney traveled farther, his friends at the Albany Post Office feared he might wander too far away to find his way home again so they purchased a leather collar with a tag reading "Owney, Post Office, Albany, N.Y." The railway mail service clerks recorded Owney's travels by attaching metal baggage tags to his collar to identify the rail lines he traveled on.

He was soon weighed down by his collection of tags. Postmaster

General John Wanamaker presented Owney with a little jacket to distribute their weight more evenly.

Owney took to traveling farther and staying away longer, eventually visiting Mexico, Canada, Japan, China, Singapore, Suez, Algiers, and the Azores.

While being shown off to an Ohio newspaper reporter, Owney bit the postal clerk who was handling him. The postmaster had Owney put down on June 11, 1897. Railway mail clerks chipped in money to have a taxidermist preserve Owney's body, which then was sent to postal headquarters in Washington, D.C., for exhibit.

In 1911, the Post Office Department entrusted Owney to the Smithsonian Institution. Since 1993, Owney has been part of the National Postal Museum in Washington, D.C.



### Catching Mail

*A railway mail service clerk operates a catcher arm to grab a mailbag from a mail crane alongside the tracks as his train races past, 1913.*



## Star Routes



### Mail by Mule

*The contract mail route to the Havasupai Indian Reservation, Supai, Arizona, far below the southern rim of the Grand Canyon, is the last mule train delivery in the United States. Helicopters and mail drops are impractical here, so a mule train makes the 6- to 8-hour round trip 5 days a week, bringing everything from food to furniture to the reservation.*

Post riders on horseback were the first contractors to carry mail between Post Offices. In 1773, post road surveyor Hugh Finlay noted that a stagecoach driver held a contract to carry semi-weekly mail between Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Boston, Massachusetts. In 1785, the Continental Congress authorized the Postmaster General to award mail transportation contracts to stagecoach operators, in effect subsidizing public travel and commerce with postal funds. Despite their higher costs and sometimes lower efficiency, stagecoach proposals were preferred over horseback.

An Act of March 3, 1845, took steps to reduce mail transportation costs. Congress abandoned its preference for stagecoaches, with contracts to be awarded to the lowest bidder for what “may be necessary to provide for the due celerity, certainty and security of such transportation.”<sup>15</sup> These were known as “celerity, certainty and security” bids. Postal clerks shortened the phrase to three asterisks or stars (\*\*\*). The bids became known as star bids, and the routes became known as star routes.

In 1845, more than two-thirds of the Post Office Department’s budget was for transportation. By 1849, the Department cut transportation costs on all routes — horseback, stage, steamboat and railroad — by 17 percent, from \$2,938,551 in 1844 to \$2,428,515. Route distances rose 20 percent for the same years, from 35.4 million miles to 42.5 million miles in 1849. Star routes were largely responsible for the savings as contractors switched to horseback, cutting per-mile costs 38 percent, from 7.2 cents to 4.5 cents.

Still, throughout the 1850s, the Department continued to favor stagecoaches over horses on certain routes. In 1852, Postmaster General Samuel D. Hubbard instructed contract bidders to state the type of conveyance “if a higher mode than horseback be intended,” noting that

stagecoaches were preferred on certain routes.<sup>16</sup>

Postmaster General Joseph Holt’s 1859 *Annual Report* criticized the “enormous sums” paid to stagecoach companies to transport mails, “some of which [were] so light as scarcely to yield a revenue sufficient to defray the expense of carrying them on horseback.” He declared, “In advertising for the new lettings, ‘Star Bids’... will alone be invited ... without any designation of modes of conveyance.”<sup>17</sup> The 1860 *Annual Report* is the last to discriminate between “coach” and “inferior” modes of service.<sup>18</sup>

Contractors had to be at least 16 years old until 1902, when the age limit was raised to 21. Subcontractors or carriers could be 16. Contractors were bonded and took an oath of office; subcontractors and carriers also took the oath.

From 1802 to 1859, postal laws required carriers to be free white persons. Violators were fined. The typical four-year contract did not provide payment for missed trips, regardless of weather conditions. Unexcused service failures could result in fines up to three times the trip’s price.

Regular schedules made carriers easy targets for thieves. Criminal punishment was harsh. Anyone found guilty of robbing carriers could receive five to ten years of hard labor for the first offense and death for the second. Meanwhile, some carriers faced the hazards of snow, avalanches, ice packs, cliff-hugging roads, seas of mud, and dangerous waters.

Contractors provided their own equipment. A 1930s-era Post Office Department memo quotes Harry Elfers, who transported mail ten miles from Sandusky, Ohio, to Kelleys Island in Lake Erie. In bad weather, he would sail from the island to Marblehead, the closest mainland point, only four miles away. That could take 20 minutes or 8 hours, depending on the weather. Either way, his pay was the same. Elfers recalled the specialized equipment he used:

When I was a youngster I was out in a boat about all the time. Now I don't care for ordinary sailing but battling with the ice has a fascination for me. As soon as the ice begins to form, I feel eager to get out one of the 'ironclads' and fight my way across. An 'ironclad' is a flat-bottomed skiff. There's a sail in the bow to carry us through the water or over the ice when conditions are right. There are two iron-shod runners on the bottom so the boat may be used as a sled. The sides are sheathed with galvanized iron. This is very important, because thin ice will cut a boat like a knife.<sup>19</sup>

Most star route carriers traveled by horse or horse-drawn vehicle until the early 20th century. Boats, sleds, snowshoes, and skis also were used. Today's contractors use trucks, tractor trailers, and automobiles or whatever it takes — mule trains into the Grand Canyon, flat-bottomed pole boats in the Louisiana bayous, and airplanes and

hovercraft in Alaska. Dog sleds were used in Alaska until 1963. Today, mail is dropped by parachute on some Alaskan routes. During the winter, snowmobiles carry mail in the highlands of Utah, Colorado, and Montana.

In *The Story of Our Post Office*, Marshall Cushing writes about Mrs. Clara Carter, who, while carrying mail between Maine's West Ellsworth and Ellsworth Post Offices around 1892, also delivered mail to customers on the route.<sup>20</sup> Such unofficial arrangements were formalized beginning July 1, 1900, when some contracts provided for delivery to and collection from rural mail boxes erected along the routes. By 1918, some contracts also permitted the sale of stamps, money orders, and registered mail along routes.

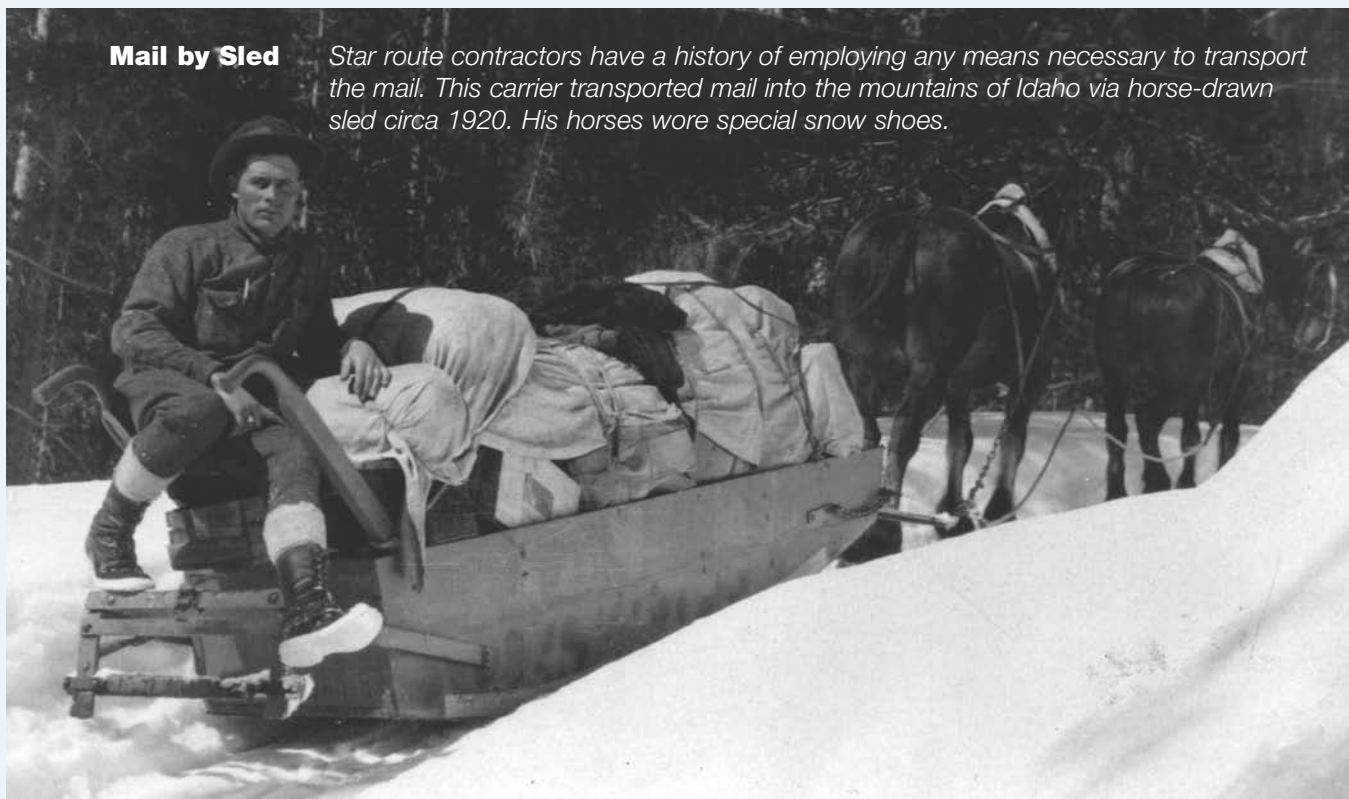
In 1948, Congress allowed the Postmaster General to renew four-year contracts with satisfactory service providers rather than award a new contract to the lowest acceptable bidder to prevent the many contract failures

resulting from speculators who underbid tried-and-true carriers by just a few dollars. Congressman Thomas J. Murray of Tennessee explained:

*I think when a star-route contractor has carried the mail for 20 to 25 years ... it is unjust and unfair for him to be deprived of his contract for another 4-year term by cut-throat bidding.*<sup>21</sup>

Star routes declined in the 1950s as unnecessary and duplicate service was eliminated. However, the 1960s saw growth as the Highway Act of 1958 improved highways while rail service declined. Between 1960 and 1970, star-route miles more than doubled. In the 1970s, star routes officially became known as highway contract routes, although popular usage of the older term continues.

At the end of 2006, the Postal Service had 16,707 highway contract routes. About 45 percent of these provided delivery to customers along the routes.



### Mail by Sled

Star route contractors have a history of employing any means necessary to transport the mail. This carrier transported mail into the mountains of Idaho via horse-drawn sled circa 1920. His horses wore special snow shoes.



# REACHING OUT TO EVERYONE



## FREE CITY DELIVERY

Before 1863, postage paid only for the delivery of mail from Post Office to Post Office. Citizens picked up their mail, although in some cities they could pay an extra two-cent fee for letter delivery or use private delivery firms. Among the postal reforms suggested by progressive Postmaster General Montgomery Blair in his 1862 report to the President was free delivery of mail by salaried letter carriers, which he felt would “greatly accelerate deliveries, and promote the public convenience.”<sup>22</sup> He reasoned that if the system of mailing and receiving letters was more convenient, people would use it more often, and pointed to increasing postal revenues in England, which already had adopted free city delivery.

Congress agreed. An Act of Congress of March 3, 1863, effective July 1, 1863, provided that free city delivery be established at Post Offices where income from local postage was more than sufficient to pay all expenses of the service. For the first time, Americans had to put street addresses on their letters.

By June 30, 1864, free city delivery had been established in 65 cities nationwide, with 685 carriers delivering mail in cities such as Baltimore, Boston, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C. By 1880, 104 cities were served by 2,628 letter carriers, and by 1900, 15,322 carriers provided service to 796 cities.

Postmasters, groups of citizens, or city authorities could petition the Post Office Department for free delivery service if their city met population or postal revenue requirements. The city had to provide sidewalks and crosswalks, ensure that streets were named and lit, and assign numbers to houses.

Initially, carriers hand-delivered mail to customers. If a customer did not answer the carrier’s knock, ring, or whistle, the mail remained in the carrier’s satchel to be redelivered when the customer was home. By 1912, new customers were required to provide mail slots or receptacles, and postmas-

**New York City**  
*Fifth Avenue, 1913.*



Library of Congress

## City Delivery Pioneer

ters were urged to encourage existing customers to provide them as well. As late as 1914, First Assistant Postmaster General Daniel C. Roper estimated that a letter carrier spent 30 minutes to an hour each day waiting at doors where there was person-to-person delivery. As of March 1, 1923, mail slots or receptacles were required for delivery service.

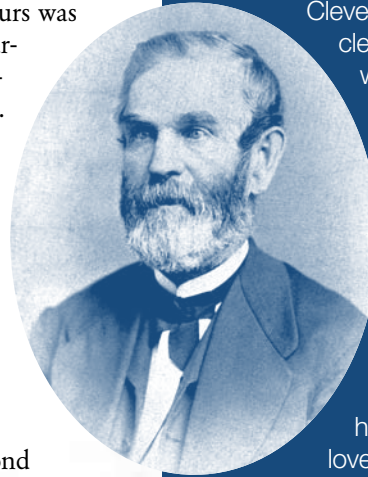
By the 1930s, as a convenience to customers living on the margins of a city, letter carriers began delivering to customers with “suitable boxes at the curb line.”<sup>23</sup> In the ensuing decades American suburbanization, which exploded in the 1950s, brought an increase in curbside mailboxes. The Department introduced curbside cluster boxes in 1967. Their use has been increasingly encouraged in recent decades to promote efficiency and economy of service.

Originally, letter carriers worked 52 weeks a year, typically 9 to 11 hours a day from Monday through Saturday, and if necessary, part of Sunday. An Act of June 27, 1884, granted them

15 days of leave per year. In 1888, Congress declared that 8 hours was a full day’s work and that carriers would be paid for additional hours worked per day. The 40-hour work week began in 1935.

Carriers walked as many as 22 miles a day, carrying up to 50 pounds of mail at a time. They were instructed to deliver letters frequently and promptly – generally twice a day to homes and up to four times a day to businesses. The second residential delivery was discontinued on April 17, 1950, in most cities. Multiple deliveries to businesses were phased out over the next few decades as changing transportation patterns made most mail available for first-trip delivery. The weight limit of a carrier’s load was reduced to 35 pounds by the mid-1950s and remains the same today.

In 2006, 224,400 letter carriers delivered mail in the nation’s cities.



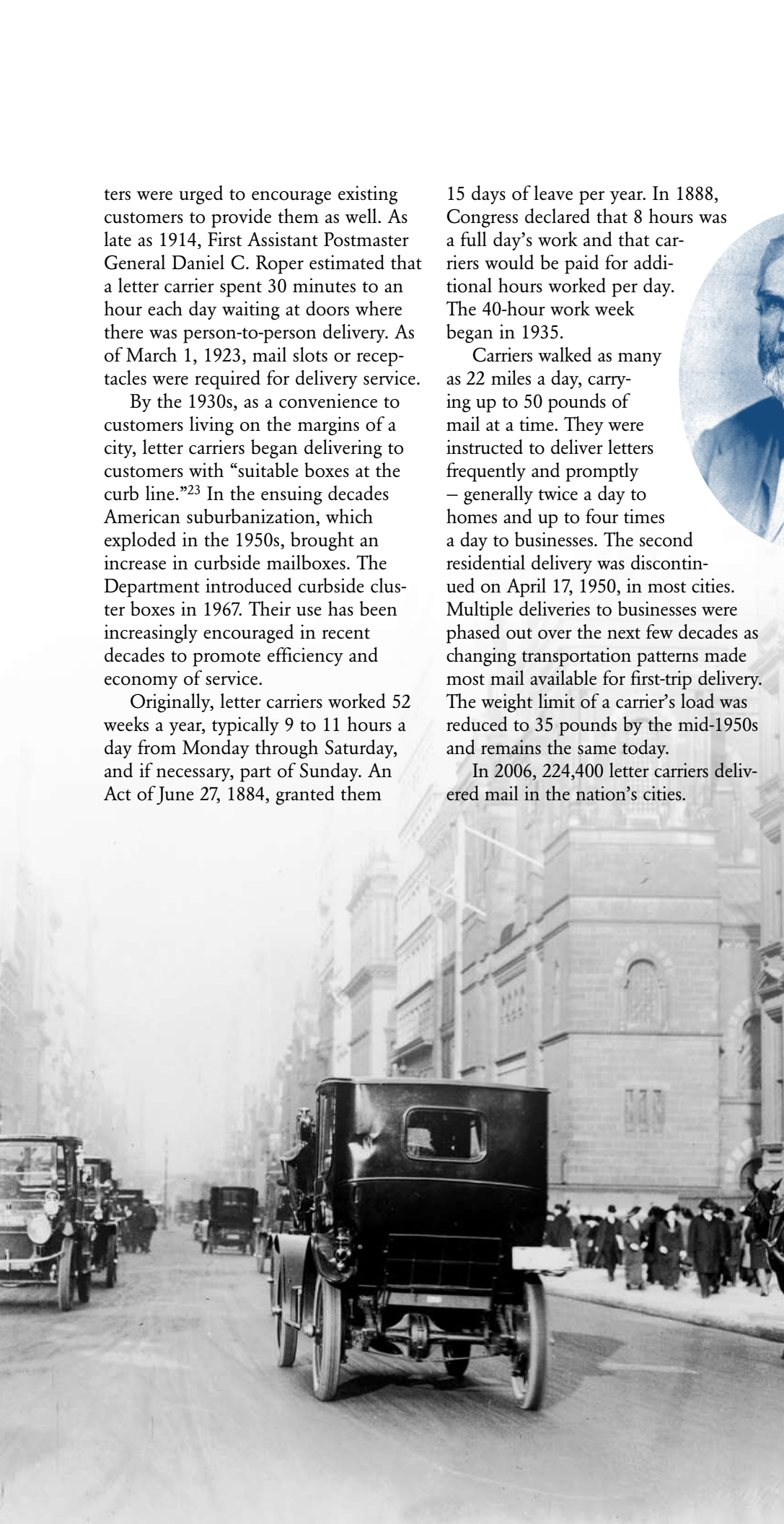
Joseph William Briggs, a Cleveland, Ohio, postal clerk, often is credited with conceiving the idea of free city delivery while contemplating long lines of customers trying to keep warm as they inched toward his window in the winter of 1862.

Many were women hoping for news of loved ones in the Civil War. Briggs enlisted local businesses to serve as staging areas for sorting customers’ mail, and he began delivering mail to his patrons free of cost.

In 1864, Briggs wrote Postmaster General Montgomery Blair, suggesting improvements to the free letter carrier system, launched in 1863. Blair liked Briggs’ ideas, brought him to Washington, and appointed him special agent in charge of superintending the operation of the letter carrier system, a role he performed until his death on February 23, 1872.

A 1921 postal committee charged with determining who should be credited with the establishment of free city delivery, after examining the available evidence, reported to Postmaster General Will Hays that “no one individual can be considered the author or originator of this service ...” The committee said, “Mr. Briggs cannot be properly credited as the author of the City Free Delivery Service, but the evidence seems sufficient to warrant the statement that he was the first letter carrier in the city of Cleveland, Ohio.”<sup>24</sup>

A plaque in the Cleveland Post Office commemorates Briggs’ service as that city’s first free letter carrier and his contributions to establishing the service nationwide.





### **Rural Carrier, Rural Route No. 2, Rochester, Indiana**

*Although a uniform has never been prescribed for rural carriers, some, such as this carrier, chose to wear one. When it was established in October 1900, this carrier's route was 35 miles long and served 1,000 customers.*

### **RURAL FREE DELIVERY (RFD)**

In 1890, nearly 41 million people – 65 percent of the American population – lived in rural areas. Although many city dwellers had enjoyed free home delivery since 1863, rural citizens had to pick up their mail at the Post Office, leading one farmer to ask: “Why should the cities have fancy mail service and the old colonial system still prevail in the country districts?”<sup>25</sup>

Postmaster General John Wanamaker, who served from 1889 to 1893, was a merchant who became one of the most innovative and energetic people ever to lead the Post Office Department. He thought it made more sense to have one person deliver mail than to have 50 people ride into town to collect their mail. He cited business logic and social philosophy as reasons to give rural dwellers free delivery. Businesses could expand their markets. Rural customers paid the same postage rates as city people. Rural people needed the important information provided by newspapers yet did not always have time to walk or ride to the Post Office. Young people might stay on the farm if correspondence and magazines eased their isolation.

“I think the growth of the Farmers’ Alliance movement and the other farmers’ movements in the past few years has been due to this hunger for something

social as much as to anything else,” Wanamaker wrote in 1891.<sup>26</sup> He proposed that rural customers receive free delivery.

On October 1, 1890, Congress authorized funding of \$10,000 to test the “practicability” of delivering mail to small towns, defined as those having populations of from 300 to 5,000 people, and nearby rural districts.<sup>27</sup> For the experiment, it was suggested that each postmaster hire a man or boy for an hour or two a day to deliver the mail or that school teachers give the mail to pupils for delivery to parents or neighbors. However, only adults were employed. Twelve communities were selected for what was called village free delivery. The results were satisfactory although some customers returned to collecting their mail from the Post Office by choice when the novelty wore off. People farther away from more heavily populated areas still had no delivery.

In January 1892, Congressman James O’Donnell introduced “A Bill to Extend the Free Delivery System of Mails to Rural Communities,” but the House Committee on Post Office and Post Roads balked at the proposed \$6 million price tag. An amendment bringing the figure down to \$100,000 also was rejected.





## Postmasters in the Mid-19th Century

In 1860, postmasters took the following oath: "I, \_\_\_\_\_, do swear/affirm that I will faithfully perform all the duties required of me, and abstain from everything forbidden by the laws in relation to the establishment of the Post Office and post roads within the United States. I do solemnly swear/affirm that I will support the Constitution of the United States."

Postmasters had to post a bond and reside in the community where the Post Office was located. The postmaster was exempt from militia duty but could be called upon to work on the roads.

The job of postmaster was an important one — candidates for the job were proposed by the outgoing postmaster, the local community, or local congressmen. Beginning in 1836, postmasters at the largest Post Offices were appointed by the President and usually received the job as a political plum. The Postmaster General continued to appoint postmasters at smaller Post Offices. The Post Office often was kept as a sideline

to the postmaster's primary occupation, such as storekeeper.

The postmaster had to keep the Post Office open during normal business hours and, if mail was delivered on a Sunday, for one hour after the delivery of mail. If a church service was going on, the postmaster had to wait until it concluded and then open the office for an hour. This decision dated back to the 19th-century controversies over the drivers of mail wagons blowing on a horn or a trumpet as the wagon came into town. Some ministers complained that the men would rise up, leave the church, and head for the Post Office, where they would visit with each other and even play cards.

The decision to keep the Post Office closed during services was a compromise. However, the Postmaster General refused to stop mail wagons from running on Sundays, since this would delay the mail too much.



### Francis E. Bush, Postmaster

*Postmasters often were pillars of their communities. Francis E. Bush, 95, served two terms as postmaster of Standing Stone, Pennsylvania, from 1875 to 1889 and then from 1901 to 1929.*



### Postmasters' Convention

*Postmasters met in Waco, Texas, on July 12, 1899, for the first convention of the Texas Postmasters Association.*

## Rural Carrier, Harbor Springs, Michigan, circa 1910

*Rural free delivery stimulated road improvement nationwide, since passable roads were a prerequisite for establishing new delivery routes. Rural carriers supplied their own transportation — from horses and buggies to bicycles, motorcycles, and automobiles — to deliver the mail. They were allowed to use automobiles on their routes as early as 1907, where roads and topography permitted.*



A year and two months later, on March 3, 1893, a bill introduced by one-term Georgia Congressman Tom Watson passed. It appropriated \$10,000 for experimental rural free delivery. On March 6, 1893, Wilson S. Bissell was sworn in as Postmaster General. He did not pursue the experiment, citing the pressure of more important concerns and the need for at least \$20 million to inaugurate rural free delivery, a figure later identified as a guess. Instead, he recommended establishing additional Post Offices where needed.

Bissell was succeeded by William L. Wilson on March 1, 1895. Wilson agreed with his predecessor that rural free delivery was not practical but was willing to attempt the experiment if Congress made money available. That year, Congress appropriated \$20,000 for the experiment and another \$10,000 in 1896, bringing the total to \$40,000 — enough for the Post Office Department to begin its rural free delivery experiment.

On October 1, 1896, rural free delivery service began in Charles Town, Halltown, and Uvilla in West Virginia, Postmaster General Wilson's home state. Within a year, 44 routes were underway in 29 states.

Just 5 days before Christmas in 1899, the Post Office Department decided to experiment with extending RFD across an entire county. Postmaster General Charles Emory Smith ordered that 63 small Post Offices and the routes of 35 star route contractors and mail messen-

gers be discontinued and that rural free delivery be established in their place in Carroll County, Maryland. County-wide delivery proved viable.

Judged a success, rural free delivery became a permanent service effective July 1, 1902. The word "free" was dropped in 1906, since it was understood.

During the six experimental years before rural delivery became a permanent service, customers sent more than 10,000 petitions asking that routes be established. The Department had time to evaluate the extent to which RFD could replace small, fourth-class Post Offices and star routes, whether it could be used to offer services such as money orders, and what national RFD service would cost. The Department also had an opportunity to see what else was needed to make the service successful: good roads, standardized mailboxes, and a "great army of rural carriers" — about 8,500 in 1902. The Post Office Department claimed that, "as a class there are no more faithful employees in the Government service."<sup>28</sup>

The backing of the National Grange, National Farmers' Congress, and State Farmers' Alliance was important to rural delivery's establishment and success, as was the enthusiastic response of rural customers. Although one Kansas farmer expressed concern that rural people would become lazy if they did not have to pick up their mail, more typical were reactions such as those of the Colorado woman who was glad to

“have our mail fresh instead of stale” and the Arizona citizen who wrote:

*I am more than ever proud of being an American citizen. ... I live three and a half miles from the Tempe post-office, and have been sick for a week past, yet my mail is brought to my door every morning, except Sunday. ... It looks as if “Uncle Sam” had at last turned his eye in our direction.<sup>29</sup>*

Farmers helped by putting out boxes for the rural carriers – everything from lard pails and syrup cans to old apple, soap, and cigar boxes. Postal officials decided a standardized box would improve service and, in 1901, asked manufacturers to design boxes to the following specifications:

*The box must be made of metal, 6 by 8 by 18 inches, and weather-proof.*

*Boxes should be constructed so they can be fastened to a post at a height convenient to the carrier without alighting.*

*Keys for customers’ boxes should be easy to use by a carrier with “one gloved hand in the severest weather.”<sup>30</sup>*

Manufacturers stenciled the words “Approved by the Postmaster-General” on satisfactory boxes. In 1902, the Post Office Department required customers to have these boxes in order to receive rural free delivery. Boxes could be square, oblong, circular, or semicircular but had to protect mail from rain, snow, and dust.

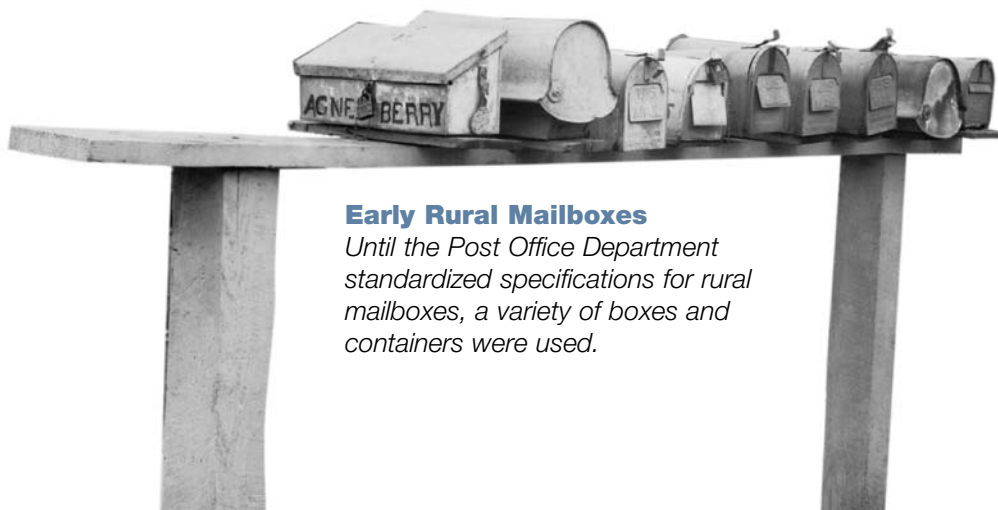
Rural carriers sold stamps and money orders, registered letters, and, in short, served as traveling Post Offices. They were the vanguard for delivery in suburban areas, a “middle territory, neither distinctly city nor rural in

character” first mentioned by the Post Office Department in its *Annual Report* of 1902, with Bridgeport, Connecticut, cited as an example.<sup>31</sup> Rural carriers served suburban areas until these areas were annexed by an adjacent city postal district. Carriers supplied their own transportation – usually horses and wagons until, in 1929, the Post Office Department noted that improved roads had led to “almost a complete change in rural delivery from horse-drawn vehicles to motor cars.”<sup>32</sup>

Although rural carriers could deliver packages weighing up to four pounds, by law the Post Office Department could not deliver heavier packages, which had to be mailed using private express companies. Beginning in 1904 the Department asked Congress for authorization to experiment with the delivery of larger packages. In 1911, Postmaster General Frank H. Hitchcock recommended that Congress allow such service in rural and urban areas and requested a total of \$150,000 for such an experiment, with the thought of paving the way for a general Parcel Post.

The increase in the number of rural delivery routes led to a decrease in the number of small Post Offices. In 1901, the Post Office Department operated the largest number of Post Offices in American history, 76,945. The next year, there were 1,000 fewer Post Offices. Despite a growing population and more mail, the number of Post Offices continued to drop each subsequent year, with the exception of 1947 and 2001.

In 2006, almost 37 million homes and businesses were served by the Postal Service’s rural letter carriers. Rural delivery continues to provide a vital link between urban and rural America. ■



### Early Rural Mailboxes

*Until the Post Office Department standardized specifications for rural mailboxes, a variety of boxes and containers were used.*



## U.S. Postage Stamps



Clockwise from upper right: 1847, first U.S. stamps, George Washington and Benjamin Franklin; 1907, Pocahontas; 1993, Elvis Presley; 1940, Booker T. Washington; 1998, Breast Cancer Research, the first semipostal stamp.

The Post Office Department issued its first postage stamps on July 1, 1847. Previously, letters were taken to a Post Office, where the postmaster would note the postage in the upper right corner. The postage rate was based on the number of sheets in the letter and the distance it would travel. Postage could be paid in advance by the writer, collected from the addressee on delivery, or paid partially in advance and partially upon delivery.

### The First Postage Stamps

In 1837, Great Britain's Sir Rowland Hill proposed a uniform rate of postage for mail going anywhere in the British Isles and prepayment by using envelopes with preprinted postage or adhesive labels. On May 6, 1840, the stamp that became known as the Penny Black, covering the one-penny charge for half-ounce letters sent anywhere in the British Isles, became available in postal facilities.

### United States Postage Stamps

Alexander M. Greig's City Despatch Post, a private New York City carrier, issued the first adhesive stamps in the United States on February 1, 1842. The Post Office Department bought Greig's business and continued use of adhesive stamps to prepay postage.

After U.S. postage rates were standardized in 1845, New York City Postmaster Robert H. Morris, among others, provided special stamps or markings to indicate prepayment of postage. These now are known as Postmasters' Provisionals.

On March 3, 1847, Congress authorized United States postage stamps. The first general issue postage stamps went on sale in New York City, July 1, 1847. One, priced at five cents, depicted Benjamin Franklin. The other, a ten-cent stamp, pictured George Washington. Clerks used scissors to cut the stamps from pregummed, nonperforated sheets. Only Franklin and Washington appeared on stamps until 1856, when a five-cent stamp honoring Thomas Jefferson was issued. A two-cent

Andrew Jackson stamp was added in 1863. George Washington has appeared on more U.S. postage stamps than any other person.

Until government-issued stamps became obligatory January 1, 1856, other payment methods remained legal.

### Postal Stationery

The first printed stamped envelopes were issued July 1, 1853. They have always been produced by private contractors and sold at the cost of postage plus the cost of manufacture. With the exception of manila newspaper wrappers used from 1919 to 1934, watermarks have been mandatory for stamped-envelope paper since 1853. The watermarks usually changed with every four-year printing contract to help identify the envelope and paper manufacturers.

Austria issued the first postal card in 1869. The United States followed in May 1873. Postal cards, known today as stamped cards, are produced by the government and carry preprinted postage, unlike privately produced postcards, which do not bear postage. The 1873 *Annual Report of the Postmaster General* noted:

*As predicted, they have been favorably received. They have supplied a public want, and have made a new and remunerative business for the Department.*<sup>33</sup>

Postal cards were sold at face value until January 10, 1999, when a charge for the cost of manufacture was added.

### Commemorative Stamps

In 1893, the first U.S. commemorative stamps, honoring that year's World Columbian Exposition in Chicago, were issued. The subject — Columbus's voyages to the New World — and size of the stamps were innovative. Standard-sized stamps were too small for engraved reproductions of paintings that portrayed events connected to

Columbus's voyages. The stamps were  $\frac{7}{8}$  inches high by  $1-1\frac{1}{32}$  inches wide, nearly double the size of previous stamps.

Over the years, commemorative stamps have been produced in many sizes and shapes, with the first triangular postage stamp issued in 1997 and the first round stamp in 2000.

The first stamp honoring an American woman was the eight-cent Martha Washington stamp of 1902. The first to honor a Hispanic American was the one-dollar Admiral David Farragut stamp in 1903. Native Americans were portrayed in a general way on several earlier stamps, but the first to feature a specific individual was 1907's five-cent stamp honoring Pocahontas. In 1940, a ten-cent stamp commemorating Booker T. Washington became the first to honor an African American.

Other firsts include the 1993 29-cent stamp featuring Elvis Presley. The public was invited to vote for the "young" or the "older" Elvis for the stamp's design. Youth triumphed, and this has become the best-selling U.S. commemorative stamp to date.

### Booklets

Stamp booklets were first issued April 16, 1900. They contained 12, 24, or 48 two-cent stamps. Paraffined paper was placed between sheets of stamps to keep them from sticking together. The books, which carried a one-cent premium until 1963, had light cardboard covers printed with information about postage rates. Stamp booklets remain a staple and are enjoying a resurgence in popularity because of their availability at a wide range of non-postal retail outlets.

### Coils and Vending

The first coil (roll) stamps were issued on February 18, 1908, in response to business requests. Coils were also used in stamp vending equipment. The Department hoped to place vending machines in Post Office lobbies to

provide round-the-clock service without extra workhours. Machines were also planned for hotels, train stations, newsstands, and stores. Twenty-five different vending machines were tested, with six chosen for tests in the Baltimore, Minneapolis, New York, Washington, D.C., and Indianapolis Post Offices. Both coil stamps and imperforate sheets were produced for vending machines, with the latter receiving a variety of distinctive perforations and separations.

### Nondenominated Stamps

The first nondenominated stamps (stamps without a printed value) in the United States were two Christmas stamps issued October 14, 1975. The Postal Service had requested a rate change from 10 to 13 cents and was unsure when the Postal Rate Commission would issue a recommended decision in the case. When the rate change was delayed, the stamps were sold for 10 cents.

A similar situation led the Postal Service to issue nondenominated stamps on May 22, 1978. They bore the letter "A" rather than a denomination. The stamps were prepared in case of a shortage of stamps in the uncertain new denomination. They were sold for 15 cents for domestic use only. Nondenominated stamps with letter designations through "H" were issued in conjunction with postage rate changes through 1998.

### Self-adhesives

The Postal Service originally developed self-adhesive stamps to make precanceled stamps more secure. Precanceled stamps are canceled across the face before being sold. In the late 1960s, as many as 20 percent of them were soaked off and reused. Precanceled stamps skipped a processing step that often caught reused stamps.

With the Christmas 1974 issue, the Postal Service experimented with a self-adhesive precanceled stamp. It was believed that the tightly bonded

self-adhesive would not permit stamps to be soaked off. An additional security feature placed slits in the stamps to foil attempts to peel them off. Unfortunately, the stamps cost three to five times more to produce than regular postage stamps, they could still be soaked off and reused, and stamps in the hands of collectors started to self-destruct.

In 1989, the Postal Service again experimented with self-adhesive stamps, this time with emphasis on customer convenience. The new self-adhesives had a water-soluble adhesive and were produced on coated paper, so the effects of the adhesive would not be destructive. Introduced nationwide in 1992, self-adhesive stamps now are issued in formats that include booklets, coils, sheets, and souvenir sheets.

### Semipostals

Semipostals are stamps on which the price exceeds the cost of postage; the difference is devoted to a particular cause. An act of Congress resulted in the *Breast Cancer Research* stamp, the first United States semipostal, on July 29, 1998, with proceeds above the cost of postage going to breast cancer research. The Postal Service issued the *Heroes of 2001* stamp on June 7, 2002, with proceeds going to the families of emergency workers killed or injured in connection with the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States.

On October 8, 2003, the Postal Service issued the *Stop Family Violence* semipostal, to contribute to the nationwide fight against domestic violence.

### Forever Stamp

In May 2006, the Postal Service filed a proposal for a *Forever* stamp, a nondenominated, nonexpiring stamp intended for customers mailing a piece of First-Class Mail. The stamp would be valid for the first ounce of postage.



# THE 20TH CENTURY

**A**t the start of the 20th century, Americans were served by the Post Office Department. At the century's close, they were served by the United States Postal Service. At the beginning of the 20th century, most Americans lived in rural areas. By its end, the country was an industrial and service economy of international pre-eminence, and the character, volume, and means of transporting mail had changed. The Post Office Department, transformed into the United States Postal Service, continued its tradition of innovation, adaptation, and change to better serve postal customers.

## PARCEL POST

By law, the Post Office Department could not carry parcels weighing more than four pounds at the beginning of the 20th century. Private express companies, which had begun to flourish in the mid-1800s, delivered large packages.

The establishment of rural free delivery had provided a heady taste of life for rural Americans. Soon the demand increased for the delivery of packages containing food, dry goods, drugs, and other commodities not easily available to farmers. When Congress considered enacting a law to allow Parcel Post service, express companies and country merchants fought long and hard against it. Rural residents, who represented 54 percent of the country's population in 1910, were equally emphatic in wanting Parcel Post. While Congress was hotly debating the question, one express company declared a large dividend to stockholders. Public indignation at their so-called exorbitant profits helped Congress decide the issue.

The Act of August 24, 1912 (37 Stat. 539), authorized Parcel Post, a service that would:

*embrace all other matter, including farm and factory products not now embraced by law in either the first, second or third class, not exceeding eleven pounds in weight, nor greater in size than seventy-two inches in length and girth combined ...*

Parcel Post began on January 1, 1913. It was an instant success, with 300 million parcels mailed in the first six months the service was offered. The effect on the national economy was electric. Marketing and merchandising through Parcel Post spurred the growth of the great mail-order houses. Montgomery Ward, the first mail-order company, started with a catalog of more than 100 products in 1872. Sears, Roebuck and Company followed Montgomery Ward in 1893. The year Parcel Post began, Sears handled five times as many orders as it did the year before. Five years later, Sears doubled its revenues.

Parcel Post grew too, literally and in volume. Its weight and size limits were expanded over time, reaching 70 pounds and 100 inches on August 1, 1931.<sup>34</sup> After World War II, Parcel Post's comparatively low rates stimulated its growth while the business of express companies began to decrease. Eventually, Congress intervened to rescue the Railway Express Agency from a precarious financial position. On January 1, 1952, the weight of parcels sent via the mails to large (first class) Post Offices was reduced to 40 pounds, if the parcels were traveling up to 150 miles, and to 20 pounds for any greater distance. None of these parcels could exceed 72 inches in length and girth combined. Parcels bound for other Post Offices still could weigh up to 70 pounds and be up to 100 inches in size. Parcel Post volume fell.

To offset this, weight and size limits for parcels moving between larger Post Offices gradually were increased starting on July 1, 1967, so that by July 1, 1969, the weight limit for all such parcels had been increased to 40 pounds, and by July 1, 1971, the size limit had been increased to 84 inches.

On February 27, 1983, a uniform weight and size limit was set at 70 pounds, 108 inches, for parcels mailed from any Post Office to any destination within the United States. On January 10, 1999, the size limit for Parcel Post increased to 130 inches.



### POSTAL SAVINGS SYSTEM

An Act of Congress of June 25, 1910, established the Postal Savings System in designated Post Offices, effective January 1, 1911. The legislation aimed to get money out of hiding, attract the savings of immigrants accustomed to saving at Post Offices in their native countries, provide safe depositories for people who had lost confidence in banks, and furnish more convenient depositories for working people.

The system paid two percent interest per year. Initially, the minimum deposit was \$1, and the balance in an account could not exceed \$500, excluding interest.

Deposits were slow at first, but by 1929, \$153 million was on deposit. Savings spurred to \$1.2 billion during the 1930s and jumped again during World War II, peaking in 1947 at almost \$3.4 billion.

After the war, banks raised their interest rates and began offering the same governmental guarantee as the Postal Savings System. In addition, United States savings bonds gave higher interest rates. Deposits in the Postal Savings System declined, dropping to \$416 million by 1964.

On April 27, 1966, the Post Office Department stopped accepting deposits to existing accounts, refused to open new accounts, and cut off interest payments as the annual anniversary date of existing accounts came up. When the system ended officially July 1, 1967, about \$50 million in the unclaimed deposits of more than 600,000 depositors was turned over to the U.S. Treasury Department to be held in trust indefinitely.

An Act of August 13, 1971, authorized the Treasury to turn over the money on deposit to various states and jurisdictions, each sharing proportionately based on its own deposits. Some money was kept for future claims, but under the Postal Savings System Statute of Limitations Act of July 13, 1984 (Public Law 98-359), no claims could be brought more than one year after enactment. Thus, no claims made after July 13, 1985, have been honored.

The above Statute of Limitations applies only to certificates. Postal savings stamps and postal savings bonds can

be redeemed by sending them to the Bureau of the Public Debt, Post Office Box 426, Parkersburg, WV 26106-0426.

### AIRMAIL

The Post Office Department's most extraordinary role in transportation was probably played in the sky, a role little known today except to postal employees and pioneers of American aviation.

The U.S. government had been cautious in exploring the airplane's potential. In 1905, the War Department considered three separate offers by Orville and Wilbur Wright to share their scientific discoveries on flight, then declined for budgetary reasons. Although by 1908 the Wright brothers had convinced many European nations that flight was feasible, the U.S. government owned only one airplane, and that crashed.

The Post Office Department, however, was intrigued with the possibility of carrying mail through the skies and authorized its first experimental mail flight at an aviation meet on Long Island in New York in 1911. Earle Ovington, sworn in as a mail carrier by Postmaster General Frank Hitchcock, made daily flights between Garden City Estates and Mineola, New York, dropping his mail bags from the plane to the ground where they were picked up by the Mineola postmaster.

Later, in 1911 and 1912, the Department authorized another 31 experimental flights at fairs, carnivals, and air meets in more than 16 states. These flights convinced the Department that the airplane could carry a payload of mail. Officials repeatedly urged Congress in 1912 to appropriate money to launch airmail service. In 1916, Congress finally authorized the use of \$50,000 from steam-and-powerboat service appropriations for airmail experiments. The Department advertised for bids for contract service in Massachusetts and Alaska but received no acceptable responses.

In 1918, Congress appropriated \$100,000 to establish experimental airmail routes. The Post Office Department urged the Army Signal Corps to lend its planes and pilots to the Department to start an airmail service. Carrying the mail, the Department argued, would provide invaluable cross-



**Parcel Post Truck, Lake Minnetonka, Minnesota, circa 1926**



**Postal Savings System, 1946**



### **Airmail Pilot**

*An airmail pilot immediately handed over the mail after flying the last leg of the transcontinental route from San Francisco to New York in the early 1920s.*

### **Airmail Plane**

*A compartment in the wing of this Ford Tri-Motor Mail Passenger plane was lowered to allow mail to be loaded and unloaded, circa 1930.*

country experience to student flyers. The Secretary of War agreed.

The Post Office Department began scheduled airmail service between New York and Washington, D.C., May 15, 1918, an important date in commercial aviation. Simultaneous takeoffs were made from Washington's Polo Grounds and from Belmont Park, Long Island, both trips by way of Philadelphia.

During the first three months of operation, the Post Office Department used Army pilots and six Army Curtiss JN-4H ("Jenny") training planes. On August 12, 1918, the Department took over all phases of airmail service, using newly hired civilian pilots and mechanics and six specially built mail planes from the Standard Aircraft Corporation.

These early mail planes had no instruments, radios, or other navigational aids. Pilots flew by dead reckoning. Forced landings occurred frequently due to bad weather, but fatalities in those early months were rare, largely because of the planes' small size, maneuverability, and slow landing speed.

Congress authorized airmail postage of 24 cents, including special delivery. The public was reluctant to use this more expensive service. During the first year, airmail bags contained as much regular mail as airmail. To bet-

ter its delivery time on long hauls and to lure the public into using airmail, the Department's long-range plans called for a transcontinental air route from New York to San Francisco. The first legs of this transcontinental route – from New York to Cleveland with a stop at Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, then from Cleveland to Chicago, with a stop at Bryan, Ohio – opened in 1919. A third leg opened in 1920 from Chicago to Omaha, via Iowa City, and feeder lines were established from St. Louis and Minneapolis to Chicago. The last transcontinental segment, from Omaha to San Francisco, via North Platte, Nebraska; Cheyenne, Rawlins, and Rock Springs in Wyoming; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Elko and Reno in Nevada; opened on September 8, 1920.

At this time, mail was carried on trains at night and flown by day. Still, the new service was 22 hours faster than the cross-country all-rail time.

In August 1920, the Department began installing radio stations at each airfield to provide pilots with current weather information. By November, ten stations were operating, including two Navy stations. When airmail traffic permitted, other government departments used the radios instead of the telegraph for special messages, and the





Department of Agriculture used the radios to transmit weather forecasts and stock market reports.

February 22, 1921, marked the first time mail was flown both day and night over the entire distance from San Francisco to New York. Congress was impressed. It appropriated \$1,250,000 for the expansion of airmail service. The Post Office Department installed additional landing fields, as well as towers, beacons, searchlights, and boundary markers, across the country. The Department also equipped the planes with luminescent instruments, navigational lights, and parachute flares.

In 1922 and 1923, the Department was awarded the Collier Trophy for important contributions to the development of aeronautics, especially in safety and for demonstrating the feasibility of night flights.

On February 2, 1925, Congress passed "An Act to encourage commercial aviation and to authorize the Postmaster General to contract for airmail service." The Post Office Department immediately invited bids from commercial aviation companies. By the end of 1926, 11 out of 12 contracted airmail routes were operating.

The first commercial airmail flight in the United States occurred

February 15, 1926. As commercial airlines took over, the Post Office Department transferred its lights, airways, and radio service to the Department of Commerce, including 17 fully equipped stations, 89 emergency landing fields, and 405 beacons. Terminal airports, except government properties in Chicago, Omaha, and San Francisco, were transferred to the municipalities in which they were located. Some planes were sold to airmail contractors, while others were transferred to interested government departments. By September 1, 1927, all airmail was carried under contract.

Charles I. Stanton, an early airmail pilot who later headed the Civil Aeronautics Administration, said about those early days of scheduled airmail service:

*We planted four seeds ... They were airways, communications, navigation aids, and multi-engined aircraft. Not all of these came full blown into the transportation scene; in fact, the last one withered and died and had to be planted over again nearly a decade later. But they are the cornerstones on which our present world-wide transport structure is built, and they came, one by one, out of our experience in daily, uninterrupted flying of the mail.<sup>35</sup>*

## New York to San Francisco

Best transportation times for mail

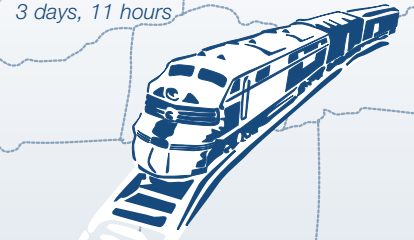
**2006 Airplane**  
6-7 hours



**1924 Transcontinental airmail**  
1 day, 10 hours, 20 minutes



**1921 Airplane and railroad**  
3 days, 11 hours



**1906 Special through-train**  
3 days, 18 hours

**1900 Transcontinental railroad**  
4 days, 10 hours

**1869 Transcontinental railroad**  
7 days, 2 hours

**1860 Railroad to St. Joseph, MO, then via Pony Express**  
13-14 days  
(3-4 railroad, 10 horseback)



**1858 Railroad to Tipton, MO, then overland-mail route**  
30-35 days (6-10 railroad, then 24-25 stagecoach)



**1849 Ship or steamboat via the Isthmus of Panama**  
1 month or longer







## Airmail Pilot Bill Hopson

William C. Hopson was less than impressed with photographs of himself.

Submitting a photo to the Post Office Department's Airmail Service in the early 1920s, he wrote:

*Enclosed please find photo of bum pilot ... When finished with picture just post in cellar, it's guaranteed to keep away all rats, mice and other vermin.*<sup>36</sup>

Hopson had 741 hours of flight time when he became an airmail pilot on April 14, 1920. He trained at Hempstead, Long Island, and won a pilot's incentive contest sponsored by Otto Praeger, the Second Assistant Postmaster General. Hopson flew 413,034 miles, more than all but two of the service's 44 pilots, logging 4,043 hours in the air.

Like many airmail pilots, Hopson flew the British-designed De Havilland (DH-4B) biplane. Its front cockpit, transformed into a cargo hold, could carry about 500 pounds of mail, and the plane cruised at 95–100 mph. Although considered reliable, DH-4Bs tended to stall, and their high landing speeds made them difficult to land in short fields. But, wrote Hopson, they “are the *only* suitable ships for mountains in all weather.”<sup>37</sup>

For most of his career, Hopson flew the Omaha-Chicago leg of the transcontinental route. In 1925, he flew into a severe storm near Anita, Iowa. An air pocket dropped the plane almost to the ground before Hopson regained control. By then, his landing gear and lower wings had harvested about 75 bushels of corn. The plane turned over, pinning Hopson underneath. Surrounded by cornstalks and deluged by rain, he fired his revolver into the air to attract attention. The official report said:

*The Pilot was only slightly injured, the mail wet in spots, and the plane practically a washout.*<sup>38</sup>

Between weather and primitive instrumentation, each airmail trip was an adventure. As Hopson wrote:

*The best system of flying bad weather is not so much to go rip roaring through nasty weather, but to use your head for something else besides a hat-rack, and fly where bad weather aint.*<sup>39</sup>

In 1925, base pay for beginning airmail pilots was \$2,000 to \$2,800, depending on how much night flying they did. Pilots also earned five to seven cents per mile flown, double for night flight. Pilots agreed, in writing, to fly in all kinds of weather.

Hopson's last flight for the Department was on August 27, 1927. On September 1, contract carriers began transporting all airmail. Hopson left the Airmail Service two days later and was hired to fly National Air Transport's Contract Air Mail Route 17 between New York and Chicago. This was the Allegheny route, one of the most difficult because of limited safe places for emergency landings.

Hopson died October 18, 1928, when his plane crashed into the top of a tree on a hill near Polk, Pennsylvania, during a bad storm. One man, grateful that Hopson had saved his life during an earlier flight, wrote a tribute that appeared in *The St. Louis Times* on October 20, 1928:

*It was a dark, rainy, cloudy day on the New York end of the air mail. No planes through in two days. I wanted to get home to my family in California. I insisted on going. It wasn't bravery — it was dumb ignorance, and an unlimited confidence in all air mail pilots.*

*“We will try to get through if you insist,” Pilot W.P. Hopson said. And we got through, clear to Cleveland.*

*Thursday he didn't get through. I kinder feel like his skill saved my life. So “Hoppie,” Old Boy, here's hoping you are piloting the best cloud the Boss has got in his hangar up there, and you don't have to worry about low ceiling, engine missing, head winds, or even whether the old rip cord will pull in case —.*

*Yours,  
Will Rogers*

## ZIP Code

During World War II, thousands of experienced postal employees left to serve with the military. To offset the loss, in May 1943 the Post Office Department began a zoning address system in 124 of the largest cities. Under this system, delivery units or zones were identified by one or two numbers between the city and state – for example, Birmingham 7, Alabama – so that mail could be separated by employees who did not have detailed scheme knowledge.

Twenty years later, the Department implemented an even farther reaching plan, the Zoning Improvement Plan (ZIP) Code.

The social correspondence of the 19th century had given way, gradually then explosively, to business mail. By 1963, 80 percent of all mail in the United States was business mail. The development of the computer brought centralization of accounts and sent a growing mass of utility bills and payments, bank deposits and receipts, advertising, magazines, credit card transactions, mortgage bills and payments, and Social Security checks through the mail. Yet while mail volume grew and while the Post Office Department had been at the forefront of advances in transportation, the methods and much of the equipment used to sort mail in thousands of Post Offices remained the same as in Benjamin Franklin's day. A better way to sort mail was needed.

In June 1962, after a study of mechanization, the presidentially appointed Advisory Board of the Post Office Department made several recommendations. One was the development of a coding system, an idea the Department had considered for a decade or more. A number of coding programs were examined and discarded before the Department selected a system advanced by Department officials. Postmaster General J. Edward Day announced that the ZIP Code would launch July 1, 1963.

Preparing for the new system involved a realignment of the mail system. The Post Office

Department had previously recognized that new avenues of transportation would open and had begun to establish focal points for air, highway, and rail transportation. Called the Metro System, these transportation centers were set up around 85 of the country's larger cities to deflect mail from congested city streets. The Metro concept was expanded and eventually became the core of 552 sectional centers, each serving between 40 and 150 surrounding Post Offices.

Once these sectional centers were delineated, the next step in establishing the ZIP Code was to assign codes to the centers and the postal addresses they served. The existence of postal zones in the larger cities, set in motion in 1943, helped to some extent, but in cases where the old zones failed to fit within the delivery areas, new numbers had to be assigned.

By July 1963, a five-digit code had been assigned to every address throughout the country. The first digit designated a broad geographical area of the United States, ranging from zero for the Northeast to nine for the far West. This number was followed by two digits that more closely pinpointed population concentrations and those sectional centers accessible to common transportation networks. The final two digits designated small Post Offices or postal zones in larger zoned cities.

The ZIP Code began as scheduled. At first, use of the new code was not mandatory for anyone, but in 1967, the Department required mailers of second- and third-class bulk mail to presort by ZIP Code. The public and business mailers alike adapted well to its use. ■



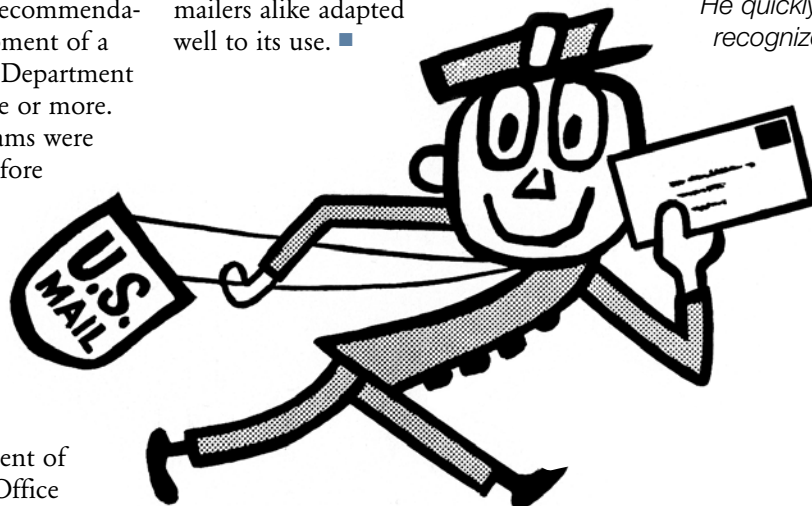
**Postmaster General J. Edward Day**

*Day launched the ZIP Code on July 1, 1963.*

## Mr. ZIP

*Mr. ZIP was unveiled in October 1962 during a postmasters' convention as an icon to promote the ZIP Code when it was implemented in 1963.*

*He quickly became a widely recognized postal symbol.*





## New Deal Art: Eager and Alive

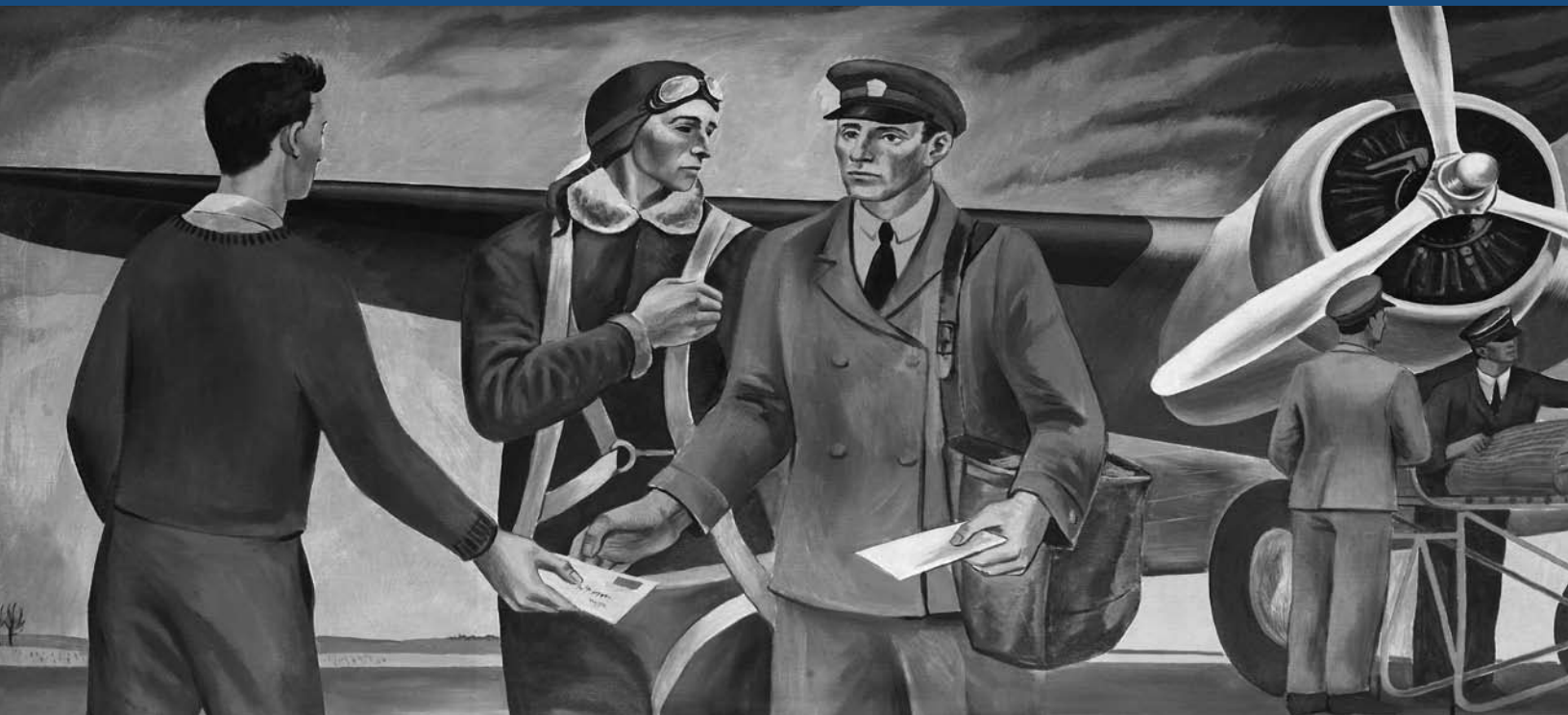
President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal sponsored several art programs to help get people back to work and restore confidence in a nation facing 25 percent unemployment in 1933.

From 1934 to 1943, the New Deal murals and sculpture seen in Post Offices were produced under the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture, later called the Section of Fine Arts. Unlike the Works Progress Administration/ Federal Art Project, with which it often is confused, this program was not

directed toward providing economic relief. Instead, the art placed in Post Offices was intended to help boost the morale of people suffering the effects of the Great Depression with art that, in the words of President Roosevelt, was:

*native, human, eager and alive — all of it painted by their own kind in their own country, and painted about things they know and look at often and have touched and loved.*<sup>40</sup>

Artists competed anonymously in national and regional contests. After receiving a commission, an artist was encouraged to consult with the postmaster and other townspeople to ensure that the subject would be meaningful. In 2006, more than 1,150 Post Offices across the continental United States continued to house this uniquely American art for people to enjoy as they go about their daily lives.



### **Winter Landscape** **Canton, Missouri**

Artist Jessie Hull Mayer painted *Winter Landscape* in oil and tempera for the Canton, Missouri, Post Office, located at 500 Lewis Street, where it still can be seen. The mural was installed in 1940, with restoration work done in 1971 and 2005.





**Postman in Storm**  
**Independence, Iowa**

The oil on canvas mural, *Postman in Storm*, by Robert Tabor might evoke empathic shivers from visitors to the Independence, Iowa, Post Office at 200 2nd Avenue, Northeast. The mural was installed in January 1938 and restored in 2000.



**Air Mail**  
**Piggott, Arkansas**

*Air Mail* by painter Daniel Rhodes is a nearly 12-foot long work in oil on canvas. The public still can see this work of art, installed in 1941, when they visit the Piggott, Arkansas, Post Office, located at 116 North 3rd Avenue.

**Indian Bear Dance**  
**Truth or Consequences,**  
**New Mexico**

Installed in 1938, *Indian Bear Dance*, painted by Boris Deutsch, is a 12-foot long, oil on canvas mural located in the Geronimo Retail Unit, 300 Main Street, Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, Post Office. The retail unit is open 24 hours a day for postal customers and visitors interested in New Deal art.





## Post Office Names



Historically, local communities suggested the name for their Post Offices, subject to the approval of the Post Office Department. The sources of some Post Office names are lost to history; there are no postal records on name origins. Often Post Offices were named after the town they served; sometimes they were named after the first postmaster. Many Post Office names changed over time. For example, the name of the Joliet, Illinois, Post Office was originally Juliet, then Romeo, then Juliet again before being changed to Joliet.

At first, unique names for Post Offices were not mandatory. The 1825 *United States Official Register* lists many instances of two Post Offices with the same name in the same state. Some states had three Post Offices with the same name — for example, three Bloomfields in Ohio and three Washingtons in Pennsylvania.

By the 1840s, the utility of unique names was officially recognized. Instructions on the application to establish a Post Office read:

*The name of the candidate for postmaster should not be applied as the name of a post office. It is preferable to have some LOCAL or PERMANENT name, which must not be the name of any other office in the State; and you should aim to select a name not appropriated to any office in the United States.*<sup>41</sup>

Despite these instructions, many new Post Offices were named after the first postmaster. In one 15-year period in Chickasaw County, Mississippi, 9 out of 20 new Post Offices were given the postmaster's first or last name or some variant.

Meanwhile, Post Office names too similar to each other continued to create confusion. In 1852 Vermont, mail for Saint Johnsbury East and Saint Johnsbury Centre often went to Saint Johnsbury, causing delays. Instructions in the 1880s addressed

this problem, specifying short names for offices which would “not resemble the name of any other post office in the United States.”<sup>42</sup> In the 1890s, the instructions were relaxed, calling for names dissimilar to “any other post office in the State.”<sup>43</sup>

Between 1850 and 1890 the number of Post Offices increased from 18,417 to 62,401. Inconsistent geographic names were deemed “a serious and growing evil in the publications of the Government.”<sup>44</sup> On September 4, 1890, President Benjamin Harrison created the United States Board on Geographic Names to settle questions regarding place names and to induce uniformity. In its first annual report, issued in 1892, the Board singled out the Post Office Department as one of many sources of confusion, citing the “thousands of cases where the name of the post-office does not conform to the local name of the place.” The Board outlined 13 guiding principles in assigning names, including a preference for locally-accepted names; avoiding the possessive form and the words “city” and “town;” using “burg” over “burgh,” “boro” over “borough,” and “center” over “centre;” and choosing one-word names where possible.

On February 13, 1891, Postmaster General John Wanamaker ordered postal employees to follow the Board's decisions whenever possible, and two more orders in the 1890s reiterated this. As a result, thousands of Post Office names were shortened in the 1890s. Perhaps to calm fears of sweeping name changes, in his 1896 *Annual Report* the Postmaster General stated that “in the selection of new names the Department rule of short, single names is strictly adhered to, but changes of names are not [normally] authorized... at offices of long standing.” Some communities successfully lobbied to have the earlier form of their name reinstated. For example, the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Post Office lost its “h” in 1894, but regained it in 1911.

*The Beaufort Post Office was one of the ten largest Post Offices in South Carolina when this photograph was taken in the 1860s.*



The *Postal Operations Manual*, as revised through August 2006, required a Post Office to normally bear the official name of the town or community it serves.

In 2006, the ten most common Post Office names were:

- Clinton (26)
- Franklin (25)
- Madison (25)
- Washington (25)
- Chester (23)
- Marion (23)
- Greenville (22)
- Springfield (22)
- Georgetown (21)
- Salem (21)

**Facility Names**

In 1998, the Paterson, New Jersey, Post Office was designated the “Larry Doby Post Office,” honoring the Hall of Fame outfielder who was the first African American to play baseball in the American League. In 2003, a Chicago postal facility was designated the “Cesar Chavez Post Office,” honoring civil rights leader Cesar E. Chavez. Since at least 1967 some postal facilities have been named in honor of individuals — usually by Congress and sometimes by the Postal Service. About one in six public laws passed by the 108th Congress (2003-2004) concerned the naming of a postal facility in honor of an individual. This name applies to the building that houses the Post Office, not to the Post Office itself.

The *Postal Operations Manual* specifies that the Postal Service may name a postal facility after an individual “only with the approval of the Postmaster General and only if the individual has been deceased for at least ten years, with the exception of deceased U.S. Presidents, Postmasters General, or former members of the [Postal Service’s] Board of Governors.” These restrictions do not apply to individuals honored by acts of Congress.

**Post Office Buildings: All Shapes and Sizes**

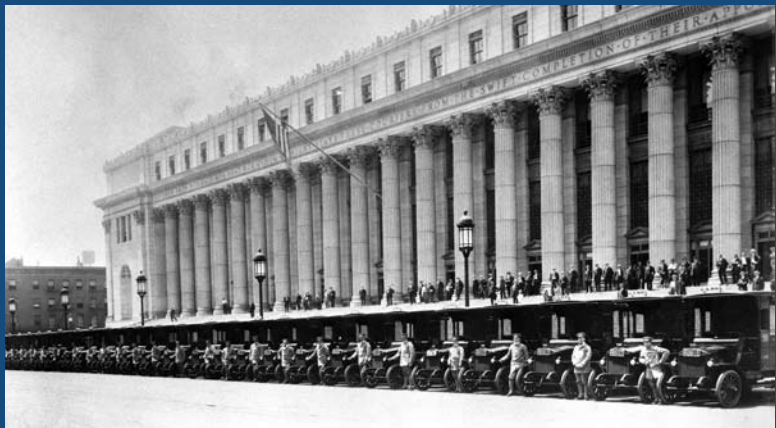
*The architectural style of Post Offices has been as varied as the communities they serve.*



*Some have been simple rustic buildings (Deansboro, New York, 1931) ...*



*... while others have inhabited small-town storefronts (Childersburg, Alabama, 1941) ...*



*... and a few have stretched over entire city blocks (New York, New York, circa 1915).*

# POSTAL REORGANIZATION

**B**y the mid-1960s, the Post Office Department had deep problems due to years of financial neglect and fragmented control in the areas of facilities, equipment, wages and management efficiency. Highly subsidized rates bore little relation to costs.

In October 1966, the Chicago Post Office ground to a virtual halt under a mountain of mail. In less than a week, the logjam was broken, but so was confidence in the status quo.

During February 1967 hearings before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Treasury-Post Office, Postmaster General Lawrence F. O'Brien said that the Department was in a "race with catastrophe." O'Brien described the crisis:

*At the peak of the crisis in Chicago, ten million pieces of mail were logjammed. The sorting room floors were bursting with more than 5 million letters, parcels, circulars, and magazines that could not be processed. Outbound mail sacks formed small grey mountain ranges while they waited to be shipped out.*

*Our new and beleaguered Chicago postmaster summed it up pretty well when he said: "We had mail coming out of our ears."*

*What happened in Chicago to cause the crisis? The answer is not that something specific happened in 1966, but that enough did not happen in the previous 33 years. ... we are trying to move our mail through facilities largely unchanged since the days of*

*Jim Farley when our mail volume was 30 percent of what it is today.*<sup>45</sup>

After O'Brien spoke, Oklahoma Congressman Tom Steed, chairman of the subcommittee, asked:

*... would this be a fair summary: that at the present time, as the manager of the Post Office Department, you have no control over your workload, you have no control over the rates of revenue, you have no control over the pay rates of the employees that you employ, you have very little control over the conditions of the service of these employees; you have virtually no control, by the nature of it, of your physical facilities and you have only a limited control, at best, over the transportation facilities that you are compelled to use — all of which adds up to a staggering amount of "no control" in terms of the duties you have to perform.*<sup>46</sup>

The answer was yes. Congress, the President, and the Post Office Department moved to improve this situation.

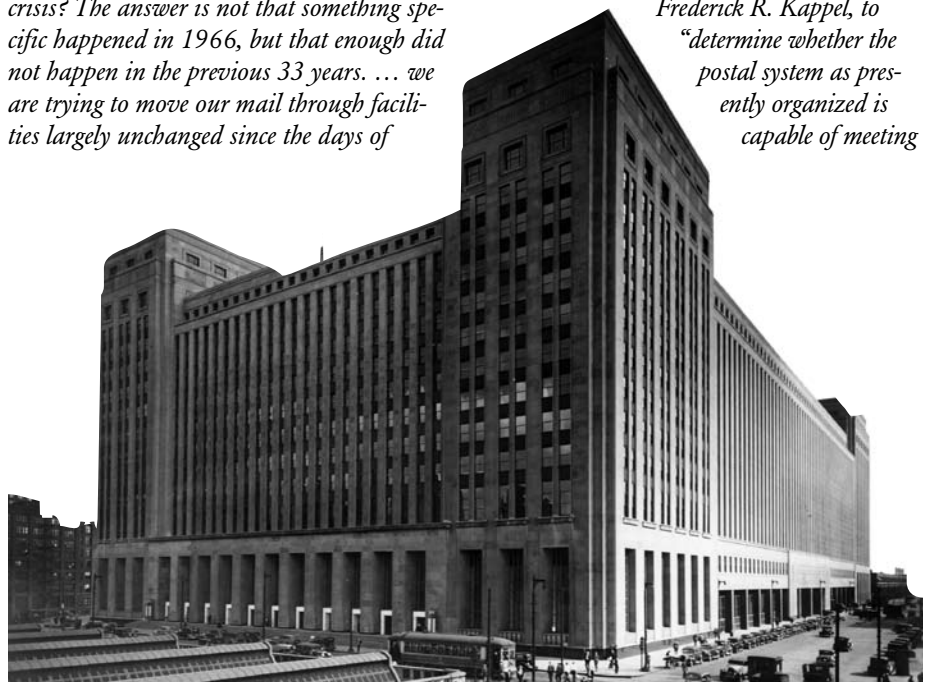
## REFORM PROPOSAL

In [April] 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed a Commission on Postal Reorganization, chaired by AT&T's

Frederick R. Kappel, to "determine whether the postal system as presently organized is capable of meeting

## The Chicago Post Office

For a week in October 1966, the Chicago Post Office, at that time the largest Post Office in the world with 60 acres of floor space, ground to a virtual halt under a logjam of 10 million pieces of mail. This crisis triggered a bipartisan look at postal reform.



the demands of our growing economy and our expanding population.” In June 1968, the Commission found that it was not.

The men who reached that conclusion included six heads of major corporations; the dean of the Harvard Business School; two prominent Democrats; and the President of the AFL-CIO. Their view ... was that “the procedures for administering the ordinary executive departments of Government are inappropriate for the Post Office.”

Having rejected political management, the Kappel Commission was equally clear in rejecting privatization. Leaving the door open for future consideration, its report said that “[T]ransfer of the postal system to the private sector is not feasible, largely for reasons of financing; the Post Office should therefore continue under government ownership. The possibility remains of private ownership at some future time, if such a transfer were then considered to be feasible and in the public interest.”

The Commission recommended:

A self-supporting government corporation.

Elimination of patronage, which controlled all top jobs, all Postmaster appointments, and thousands of other positions.

That rates be set by a Board of Directors “after hearings by expert Rate Commissioners ... subject to veto by concurrent resolution of the Congress.”

That labor-management impasses over contracts and pay be referred to the President, who “would be free to establish whatever ad hoc methods he chooses to resolve the matter. The uncertainties for both parties... make for more meaningful bargaining and are, in our view, a source of strength.”<sup>47</sup>

The commission released its recommendations in June 1968. President Richard M. Nixon supported the commission’s recommendations; others, including postal union leaders, opposed it.

### POSTAL REORGANIZATION ACT

On March 12, 1970, after extensive hearings, the House Post Office and Civil

Service Committee reported a compromise measure containing provisions similar to the commission proposals endorsed by President Nixon. The bill included a 5.4 percent retroactive pay raise and a system that would allow employees to reach the top of their pay grade in 8 rather than 21 years. Postal employees called it too little, too late.

On March 18, a work stoppage began. It ultimately involved 152,000 postal employees in 671 locations. The President ordered the Army to deliver the mail, and the unions asked Labor Secretary George Shultz to intervene. Postmaster General Winton M. Blount agreed to negotiate when the employees returned to work. They did, and negotiations began March 25. Eight days later, the negotiating parties recommended a general wage increase of six percent, retroactive to December 27, 1969, for all federal employees. Postal workers would get an additional eight percent increase if there was agreement on, and enactment of, legislation reorganizing the Post Office Department.

On April 16, 1970, after continuing negotiations, the Department and union leaders announced agreement on a reorganization plan, which was embodied in a legislative proposal and sent to Congress by President Nixon. The plan included four provisions that Postmaster General Blount saw as necessary: adequate financing authority, removal of the system from politics to assure continuity of management, collective bargaining, and setting of rates by the Postal Service after an opportunity for hearings before an impartial rate panel. In addition to the eight percent pay increase, the bill provided for negotiation of a new wage schedule permitting employees to reach the top of their pay grade in eight years.

On August 3, 1970, by a vote of 57 to 7, the Senate approved the conference report on House Resolution 17070, a modified version of the legislation proposed by the President. Three days later, the House of Representatives approved it. On August 12, 1970, President Nixon signed into law the most comprehensive postal legislation since the founding of the Republic, Public Law 91-375, the Postal Reorganization Act. ■



### Postal Reorganization Act of 1970

As Postmaster General Winton M. Blount (far left) watched, President Richard M. Nixon signed the Postal Reorganization Act into law on August 12, 1970. The act transformed the Post Office Department into the United States Postal Service.



# UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE



**T**he Post Office Department was transformed into the United States Postal Service, an independent establishment of the executive branch of the Government of the United States. The mission of the Postal Service remained the same, as stated in Title 39 of the *U.S. Code*:

*The Postal Service shall have as its basic function the obligation to provide postal services to bind the Nation together through the personal, educational, literary, and business correspondence of the people. It shall provide prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas and shall render postal services to all communities.*

The new Postal Service officially began operations on July 1, 1971, when the Postmaster General ceased to be a member of the President's Cabinet. The Postal Service received:

*Operational authority vested in a Board of Governors and Postal Service executive management, rather than in Congress.*

*Authority to issue public bonds to finance postal buildings and mechanization.*

*Direct collective bargaining between representatives of management and the unions.*

*A new rate-setting procedure, built around an independent Postal Rate Commission.*

The Postal Reorganization Act changed the United States postal system in many ways.

## **FINANCES AND RATES**

The act established an independent Postal Rate Commission of five members, appointed by the U.S. President with the advice and consent of the U.S. Senate, to recommend postal rates and mail classifications for adoption by the Postal Service Governors. It

authorized the Postal Service to borrow money from the general public and phased out the general public service subsidy, which the Postal Service ended earlier than required, last accepting an operational subsidy in 1982. It also authorized appropriations to reimburse the Postal Service for carrying congressionally established categories of free and reduced-rate mail and required that rates for each class of mail cover direct and indirect costs attributable to that class, plus a portion of institutional costs.

## **PERSONNEL**

The act established a postal career service, a framework that permits terms and conditions of employment to be set through collective bargaining. It also prohibited political recommendations for appointments within the Postal Service. The Civil Service retirement program was retained.

## **LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS**

The act authorized collective bargaining on wages and working conditions under laws applying to private industry and provided for binding arbitration if an impasse persists 180 days after the start of bargaining. The ban on strikes, applicable to all federal employees, remained. The act authorized the National Labor Relations Board to determine proper bargaining units, supervise representative elections, and enforce the unfair labor practices provisions. It also protected the rights of all employees to form, join, or assist a labor organization or to refrain from such activity.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

The act generally extended existing laws governing transportation of mail, while providing some additional flexibility. The distinctions between various categories of motor carriers, previously contracted by the Post Office Department, were eliminated. The Civil Aeronautics Board retained authority to regulate rates for airmail transportation,

but the Postal Service also was granted limited authority to contract directly with the airlines for air transportation services.

### PAY

The act specified that the Postal Service would maintain compensation and benefits for its officers and employees comparable to that offered by the private sector for similar work. However, the act mandated that no officer or employee be paid compensation at a rate higher than a Cabinet officer.

### POSTAL MECHANIZATION AND EARLY AUTOMATION

At the turn of the 20th century, despite growing mail volume and limited work space, the Post Office Department relied on antiquated mailhandling methods, such as the pigeonhole method from colonial times. Although crude sorting machines were proposed by inventors of canceling machines in the early 1900s and tested in the 1920s, the Great Depression and World War II postponed widespread development of mechanization until the mid-1950s.

## Rates for Domestic Letters

Before the middle of the 19th century, rates were based on the number of sheets in a letter and the distance it was traveling. In 1845, rates were based on weight

and distance. Beginning in 1863, domestic letter rates became “uniform,” that is, they were based solely on weight, regardless of distance.

*(Postage listed below is in cents.)*

<b>Effective Date</b>	<b>Per 1/2 Ounce</b>		
March 3, 1863	3		
March 3, 1883	2		
		<b>Per Ounce</b>	
July 1, 1885	2		
November 3, 1917	3		
July 1, 1919	2		
July 6, 1932	3		
August 1, 1958	4		
January 7, 1963	5		
January 7, 1968	6		
May 16, 1971	8		
March 2, 1974	10		
		<b>First Ounce</b>	<b>Each Additional Ounce</b>
September 14, 1975	10		9
December 31, 1975	13		11
May 29, 1978	15		13
March 22, 1981	18		17
November 1, 1981	20		17
February 17, 1985	22		17
April 3, 1988	25		20
February 3, 1991	29		23
January 1, 1995	32		23
January 10, 1999	33		22
January 7, 2001	34		21
July 1, 2001	34		23
June 30, 2002	37		23
January 8, 2006	39		24

In 1956, the Post Office Department began intense research on coding systems used in 13 other countries and began to work with the U.S. Bureau of Standards and the Rabinow Engineering Company, among others, to develop a system best suited to U.S. postal needs. They examined codes for extracting information and the memory core needed by automated letter sorting machines.

The Post Office Department also initiated projects and awarded contracts to develop a number of machines and technologies, including letter sorters, facer-cancelers, automatic address readers, parcel sorters, advanced tray conveyors, flat sorters, and letter mail coding and stamp-tagging techniques.

The first semiautomatic parcel sorting machine was introduced in Baltimore in 1956. A year later, a foreign-built multiposition letter sorting machine (MPLSM), the Transorma, was installed and tested for the first time in an American Post Office.

The first American-built letter sorter, based on a 1,000-pocket machine adapted from a foreign design, was developed during the late 1950s. The first production contract was awarded

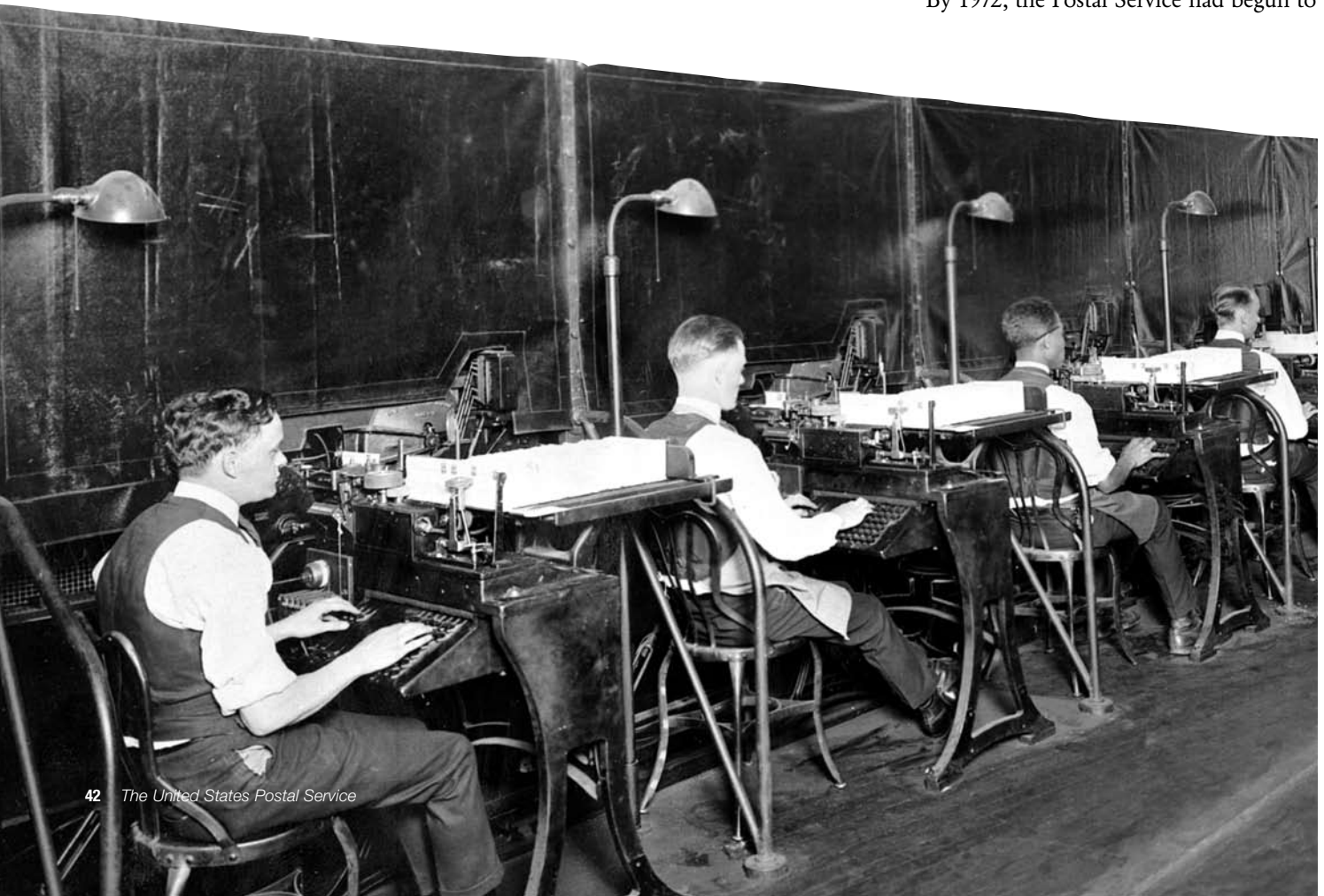
to the Burroughs Corporation for ten machines. The machine was successfully tested in Detroit in 1959 and eventually became the backbone of letter sorting operations during the 1960s and 70s. In 1959, the Post Office Department also awarded its first volume order for mechanization to Pitney-Bowes, Inc., for the production of 75 Mark II facer-cancelers.

The Department's accelerated mechanization program began in the late 1960s and consisted of semiautomatic equipment such as the MPLSM, the single position letter sorting machine (SPLSM), and the facer-canceler. In November 1965, the Department put a high-speed optical character reader (OCR) into service in the Detroit Post Office. This first-generation machine was connected to an MPLSM frame and read the city/state/ZIP Code line of typed addresses to sort letters to one of 277 pockets. Subsequent handlings of the letter required that the address be read again.

Mechanization increased productivity. By the mid-1970s, however, it was clear that cheaper, more efficient methods and equipment were needed if the Postal Service was to offset rising costs associated with growing mail volume. By 1972, the Postal Service had begun to

### **Gehring Mail Distributing Machine, Washington, D.C., 1922**

*Clerks tested new letter sorting equipment to help speed mail service.*





examine how to sort mail in the order a letter carrier would deliver it. In 1978, the Postal Service also began to develop an expanded ZIP Code to reduce the number of mailpiece handlings.

The new code required new equipment. In September 1982, the first computer-driven, single-line OCR was installed in Los Angeles. The equipment required a letter to be read only once at the originating office by an OCR, which printed a barcode on the envelope. At the destination Post Office, a less expensive barcode sorter (BCS) sorted the mail by reading its barcode.

The Postal Service had begun to develop an expanded ZIP Code of four add-on digits that would speed processing when coupled with new automation equipment capable of sorting mail to small geographic seg-

ments, such as city blocks or a single building. Following the introduction of this ZIP+4 code in 1983, the first delivery phase of the new single-line OCR channel sorters and BCSs was completed by mid-1984. By the end of 1984, 252 OCRs were installed in 118 major mail processing centers across the country and were processing an average of 6,200 pieces of mail per workhour – a substantial increase compared to the 1,750 pieces per work hour processed by MPLSMs.

#### **ZIP+4 CODE**

The ZIP+4 code added a hyphen and four digits to the existing five-digit ZIP Code. The first five numbers continued to identify an area of the country and delivery office to which mail is directed. The sixth and seventh numbers denoted

#### **City Letter Carriers, Mobile, Alabama, 1956**

*City carriers sorted mail into delivery sequence by hand until the late 20th century.*





### Automated Equipment

**Top:** Delivery barcode sorter and its crew of two, 1992. One person feeds in stacks of letters, the other “sweeps” out sorted letters into trays in delivery order.

**Middle:** Letters zip through modern sorting equipment at the rate of ten letters per second, 2003.

**Bottom:** The input subsystem on a delivery barcode sorter tags mail that needs further processing at a remote encoding center, circa 1997.

a delivery sector, which may be several blocks, a group of streets, a group of Post Office boxes, several office buildings, a single high-rise office building, a large apartment building or a small geographic area. The last two numbers denoted a delivery segment, which might be one floor of an office building, one side of a street between intersecting streets, specific departments in a firm, or specific Post Office boxes.

On October 1, 1983, the Governors of the Postal Service approved price incentives for First-Class Mail bearing the ZIP+4 Code.

### THE AUTOMATION AGE

An expanding delivery network – with up to two million new addresses added annually – and uncertain revenue growth continually challenge the Postal Service to operate more efficiently. Its Corporate Automation Plan, approved in 1988, was considered the “cornerstone to achieving quality mail service at reduced costs,” since mail can be processed using automation equipment at one-tenth the cost of manual processing.<sup>48</sup> The Postal Service delivered 32 percent more mail with nearly 9 percent fewer employees in 2006 compared to 1988, largely because of its successful implementation of mail processing technology.

### SORTING LETTERS BETTER

Letters account for the greatest amount of mail volume – about 73 percent in 2006 – so the Postal Service first focused on automating the processing of letters. In the 1990s, new generations of equipment and technology dramatically speeded up letter processing.

By 1989, multiline optical character readers had replaced single-line optical character readers, allowing equipment to read and barcode letters without a ZIP+4 code so this mail could be sorted on high-speed barcode sorters to the individual carriers who would deliver the mail. In 1991, BCSs were retrofitted so they could scan a wider area on a piece of mail to find the barcodes, essentially anywhere on the envelope face. This gave mailers more flexibility in designing their mail, placing their barcodes, and being able to barcode letters as they addressed them,

saving mailers time as well. Previously, barcodes had been restricted to the lower right hand corner of each piece of mail.

In 1991, the Postal Service offered discounted rates to mailers who pre-barcode their mail, which then could bypass multiline OCRs, saving the Postal Service time and money – savings passed on to the mailers. These discounts helped the percentage of mail with customer-applied barcodes jump from just 7 percent in 1990 to 59 percent in 2000.

Throughout the 1990s, advanced facer-canceler systems (AFCSS) were deployed. These systems face (orient) and cancel 30,000 pieces of mail per hour – nearly twice as much as the older Mark II facer-cancelers they replaced. AFCSS sort mail by address type (script, barcoded, and machine imprinted) for routing to proper equipment. In 2002 and 2003, nearly one-third of AFCSS were modified with video facing units, which use images to orient letters, avoiding manual processing of letters which cannot be oriented in the normal way, that is, by looking for special ink in the stamp or postage area. Each major processing facility was given at least one of these enhanced AFCSS.

In 2005, all 1,086 AFCSS were given video facing units and were upgraded with OCRs so they could identify the five-digit destination ZIP Code on each letter. Advanced facer-cancelers were also upgraded with doubles detectors so the Postal Service could reduce rehandling mail that stuck together as it went through equipment. That same year, a switch was made to ink jet cancelers, which included a time stamp, allowed different messages, and were easier to use and maintain than previous mechanical cancelers.

To take letter mail processing to the next level – sorting it automatically to the customer level – the Postal Service lengthened the nine-digit ZIP+4 code by two digits in 1990. These additional digits represent specific addresses, called “delivery points.” First tested in 1991, barcodes representing these delivery points enable equipment to sort letters into trays in delivery order, so carriers can get out on the street to deliver mail more quickly. The Postal



Service retrofitted existing equipment to sort mail to delivery points and, in late 1991, deployed the first delivery barcode sorters. Since then, the Postal Service has installed more than 8,900 delivery barcode sorters and carrier sequence barcode sorters (smaller units with a similar function used since 1995). By 1998, these machines had almost completely replaced the old multi-position letter sorting machines. Today, letter mail arrives in trays in the order of delivery to almost all city carriers and more than 75 percent of rural carriers.

The remote barcoding system, first tested in Tampa, Florida, in 1992, provides the Postal Service with a means to apply barcodes to mail that cannot be processed by multiline optical character readers (MLOCRs) when the print quality of an address is poor or the handwriting difficult to read. The MLOCRs were modified to include a video encoding feature that sends an image of an illegible address to a remote computer reader (RCR) or a data conversion operator at a remote encoding center, without removing the mail from the processing plant. Since 1996, advanced facer-cancelers have captured and sent images of handwritten addresses. If the RCR cannot decipher the address, an operator at the center reads the address and keys in the information so the piece can be barcoded for proper sorting.

The number of remote encoding centers peaked by 1997, when 23,000 employees at 55 centers nationwide keyed in address information to barcode about 24 billion letters. The number of centers began declining just two years later, in 1999, as more prebarcoded letters entered the mailstream. Better technology also had improved incrementally the address recognition rates of the MLOCRs and RCRs. For example, in 1997 MLOCRs received new gray scale cameras, and RCRs received new handwriting analysis software, which helped both machines decipher more addresses. In 1998, the Postal Service nationally deployed new software that enabled MLOCRs to read more than 50 percent of addresses. In 1999, for the first time, the number of MLOCR-



generated barcodes exceeded the number applied by the remote barcoding system.

Between 1997 and 2003, the percentage of machine-readable handwritten addresses jumped from less than 2 percent to about 80 percent. Along with other advances, improved address recognition increased letter mail productivity in processing plants by nearly 50 percent from 1993 to 2001.

Since 2000, the Postal Service has worked to increase the thickness and weight of mail that can be processed on automation equipment. In 2000, the eight percent of letter mail that still had to be processed manually accounted for half of the labor cost for processing letters. That year, the Postal Service installed six prototype delivery barcode sorter expanded capability machines at three processing plants. Expanded capability machines process a wider range of letter mail, from flimsy to thick, heavy pieces, that postal workers previously sorted by hand. Carrier sequence barcode sorters received additional stackers in 2001 and 2002, allowing machines to sort to a greater number of delivery points on a route.

#### **Carrier Sequence Barcode Sorter, 2004**

*An operator sweeps mail from the sorter's output bins, at his left, to the machine's feeder belt, at his right, for another pass through the sorter. The output of the next pass will be sorted to more specific neighborhood locations.*

In 2000, the Postal Service also began to deploy state-of-the-art DIOSS systems (delivery input/output subsystem barcode sorters), an upgraded delivery barcode sorter. With up to 302 bins to receive mail – five times more than the equipment it replaced – DIOSS can provide a finer, more localized sort, reducing the number of handlings and accelerating delivery times. Around the same time, identification code sort systems were added to barcode sorters, so the machines could sort mail, if need be, using the fluorescent barcodes sprayed on the backs of envelopes by the remote barcoding system to identify mailpieces. This saved two additional passes through sorting machines to re-

barcode mail when address barcodes were unreadable.

In 2005, the Postal Service completed deployment of more than 9,000 wide-field-of-view cameras, which replaced aging wide area barcode readers. The newer cameras read a barcode virtually anywhere on the front of an envelope as well as information-based indicia codes such as “electronic postage” and barcodes on certified mail.

In 2004, to increase its efficiency in handling undeliverable-as-addressed (UAA) letter mail, the Postal Service began deploying the postal automated redirection system (PARS) to processing plants nationwide. PARS automates the handling of UAA letter mail, reducing the number of times it needs to be handled and the costs of processing it by intercepting portions of this mail

### **Operators Feed AFSM 100 ...**

*Operators put stacks of vertically-aligned flats (oversize mail) into feeders. The flats travel one at a time through feeders, OCRs, and buffers to the injectors, which insert the flats, one-by-one, into cartridges.*





earlier in the sorting process. PARS also automates the processing of change of address forms and provides two revenue-generating services: electronic notification to mailers who subscribe to the address change service, and hard copy notification to mailers who add an endorsement to their mail.

### PROCESSING FLATS

Building on the success of its letter automation program, the Postal Service began to automate the processing of flats. Largely comprised of catalogs, magazines, and oversize envelopes, flats make up nearly 30 percent of the mailstream.

In 1982, the Postal Service deployed its first flat sorting machine (FSM), the FSM 775. Previously, all flats had been processed manually. With four opera-

tors keying in part of the ZIP Code, the FSM 775 could sort about 6,200 flats per hour into 100 bins. The FSM 881, introduced ten years later in 1992, could sort about 10,000 flats per hour with four operators.

In 1996, FSM 1000s were introduced to handle the one out of four flats that could not go through the FSM 881s, including newspapers, poly-wrapped material, and flats weighing more than 20 ounces. In 1998, the Postal Service began upgrading flat sorting machines, adding barcode readers to FSM 1000s and optical character readers to FSM 881s. Beginning in 2002, automated flats feeders and optical character readers were added to the FMS 1000s, improving the machines' throughputs and reducing the number of people required to staff them.

The first fully automated flat sorting machine (AFSM 100) was installed



**... Up To 300,000 Flats Per Day**  
*Inside the AFSM 100, cartidges transport flats up an inclined conveyor (shown at far left) to output bins, where flats are sorted to specific geographic locations based on their barcode, 2005.*

## Sorting Flats

Postal Service employees load flats into an AFSM 100 for sorting, 2001.



in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1999. Each AFSM can process 300,000 flats a day, almost three times as many as the equipment it replaced. The AFSM 100 has a video encoding feature that sends images of unreadable addresses to the remote barcoding system for barcoding, without removing the mail from mailstream. Widescale deployment of AFSM 100s was completed in 2002 with 534 systems installed at 240 mail processing facilities nationwide.

In 2004, the Postal Service began to install a system called flat ID code sort on all AFSM 100s. It tags each flat with a special identification code. Subsequent operations to sort the flats use these ID tags. Beginning in 2005, automatic induction systems and automatic tray handling systems were added to AFSM 100s, saving

even more manual labor. Automatic induction systems feed flats into the machine, and tray handling systems automatically label and offload full trays of sorted mail and reload the machine with empty trays.

By 2005, flats productivity had nearly doubled in processing facilities, with about 80 percent of flats processed on the AFSM 100, but time spent sorting flats at delivery offices remained the same. Letter carriers spent an average of three hours a day sorting their mail into delivery order. Unlike most letters, flats did not arrive in delivery order. In the late 1990s, the Postal Service began to explore ways to sort flats into delivery order or “carrier walk” sequence. In April 2006, a prototype flats sequencing system was installed in Indianapolis for field testing.



### PROCESSING PARCELS

The Postal Service also has turned its attention to speeding up the processing of parcels, which make up a little over one percent of mail volume. Small parcel and bundle sorters were introduced in 1988, mechanizing one of the most labor-intensive operations in the Postal Service. The small parcel and bundle sorter uses a conveyor system with four to six induction stations where operators face and key mail based on ZIP Code. Then, conveyors transport the mail to specific bins for delivery or further processing. Beginning in 1999, feed systems were added to the sorters, reducing labor costs.

In 1992, the Postal Service began to deploy package barcode sorting systems to process prebarcoded parcels and to apply barcoded labels to non-barcoded parcels. In 2001, singulate, scan, and induction units were introduced. These units send parcels, one by one, through a unit that measures and weighs them, and then through a scanning tunnel that reads the barcode. Next, parcels are fed automatically onto the sorter at a rate of more than 5,000 per hour.

In 2004 the Postal Service began to deploy the automated package processing system (APPS), which uses an OCR/barcode reader/video coding system to sort more packages more quickly. Deployment of the APPS, which can process up to 9,500 parcels per hour, continued through 2006.

### AUTOMATING MAIL HANDLING AND ACCEPTANCE

The Postal Service has used automation not only to sort mail but also to move containers of mail in processing plants and to verify the preparation of large mailings that can receive discounts.

In 1996, the Board of Governors approved funds to integrate robotics into major mail processing plants. In 1997, the Postal Service started to deploy 100 robotic tray handling systems, automating the sorting and loading of trayed letter mail to containers or pallets for transportation. In 2000 and 2001, 100 gantry robots were deployed — essentially arms running along overhead tracks that can distribute tubs and trays of mail.



In 1998, the Postal Service began using ABE (automation barcode evaluator) systems to help ensure that large mailings had clear, readable barcodes so they could be processed efficiently. In 2001, the Postal Service introduced MERLIN (mailing evaluation readability lookup instrument) to further automate the labor-intensive process of evaluating bulk mailings for discount eligibility. In addition to analyzing barcodes, MERLIN can analyze mail size and weight and produce the necessary reports for mail acceptance. MERLIN samples all mailings of more than 10,000 pieces and some smaller bulk mailings.

### Robotic Arm, 1999

*The Postal Service began integrating robotics into its mail handling in 1997.*



### Automated Postal Center (APC), 2004

The Postal Service installed 2,500 APCs at postal facilities nationwide in 2004. APCs offer customers self-service access to most retail transactions.

### GIVING CUSTOMERS GREATER ACCESS

The Postal Service has installed automated equipment in lobbies to better serve Post Office customers. In the 1990s, the focus of this effort was the integrated retail terminal (IRT), a computer that incorporates an electronic scale. It provides information to customers during a transaction and simplifies postal accounting by consolidating data. Postage validation imprinters attached to the IRTs produce self-sticking postage labels with a barcode for automated processing.

In 1998, the Postal Service started rolling out the POS (point of service) ONE system. By 2005, more than 60,000 retail terminals were installed in more than 15,000 facilities nationwide. By providing state-of-the-art computer technology and connecting retail units through phone lines or satellite connections, POS ONE provides real-time information and faster, more efficient service.

The Postal Service also has taken advantage of personal computers

to help small businesses and home office users. In March 1998, the Postal Service authorized tests of PC Postage. Developed and distributed by USPS-approved vendors, PC Postage produces information-based indicia – digitally-encoded, two-dimensional barcodes that postal customers can print directly onto envelopes or address labels. Users have access to postage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from their homes or offices. In 2004, the Postal Service began market-testing Customized Postage, which enables customers to personalize PC Postage with digital images.

In 2002, the Postal Service launched Click-N-Ship on its Web site, [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com). Click-N-Ship lets customers create shipping labels, calculate and pay postage, and insure packages online. In its first six months of operation, customers used the service to produce more than one million shipping labels. In January 2006 a mailing list feature was added to Click-N-Ship, allowing users to create group mailing lists and store up to 3,000 addresses.

In 2004, the Postal Service launched the *PostalOne!* system on its Web site. *PostalOne!* gives business mailers access to a streamlined process for mail entry, payment, tracking, and reporting.

In 2004, the Postal Service also deployed 2,500 mailing kiosks called Automated Postal Centers (APCs) nationwide. Like ATMs in banks, APCs offer customers an alternative to counter service in busy Post Offices, providing self-service mailing with an integrated scale and a touch-screen menu.

### INTELLIGENT MAIL

Since at least 1999, the Postal Service has worked to provide customers with more information on each mailpiece as it travels through the system. The goal is to have an “intelligent mail” system in place by 2009. The system would operate like a Global Positioning System for mail, using a standardized barcode on each piece of mail and mail container that will enable customers to see where their mail is at every step.

Intelligent Mail refers to the capture and sharing of information about each mailpiece throughout the system, from its point of origin to its destina-

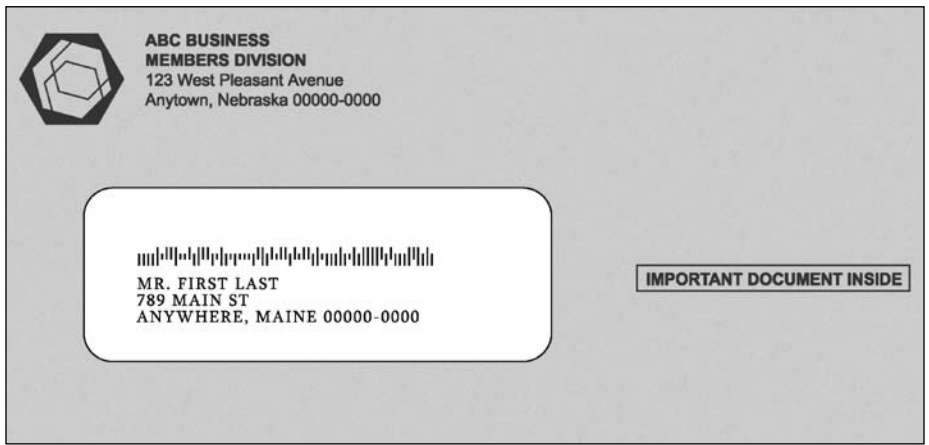


tion. Realizing that today's customers want to know more about their mail, in the last seven years the Postal Service has increased the transparency of its mailstream.

In March 1999, the Postal Service launched Delivery Confirmation service to provide customers with the date, time, and ZIP Code of delivery for Priority Mail and parcels. Customers call a toll-free number or visit *www.usps.com*. More than 300,000 handheld scanners were deployed to letter carriers to support Delivery Confirmation service. In 2001, the Postal Service added Signature Confirmation, allowing customers to request a copy of the signature of the individual who received the mailpiece. In 2006, the Postal Service began deploying new handheld scanners that can take a digital image of the signature, allowing customers to see it the same day.

In 2002, the Postal Service officially launched Confirm service, which provides tracking information to participating letter and flat mailers. Mailers print an identifying barcode, known as a PLANET Code, on their mail. Automated equipment reads the barcode and makes information available to the mailer via the Internet on the time, place, and operation that handled the mail.

In January 2003, the Postal Service created the Intelligent Mail and Address Quality group, to focus its efforts towards developing information-rich mail. The group's intelligent mail plan is based on adopting one information-rich code for each type of mail.



These will uniquely identify each mailpiece, provide distribution information, and point to services such as address change, special services, tracking, and delivery confirmation.

In 2003, the Postal Service began experimenting with new barcoding systems to expand data encoding capacity and, at the same time, reduce space occupied on a piece of mail by multiple barcodes. The solution, finalized in 2005, was a barcode that uses four vertical bar types rather than two. It encodes almost three times more information than the current codes. It also can consolidate information from both the POSTNET and PLANET barcodes and has the ability to incorporate many other services in the future. The new barcode was tested by Confirm service users in 2005. Beginning September 1, 2006, Confirm service subscribers and address change service users were given the option of using the new barcode, with other services to follow as technology evolves. ■

### Information-rich Barcode

*With four types of vertical bars rather than two, the new barcode can hold nearly three times as much information as previous versions.*



### Intelligent Scanning

*New handheld scanners, deployed in 2006, enable letter carriers to not only scan barcodes but also to take a digital image of customer signatures to share with mailers the same day.*

## The Postal Service Board of Governors

The Board of Governors was established by the Postal Reorganization Act of August 12, 1970. It is comparable to a board of directors of a private corporation. The Board includes nine Governors who are appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate.

The nine Governors select a Postmaster General, who becomes a member of the Board, and those ten select a Deputy Postmaster General, who also serves on the Board. The Postmaster General serves at the pleasure of the Governors for an indefinite term. The Deputy Postmaster General serves at the pleasure of the Governors and the Postmaster General.

Originally, Governors of the Postal Service were appointed for terms of nine years. In 1970, when the Board was established, the first nine appointments were for staggered terms of one to nine years. Subsequent appointments were made for a full nine years or, when vacancies occurred, for the remainder of the unexpired terms. However, the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006 changed the terms of the Governors from nine to seven years. Each Governor's term expires on December 8 of a given year.

Governors can be removed only for cause.

The Governors are chosen to represent the public interest and cannot be representatives of special interests. Not more than five of the nine may belong to the same political party.

The Postmaster General and the Deputy Postmaster General participate with the Governors on all matters except for voting on rate or classification adjustments, adjustments to the budget of the Postal Regulatory Commission, and elections of the chairman and vice chairman of the Board. While the entire Board approves requests to the independent Postal Regulatory Commission for changes in rates and classes of mail, the Governors alone, upon receiving a recommendation from the Commission, may approve, allow under protest, reject, or modify that recommendation.

The entire Board determines the dates on which new rates and classification adjustments become effective.

The Board directs the exercise of the powers of the Postal Service, directs and controls its expenditures, reviews its practices, conducts long-range planning, and sets policies on all postal matters. The Board takes up matters such as service stan-

dards, capital investments, and facilities projects exceeding \$25 million. It also approves officer compensation.

A chairman and a vice chairman organize and conduct the meetings. The Governors elect the chairman and the vice chairman from among the members of the Board. There are four standing committees: Audit and Finance, Capital Projects, Compensation and Management Resources, and Governance and Strategic Planning.

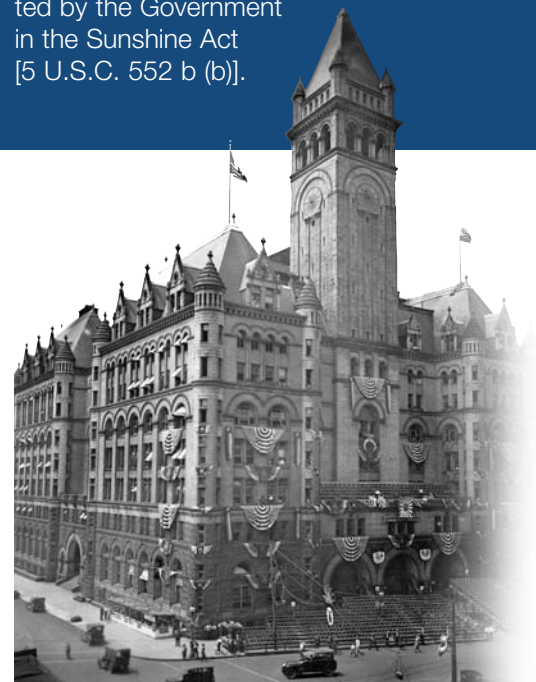
The Governors employ a full-time secretary, who serves as the primary staff assistant to the Board. The secretary is generally responsible for coordinating the resources of the Postal Service so that the Board fulfills its statutory duties in the most efficient and informed manner possible.

The Board of Governors meets on a regular basis, generally in Washington, D.C., but meetings may be scheduled in some other city where the members can see firsthand a Postal Service or large mailer's operation.

All meetings are open to the public unless the Board specifically votes to close all or part of a meeting in line with exemptions permitted by the Government in the Sunshine Act [5 U.S.C. 552 b (b)].

### Post Office Department Headquarters, 1899-1934

*This granite building on Pennsylvania Avenue, not far from the White House, was the last to simultaneously house both postal Headquarters and the Washington, D.C., Post Office. Horse-drawn wagons brought mail to the building in its early years. By the time postal Headquarters moved to a larger building, almost all mail was carried by motor vehicles.*





## Governors of the Postal Service

	<b>Date Appointed</b>		<b>Date Appointed</b>
<b>Theodore W. Braun</b>	January 11, 1971	<b>J. H. Tyler McConnell</b>	December 18, 1985
<b>Charles H. Coddling</b>	January 11, 1971	<b>Robert Setrakian</b>	December 18, 1985
<b>Patrick E. Haggerty</b>	January 11, 1971	<b>Crocker Nevin*</b>	August 15, 1986
<b>Andrew D. Holt</b>	January 11, 1971	<b>Norma Pace</b>	May 21, 1987
<b>George E. Johnson</b>	January 11, 1971	<b>Ira D. Hall</b>	November 23, 1987
<b>Frederick R. Kappel</b>	January 11, 1971	<b>Tirso del Junco, M.D.</b>	July 15, 1988
<b>Elmer T. Klassen</b>	January 11, 1971	<b>Susan E. Alvarado</b>	July 15, 1988
<b>Crocker Nevin*</b>	January 11, 1971	<b>Bert H. Mackie</b>	December 9, 1988
<b>Myron A. Wright</b>	January 11, 1971	<b>LeGree S. Daniels</b>	August 6, 1990
<b>John Y. Ing</b>	June 22, 1972	<b>Sam Winters</b>	November 23, 1991
<b>Robert E. Holding</b>	October 26, 1972	<b>Einar V. Dyhrkopp</b>	November 24, 1993
<b>Hayes Robertson</b>	May 14, 1974	<b>S. David Fineman</b>	May 26, 1995
<b>William A. Irvine</b>	March 3, 1975	<b>Robert F. Rider</b>	May 26, 1995
<b>Hung Wai Ching</b>	August 5, 1976	<b>Ned R. McWherter</b>	October 2, 1995
<b>Robert L. Hardesty</b>	August 16, 1976	<b>Ernesta Ballard</b>	November 13, 1997
<b>William J. Sullivan</b>	January 12, 1979	<b>John F. Walsh</b>	November 16, 1999
<b>Richard R. Allen</b>	October 5, 1979	<b>Alan C. Kessler</b>	November 3, 2000
<b>George W. Camp</b>	October 5, 1979	<b>Albert V. Casey</b>	August 6, 2002
<b>Paula D. Hughes</b>	August 19, 1980	<b>James C. Miller III</b>	April 22, 2003
<b>David E. Babcock</b>	August 20, 1980	<b>Carolyn Lewis Gallagher</b>	November 3, 2004
<b>Timothy L. Jenkins</b>	August 20, 1980	<b>Louis J. Giuliano</b>	November 3, 2004
<b>Wallace N. Hyde</b>	December 31, 1980	<b>John S. Gardner</b>	January 6, 2006
<b>John R. McKean</b>	March 9, 1982	<b>Mickey D. Barnett</b>	August 17, 2006
<b>Peter E. Voss</b>	July 28, 1982	<b>James H. Bilbray</b>	August 17, 2006
<b>John L. Ryan</b>	May 10, 1983	<b>Katherine C. Tobin</b>	August 17, 2006
<b>Ruth O. Peters</b>	December 2, 1983	<b>Ellen C. Williams</b>	August 17, 2006
<b>Frieda Waldman</b>	January 6, 1984	<b>Thurgood Marshall Jr.</b>	December 15, 2006
<b>John N. Griesemer</b>	December 12, 1984		

\* Crocker Nevin served two separate terms.



### **Postal Service Headquarters, 1973-Present**

*Vlastimil Koubek designed the Postal Service Headquarters building. The building's façade has precast concrete panels in a terra cotta color and is located in Southwest Washington, D.C., just a few blocks north of the Potomac River.*

## Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee



*Stamps recommended by the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee and approved by the Postmaster General for issuance in 2007 commemorate, clockwise from upper left: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Stewart, Pacific Lighthouses, Ella Fitzgerald, Mendez v. Westminster School District, Nature of America: Alpine Tundra, and Pollination.*

The Post Office Department's Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee was established March 21, 1957, by Orders of the Postmaster General 56304 and 56305, to provide a breadth of judgment and depth of experience in various areas which influence the subject matter, character, and beauty of postage stamps. As announced in the *Federal Register* of Tuesday, March 26, 1957:

*The Stamp Advisory Committee shall advise the Post Office Department on any matters pertaining to the subject matter, design, production and issuance of postage stamps.*

The initial seven-member committee was appointed by Postmaster General Arthur E. Summerfield on March 26, 1957. Those serving were Deputy Director of the United States Information Agency Abbott Washburn; three well-known philatelists — Franklin R. Bruns, Jr., Sol Glass, and Harry L. Lindquist; and three artists — Arnold Copeland, president of Westport Artists, Inc.; Ervine Metz, president of the Society of Illustrators; and William H. Buckley, president of the New York Art Directors Club. Franklin Bruns served as the first chairman.

The artists were enthusiastic about the committee and the concept of using the skills of members from their groups to help design United States postage stamps. (The combined memberships of the three groups included an estimated 95 percent of all commercial artists in the country.) All three artists played an important role in improving postage stamp designs by helping the Post Office Department transition from near total reliance upon the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to commercial artists.

The first meeting of the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee was opened by Postmaster General Summerfield on April 30, 1957. As one of its first orders of business, the

committee decided to establish standards for the selection of subjects for commemorative stamps.

These guidelines have been changed, as needed, over the years, and included the following in 2006:

**It is a general policy that U.S. postage stamps and stationery primarily will feature American or American-related subjects.**

**No living person shall be honored by portrayal on U.S. postage.**

**Commemorative stamps or postal stationery items honoring individuals usually will be issued on, or in conjunction with, significant anniversaries of their birth, but no postal item will be issued sooner than ten years after the individual's death.<sup>49</sup> The only exception to the ten-year rule is the issuance of stamps honoring deceased United States Presidents. They may be honored with a memorial stamp on the first birth anniversary following death.**

**Events of historical significance shall be considered for commemoration only on anniversaries in multiples of 50 years.**

**Only events, persons, and themes of widespread national appeal and significance will be considered for commemoration. Events, persons, or themes of local or regional significance may be recognized by a philatelic or special postal cancellation, which may be arranged through the local postmaster.**

**Stamps or stationery items shall not be issued to honor fraternal, political, sectarian, or service/charitable organizations. Stamps or stationery shall not be issued to promote or advertise commercial enterprises or products. Commercial products or enterprises might be used to illustrate more general concepts related to American culture.**

**Stamps or stationery items shall not be issued to honor cities, towns, municipalities, counties, primary or secondary schools, hospitals, libraries, or similar institutions. Due to the limitations placed on annual postal programs and the vast number of such locales, organizations, and institutions in existence, it would be difficult to single out any one for commemoration.**

**Requests for observance of statehood anniversaries will be considered for commemorative postage stamps only at intervals of 50 years from the date of the state's first entry into the Union. Requests for observance of other state-related or regional anniversaries will be considered only as subjects for postal stationery and again only at intervals of 50 years from the date of the event.**

**Stamps or stationery items shall not be issued to honor religious institutions or individuals whose principal achievements are associated with religious undertakings or beliefs.**

**Semipostal stamps are designed to raise funds for**

**causes determined to be in the national public interest and appropriate. Semipostal stamps are sold for a price above their postage value. The difference between the sales price and the postage value of semipostal stamps consists of an amount (less a deduction for the Postal Service's reasonable costs) to be given to other executive agencies in furtherance of specified causes. The Postal Service issues semipostals in accordance with legislation.**

**Requests for commemoration of universities and other institutions of higher education shall be considered only for stamped cards and only in connection with the 200th anniversaries of their founding.**

**No stamp shall be considered for issuance if one treating the same subject has been issued in the past 50 years. The only exceptions to this rule are traditional themes such as national symbols and holidays.**

In November 1960, Postmaster General Summerfield approved the Benjamin Franklin Award, then in the form of a certificate, for members of Congress, special advisory groups, or employees making a contribution to the Post Office Department not connected with official employment. On December 15 of that year, members of the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee received the first Benjamin Franklin awards in appreciation for the distinguished and outstanding public service each rendered as a member of the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee.

Today the committee consists of up to 15 members appointed by the Postmaster General, who also appoints the chairman. The members share a respect for philately and are experts on history, science and technology, art, education, sports, or other subjects of public interest.

The committee meets four times a year to review suggestions for new postage stamps. Committee members receive travel expenses, and nongovernment members receive a meeting stipend. Most subjects chosen to appear on stamps and postal stationery are suggested by the public. The Postal Service receives approximately 50,000 proposals each year. Every proposal is considered.

The committee's primary goal is to select subjects that are both interesting and educational for recommendation to the Postmaster General, who decides which stamps will be issued.

Besides recommending new subjects for commemorative stamps each year, the committee also suggests subjects for the extensive line of regular stamps. The committee considers the interests of stamp collectors as well as all citizens and looks for subjects that will stand the test of time, be consistent with public opinion, and have broad national appeal.

Ideas for stamp subjects should be addressed to:

*Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee  
Stamp Development  
United States Postal Service  
1735 North Lynn Street Room 5013  
Arlington VA 22209-6432*

Subjects should be submitted at least three years in advance of the proposed date of issue to allow sufficient time for consideration and for design and production, if the subject is approved.



# TRANSFORMATION

In the 36 years since the Postal Reorganization Act was signed, technological advances have both improved the operations and services offered by the Postal Service and increased competition and customer expectations. A decade of prosperity in the 1980s, with a concomitant growth in mail volume, was followed by slower economic growth in the 1990s. Bankruptcies, consolidations, and restructuring of markets reduced the flow of business mail. In 1991, overall mail volume dropped for the first time in 15 years. The following year, volume rose only slightly, and the Postal Service narrowly avoided the first back-to-back declines in mail volume since the Great Depression. In an effort to address financial challenges and hold rates steady, in 1992 the Postal Service created a new organizational structure that replaced 5 regions and 73 field divisions with 10 areas and 85 districts.

Total mail volume began to grow again and, from 1992 through 2000, reached record levels. Then, in 2001, the Postal Service again saw a slight drop in total mail volume compared to the previous year. The 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center buildings caused a tragic loss of human lives and rippled out to affect many areas. One was to intensify recessionary effects on the mailing and advertising industry. In 2002, total mail volume dropped to 202.8 billion pieces, down nearly five billion pieces from the previous year. Volume began to rise again in 2004 largely because of

growth in Standard Mail. In 2005, for the first time, the volume of Standard Mail exceeded that of First-Class Mail. However, First-Class Mail continued to generate more revenue than any other class of mail.

In 2006, the Postal Service sorted and delivered more than 213 billion pieces of mail, about 40 percent of the world's total mail volume and more than any other postal administration in the world.

## MEASURING IMPROVEMENT

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, private express companies ruled the package delivery market until Congress, concerned about the high rates being charged, authorized the Post Office Department to begin carrying larger parcels to provide an alternative for customers. In the 20th and opening years of the 21st centuries, competition grew for every postal product. The rise of electronic communications and other technologies offered alternatives for sending statements, payments, and personal messages. Private companies continued to dominate the market for the urgent delivery of mail and packages.

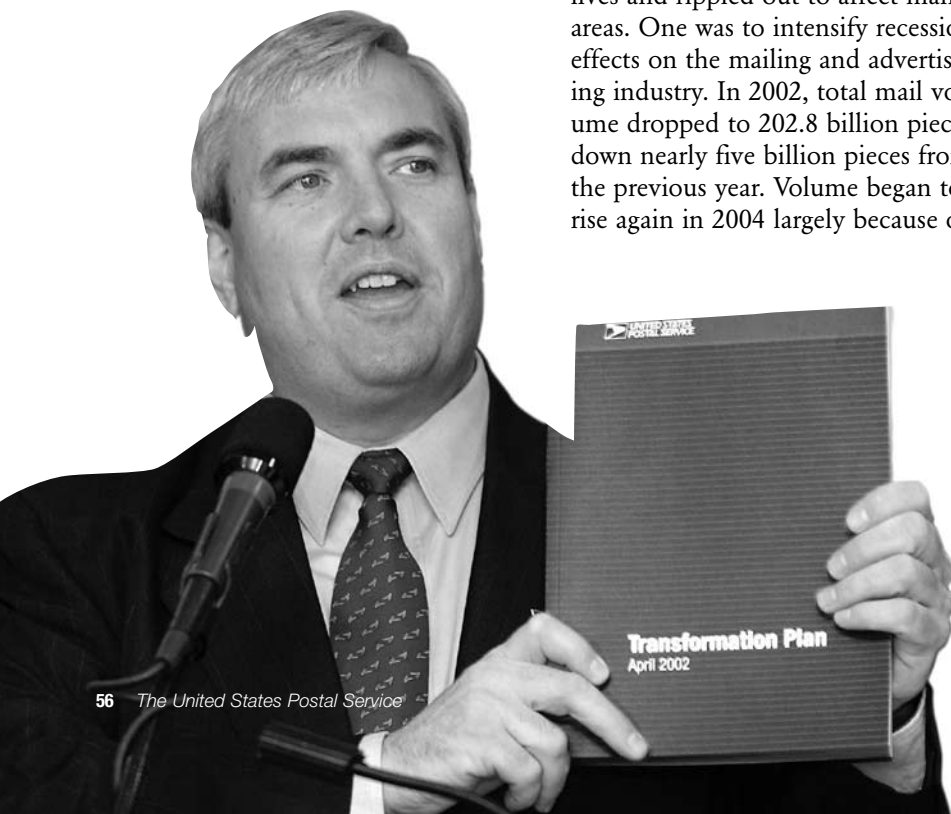
Recognizing the need to become more competitive, the Postal Service began to change and restructure in the early 1990s. In 1990, the Postal Service awarded two contracts to private firms to independently measure First-Class Mail service and customer satisfaction, providing benchmarks for evaluating service improvements. In 1993, the Postal Service awarded an additional contract to measure the satisfaction levels of business mailers.

First-Class Mail service performance is independently measured under the External First-Class (EXFC) Measurement System. By 2000 EXFC scores for on-time delivery reached a record high of 94 percent for the first time. In 2006 the Postal Service reported a national 95 percent success rate in on-time overnight delivery, with a number of service areas achieving 97 percent on-time delivery.

## Transformation Plan

*"The Postal Service has been a reliable, trusted provider of communications for more than two centuries. It is a basic and fundamental service provided to the people of America by their government. It helps keep Americans in touch, and it is the hub of a \$900 billion mailing industry. We are working to keep this critical national asset strong and vibrant, today and far into the future."*

— Joint statement by the Postmaster General and the Chairman, Board of Governors, April 2002



## TRANSFORMATION PLAN

In April 2001, United States Comptroller General David Walker placed the Postal Service's transformation efforts and long-term outlook on the General Accounting Office's "high risk" list because of the Postal Service's significant financial, human capital, and structural challenges. Walker stated that:

*The Service's ability to provide universal postal service ... will be increasingly threatened unless changes are made, both within current law and to the legal and regulatory framework that governs the Service.*<sup>50</sup>

The General Accounting Office, now the Government Accountability Office, asked the Postal Service for a comprehensive plan that addressed these concerns. A year later, on April 4, 2002, the Postal Service submitted its *Transformation Plan* to Congress. The plan presented targets to improve service and manage costs. The Postal Service began to implement the plan's service, customer satisfaction, workplace improvement, and financial recommendations even before submitting it to Congress.

In September 2005, the Postal Service published its *Strategic Transformation Plan, 2006–2010*, which identified further strategies to enhance the Postal Service's core business of delivering mail. The results?

From 2002 through 2006, the Postal Service saw:

★ *Record-level service performance and customer satisfaction scores during a period when the Postal Service had added nearly 7 million new addresses to its delivery network.*

★ *Consistent growth in total factor productivity.*

★ *Nearly \$5 billion in cost savings since 2000, a five-year savings target identified in the plan.*

★ *A 7.5 percent reduction in the number of career employees with no layoffs.*

★ *Greater efficiency and added value to the mail through innovative technology.*

## Partnering With Customers and Competitors

The Postal Service has worked with customers to improve mail service since it first began operations in 1971, and even earlier, as the Post Office Department.

Mail Users Councils, renamed Postal Customer Councils (PCCs) in 1971, were first established in 300 large cities in 1961. That year, faced with large amounts of business mail deposited after 5 p.m., the Department began a Mail Early campaign. Local business and postal executives meet regularly to schedule bulk mailings and discuss ways to improve customer service, customer satisfaction, and corporate profitability through educational programs, mailer clinics, and seminars. By the end of 2006, more than 100,000 businesses belonged to PCCs.

The Mailers' Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC) was established in January 1965. Its members represented, and continue to represent, major bulk-mailing associations and organizations, including publishers, advertising mailers, envelope and greeting card manufacturers, as well as representatives from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. MTAC offers technical advice in implementing policies and solving problems and has suggested improvements to the ZIP Code and ZIP+4 programs, handling changes of address, and presorting and barcoding, among other initiatives. It has worked with postal officials on

optical character recognition and electronic payment and transactions for business mail deposited at Post Offices. In 2005, MTAC worked on programs to see that large, bulk mailings moved into the mailstream more smoothly and were accurately prepared and addressed; it also focused on service measurement and improvement.

Consumer Advisory Councils, called Customer Advisory Councils prior to 2000, were established by 1989. The councils consist of groups of citizens who volunteer to work with local postal management on issues of interest to local communities.

More recently, the Postal Service has allied with some of its traditional competitors to improve delivery operations.

In 2001, the Postal Service formed a business alliance with FedEx, using FedEx's air network for the domestic air transportation of U.S. Mail and allowing the company to place self-service collection boxes on postal property. In 2006, the Postal Service signed a new contract with FedEx, continuing the alliance.

In 2004, the Postal Service contracted with United Parcel Service (UPS) for air transportation of U.S. Mail. In June 2006, the Postal Service expanded the alliance, contracting with the company for air transportation of mail to and from 98 U.S. cities.

### Mailers' Technical Advisory Committee, 1967

*Established in 1965, the Mailers' Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC) represented 26 mailing industries by 1967, including newspaper, magazine, and classroom publishers; mail order companies; advertisers; envelope manufacturers; and the religious press.*





### PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON THE POSTAL SERVICE

In 1967, a presidential commission on the Post Office Department met at a time when Congress subsidized 25 percent of postal costs, and the Post Office Department was in the red. In August 1970, the Postal Reorganization Act was signed into law, creating the United States Postal Service under an economic assumption that continuing growth in mail volume and revenue would support the continued growth of the postal infrastructure – a model that no longer is valid.

In a March 2001 letter to the President, the Postal Service Governors stated that significant statutory reform was needed to continue to provide consistent, satisfactory, universal service to the American people.

On December 11, 2002, President George W. Bush issued an executive order establishing the President's Commission on the Postal Service. The nine-member bipartisan commission was to identify the operational, structural, and financial challenges facing the Postal Service; examine potential solutions; and chart a course to build a healthy financial foundation. Postmaster General John E. Potter described the work of the commission as consistent with, and complementary to, the Postal Service's *Transformation Plan*.

Gathering information from postal stakeholders, including congressional

leaders, union officials, postal employees, customers, and other representatives of the nation's \$900 billion mailing industry, the commission issued its report, *Embracing the Future*, to the President in 2003. The report called for the Postal Service to remain a public institution subject to broader oversight, to focus on universal mail service as its core value, to be guided by the best business practices, to overhaul the postal network, to clarify the postal monopoly, and to maintain a culture of excellence.

### BUDGET IMPACTS OF 2003 LEGISLATION: ESCROW FUND AND MILITARY SERVICE BENEFITS

In November 2002, the Office of Personnel Management reported that the Postal Service would overpay its retirement obligations over the long term for postal employees and retirees enrolled in the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) by \$71 billion.

Within months, Congress passed the Postal Civil Service Retirement System Funding Reform Act of 2003, which became Public Law 108-18 on April 23, 2003. The act modified the way the Postal Service funded its obligations to the CSRS, to prevent overfunding. The act also dictated how the Postal Service would spend its estimated savings: to pay down debt in 2003 and 2004, and to maintain postage rates in 2005. In 2006, the act required that the Postal Service's estimated annual savings – about \$3.1 billion – be considered an operating expense of the Postal Service, to be held in escrow for future use as determined by Congress.

But the projected savings did not represent cash actually on hand. Although funds were available through 2005, by 2006 inflationary costs and reduced revenue had whittled away the financial benefit of lower CSRS payments. To fund the escrow account, in 2005 the Postal Service requested an across-the-board increase of 5.4 percent in rates and fees, while warning that a biannual increase of 1 to 1.5 percent to fund this account might be needed in the future. The Postal Rate Commission and the postal Governors approved the request. On January 8, 2006, most postal rates and fees increased by about

### Military Mail, 2005

The Postal Service, working with the Military Postal Service Agency, delivered 70 million pounds of mail to men and women serving in Iraq in 2006.





5.4 percent – including the price of a First-Class stamp, from 37 to 39 cents – solely to fund the escrow account.

The 2003 act also created another challenge for the Postal Service: it transferred to the Postal Service from the Department of the Treasury the responsibility for funding military pensions of current and former postal employees, amounting to \$27 billion in costs transferred from taxpayers to postal ratepayers.

### POSTAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2006

On December 9, 2006, after several years of discussion and study, Congress passed the far-reaching Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act, H.R. 6407.

President Bush signed the act into law on December 20, 2006. The act divided postal products into market-dominant and competitive categories; created the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) out of the Postal Rate Commission and increased the PRC's regulatory powers; returned the obligation to pay military service costs to the Department of Treasury; and replaced escrow requirements to fund retiree health benefits.

The act included other changes to the way the Postal Service has operated since the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970.

*Any rate changes that take place in the 12 months after passage of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act would be determined under the regulations in place prior to passage of the act.*

*Increases in the rates for market-dominant products such as First-Class Mail will be restricted by a cap tied to the Consumer Price Index for 10 years. This cap would be reviewed by the PRC at that time.*

*Increases in competitive products such as Express Mail will not be capped. Rates will cover attributable costs and contribute to institutional costs.*

*The Postal Service must establish a set of service standards for its market-dominant products within one year and then develop a plan, to be submitted to Congress, for meeting these standards.*

*The PRC will have subpoena power over the Postal Service and can levy fines against it if the Postal Service does not take remedial action when the PRC finds a complaint filed regarding rates, regulations, or service standards has merit.*

*Governors will serve for seven- rather than nine-year terms.*

*The PRC will report to Congress every five years on the effectiveness of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act, with suggestions, if appropriate.*

*At least four of the nine Governors must have experience in managing organizations employing 50,000 or more people.*

*The Postal Regulatory Commission must create an Office of Inspector General. The Board of Governors will continue to appoint the Inspector General of the Postal Service.*

*The act abolished the requirement for fact-finding, replacing it with a requirement for mediation.*

*Injured employees must use annual, sick, or leave without pay for three days before they can collect continuation of pay benefits.*

### DEALING WITH THE UNIMAGINABLE

On September 11, 2001, terrorists attacked the United States, killing thousands. The Postal Service helped keep the lines of communication open despite severe restrictions on commercial air operations during this tragic time.

As the Postal Service dealt with these challenges, a photo editor in Boca Raton, Florida, died from inhalation anthrax on October 5, 2001, the first known case in the United States since 1976. A week later, a media employee in New York City was diagnosed with cutaneous anthrax after opening a letter addressed to an NBC anchorman. On October 15, 2001, a letter postmarked in Trenton, New Jersey, was delivered to the Capitol Hill office of a U.S.

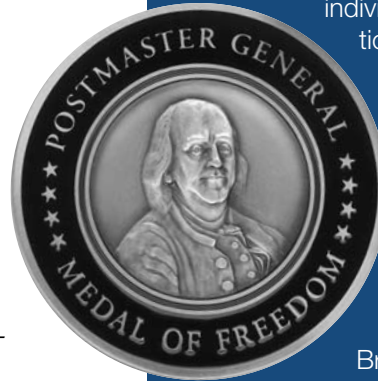
## Medal of Freedom

The Postmaster General's Medal of Freedom was created in 2001 to recognize outstanding individual contributions to the Postal Service. The first recipients of the medal were Thomas L. Morris, Jr., and Joseph P. Curseen, Jr. Both men worked at the Brentwood mail processing facility in Washington, D.C., and both died in October 2001 of inhalation anthrax. The medals were presented to their widows during a memorial service held in their honor by the Postal Service.

The Postmaster General's Medal of Freedom honored Mr. Morris and Mr. Curseen for making the ultimate sacrifice as they served others.

After closing in 2001, the Brentwood facility reopened in December 2003 with a new name: The Joseph Curseen, Jr., and the Thomas Morris, Jr., Processing and Distribution Center. A large plaque on the building states:

*We are poorer for their loss but richer for having been touched by these dedicated, hard-working heroes. We will never forget.*



**Thomas L. Morris, Jr.**



**Joseph P. Curseen, Jr.**

## Everyday Heroism

In 1901, John J. Comisky, a New Jersey letter carrier walking his route, saw a 12-year old boy struggling for his life in the Passaic River. Comisky jumped into the river, brought the boy to shore, then continued delivering mail in his dripping-wet uniform.

In 1927, Charles M. Taylor, a railway mail clerk in St. Louis, pulled six women and children from a wrecked, submerged Pullman car.

In 1928, Paul F. Collins, an airmail pilot, tightly circled his plane around a burning house late in the evening of February 10, until the plane's buzzing sounds woke up the family of eight inside, who escaped the fire.

A Boston letter carrier, Daniel M. Long, leaped from Harvard Bridge to save a drowning man in 1930.

From 18th century post riders who carried and protected the mail to injured airmail pilots in the early 20th century who pulled mail from crashed planes and carried it over mountains to safety, when needed, postal employees have risen to whatever levels are required to serve, and sometimes save, their customers.

In 1982, the National Association of Letter Carriers and the Postal Service formalized a long tradition of watching out for their customers when they established the Carrier Alert Program. Customers could register for the program, and letter carriers would report any suspicious incidents or accumulations of mail that might indicate the customer was unable to collect his or her mail because of illness or injury.

Every year, hundreds of postal employees are recognized as heroes, sometimes risking their own lives to save others in their community.

Senator. The letter claimed to contain anthrax, and this proved to be true. The Postal Service then went to work with other agencies to deal with bioterrorism.

The Postal Service announced the formation of a mail security task force, headed by the Chief Postal Inspector; authorized its employees to wear protective gear; and considered ways to sanitize mail, including irradiating it with electron beams. The Postal Service also notified people at every mailing address about how to identify and handle suspicious letters and packages.

On October 21, 2001, Joseph P. Curseen, Jr., an employee at the Brentwood postal facility in Washington, D.C., that handled mail for Capitol Hill, was diagnosed with inhalation anthrax. That night, another employee, Thomas L. Morris, Jr., died from inhalation anthrax. The next morning, Curseen also died.

Postmaster General John E. Potter announced the sad news, then stated:

*800,000 Postal Service employees are using everything they've learned, doing everything humanly possible, to keep the mail safe and keep it moving. And we're determined not to let terrorists stop us.<sup>51</sup>*

By October 27, anthrax spores had been detected in other locations. All told, at least five deaths and several cases of anthrax poisoning are known.

In 2004, after multiple tests, the Postal Service began installing biohazard detection equipment to protect postal employees, customers, and the mail, and continues to work to strengthen the security of the mail.

### DELIVERING DESPITE DISASTER

In 2005, along with millions of other people, postal employees faced one of their greatest challenges.

On August 25, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall near Miami, Florida, as a category 1 hurricane. The storm headed southwest to the Gulf of Mexico, where it gathered strength before making landfall again on the morning of August 29 near New Orleans, Louisiana. By that time Katrina was a category 3 hurricane with sustained winds of 125 mph. Later that

same day, the New Orleans levee system failed, filling the city with water.

One of the most destructive storms in United States history, Katrina devastated entire sections of coastal Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, and put 80 percent of the City of New Orleans underwater. The storm claimed more than 1,800 lives, with many more unaccounted for, and displaced more than one million people.

Before the storm hit, the Postal Service diverted inbound New Orleans-area mail to the Houston, Texas, mail processing and distribution center. At the New Orleans processing and distribution center, employees moved mail to an upper floor, to protect it from floods. Within days of the storm, the Postal Service joined with the Social Security Administration and other agencies to arrange for the distribution of Social Security, pension, and benefit checks, which were due to be delivered at the beginning of September. The Postal Service set up temporary check distribution centers; they delivered more than 30,000 checks before the centers were closed in mid-September.

More than 4,000 postal employees and their families were displaced by Hurricane Katrina, ending up in nearly every state. Through national media outlets, the Postal Service urged displaced employees to check in via a national toll-free hotline to make sure employees received their paychecks as well as assistance and job-related information. Despite suffering personal losses, many postal employees returned to work almost immediately to help deliver checks, medicines, and other vital mail.

Through national news media the Postal Service also urged displaced residents to file change-of-address forms so that their mail could be sent to them directly, bypassing storm-stricken regions. Customers filed forms online at [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com), over the phone at 1-800-ASK-USPS, and at local postal facilities. Mail facilities were set up in temporary shelters at Houston's Astrodome and in dozens of communities throughout the nation so that mail could reach evacuees wherever they were. By year's end, the Postal Service had processed change-of-address forms from more than 520,000 households that had been displaced by





### After the Storm

Two and a half weeks after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, Letter Carrier Deborah Johnson resumed deliveries in West Biloxi, Mississippi.

### Return to Normalcy

On September 20, 2005, Letter Carrier Kenneth Patterson in Biloxi, Mississippi, spoke with a customer while on his rounds.



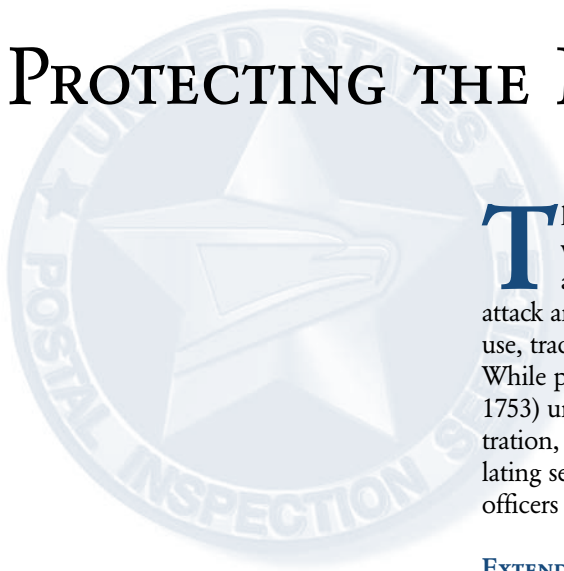
Hurricane Katrina as well as Hurricane Rita, which struck near the Louisiana-Texas border the following month. Due to intense national interest the Postal Service provided an overview of change-of-address data to national news media, since it was the only reliable way to track the movement of evacuees.

Besides Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, two other major hurricanes – Dennis and Wilma – hit the southern United States during the 2005 hurricane season, which was the worst on record. All told, in 2005 hurricanes destroyed 17 postal facilities and damaged more than 500.

Despite the devastation, postal employees delivered, handing out mail from trailers, recreational vehicles, and even tents, where street delivery was not possible. Within two weeks of Hurricane Katrina, full service had been restored to 82 percent of affected Post Offices. Mail service in New Orleans resumed in October, when residents began returning to the ravaged city. The eventual resumption of street delivery was a welcome sign of normalcy. As letter carriers gradually returned to city streets they were greeted with smiles, laughter, hugs, and tears. ■



# PROTECTING THE MAIL



The U.S. Postal Inspection Service, which protects postal customers and employees from criminal attack and the mail from criminal misuse, traces its roots to Benjamin Franklin. While postmaster of Philadelphia (1737-1753) under the British postal administration, Franklin’s duties included “regulating several offices, and bringing the officers to account.”<sup>52</sup>

## EXTENDING MAIL SERVICE

The position of “surveyor” was created in December 1772, with Hugh Finlay named “Surveyor of Post roads on the Continent of North America” by the British postmasters general.<sup>53</sup> Finlay toured Post Offices from Maine to Georgia to evaluate service and suggest improvements. In 1775, the Second Continental Congress appointed William Goddard surveyor of the United Colonies; he would become the first American surveyor. Goddard established new Post Offices, arranged mail transportation contracts, and settled postmasters’ accounts.

In 1782, the position of surveyor was abolished to save money; Postmasters General and their assistants acted in the capacity of inspector through the 1790s.

By 1801, the title “special agent” was used. In March 1801, a special agent was appointed to investigate delays in moving mail between

## William Goddard

In 1775, William Goddard was appointed as the first surveyor of the new American postal system.



Washington, D.C., and Kentucky. Six years later, another was hired to secretly investigate mail robberies in Tennessee.

By 1830, an Office of Instruction and of Mail Depredations was created, headed by General Agent Preston S. Loughborough. His duties were to:





*investigate, in person, cases of mail robberies and of missing letters; to correspond with district attorneys ... to examine mail routes, and the manner in which mail contracts are executed; to examine post offices; the characters and conduct of postmasters ...*

and to communicate:

*the decisions of the Postmaster General on questions ... concerning the construction of post office laws and regulations.*<sup>54</sup>

By 1837, the Post Office Department’s four special agents were paying surprise visits to Post Offices, auditing accounts, and reporting on the general state of affairs. Twelve special agents were employed by 1843, and the Postmaster General attributed a decrease in mail thefts to their “vigilance ... in ferreting out and bringing to justice depredators.”<sup>55</sup> In the 1840s, special agents also were sent to Texas (1846), Oregon (1847), and California (1848), to superintend the establishment of new service.

In October 1850, the Postmaster General outlined agents’ duties:

-  *Arresting and helping convict mail thieves.*
-  *Overseeing mail service.*
-  *Occasionally asking local business communities for improvement suggestions.*
-  *Keeping a daily journal of activities, to be transcribed twice a month and sent to the Department.*<sup>56</sup>

By 1855, the Post Office Department employed 18 special agents – 3 at large and 15 domiciled across the United

States. Twenty-one agents served by 1861, including one assigned solely to the New York City Post Office, which handled more than three times the mail of the next largest Post Office.

The Civil War brought new challenges. Special agents helped deliver mail to Union troops in the South and reestablished service as southern states returned to federal control. Finding individuals willing and able to serve as postmasters in the South was difficult because, until July 1868, all prospective postmasters had to swear that they had not voluntarily aided the Confederacy or Confederate soldiers. The 1865 *Official Register of the United States* listed 33 special agents, including 5 in charge of specific southern Post Offices.<sup>57</sup>

The number of agents grew with the Post Office Department and with congressional mandates to protect the mail and to protect the American public from obscenity, fraud, and lotteries conducted through the mail.

#### CLEANING THE MAILSTREAM

In February 1865, Jacob Collamer, a U.S. Senator from Vermont and former Postmaster General, told his fellow senators that the traffic in obscene books and pictures was “getting to be a very great evil.”<sup>58</sup> An Act of Congress of March 3, 1865, provided that “no obscene book, pamphlet, picture, print, or other publication of a vulgar and indecent character, shall be admitted into the mails.”<sup>59</sup> The act was broadened in 1872 to ban obscene envelopes and postal cards, then expanded in 1873 when Congress passed the Comstock Act, named after Special Agent Anthony Comstock, a zealous anti-vice crusader. In addition to banning the mailing of obscene materials, the Comstock Act banned mailing any items or information relating to contraception or abortion, or receiving them with intent to distribute.

In 1872, Congress also passed the Mail Fraud Statute, which empowered special agents to pursue swindlers who previously had used the mails “with almost absolute impunity.”<sup>60</sup> “Swindling circulars” enticed victims to buy counterfeit money, tickets for non-existent lotteries, and miraculous “medicines” and devices.<sup>61</sup> For a mere \$5 (or

three for \$10), citizens could buy “THE MAGIC BELT! FOR RENDERING ONE’S SELF ‘INVISIBLE’” (“Go where you will, no living being can see you, nor in any way be aware of your presence”).<sup>62</sup> In 1876 Chief Special Agent P. H. Woodward noted that swindlers not only fleeced innocent victims by enticing them to send money through the mail but tempted postal employees with an “easy conscience” to redirect money-filled envelopes addressed to a “professional cheat” into their own pockets.<sup>63</sup> In 1875, out of 307 people arrested for violating postal laws, 115 were postal employees.

In 1880, the title “post-office inspector” replaced “special agent.” In recommending the change, Postmaster General David M. Key said:

*the duties of these officers are by no means confined to the detection and arrest of offenders ... most of their time is occupied in the inspection of the postal service, the examination of postmasters’ accounts, the investigation of the solvency of their bonds, the collection of debts ... and the general supervision of all officers and employe’s.*<sup>64</sup>

In the late 19th century, the first federal law prohibiting all lottery-related mail was passed, the Anti-Lottery Act of 1890. The act targeted the New Orleans-based Louisiana Lottery Company, the only legal U.S. lottery at the time, which earned profits of more than \$10,000,000 a year, mostly via the U.S. Mail. Armed with the new law, inspectors quickly shut down the lottery, whose business had been so vast that, within three months, revenue at the New Orleans Post Office dropped by one third and nine clerks had to be let go.

During the Spanish-American War of 1898, several experienced inspectors oversaw temporary military Post Office stations serving the troops and investigated thefts of soldiers’ mail. In 1898, inspectors also went to Alaska to reorganize the mail service there; the discovery of gold had led to avalanches of mail.

In 1900 inspectors investigated postal fraud in Cuba, which was under U.S. military jurisdiction, and traveled to Puerto Rico and Hawaii to supervise the start of mail service in these new U.S. territories. In 1903, 40 inspectors partic-

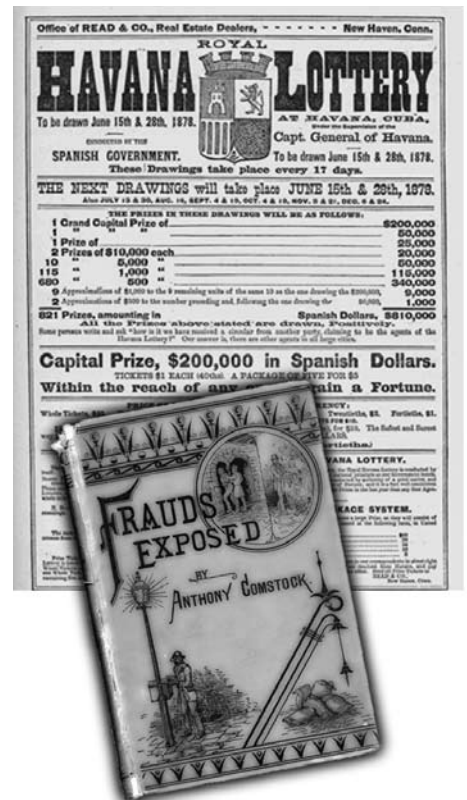


#### P.H. Woodward

P.H. Woodward, special agent from 1865 to 1876, described agents’ clever detective work and derring-do in his 568-page book *Guarding the Mails; Or, The Secret Service of the Post Office Department*.

#### Warning Consumers

Hoping to “save the credulous from being swindled,” in 1880 Anthony Comstock wrote *Frauds Exposed; Or, How the People Are Deceived and Robbed, and Youth Corrupted*.





## The De Autremont Train Holdup, 1923

On October 11, 1923, brothers Ray, Roy, and Hugh De Autremont held up a Southern Pacific train in Oregon because they believed it carried \$500,000 in gold. (It did not.) The brothers murdered the train engineer, brakeman, and fireman, and used too much dynamite to blow open the mail car, killing the railway postal clerk and destroying the mail. They fled the scene empty-handed, leaving behind several incriminating clues. An extensive manhunt followed, with postal inspectors following clues as far as Central America, Mexico, Canada, and Alaska. All three brothers were caught in 1927, after being recognized from reward posters. "We literally plastered the United States with circulars," one inspector recalled. "I knew it would be through those we would get the men."<sup>65</sup> All three brothers were convicted and sentenced to life in prison.



### The De Autremont Investigation

Reward posters led to the arrest and conviction of the De Autremont brothers.

Train Holdup of S.P. Co. Train No. 1-13, Siskiyou, Oregon, October 11, 1923. Four Men Killed.

# REWARD

of \$4800.00

For Arrest and Conviction of Each Man

At least three implicated. Below are photographs and descriptions of two of three brothers wanted in connection with the holdup. Should be arrested on sight and held incommunicado.

Wire information, charges collect, to D. O'Connell, Chief Special Agent, Southern Pacific Railroad Company, or to C. Haddiford, Post Office Inspector in Charge, Ashland, Oregon, or to G. E. Terrill, Sheriff, Jackson County, at Medford, Oregon.



**No. 1. Roy DeAutremont**  
Age: 23 years  
Weight: 135 to 140 lbs.  
Hair: Medium light, bleached by sun  
Height: 5 ft. 6 inches  
Complexion: Sandy  
Eyes: Light brown. Small. Wears glasses at times, and eyes appear granulated and watery.  
Face broad, short cut neck, long nose and prominent nostrils.  
Face smooth. No marks. Head round.  
Twin brother of Number Two.



**No. 2. Ray DeAutremont**  
Age: 23 years  
Height: 5 ft. 6 inches  
Weight: 135 to 140 lbs.  
Complexion: Sandy  
Hair as shown in Number one.  
Broad face, short cut neck, face smooth.  
Eyes: Light brown and small.  
Twin brother of Number One.



**No. 3. Hugh DeAutremont, alias E. E. James**  
Age: 19—Looks older  
Height: 5 ft. 7 inches  
Weight: 120 lbs.  
Complexion: Fair  
Eyes: Blue  
Nose: Slightly pug  
Ashland, Oregon, October 21, 1923.

ipated in a sweeping internal investigation of irregularities in the awarding of contracts, leading to the removal or resignation of 17 Post Office Department officers and employees, including First Assistant Postmaster General Perry S. Heath and Superintendent of Free Delivery August W. Machen. In 1905, the Department had 216 inspectors; by 1911, the number had increased to 390.

### PURSuing ROGUES AND ROBBERS

During World War I, the need for military postal facilities was decided by inspectors, who also investigated the loyalty of potential employees and possible violators of the Espionage and Sedition Acts. After the war and through the 1930s, inspectors contended with an increase in mail robberies by armed gangs. Thefts became so numerous that, in 1921, about 50,000 surplus military firearms were distributed to railway postal clerks. In 1921 and again in 1926, thousands of U.S. Marines guarded valuable mail at vulnerable points throughout the country, as identified by inspectors. Two of the

most notorious train robberies were the botched robbery at Siskiyou, Oregon, in 1923, and a well-planned heist at Rondout, Illinois, in 1924. Inspectors doggedly investigated each case and eventually saw the thieves convicted.

Meanwhile, inspectors continued protecting the public from evolving consumer fraud. In 1920 they investigated and helped convict Charles Ponzi, the father of illegal pyramid schemes, who filched millions of dollars from the public for supposed investments.<sup>66</sup>

During World War II, inspectors served as liaisons between civilian and military postal facilities, regularly inspecting both types of facilities to ensure prompt, secure handling of mail, investigating complaints of theft, and helping military authorities identify the guilty parties.

In 1954, the title "postal inspector" was first officially used.

The 1950s saw a rise in illegal drug use, a significant factor in postal crime. By 1954, about half of all non-postal mail thieves in the New York City area were addicts who stole checks

from mailboxes to finance their habit. Illegal drug use affected the Post Office Department on another front as well: in 1967 Postmaster General Lawrence F. O'Brien noted an increase in the use of mail to transmit illegal drugs.<sup>67</sup> The Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970 made it unlawful to use the mail "to transmit or facilitate the manufacture, distribution, disbursing or possession" of illegal drugs; postal inspectors immediately seized the initiative in pursuing offenders.<sup>68</sup>

The Security Force, the uniformed branch of the Postal Inspection Service, was formed in 1970. Primarily responsible for protecting people and property and keeping the peace on postal property, postal police officers, like other members of the Postal Inspection Service, also respond to natural and man-made disasters.

### PROTECTING THE INNOCENT

Since the passage of the Child Protection Act in 1984, postal inspectors have arrested nearly 5,000 suspects for using the mail in violation of federal child exploitation laws. In 1999, inspectors helped shut down Landslide Productions, Inc. of Fort Worth, Texas, the largest-known child pornography enterprise in history, grossing \$1.4 million each month from Web site subscriptions. Its founder was sentenced to 1,335 years in prison. The company's customer records sparked a two-year undercover sting operation called "Operation Avalanche," with investigators contacting former Web site subscribers and arresting them if they accepted delivery of child pornography.

Mail fraud – free-prize schemes, foreign lotteries, pyramid schemes, investment fraud, and work-at-home scams – has been around for generations, but a new type of fraud emerged in the late 20th century: credit card fraud. More than one million credit cards travel through the U.S. Mail each day. In 1992 the Inspection Service partnered with major credit card issuers to protect cards and cardholders against theft. The Inspection Service also worked to prevent credit card fraud through community awareness, publicizing prevention guidelines.



Following 9/11 and the discovery of anthrax in the mail in October 2001, postal inspectors were trained in hazardous waste operations, emergency response, and the handling of mail-screening equipment. Inspectors work with postal employees, local first responders, and public health personnel to conduct regular interagency drills at postal facilities with biohazard detection systems.

In the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, nearly 300 postal inspectors and postal police officers, as well as special agents of the Office of Inspector General, assisted in recovery operations on the Gulf Coast. Inspectors and officers worked with Postal Service employees to determine damage to postal property, assess environmental conditions of facilities, and expedite changes of address for displaced residents. Inspectors provided 112 security escorts for Postal Service employees and contractors disbursing federal checks to needy citizens. They also joined the U.S. Department of Justice's Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force to investigate and warn citizens of fraud schemes related to relief efforts.

Postal inspectors continue to protect the Postal Service, its employees, and its customers from criminal attack, and the nation's mail from criminal misuse. ■

### Armed Railway Clerks, 1930s

The Postmaster General armed railway clerks in 1921 to help combat a rash of train robberies.

### Reward Poster

Rewards for the arrest and conviction of postal offenders were offered as early as 1877. The largest reward ever offered – \$2.5 million for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the individual(s) who mailed anthrax in 2001 – still stands.

**SPECIAL REWARD**  
Up to **\$2.5 million**

For information leading to the arrest and conviction of the individual(s) responsible for the mailing of letters containing anthrax to the New York Post, Tom Brokaw at NBC, Senator Tom Daschle and Senator Patrick Leahy:

EDITOR  
NEW YORK POST  
1211 AVE. OF THE AMERICAS  
NEW YORK, NY 10036

SENATOR DASCHLE  
504 HART SENATE OFFICE  
BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4902

TOM BROKAW  
NBC TV  
30 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA  
NEW YORK, NY 10112

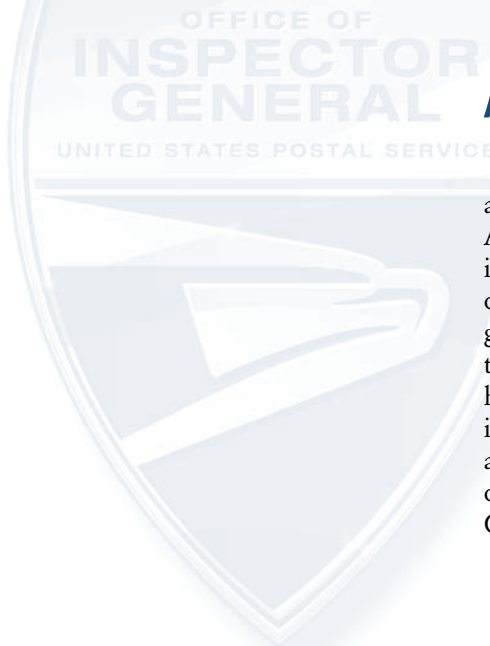
SENATOR LEAHY  
423 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE  
BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4902

The mailings took place in the Trenton, NJ, area on or about Sept. 18 and Oct. 9, 2001.  
Anyone having information, please contact America's Most Wanted at 1-800-CRIME TV or www.amw.com.

All information will be held in strict confidence. Reward payment will be made in accordance with the conditions of Postal Service Reward Notice 296, dated February 2000.



# THE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



The Office of Inspector General (USPS OIG) was established in the Postal Service by 1988 amendments to the Inspector General Act of 1978. The act had created OIGs in 12 federal agencies following a series of public spending scandals to investigate and audit the programs and operations of agencies that, in many cases, had failed to supervise their own spending, to ferret out fraud and misconduct, and to help prevent and end the misuse of funds. The act granted the Inspectors General broad authority to:

- conduct audits and investigations;*
- access all agency records directly, using subpoenas if necessary;*
- request assistance from other government agencies;*
- administer oaths when taking testimony;*
- hire staff and manage their own resources; and*
- receive and respond to complaints from agency employees, whose confidentiality was to be protected.*

Inspectors General were not authorized to take corrective action themselves under the rationale that it would be difficult – if not impossible – for Inspectors General to review programs and operations objectively if they were directly involved in carrying them out.

The Inspector General Act Amendments of 1988 created OIGs in 39 additional government agencies and entities, including the Postal Service, but until 1997 the Chief Postal Inspector served as the Postal Service’s Inspector General, reporting to postal management.

Recognizing the importance of a USPS OIG independent from management, in 1996 Congress created the Postal Service’s independent Office of Inspector General to be its eyes and

ears to detect and prevent waste, fraud, theft, and misconduct. Although funded by the Postal Service, the Inspector General is appointed by the nine presidentially appointed Governors of the Postal Service and reports twice a year to the Governors and to Congress. The USPS OIG’s independence allows it to more effectively perform its mission, “to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of USPS programs and operations, while eliminating and preventing fraud, waste, and abuse.”<sup>69</sup>

The Postal Service’s independent Office of Inspector General began with a single employee, Inspector General Karla W. Corcoran, who was sworn in on January 6, 1997. In one year’s time, the office hired 109 employees and set up field offices across the country to audit and investigate Postal Service programs and operations. It also established a hotline number to receive allegations of waste, fraud, and abuse, which received more than 14,000 calls in its second year.

On August 20, 2003, the current Inspector General, David C. Williams, was sworn into office. In 2004, the scope of his office increased when Postmaster General Potter announced the transfer of additional investigative responsibilities from the Postal Inspection Service to the USPS OIG. Beginning February 7, 2005, allegations of postal employee misconduct including embezzlement, record falsification, workers’ compensation fraud, contract fraud, and on-duty narcotics violations, were referred to the USPS OIG. On May 1, 2006, the USPS OIG took over the responsibility for investigating all new allegations of these types. On September 1, 2006, the USPS OIG also began investigating all new allegations of mail theft by postal employees. To handle its increased responsibilities, the USPS OIG hired more than 260 new investigators in 2006.

By the end of 2006, its staff numbered 1,071 and included special agents (federal law enforcement officers authorized to carry firearms, make arrests, and

investigate federal criminal violations), auditors (professionals trained in government audit and accounting standards), and others crucial to its mission.

Since it was established, the Office of Inspector General has issued 3,077 audit reports and management advisories accounting for more than \$3.7 billion in questioned costs, unrecoverable costs, funds put to better use, and revenue impact. Examples of fraud uncovered by USPS OIG investigations include a trucking contractor defrauding the Postal Service of \$1.5 million in fuel rebates; a highway route contractor defrauding

the Postal Service of \$120,468 for services not rendered; and a construction contractor charging the Postal Service \$175,630 for work never done.

During fiscal year 2006 alone, the Office of Inspector General completed 6,357 investigations resulting in 293 arrests, 237 indictments, 209 convictions, and 2,977 administrative actions. Injury compensation fraud investigations saved the Postal Service \$105 million in long-term costs, and \$20.9 million in fines and restitution went to the Postal Service as a result of investigative work. ■



### **Investigation In Progress**

*Special agents from the Office of Inspector General conduct surveillance in 2003.*

## **Discovering Savings**

One mission of the Office of Inspector General is to help control postal costs. Through nationwide audits of postal operations, facilities, and transportation networks, the OIG has identified cost savings in everything from delivery operations to letter mail processing.

For example, from 2004 through 2006, in response to a request from the Postal Service's Vice President of Network Operations Management, the OIG audited transportation routes to and from bulk mail centers (BMCs). Bulk mail includes magazines, advertising, and merchandise shipped by

major mailers and is processed in 21 BMCs and other facilities nationwide. Less time-sensitive than other mail, bulk mail travels by highway and railroad, versus by air, which is more costly. The Postal Service spends more than \$500 million annually on contracts to transport bulk mail.

In a series of 13 audits, the OIG identified potential savings of about \$40.6 million by eliminating or reducing bulk mail transportation contracts across the country. In one such audit, the OIG analyzed all 1,224 trips that delivered mail to BMCs in the Postal Service's

Great Lakes Area from March through September 2004. OIG staff evaluated mail volume and the type of mail carried, interviewed postal employees, reviewed postal policies and procedures, visited BMCs and other postal facilities, and observed and photographed operations. Working with financial and computer analysts and other experts, the OIG identified 96 trips that could be modified or eliminated without affecting service by consolidating mail on other trips — potentially saving the Postal Service \$7.7 million over the life of the existing contracts.



# POSTMASTERS GENERAL



A list of Postmasters General and the names of those who appointed them follows. All appointments by the President were made with the advice and consent of the Senate. Dates prior to 1900 are the dates the Postmasters General were appointed or commissioned. Dates after 1900 are the dates the Postmasters General took office. *Italics indicate a carryover from the previous administration.*

Postmaster General	Date	Appointed by
Benjamin Franklin	July 26, 1775	Continental Congress
Richard Bache	November 7, 1776	
Ebenezer Hazard	January 28, 1782	
Samuel Osgood	September 26, 1789	George Washington
Timothy Pickering	August 12, 1791	
Joseph Habersham	February 25, 1795	
<i>Joseph Habersham</i>	...	John Adams
<i>Joseph Habersham</i>	...	Thomas Jefferson
Gideon Granger	November 28, 1801	
<i>Gideon Granger</i>	...	James Madison
Return J. Meigs, Jr.	March 17, 1814	
<i>Return J. Meigs, Jr.</i>	...	James Monroe
John McLean	June 26, 1823	
<i>John McLean</i>	...	John Quincy Adams
William T. Barry	March 9, 1829	Andrew Jackson
Amos Kendall	May 1, 1835	
<i>Amos Kendall</i>	...	Martin Van Buren
John M. Niles	May 19, 1840	
Francis Granger	March 6, 1841	William Henry Harrison
<i>Francis Granger</i>	...	John Tyler
Charles A. Wickliffe	September 13, 1841	
Cave Johnson	March 6, 1845	James K. Polk
Jacob Collamer	March 8, 1849	Zachary Taylor
Nathan Kelsey Hall	July 23, 1850	Millard Fillmore
Samuel D. Hubbard	August 31, 1852	
James Campbell	March 7, 1853	Franklin Pierce
Aaron V. Brown	March 6, 1857	James Buchanan
Joseph Holt	March 14, 1859	
Horatio King	February 12, 1861	
Montgomery Blair	March 5, 1861	Abraham Lincoln
William Dennison	September 24, 1864	
<i>William Dennison</i>	...	Andrew Johnson
Alexander W. Randall	July 25, 1866	
John A. J. Creswell	March 5, 1869	Ulysses Grant
James W. Marshall	July 3, 1874	
Marshall Jewell	August 24, 1874	
James N. Tyner	July 12, 1876	
David M. Key	March 12, 1877	Rutherford B. Hayes
Horace Maynard	August 26, 1880	
Thomas L. James	March 5, 1881	James A. Garfield
<i>Thomas L. James</i>	...	Chester A. Arthur
Timothy O. Howe	December 20, 1881	
Walter Q. Gresham	April 3, 1883	
Frank Hatton	October 14, 1884	

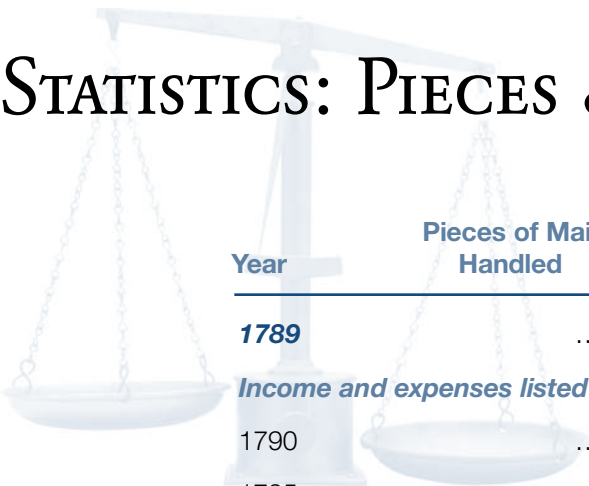
Postmaster General	Date	Appointed by
William F. Vilas	March 6, 1885	Grover Cleveland
Don M. Dickinson	January 16, 1888	
John Wanamaker	March 5, 1889	Benjamin Harrison
Wilson S. Bissell	March 6, 1893	Grover Cleveland
William L. Wilson	March 1, 1895	
James A. Gary	March 5, 1897	William McKinley
Charles Emory Smith	April 21, 1898	
<i>Charles Emory Smith</i>	...	Theodore Roosevelt
Henry C. Payne	January 15, 1902	
Robert J. Wynne	October 10, 1904	
George B. Cortelyou	March 7, 1905	
George von L. Meyer	March 5, 1907	
Frank H. Hitchcock	March 6, 1909	William H. Taft
Albert S. Burleson	March 5, 1913	Woodrow Wilson
Will H. Hays	March 4, 1921	Warren G. Harding
Hubert Work	March 4, 1922	
Harry S. New	March 5, 1923	
<i>Harry S. New</i>	...	Calvin Coolidge
Walter F. Brown	March 6, 1929	Herbert Hoover
James A. Farley	March 6, 1933	Franklin D. Roosevelt
Frank C. Walker	September 11, 1940	
<i>Frank C. Walker</i>	...	Harry S. Truman
Robert E. Hannegan	June 30, 1945	
Jesse M. Donaldson	December 16, 1947	
Arthur E. Summerfield	January 21, 1953	Dwight D. Eisenhower
J. Edward Day	January 21, 1961	John F. Kennedy
John A. Gronouski	September 30, 1963	
<i>John A. Gronouski</i>	...	Lyndon B. Johnson
Lawrence F. O'Brien	November 3, 1965	
W. Marvin Watson	April 26, 1968	
Winton M. Blount	January 22, 1969	Richard M. Nixon

#### Appointed by the Governors of the United States Postal Service

<i>Winton M. Blount</i>	July 1, 1971
E. T. Klassen	January 1, 1972
Benjamin F. Bailar	February 16, 1975
William F. Bolger	March 15, 1978
Paul N. Carlin	January 1, 1985
Albert V. Casey	January 7, 1986
Preston R. Tisch	August 16, 1986
Anthony M. Frank	March 1, 1988
Marvin T. Runyon	July 6, 1992
William J. Henderson	May 16, 1998
John E. Potter	June 1, 2001



# STATISTICS: PIECES & POST OFFICES



Year	Pieces of Mail Handled	Number of Post Offices	Total Operating Revenue	Total Operating Expenses
<b>1789</b>	...	<b>75</b>	<b>\$ 7,510</b>	<b>\$ 7,560</b>
<i>Income and expenses listed for 1789 are for three months only.</i>				
1790	...	75	37,935	32,140
1795	...	453	160,620	117,893
1800	...	903	280,804	213,994
1805	...	1,558	421,373	377,367
1810	...	2,300	551,684	495,969
1815	...	3,000	1,043,065	748,121
1820	...	4,500	1,111,927	1,160,926
1825	...	5,677	1,306,525	1,229,043
1830	...	8,450	1,850,583	1,932,708
1835	...	10,770	2,993,556	2,757,350
1840	...	13,468	4,543,522	4,718,236
1845	...	14,183	4,289,842	4,320,732
1850	...	18,417	5,499,985	5,212,953
1855	...	24,410	6,642,136	9,968,342
1860	...	28,498	8,518,067	14,874,601
1865	...	28,882	14,556,159	13,694,728
1870	...	28,492	18,879,537	23,998,838
1875	...	35,547	26,791,314	33,611,309
1880	...	42,989	33,315,479	36,542,804
1885	...	51,252	42,560,844	50,046,235
1890	4,005,408,000	62,401	60,882,098	66,259,548
1895	5,134,281,000	70,064	76,983,128	87,179,551
1900	7,129,990,000	76,688	102,353,579	107,740,268
1905	10,187,506,000	68,131	152,826,585	167,399,169
1910	14,850,103,000	59,580	224,128,658	229,977,225

Year	Pieces of Mail Handled	Number of Post Offices	Total Operating Revenue	Total Operating Expenses
1915	...	56,380	\$ 287,248,165	\$ 298,546,026
1920	...	52,641	437,150,212	454,322,609
1925	...	50,957	599,591,478	639,281,648
1930	27,887,823,000	49,063	705,484,098	803,667,219
1935	22,331,752,000	45,686	630,795,302	696,503,235
1940	27,749,467,000	44,024	766,948,627	807,629,180
1945	37,912,067,000	41,792	1,314,240,132	1,145,002,246
1950	45,063,737,000	41,464	1,677,486,967	2,222,949,000
1955	55,233,564,000	38,316	2,349,476,528	2,712,150,214
1960	63,674,604,000	35,238	3,276,588,433	3,873,952,908
1965	71,873,166,000	33,624	4,483,389,833	5,275,839,877
1970	84,881,833,000	32,002	6,472,737,791	7,982,551,936

***Effective July 1, 1971, the Post Office Department was transformed into the United States Postal Service, an independent establishment of the executive branch of the Government of the United States.***

1971	86,983,000,000	31,947	8,751,484,000	8,955,264,000
1975	89,265,979,000	30,754	11,548,104,000	12,574,205,000
1980	106,311,062,000	30,326	18,752,915,000	19,412,587,000
1985	140,097,956,000	29,557	28,705,691,000	29,207,201,000
1990	166,300,770,000	28,959	39,654,830,000	40,489,884,000
1995	180,733,700,000	28,392	54,293,500,000	50,730,200,000
2000	207,882,200,000	27,876	64,539,900,000	62,992,000,000
2005	211,742,700,000	27,385	69,907,400,000	68,283,000,000
2006	213,137,700,000	27,318	72,650,400,000	71,684,000,000

# SIGNIFICANT YEARS IN U.S. POSTAL HISTORY

- 
- 1639** Richard Fairbanks' tavern in Boston named repository for overseas mail
- 1775** Benjamin Franklin was appointed first Postmaster General under Continental Congress
- 1777** Continental Congress authorized appointment of an inspector of dead letters
- 1789** Samuel Osgood was appointed first Postmaster General under Constitution
- 1823** Navigable waters designated post roads by Congress
- 1829** Postmaster General joined Cabinet
- 1838** Railroads designated post routes by Congress
- 1845** Act of Congress created star routes
- 1847** U.S. postage stamps issued
- 1853** Stamped envelopes issued
- 1855** Registered Mail began  
Prepayment of postage required
- 1858** Street letter boxes installed
- 1860** Pony Express started
- 1862** Railway mail service began experimentally
- 1863** Free city delivery instituted  
Postage rates became uniform, regardless of distance  
Domestic mail divided into three classes
- 1864** Post Offices categorized by class  
Railway mail service inaugurated  
Postal money order system created
- 1869** International money orders offered
- 1872** Congress enacted Mail Fraud Statute  
Congress makes Post Office Department an executive department
- 1873** U.S. postal cards issued
- 1874** General Postal Union established (later Universal Postal Union)
- 1879** Domestic mail divided into four classes
- 1885** Special delivery began
- 1887** International Parcel Post instituted
- 1893** First commemorative stamps issued
- 1896** Rural free delivery began experimentally
- 1898** Private postcards authorized
- 1902** Rural free delivery became permanent service
- 1911** Postal Savings System started  
First carriage of mail by airplane sanctioned by the Post Office Department
- 1912** Village delivery offered
- 1913** Parcel Post began  
Insurance offered  
Collect on delivery (COD) offered
- 1914** Government-owned and -operated vehicle service instituted
- 1918** Scheduled airmail service began  
Non-profit second-class rates effective
- 1920** Metered postage authorized
- 1924** Scheduled transcontinental airmail service began
- 1927** International airmail began
- 1941** Highway Post Offices started
- 1942** V-mail inaugurated
- 1943** Postal zoning system began in 124 large cities
- 1948** Domestic and International Air Parcel Post inaugurated
- 1950** Residential deliveries reduced to once a day
- 1952** Nonprofit third-class rates effective
- 1953** Piggy-back mail service by trailers or railroad flatcars started
- 1955** Certified mail introduced
- 1957** Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee created
- 1959** Missile mail dispatched from submarine to mainland Florida
- 1960** Facsimile mail offered
- 1961** Mail Users Councils established
- 1963** ZIP Code and sectional center plan implemented
- 1964** Self-service Post Offices open  
Postmark simplified
- 1965** Optical scanner (ZIP Code reader) tested  
Mailers' Technical Advisory Committee established
- 1966** Postal Savings System terminated
- 1967** Presorting by ZIP Code became mandatory for second- and third-class mailers
- 1968** Priority Mail established as a subclass of First-Class Mail
- 1969** Patronage eliminated in postmaster and rural carrier appointments
- 1970** Postal Reorganization Act signed  
Express Mail began experimentally  
MAILGRAM instituted
- 1971** United States Postal Service began operations  
Postmaster General no longer in Cabinet  
Labor contract negotiated through collective bargaining, a first for the federal government  
National service standards established  
Letter cancelled on moon by Apollo 15 mission
- 1972** Stamps by mail instituted  
Passport applications accepted in Post Offices
- 1973** National service standards expanded
- 1974** Highway Post Offices terminated  
Self-adhesive stamps tested
- 1975** Post Office class categories eliminated
- 1976** Discount offered for presorted First-Class Mail



- 1977** Airmail abolished as a separate rate category  
Express Mail became permanent class of service  
Final run of railway post office on June 30
- 1978** Discount offered for presorted second-class mail  
Postage stamps and other philatelic items copyrighted
- 1979** Discount offered for presorted bulk third-class mail  
Postal Career Executive Service (PCES) established  
New size standards implemented
- 1980** INTELPOST (high-speed international electronic message service) began
- 1981** Controlled circulation classification discontinued  
Discount offered for First-Class Mail presorted to carrier routes
- 1982** Automation began with installation of optical character readers  
E-COM (Electronic Computer-Originated Mail) offered  
Last year Postal Service received public service subsidy
- 1983** ZIP+4 code instituted
- 1984** Integrated retail terminals automated postal windows
- 1985** E-COM terminated
- 1986** Field divisions created
- 1987** Stamps by Phone available  
Multiline optical character readers ordered
- 1988** Small parcel and bundle sorters deployed
- 1989** First Postal Store opened
- 1990** International business reply mail offered  
Easy Stamp allowed computer purchase of stamps  
Independent measurement of First-Class Mail service implemented
- 1991** Wide area barcode readers added  
Delivery point sequence processing began
- 1992** Remote barcoding system introduced  
Area and district offices created for customer service and mail processing  
Stamps sold through automatic teller machines  
Flats barcoded for automation  
Self-adhesive stamps introduced nationwide  
Postal Service began national environmental program
- 1993** New corporate logo introduced  
Postal Service began selling First Day Covers  
National Postal Museum opened in Washington, D.C.  
*Elvis* stamp issued (best-selling commemorative)
- 1994** Postal Service launched public Internet site
- 1996** Classification reform enacted  
Standard Mail category created  
Inspector General appointed  
Postal Service released automated postage software via Internet  
Self-adhesive coil stamps sold  
Flat sorters introduced
- 1997** Robotic containerization systems deployed  
Linerless self-adhesive coil stamps offered  
StampsOnline instituted
- 1998** U.S. semipostal stamp issued  
Confirm service tested
- 1999** Delivery Confirmation launched  
PC Postage introduced  
POS (Point of Service) ONE began  
AFSM 100 installed  
Lance Armstrong of the USPS Pro Cycling Team won his first Tour de France
- 2000** External First Class (EXFC) scores reached record high of 94 percent for the first time
- 2001** Business alliance with FedEx formed  
Mail irradiated due to anthrax threat  
Signature Confirmation launched  
Internet change of address instituted
- 2002** *Transformation Plan* released  
President's Commission on the United States Postal Service established  
Record levels of service performance posted for First-Class Mail and Priority Mail  
Confirm service became permanent
- 2003** Civil Service Retirement System funding reform legislation passed  
Repositional notes authorized on advertising mail  
First negotiated service agreement  
Parcel Return Services pilot program began
- 2004** Biohazard detection equipment deployed  
Pay for Performance implemented  
Customized Postage tested
- 2005** Standard Mail volume outpaces First-Class Mail volume  
*Strategic Transformation Plan, 2006–2010* issued
- 2006** Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act signed into law  
“Forever” stamp proposed  
Intelligent Mail devices with signature capture deployed  
New barcode instituted (later called Intelligent Mail barcode)

# DELIVERY IN CITIES: A VISUAL TIMELINE



## COLLECTION VEHICLES

Horse-drawn wagons originally were used to transport mail in large cities. Automobiles were first tested for mail collection in cities in 1899; they were able to cover the same distance as horse-drawn wagons in less than half the time. The first contract for mail collection by automobile was for service in Baltimore in 1906. In 1911, "motor wagons" were used in seven cities; by 1933 only two percent of postal vehicles in cities were horse-drawn.

The Post Office Department originally painted its motor vehicles red, white, and blue but changed the color to vermilion red beginning in February 1913, then switched to green, red, and black in October of that year. By 1915 the Department returned to a red, white, and blue color scheme for its vehicles.

Beginning in 1921, when most of the postal fleet consisted of trucks transferred from the War Department, postal vehicles were painted olive drab. The color scheme reverted to red, white, and blue in 1954, and then to white in 1979.

## Collection Vehicles



*Screen wagon, circa 1900*



*Columbia automobile, circa 1906*



*Screen truck, 1914*

## Delivery Vehicles



*Willys Jeep, 1953*



*Cushing mailster, 1958*

## City Letter Carriers



*1888*



*Circa 1894*



*1926*



*Circa 1940*

## DELIVERY VEHICLES

Although some enterprising letter carriers in Los Angeles used their own autos to deliver mail as early as 1912 – cutting their eight-hour workday down to four – the Post Office Department did not motorize city delivery routes until the 1950s, in response to unprecedented suburban growth. The Department had motorized more than half of its residential routes by 1969 with Jeeps, three-wheeled mailsters, and sit-stand trucks. Jeeps were in general use in the 1970s and 1980s. Long-life vehicles – longer lasting, lighter, and roomier than Jeeps – were introduced in 1987.

## CITY LETTER CARRIERS

City letter carriers were first required to wear a uniform in 1868; the uniform was blue-gray with black trim. Carriers' uniforms have changed over time to provide greater comfort, especially in hot weather. For a detailed history of the letter carrier uniform, go to [www.usps.com/postalhistory](http://www.usps.com/postalhistory).



Ford Model A truck,  
circa 1930



Chevrolet 3/4 ton truck,  
1958



2 ton truck, 1997



Sit-stand vehicle, 1961



Long-life vehicle (LLV), 1996



Circa 1953



1967



1973



2001



# HOW A LETTER TRAVELS



## COLLECTION

*After a customer has deposited a letter destined for a distant address in a collection box, a postal carrier removes all of the mail from the box and takes it to the Post Office where he or she works. That letter and mail collected by other carriers of that Post Office are placed on a truck and taken to a mail processing plant.*



## CULLING AND POSTMARKING

*Postal workers send the letter through a machine that rapidly separates mail by shape, separating letters from large envelopes and packages (the culling operation). The machine orients letters so that all addresses face the same way and are right side up. It then applies a postmark with the date and place where the letter was sorted and cancellation lines so the stamp cannot be reused, in order to protect postal revenue.*



## SCANNING AND LIFTING IMAGES

*Every letter gets identified by a code consisting of a series of florescent bars imprinted on the back. The address on the front of each letter is scanned by an optical character reader. Images of letters that could not be successfully read are transmitted to a remote encoding center for further processing. All letters are placed in trays and moved to the next piece of automated equipment for barcode application.*



## APPLYING A BARCODE AND SORTING

*Linked with the identification code, a barcode is sprayed on the front of the letter. Representing the specific delivery address, the barcode consists of tall and short bars used for all further sorting. The barcode sends a letter into a bin on the machine for a particular range of ZIP Codes; these identify the next processing plant.*

### TRANSPORTATION TO PROCESSING PLANT

*The letter is placed in a tray with other mail for the ZIP Code range it falls into, and this tray is taken to the airport to fly across the country. After the plane lands at its destination, postal workers take the tray containing the letter to the mail processing plant that serves the Post Office, station, or branch that will deliver the letter.*



### SORTING INTO DELIVERY ORDER

*At the plant, the letters in the tray are fed through a barcode sorter, which separates letters for a specific ZIP Code from other letters in that ZIP Code range. After this, the letter will receive its final sortation. A delivery barcode sorter sorts the letter to the particular carrier who will deliver it. The delivery barcode sorter also arranges that carrier's letters into the order of delivery.*



### TRANSPORTATION TO DELIVERY POST OFFICE

*Next, all the mail for this carrier is taken by truck to the Post Office, station, or branch in which the carrier works. The carrier loads trays of mail, including the letter, into a motor vehicle.*



### DELIVERY TO ADDRESSEE

*The carrier drives to the street where the letter is to be delivered, safely parks, then loads his or her satchel with the mail to be carried to each house or business. Within minutes of leaving the truck, the carrier delivers the letter to the addressee.*

*More than 700 million pieces of mail are sorted and delivered by the Postal Service each delivery day.*



# RESEARCH SOURCES

See also U.S. Postal Service, *Sources of Historical Information on Post Offices, Postal Employees, Mail Routes, and Mail Contractors*, Publication 119, listed in the bibliography and available online at [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com).

## AMERICAN PHILATELIC RESEARCH LIBRARY

100 Match Factory Place  
Bellefonte PA 16823-1367  
[www.stamplib.org](http://www.stamplib.org)

The American Philatelic Research Library, the library of the American Philatelic Society, is the largest public philatelic library in the United States. The library publishes a quarterly journal, *Philatelic Literature Review*.

## CORPORATE LIBRARY UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

475 L'Enfant Plaza SW  
Washington DC 20260-1540

The Postal Service's Corporate Library has a collection of historical material, including the *Annual Report of the Postmaster General* since 1789, *Postal Laws and Regulations* since 1794, the *United States Official Postal Guide* from 1874 to 1954, and the *Postal Bulletin* since 1880. (Exact titles vary.) While the library does not lend out its historical material, its collection is open to the general public during regular business hours. The library also has secondary sources on postal history, including many listed in the bibliography of this publication.

## HISTORIAN UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

475 L'Enfant Plaza SW  
Washington DC 20260-0012  
[www.usps.com/postalhistory](http://www.usps.com/postalhistory)

The historian maintains Postmaster Finder, the Postal Service's national historic record of postmasters by Post Office, online at [www.usps.com/postmasterfinder](http://www.usps.com/postmasterfinder). The historian's staff can provide guidance in researching specific aspects of postal history. Upon request, the historian's staff can provide the names and appointment

dates of postmasters who have served at particular Post Offices, Post Office establishment and discontinuance dates, and the dates of any Post Office name changes. Response time varies with the number of requests received.

## LIBRARY OF CONGRESS 101 Independence Avenue SE Washington DC 20540-0002 [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)

The Library's Geography and Map Division has early post route, railroad, and other historical maps. Some of these maps have been digitized and can be viewed or downloaded from their Web site. From [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov), search for "map collections."

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington DC 20408-0001  
[www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov)

The National Archives houses postal records prior to 1971. Some of the records most useful in researching local postal history have been reproduced on microfilm, including National Archives Microfilm Publication M1131, *Record of Appointment of Postmasters, October 1789–1832*; Publication M841, *Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832–September 30, 1971*; and Publication M1126, *Post Office Department Reports of Site Locations, 1837–1950*. For more information on these and other records, write to the National Archives or visit its Web site.

## NATIONAL PERSONNEL RECORDS CENTER

Civilian Records Facility  
111 Winnebago Street  
St. Louis MO 63118-4126

The Civilian Records Facility has personnel records for many postal employees whose service ended after 1910. Researchers should provide as much identifying information as possible about the former employee and his/her place and dates of employment. The Civilian Records Facility also houses



rural route cards, filed by Post Office, which provide details on rural routes and carriers.

#### **NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION**

*2 Massachusetts Avenue NE  
Washington DC 20002-9997  
[www.postalmuseum.si.edu](http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu)*

The National Postal Museum offers exhibits tracing the history of the postal system in the United States. It houses nearly six million postal-related items – mostly stamps, but also postal stationery, greeting cards, covers and letters, mailboxes, postal vehicles, handstamps, metering machines, patent models, uniforms, badges, and other objects related to postal history and philately. The museum’s library, with more than 40,000 volumes and manuscripts, is open to the public by appointment.

#### **RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE LIBRARY**

*117 East Main Street  
Boyce VA 22620-9639  
[www.railwaymailservicelibrary.org](http://www.railwaymailservicelibrary.org)*

The Railway Mail Service Library has artifacts, mail route schedules, schemes of mail distribution, and publications relating to the railway mail service/postal transportation service. The library is open by appointment but handles most requests by mail. ■

#### **PONY EXPRESS RESOURCES**

##### **Lexington Historical Museum**

*112 South 13th Street  
Lexington MO 64067-1402*

##### **Pony Express Museum**

*914 Penn Street  
St. Joseph, MO 64503-2544  
[www.ponyexpress.org](http://www.ponyexpress.org)*

##### **Patee House Museum**

*1202 Penn Street  
P.O. Box 1022  
St. Joseph MO 64502-1022*

##### **St. Joseph Museum Library**

*3406 Frederick Avenue  
P.O. Box 8096  
St. Joseph MO 64508-8096  
[www.stjosephmuseum.org](http://www.stjosephmuseum.org)*

##### **The Huntington Library**

*1151 Oxford Road  
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# NOTES

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- 26 *Ibid.*, 86.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 1892, 11–12.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 1902, 129.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 1897, 112–114.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 1901, 122. Locks on rural mailboxes have always been optional; initially carriers used master keys to open locked boxes. Since May 28, 1981, rural carriers have delivered mail into locked boxes through slots.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 1902, 101.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 1929, 26.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 1873, XXVI–XXVII.
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- 66 Ponzzi promised a 50 percent return on investments from profits made redeeming international reply coupons bought cheaply in war-torn Europe for their greater value in U.S. currency. He continued seeking investors even after he learned the coupons could not be redeemed for cash. Only his earliest investors profited, because they were paid from funds anted up by later investors.
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## Postal Insignia

### Inscriptions

Contrary to popular belief, the United States Postal Service has no official motto. However, a number of postal buildings contain inscriptions, the most familiar of which appear in New York City and Washington, D.C.

#### **General Post Office, New York City, 8th Avenue and 33rd Street**

*Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.*

From the works of Herodotus describing the expedition of the Greeks against the Persians under Cyrus, about 500 B.C. The Persians operated a system of mounted postal couriers who performed with great fidelity.

#### **Former Washington, D.C., Post Office, Massachusetts Avenue and North Capitol Street, now the site of the Smithsonian Institution's National Postal Museum**

*Messenger of Sympathy and Love*

*Servant of Parted Friends*

*Consoler of the Lonely*

*Bond of the Scattered Family*

*Enlarger of the Common Life*

*Carrier of News and Knowledge*

*Instrument of Trade and Industry*

*Promoter of Mutual Acquaintance*

*Of Peace and of Goodwill Among*

*Men and Nations*

From "The Letter," by Dr. Charles W. Eliot, former president of Harvard University, as revised by President Woodrow Wilson.

### Seals

Mercury, a post rider, and now the eagle have symbolized the U.S. postal system at various times.

In 1782, Postmaster General Ebenezer Hazard used the figure of Mercury, messenger of the gods, in his official seal. Mercury's feet, helmet, and staff had wings, and he was encircled by an inscription which read, in Latin, "Seal of the Office of

the General Messenger." By 1824 the inscription was changed to read "Seal of the Genl Post-Office Department," Mercury's right hand was raised, and he was standing on top of a globe. By 1829 "America" was written on the globe.

Amos Kendall, in his May 1, 1837, Order of the Postmaster General, moved away from this classical, divine imagery when he directed that the official seal of the Post Office Department portray "a Post Horse in speed, with Mail-bags and rider, encircled by the words 'Post Office Department, United States of America.'" The energy and effort of a human on a gallant horse served as the seal of the Post Office Department from 1837 through 1970.

When President Nixon signed the Postal Reorganization Act into law on August 12, 1970, the bald eagle became the center of the Postal Service seal. The eagle was poised for flight on a white field, above red and blue bars framing the words "U.S. Mail," which were in black. The ochre border featured the words "United States Postal Service" on three sides and nine five-pointed stars at the base. The stars had no special symbolism.

On October 12, 1993, Postmaster General Marvin Runyon unveiled a new corporate logo, an eagle's head in white leaning into the wind, on a blue background. The 1993 corporate logo became a registered trademark on September 12, 1995. It has not replaced the 1970 postal seal as the official seal of the United States Postal Service.

### Postal Seals



1829–1837



1837–1970



1970–Present

### Postal Corporate Signature 1993–Present





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