The
United
States
Postal
Service

An American History
1775–2002

THE STORY OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE IS A STORY OF TRANSFORMATION. Starting as an informal network that kept settlers and colonists in touch with each other and with their homelands, America's postal system has changed to meet the needs of the nation it serves.

Postal history is a work in progress. It is an ongoing saga of enormous breadth and depth, 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 225 years, the United States Postal Service has delivered on that promise, reaching further as the nation has grown and moving faster as technology has developed.

Our universal mail system has strengthened the bonds of friendship, family, and community. It has encouraged civic discourse and advanced the spread of information and educational opportunity. It has been a key element of our economy, both as the hub of a vital industry and as a trusted courier of the nation's – and the world's – business.
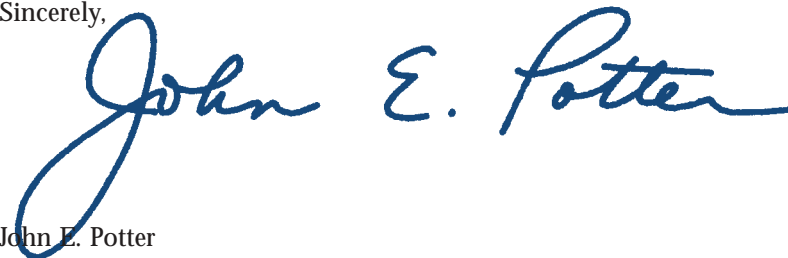
The story of the United States Postal Service is also the story of technology. Whether in transportation or in leading the development of new and better ways to process the nation's mail, the Postal Service always has sought out the latest and most effective ways to get the job done.

Above all, the story of the United States Postal Service is the story of men and women whose daily efforts have provided our nation with the finest and most efficient mail service in the world. Each and every day, they keep the mail moving, as they have for more than two centuries. Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor the winds of change, nor a nation challenged have kept them from their rounds.

Our transformation will continue. The communications world has changed radically since the Post Office Department became the United States Postal Service in 1971. Our ability to provide affordable, universal mail service for everyone in America depends on our transformation. If our history has taught us one thing, it is that the United States Postal Service is one of the most adaptable organizations in America.

Please enjoy this history of the United States Postal Service. It's a story that we will continue to write every day – together.

Sincerely,

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[a], 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.[1]

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 drops.

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.[2] 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 ... [3]

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

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 ye Post of ye Continent of Nth 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."[4] 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. America's present Postal Service descends in an unbroken line from the system Franklin planned and placed in operation. History rightfully accords him major credit for establishing the basis of the system that has well served the growing and changing needs of the American people.

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 exact-ing such postage on the papers passing 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. President George Washington criticized Hazard when he substituted riders on horse-back on some routes to improve service and reduce costs. Washington support-ed 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."[5]

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.[6]

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 1-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 2 years and made more specific provisions. The act 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 and regulations 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 the close of the Revolutionary War, when he was appointed Postmaster General. 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.[7] 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.[8]

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.[9] 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 surveying 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 postal pioneer, printer, writer, statesman, diplomat, civic leader, scientist, and inventor. 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.[10]

Abraham Lincoln, Postmaster

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 his or her mail from the Post Office, 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."[11]

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, D.C.

William Faulkner
Novelist, Postmaster, University, MS

Samuel L. Gravely
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

The 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 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. By the end of 1819, the Department served citizens in 22 states, including the newest states of Illinois (1818) and Alabama (1819). The number of 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.

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 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

The United States in 1857

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).

An Office of Instructions and Mail Depredations was established in 1830 as the investigative and inspection branch of the Post Office Department. The head of that office, Preston S. Loughborough, is considered the first Chief Postal Inspector. Postal Inspectors have safeguarded the sanctity of the U.S. Mail and protected postal employees, property, and revenue for two centuries, investigating crimes such as robberies, mail theft, and fraud.

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 generate 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 less
- 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 or less 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 10 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.[12]

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, managers of steamboats and other craft had to deliver the letters and packets they carried to local Postmasters within 3 hours of docking in daylight or 2 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 3 to 4 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 6 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.
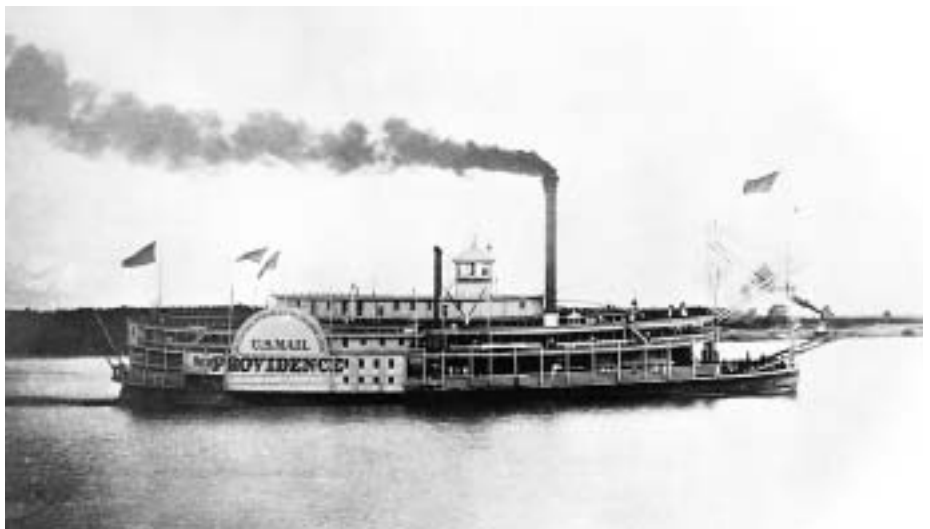
E. B. and N. Philip Norman Collection, Mss. 1084, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA

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 10 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. 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 to an end. By November 15, 1865,
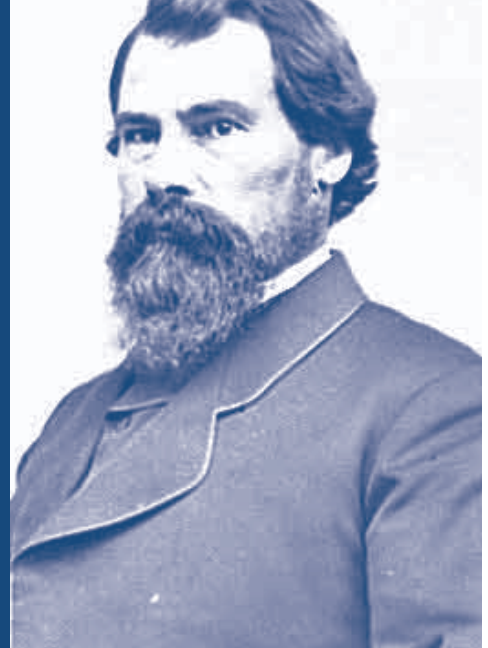
John Henninger Reagan

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

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 10 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.

New York Central Railroad

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."[13] 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 6 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."[14] 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, former Postmaster William A. Davis of St. Joseph, Missouri, 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, 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, special equipment that can 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.

In 2002, Amtrak continued to carry periodicals between many Post Offices. ■

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 lesser 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."[15] 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.

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.[16]

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."[17] The 1860 *Annual Report* is the last to discriminate between "coach" and "inferior" modes of service.[18]

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. On subcontracted routes, carriers also took the oath.

From 1802 to 1859, postal laws required carriers to be free white persons. Violators were fined. The typical 4-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 5 to 10 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 10 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 4 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.[19]

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.[20] 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 4-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.[21]

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 and 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.

The number of highway contract routes keeps growing. In 2002, there were approximately 17,300 highway contract routes, with about 37 percent providing delivery to customers along their 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 2-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."[22] 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 Boston, Baltimore, 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

New York City
Fifth Avenue, 1913

Library of Congress

satchel to be redelivered when the customer was home. By 1912, new customers were required to provide mail slots or receptacles, and Postmasters 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. Only half of city delivery addresses had mail slots or receptacles. Carriers continued to announce the arrival of mail when depositing it in door slots or mail receptacles.

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."[23] American suburbanization in the ensuing decades – which exploded in the 1950s – brought an increase in curbside mail boxes. 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 Congress in 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 2002, 233,639 letter carriers delivered mail in the nation's cities.

City Delivery Pioneer

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."[24]

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.
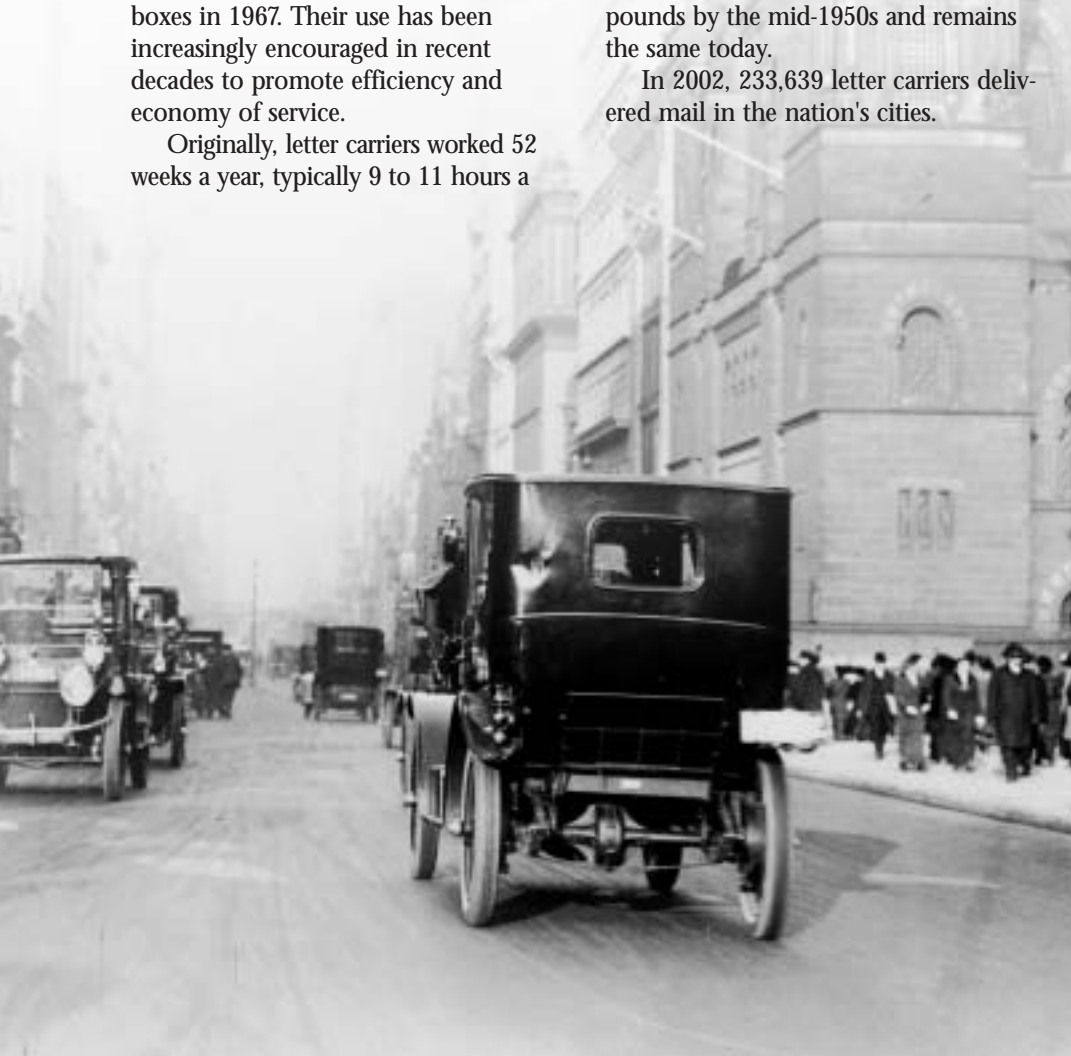
Rural Free Delivery (RFD)

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?"[25]

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.[26] 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.[27] 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 further 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.

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.

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.

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 6 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."[28]

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.[29]

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."[30]

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, nei-ther 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.[31] 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."[32]

By 1904, rural customers began asking carriers to deliver small packages from local merchants, and the Post Office Department asked Congress to allow the delivery of packages deposited at the local Post Office. Five years later, the Postmaster General again asked for authorization to experiment with the delivery of packages on rural routes. In 1911, 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.
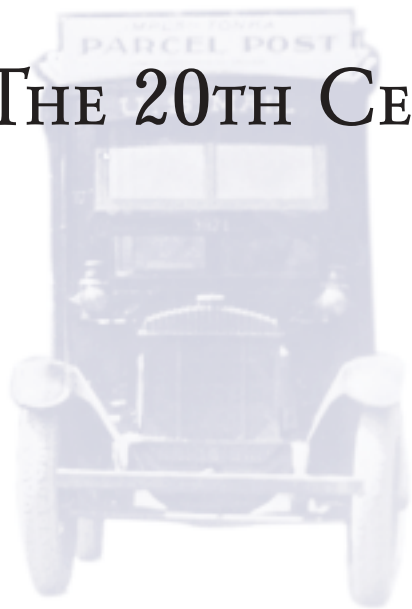
In 2002, more than 33 million homes and businesses were served by the Postal Service's rural letter carriers. Rural delivery continues to provide a vital link between urban and rural America. ■

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

THE 20TH CENTURY

At 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 4 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 6 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 to 70 pounds and 100 inches on August 1, 1931. 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 2 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 spurted 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. Savings bonds also 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 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 still on deposit to various states and jurisdictions, each sharing proportionately based on its own deposits. Some money was kept on deposit 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 1 year after enactment. Thus, no claims made after July 13, 1985, have been honored.

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, America 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-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

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 or unloaded, circa 1930.

and from Belmont Park, Long Island, both trips by way of Philadelphia.

During the first 3 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 or "by the seat of their pants." 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 better 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, Cheyenne, Rawlins, Rock Springs, Salt Lake City, Elko, and Reno, 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 flying.

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.[33]

New York to San Francisco
Best delivery times for mail

2002 Airplane
6–7 hours

1924 Transcontinental airmail
1 day, 10 hours, 20 minutes
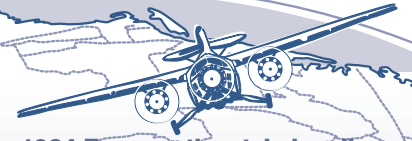
1921 Airplane and railroad
3 days, 11 hours
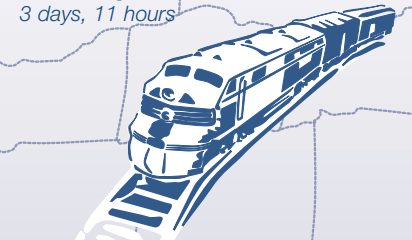
1906 Special through-train
3 days, 18 hours

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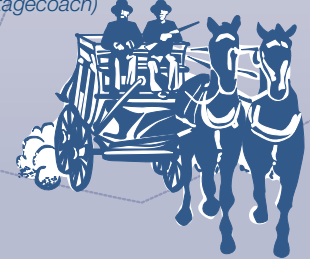
1849 Ship or steamboat via the Isthmus of Panama
1 month or longer

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.[34]

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 Haviland (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 m.p.h. 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."[35]

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.[36]

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.[37]

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 5 to 7 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 2 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 Post Offices. 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. ∎
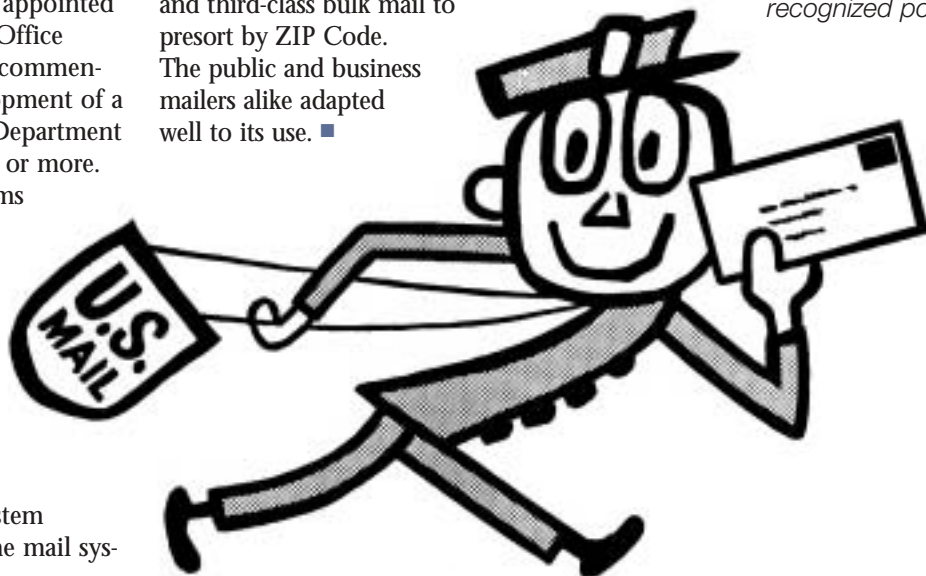

Postmaster General J. Edward Day
Day launched the ZIP Code on July 1, 1963.

Mr. ZIP
Mr. ZIP was unveiled in October 1962 during a Postmasters' convention and later became a widely recognized postal symbol.

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 10-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 5-cent stamp honoring Thomas

Jefferson was issued. A 2-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 4-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.*[38]

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 7/8 inches high by 1-11/32 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 8-cent Martha Washington stamp of 1902. The first to honor a Hispanic American was the 1-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 5-cent stamp honoring Pocahontas. In 1940, a 10-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 became the best-selling U.S. postage stamp to date.

Semipostals

Semipostals are stamps on which a charge beyond the cost of postage 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. The Breast Cancer Research semipostal stamp is nondenominated. Its price and its contribution to breast cancer research have fluctuated as postage rates have changed. On June 7, 2002, the Postal Service issued the Heroes of 2001 semipostal. Proceeds beyond the cost of postage are distributed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to the families of emergency workers killed or injured in connection with the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States.

Booklets

Stamp booklets were first issued April 16, 1900. They contained 12, 24, or 48 2-cent stamps. Parafinned paper was placed between sheets of stamps to keep them from sticking together. The books, which carried a 1-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 work hours. Machines were also planned for hotels, train stations, newsstands, department stores, and drug 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

Nondenominated stamps (stamps without a printed value) were first issued October 14, 1975, for two Christmas stamps. The Postal Service had requested a rate change from 10 to 13 cents and was unsure if or 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.

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. Because they were precanceled, they 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. They became so popular that demand could barely be met. Self-adhesive stamps are now issued in formats that include booklets, coils, sheets, and souvenir sheets.

Modern water-activated stamp adhesives use a mixture of dextrin and resin. The dextrin is derived principally from corn and, sometimes, potatoes. In recent years, the Postal Service has added more self-adhesive stamps and reduced the number of water-activated adhesive stamps.

Postal Reorganization

By 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.[39]

After Postmaster General 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.[40]

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

The Chicago Post Office

For a week in October 1966, the Chicago Post Office, 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.
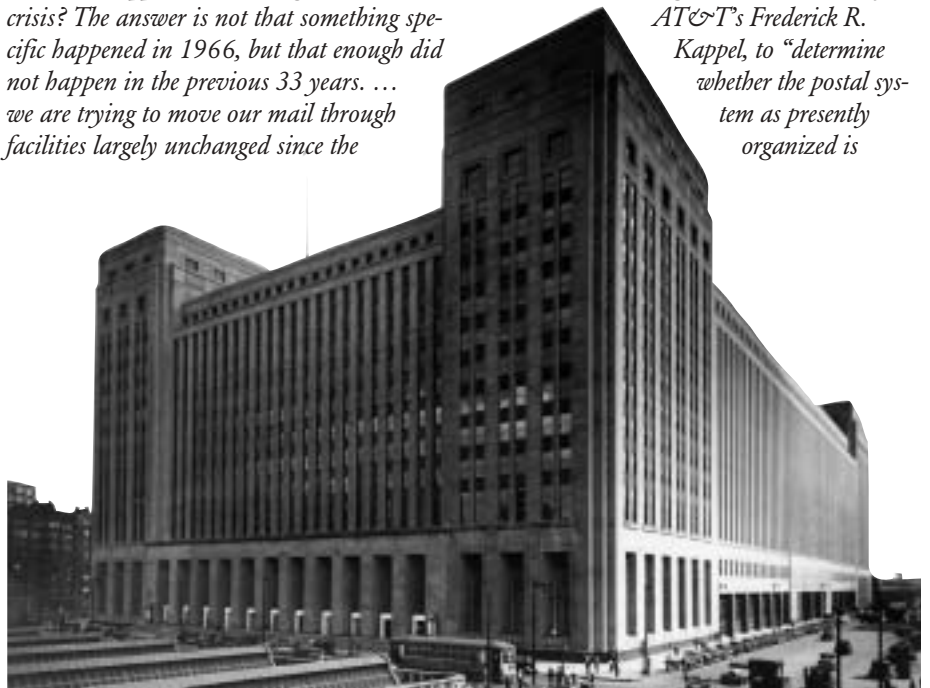
capable of meeting the demands of our growing economy and our expanding population." In June 1968, the Commission found that it was not.

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."* [41]

The Commission released its recommendations in June 1968. President 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 and 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 with the seven postal unions 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 6 percent, retroactive to December 27, 1969, for all federal employees. Postal workers would get an additional 8 percent increase if there was agreement on, and enactment of, legislation reorganizing the Post Office Department.

On April 16, 1970, 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. It 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 8 percent pay increase, the bill provided for negotiation of a new wage schedule permitting employees to reach the top of their pay grade in 8 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

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. 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

It 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

It 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

It 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 entirely on antiquated mailhandling methods, such as the pigeonhole method of letter sorting, a holdover 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. The Post Office Department then took major steps toward mechanization by initiating projects and awarding contracts for the development of a number of machines and technologies. These included letter sorters, facer-cancelers, automatic address readers, parcel

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 the weight of a letter and the distance it was going. 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.

Effective Date	Per 1/2 Ounce	
March 3, 1863	3	
March 3, 1883	2	

	Per Ounce	
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	

	First Ounce	Each Additional Ounce
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

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 10 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. In 1984, more than 1,000 Mark II and M-36 facer-cancelers were in operation. By 1992, these machines were outdated and replaced by advanced facer-canceler systems (AFCS) purchased from ElectroCom L.P. The AFCS processed more than 30,000 pieces of mail per hour, twice as fast as the M-36 facer-cancelers. AFCSs electronically identified and separated pre-barcoded mail, handwritten letters, and machine-imprinted pieces for faster processing through automation.

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. To reduce the number of mailpiece handlings, the Postal Service began to develop an expanded ZIP Code in 1978.

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

Clerks tested new letter-sorting equipment to help speed mail service.
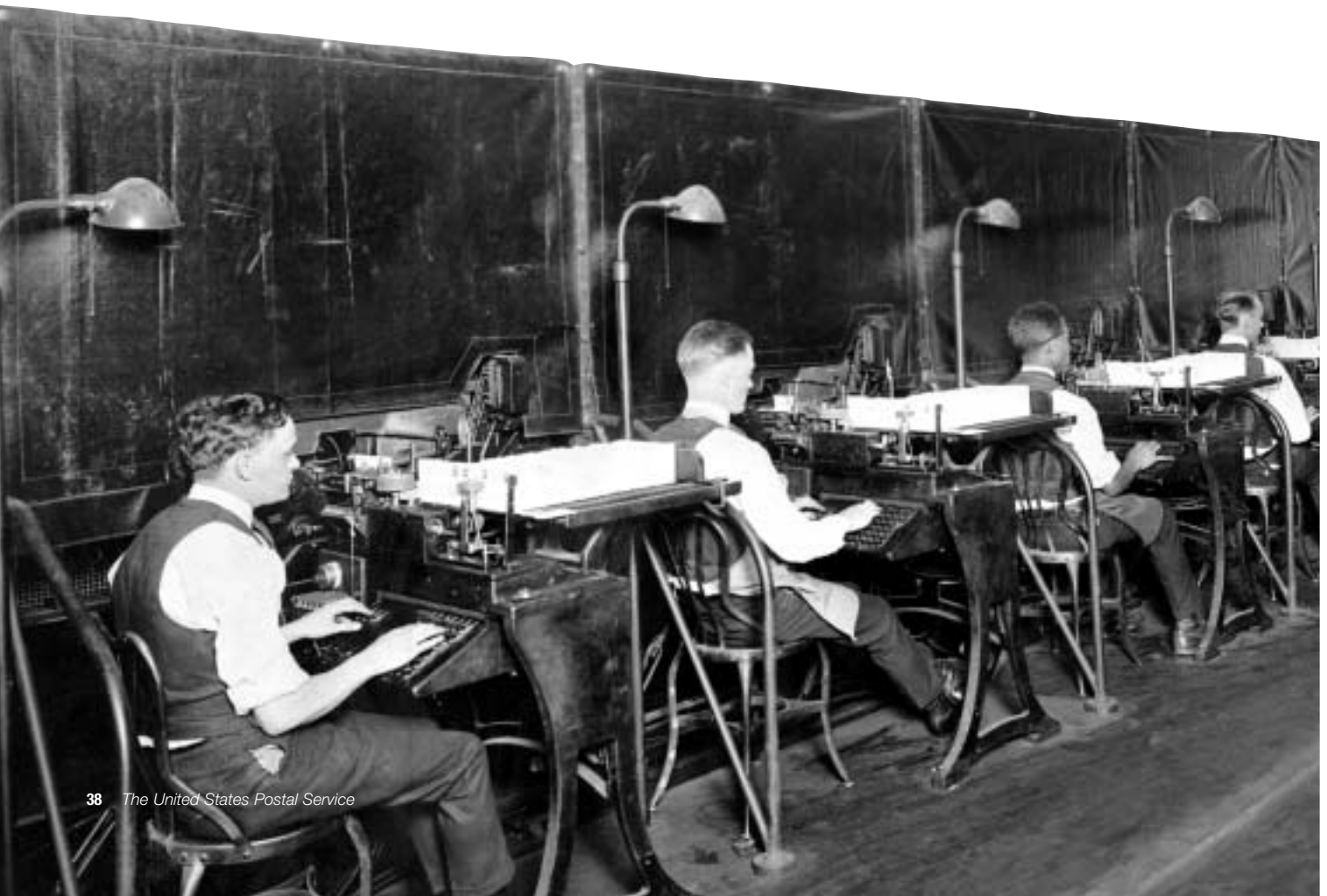
The new code required new equipment. In September 1982, the first computer-driven, single-line OCR was installed in Los Angeles. The equipment required a letter to be read only once at the originating office by an OCR, which printed a barcode on the envelope. At the destination Post Office, a less expensive 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 capable of sorting mail to small geographic segments, such as city blocks or a single building.

Following the introduction of the ZIP+4 code in 1983, the first delivery phase of the new 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 work hour – 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 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
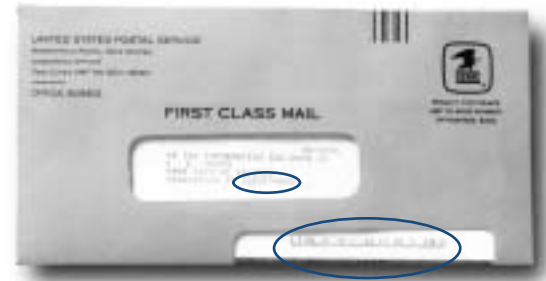
ZIP+4 Code and Barcode
The ZIP+4 code was introduced in 1983. The markings in the barcode correspond to the numbers in the ZIP+4 code.

City Letter Carriers, Mobile, Alabama, 1956
City carriers sorted mail into delivery sequence by hand until the late 20th century.

Modern Equipment

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

Middle: *An AFSM 100 sorts flats into tubs labeled with their destination.*

Bottom: *The input subsystem on a multiline optical character reader tags mail that needs further processing at a remote encoding center.*

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

A new generation of equipment has changed the way mail flows and has improved productivity. Advanced facer-canceler systems face, cancel and sort mail. Multiline optical character readers (MLOCRs) read the entire address on an envelope, spray a barcode on the envelope, then sort it at a speed of nine or more envelopes per second. Wide field of view cameras can read a barcode virtually anywhere on a letter.

The remote barcoding system (RBCS) processes images from letter mail that OCRs cannot read because of print quality or idiosyncratic handwriting and transfers the information to remote encoding centers. First tested in Tampa, Florida, in 1992, the centers now process approximately 6 billion address images a year, versus 24 billion at their peak. Improved computer technology can process more than 86 percent of all addresses.

The ZIP+4 code has reduced the number of times a piece of mail is handled and has shortened the time carriers spend casing their mail (placing it in order of delivery).

First tested in 1991, delivery point barcodes, which represent an 11-digit ZIP Code, have virtually eliminated the need for carriers to case mail because it arrives in trays in the order of delivery. The Postal Service has installed more than 8,900 delivery barcode sorters and carrier sequence barcode sorters nationwide to perform this task.

Letters constitute approximately 70 percent of United States mail, so the Postal Service has given a great deal of attention to letter sorting equipment. Recently, the Postal Service began automating systems to forward mail and process flats (larger pieces of mail that are sorted without being bent). The first fully automated flat sorting machine (AFSM 100) for processing periodicals and oversized envelopes was installed in Baltimore in 1999. The AFSM 100 has a video encoding feature to read addresses that the computer cannot decipher and to send an image of the piece to a data conversion operator at an RBCS site. The operator reads the address and keys in the information that allows the piece to be sorted properly. Deployment of the first AFSM 100s began in April 2000 and ended in April 2002 with 534 systems installed at 229 mail processing facilities nationwide. Each AFSM can process 300,000 flats a day − almost three times as many as the equipment it replaces.

In 1999, the Board of Governors approved funding to integrate robotics into its major processing plants. In 2000 and 2001, 100 robotic containerization systems were installed to automatically sort and load trays of mail to containers or pallets for transportation.

In 2002, the Postal Service initiated deployment of the wide field of view camera to replace the wide area barcode reader on delivery barcode sorters. The camera can read "electronic postage" and recognize barcodes on certified mail, which will enable value-added services such as tracking and tracing a piece of mail from induction to delivery.

Beyond the Processing Plant

The Postal Service has accelerated the installation of automated equipment in lobbies to better serve Post Office customers. In the 1990s, the backbone 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 have been attached to the IRTs to 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. Eventually 60,000 retail terminals will be installed in 20,000 facilities. By providing state-of-the-art computer technology and connecting retail units through phone lines or satellite connections, POS ONE pro-

vides managers with real-time information and provides customers with faster, more efficient service.

The Postal Service also has taken advantage of personal computers to help small business and home office users. In March 1998, the Postal Service authorized tests of PC Postage. These products, developed and distributed by USPS-approved vendors, produce Information Based Indicia, digitally-encoded, two-dimensional barcodes that postal customers can print directly onto envelopes or address labels. PC Postage gives customers access to postage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from the convenience of their home and office computers.

In March 1999, the Postal Service launched Delivery Confirmation to provide the date, time, and ZIP Code of delivery for Priority Mail and parcels. Customers call a toll-free number or visit the Postal Service's Web site for this information. More than 300,000 handheld scanners have been deployed to letter carriers to support Delivery Confirmation. 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 2002, the Postal Service officially launched Confirm service to provide 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. ■

Flat-sorting
Postal Service employees load flats into an Automated Flat Sorting Machine (AFSM) 100 for sorting.

The Postal Service Board of Governors

The Board of Governors was established by the Postal Reorganization Act of August 12, 1970. 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.

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 that they may not vote on rate or classification adjustments, adjustments to the budget of the Postal Rate Commission, selection and removal of the Inspector General, and election of the Chairman of the Board. While the entire Board approves requests to the independent Postal Rate 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 standards, capital investments, and facilities projects exceeding $10 million. It also approves officer compensation.

The first nine appointments were for staggered terms of 1 to 9 years. Subsequent appointments have been made for a full 9 years or, when vacancies have occurred, for the remainder of the unexpired terms. Each Governor's term expires on December 8 of a given year. Governors may continue to serve following expiration of their term until a successor is appointed, but not for more than 1 year.

Each January, the Governors elect a Chairman of the Board to organize and conduct their meetings. There are three standing committees: Audit and Finance, Capital Projects, and Strategic Planning. The Governors employ a full-time secretary, who serves as the primary staff assistant to the Board and 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 monthly, usually on the first Monday and Tuesday of the month. Meeting locations are generally in Washington, D.C., but may be scheduled in some other city where the members can see a Postal Service or large mailer's operation firsthand. 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)]. Each Governor receives $300 per day for not more than 42 days of meetings each year and travel expenses, in addition to an annual salary of $30,000.

The Capitol

Governors of the Postal Service

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

Crocker Nevin served two separate terms.

Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee

Stamps recommended by the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee and approved by the Postmaster General for issuance in 2003, commemorated, clockwise from the top: the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.; author Zora Neale Hurston; lighthouses of the Southeast; American reptiles and amphibians; Ohio statehood; and labor activist Cesar E. Chavez.

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 Metzl, 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 currently include the following:

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 10 years after the individual's death. The only exception to the 10-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. The members share a respect for philately and are experts on history, science and technology, art, education, sports, and 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:

The Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee
Stamp Development
United States Postal Service
Room 5670
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20260-2437

COMPETITION AND CHANGE

Despite improved technology, the Postal Service faced mounting financial and competitive pressures in the late 20th century. Following a decade of prosperity in the 1980s that saw a dramatic increase in mail volume, the nation entered a period of slower economic growth in the 1990s. Bankruptcies, consolidations, and a general restructuring of the marketplace 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.

Competition grew for every postal product. The rise of electronic communications and other technologies offered alternatives for conveying statements, payments, and personal messages. Private companies continued to dominate the market for the urgent delivery of mail and packages.

To become more competitive, the Postal Service began to change and restructure. In 1990, the Postal Service awarded two contracts to private firms to independently measure First-Class Mail service and customer satisfaction. The Postal Service also began to work more closely with customers to identify ways to better meet their needs and expanded customer conveniences such as stamps on consignment. With the help of business mailers, the Postal Service continued support for rates reflecting customer work-sharing features, many tied to automation, to give customers more flexibility. At the same time, the Postal Service began implementing Consumer Advisory Councils, groups of citizens who volunteered to work with local postal management on postal issues of interest to the community. The name was changed to Customer Advisory Councils and, as of December 2002, 212 were in place.

In the summer of 1992, following the appointment of Marvin Runyon as Postmaster General, the Postal Service created a new organizational structure that replaced 5 regions and 73 field divisions with 10 areas and 85 districts.

In 1993, the Postal Service awarded contracts for two additional external measurement systems, one to survey satisfaction levels of business mailers, the other to track service performance of third-class mail. Service performance results now are measured through the Transit Time Measurement System, which includes External First-Class (EXFC) and Priority End to End (PETE) measurements, among others.

In 1996, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) was created by law. Reporting directly to the postal Governors, the OIG conducts independent financial audits, evaluations, and investigations of postal programs and operations to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse [5 U.S.C. app.3 § 8(g)].

TRANSFORMATION PLAN

The law that created today's Postal Service, the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970, placed the organization on a businesslike footing by making postal operations self-sufficient. The new business environment led to unparalleled levels of service and efficiency. In 2002, the Postal Service improved service to record levels while aggressively holding the line on expenses. Volume declined, yet total factor productivity rose. By the end of 2002, the Postal Service delivered 22 billion more pieces of mail to 12 million more addresses than it did in 1995 with the same number of employees. However, technological and commercial trends have been reshaping national and international services for collecting, transporting, and delivering all types of postal products. At stake is the right

of every American to send and receive mail.

The Postal Service, with the assistance of stakeholders, created a comprehensive Transformation Plan. It was submitted to Congress and the American people in April 2002 and contains views on the steps that must be taken now and the long-term options that appear feasible, as a decisive response to the challenges of a new century.

The Transformation Plan is a blueprint for the future of the Postal Service. It contains specific strategies that will foster growth by increasing the value of postal products and services to customers, improve operational efficiency, and enhance a performance-based culture.

The plan identified actions the Postal Service can take – and is taking – within the context of existing law; moderate, short-term legislative change; and long-term structural change to ensure a sound postal system for years to come.

Funding Civil Service Retirement

In November 2002, the Office of Management and Budget announced that the Postal Service had almost fully funded its obligation to the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS).

Separate audits conducted by the Office of Personnel Management and General Accounting Office found that, without a change in law, the Postal Service would overpay its CSRS obligation by more than $78 million, costs that would have come from postage and fees paid by postal customers.

A change to the law would not affect the benefits of current or future postal retirees covered by CSRS but would provide the Postal Service with the means to reduce debt and stabilize postage rates until at least 2006.

Subsequent bipartisan legislation to allow the Postal Service to reduce its payments to CSRS would later be signed into law.

President's Commission on the Postal Service

The last presidential commission met in 1967. By 1970, Congress subsidized 25 percent of postal costs and the Post Office Department was in the red. In August 1970, the Postal Reorganization Act was passed, creating the U.S. Postal Service under the basic economic assumption that continuing growth in mail volume and revenue would support continued infrastructure growth. Today, that regulatory model is no longer valid. In a March 2001 letter to the President, the Postal Service Governors said that significant statutory reform would be necessary for the organization to continue to provide consistent and satisfactory levels of universal service to the American people.

We are at a point in our history when it's time for the next phase in postal evolution. And this time we need help.
– *Postmaster General John E. Potter*

President George W. Bush issued an executive order on December 11, 2002, establishing the President's Commission on the Postal Service.

The task of the nine-member bipartisan Commission was to identify the operational, structural, and financial

The President's Commission on the United States Postal Service

The nine-member bipartisan commission was tasked with identifying the challenges facing the Postal Service, examining possible solutions, and charting a course to a more robust financial foundation.

challenges facing the Postal Service; examine potential solutions; and chart a course to help build a healthier financial foundation. Postmaster General Potter described the work of the Commission as consistent with – and complementary to – the Postal Service's Transformation Plan.

The Commission's agenda included gathering input from postal stakeholders, including congressional leaders, union officials, Postal Service employees, customers, and other representatives of the nation's $900 billion mailing industry. The Commission's charter called for the preparation of a report to the President in 2003 that would articulate a proposed vision for the future of the Postal Service and recommend legislative and administrative reforms needed to ensure its future viability.

Commission members

Harry Pearce and James Johnson were named as Commission co-chairs. Pearce is chairman of the board of Hughes Electronics. Johnson is vice chairman of Perseus, L.L.C.

Other members included Richard Levin, president, Yale University; Dionel Avilés, president, Aviles Engineering; Don Cogman, chairman, CC Investments; Carolyn Gallagher, former CEO, Texwood Furniture; Norman Seabrook, president, New York City Correction Officers' Benevolent Association; Robert Walker, CEO, Wexler Group; and Joseph Wright, CEO, PanAmSat.

Industry support for the Commission

Mailing industry groups have praised the creation of the Commission. Among many endorsing the commission were the Direct Marketing Association (DMA), Alliance of Nonprofit Mailers, Magazine Publishers of America, Mailers Council, and Newspaper Association of America.

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 commer-

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 Morris, Jr., and Joseph 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.

Thomas Morris, Jr.

Joseph Curseen, Jr.

cial 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. No one knew how he contracted the disease, 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. 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 from inhalation anthrax.

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.[42]

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.

The Postal Service continues to work to strengthen the security of the mail. ▪

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., City 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.

Postal Seals

Seal
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, the messenger of the gods and the god of commerce and travel in Roman mythology. The seal was modified in 1808, to include a serpent-entwined staff and in 1824, to raise Mercury's right hand.

The official seal used by the Post Office Department from 1837 to 1970 pictured, as directed by Postmaster General Amos Kendall, "a Post Horse in speed, with Mail-bags and rider, encircled by the words 'Post Office Department, United States of America.'"[43]

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.

1782–1837   **1837–1970**   **1970–Present**

Postal Corporate Signature
1993–Present

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE ®

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	
Joseph Habersham	…	John Adams
Joseph Habersham	…	Thomas Jefferson
Gideon Granger	November 28, 1801	
Gideon Granger	…	James Madison
Return J. Meigs, Jr.	March 17, 1814	
Return J. Meigs, Jr.	…	James Monroe
John McLean	June 26, 1823	
John McLean	…	John Quincy Adams
William T. Barry	March 9, 1829	Andrew Jackson
Amos Kendall	May 1, 1835	
Amos Kendall	…	Martin Van Buren
John M. Niles	May 19, 1840	
Francis Granger	March 6, 1841	William Henry Harrison
Francis Granger	…	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 Filmore
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	
William Dennison	…	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
Thomas L. James	…	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	
Charles Emory Smith	…	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	
Harry S. New	…	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	
Frank C. Walker	…	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	
John A. Gronouski	…	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

Winton M. Blount	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
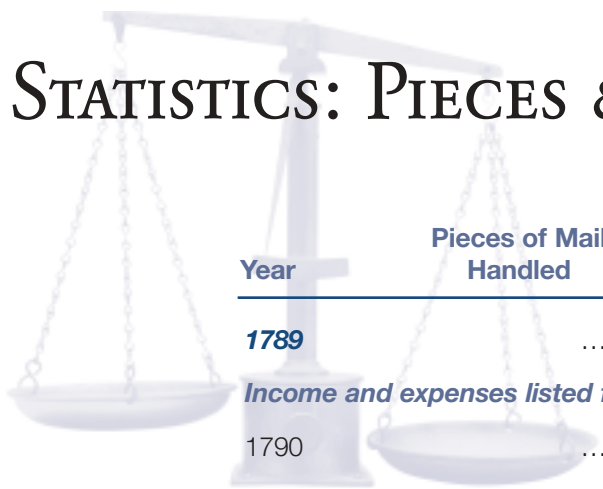
Year	Pieces of Mail Handled	Number of Post Offices	Total Operating Revenue	Total Operating Expenses
1789	…	**75**	**$ 7,510**	**$ 7,560**

Income and expenses listed for 1789 are for 3 months only.

Year	Pieces of Mail Handled	Number of Post Offices	Total Operating Revenue	Total Operating Expenses
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.

Year	Pieces of Mail Handled	Number of Post Offices	Total Operating Revenue	Total Operating Expenses
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	64,540,000,000	62,992,000,000
2002	202,821,900,000	27,791	66,463,000,000	65,234,000,000

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

1830 Office of Instructions and Mail Depredations established, later became Office of the Chief Postal Inspector

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

1873 U.S. postal cards issued

1874 General Postal Union established (later Universal Postal Union)

1879 Domestic mail divided into four classes

1880 Congress established title of Chief Post Office Inspector

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

1916 Postal inspectors solve last known stagecoach robbery

1918 Scheduled airmail service began

Non-profit second-class rates effective

1920 Metered postage authorized

1924 Scheduled transcontinental airmail service began

1925 Special handling offered

1927 International airmail began

1935 Trans-Pacific airmail began

1939 Trans-Atlantic airmail began

Autogiro service started experimentally

1941 Highway Post Offices started

1942 V-mail inaugurated

1943 Postal zoning system began in 124 large Post Offices

1948 Domestic and International Air Parcel Post inaugurated

1950 Residential deliveries reduced to once a day

1952 Non-profit 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

1963 ZIP Code and sectional center plan implemented

1964 Self-service Post Offices open Postmark simplified

1965 Optical scanner (ZIP Code reader) tested

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	1986	Field divisions created		Linerless self-adhesive coil stamps offered

1972   Stamps by mail instituted

Passport applications accepted in Post Offices

1973   National service standards expanded

1974   Highway Post Offices terminated

Satellite transmission of MAILGRAMS began

Self-adhesive stamps introduced

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 new class of service

Final run of Railroad 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

Delivery point sequence processing began

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

Wide area barcode sorters added

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 automated sorting

1993   New corporate logo introduced

Postal Service sold First Day Covers

National Postal Museum opened in Washington, D.C.

1996   Classification reform enacted

Standard Mail category created

Inspector General appointed by Governors

Postal Service released automated postage software via Internet

Self-adhesive coil stamps sold

1997   Postal Service launched public Internet site

Robotic containerization systems deployed

Flat-sorters modified to handle newspapers and magazines

Linerless self-adhesive coil stamps offered

StampsOnline instituted

1998   U.S. semipostal stamp issued

1999   Delivery Confirmation launched

PC Postage introduced

Resolve Employment Disputes Reach Equitable Solutions Swiftly (REDRESS) implemented

POS (Point of Service) ONE began

AFSM 100 (Automated flat sorting machine) installed

Lance Armstrong of the USPS Pro Cycling Team won his first Tour de France

2000   Report of the USPS Commission on a Safe and Secure Workplace (Califano Report) issued

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

2002   Segway Human Transporter used experimentally

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

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.

American Philatelic Research Library
100 Oakwood Avenue
Post Office Box 8000
State College, PA 16803-8000
www.stamplibrary.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 materials, its collection is open to the general public during regular business hours. The library also has many 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
The Historian maintains Postmaster Finder, the Postal Service's national historic record of Postmasters by Post Office, online at *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
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*, search for "map collections."

National Archives and Records Administration
700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20408-0001
www.nara.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.si.edu/postal
The National Postal Museum offers exhibits tracing the history of the postal system in the United States. It houses more than 13 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

12 East Rosemont Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22301-2325
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

Patee House Museum
1202 Penn Street
Post Office Box 1022
St. Joseph, MO 64502-1022

St. Joseph Museum Library
1100 Charles Street
St. Joseph, MO 64501-2875
www.stjosephmuseum.org

The Huntington Library
1151 Oxford Road
San Marino, CA 91108-1218
www.huntington.org

The Wells Fargo Bank History Museum
420 Montgomery Street
San Francisco, CA 94104-1205
www.wellsfargo.com, then search for "museum"

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NOTES

1 *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), 2:208.

2 The year of Neale's grant is given according to the current, Gregorian calendar. Neale's grant was dated February 17, 1691, under the old, Julian calendar.

3 William Goddard's petition to the Continental Congress, September 29, 1774, in the collection of the National Postal Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

4 *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), 2:57.

5 The George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741–1799: Series 2 Letterbooks, George Washington to John Jay, July 18, 1788; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html] (February 25, 2003).

6 Ebenezer Hazard to Jeremy Belknap, September 27, 1789, in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society,* Vol. III, Fifth Series (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1877), 192.

7 Ebenezer Hazard to the Continental Congress, November 14, 1776, in *American Archives,* Series 5, Volume 3, 681 (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972) (originally by Peter Force, Washington, 1853).

8 Ebenezer Hazard to Rev. John Witherspoon, November 14, 1776, in Ibid., 681–682.

9 Benjamin Franklin was born on January 17, 1706, according to the current, Gregorian calendar. He was born on January 6, 1705, under the old, Julian calendar.

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18 Ibid., 1860, 2.

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22 *Annual Report of the Postmaster General,* 1862, 32.

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27 Ibid., 1892, 11–12.

28 Ibid., 1902, 129.

29 Ibid., 1897, 112–114.

30 Ibid., 1901, 122.

31 Ibid., 1902, 101.

32 Ibid., 1929, 26.

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UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

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