

**Reemergence of Postal System.** It was during the Renaissance period that the need for correspondence was again needed to facilitate the growth of international trade/commerce. Merchants, bankers, cooperatives and guilds set up their own messenger services with the most extensive and dependable postal services being found in the Italian city states.

This was followed by a slow expansion as connections between commercial centers of these Italian city states like Florence, Genoa, and Siena moved into several commercial cities in northern France, the Low Countries and Germany. These correspondences allowed for the scheduling and coordination of merchant fairs that attracted merchants from all parts of Europe.

The best-known and most efficient of these postal service operated by the Counts of Thurn and Taxis. A family, whose Italian name was Tassis, operated the first courier services in the city-states from about 1290. Franz von Taxis served as postmaster to the Holy Roman emperor Maximilian I from 1489 and to Philip I of Spain from 1504. Von Taxis secured the right to carry both government and private mail throughout the empire. The Thurn and Taxis monopoly operated a network of postal routes in Spain, Germany, Austria, Italy, Hungary, and the Low Countries from 1512 to 1867 (fall of the Habsburgs). 20,000 messengers were employed to deliver mail and newspapers.

In France, the postal service grew to where it provided a major international link for commerce and news. There was also a postal link between the Bagdad, Venice and Constantinople and later including the Russian and Polish commercial centers

**National Postal Systems.** The first national postal system set up was ordered by Louis XI of France who set up the Royal Postal Service in 1477. This was followed in 1516, in England with Henry VIII appointing a post master to maintain the regular postal service along the roads leading out of London. Neither of these systems was intended to serve the public.

The use of private mail was not legalized in France until 1627 and in Britain until 1635. Private mail delivery operations served the government for a while, but in 1672, France declared all postal services to be a state of monopoly. Private services were eventually depleted of business.

As trade flourished and grew in the 1700's the economic situation in the United Kingdom spurred a demand for better mail services. By 1765 new road system had been completed in Britain and Ireland and by 1784 stage coaches began carrying mail between the cities and towns. The route between London and Bath was the first with express service being provided by mounted post boys along the main routes. During the next 150 years, this "open" postal system proved an easy target for robbers and inspired many fictional characters/stories for literature and some very interesting scandals for the emerging newspapers and tabloids.

Between 1775 and 1815, Britain was in almost a constant state of war with either the United States or France or both. To help support the war effort, postage rates were increased remained so for the next 40 years until the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815. It was at this juncture, that an Englishman, Rowland Hill, formulated a series of proposals on reforming the postal system that gained notice between 1835 and 1837. His pamphlet, "**Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability,**" is now regarded as a milestone in the development of the modern postal system.

He proposed and proved that carrying charges were insignificant factors in the total cost of handling mail. He also proved that complex series of rates based on distance were needless. Sir Rowland Hill noted that the collection of payment for mail delivery could be avoided.

He made a solution to postal problems by imposing a uniform postage rate regardless the distance. He also suggested the use of prepayment through adhesive stamps and will be sold at post offices. He proposed that payments will be based on weight and suggested a penny for each half-ounce.

On the ascendance of Victoria to the thrown in 1837 - the United Kingdom entered a new era of handing both public and private post.



**Sir Rowland Hill KCB, FRS (03 December 1795 – 27 August 1879)** was an English teacher, inventor and social reformer. He campaigned for a comprehensive reform of the postal system, based on the concept of penny postage and his solution of prepayment, facilitating the safe, speedy and cheap transfer of letters. Hill later served as a government postal official, and he is usually credited with originating the basic concepts of the modern postal service, including the invention of the postage stamp



Queen Victoria 1837

