

US POSTAL TIMELINE (to 1920)

1639- Richard Fairbanks' tavern in Boston named repository for overseas mail
1775- Benjamin Franklin, first Postmaster General under Continental Congress
1789- US POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT ESTABLISHED
1789- Samuel Osgood, first Postmaster General under Constitution
1823- Navigable waters designated post roads by Congress
1825- Dead letter office
1829- Postmaster General joins Cabinet
1830- Office of Instructions and Mail Depredations established, later Office of the Chief Postal Inspector
1838- Railroads designated post routes by Congress
1845- Star routes
1847- Postage stamps
1852- Stamped envelopes
1855- Registered Mail
1855- Compulsory prepayment of postage
1858- Street letter boxes
1860- Pony Express
1862- Railway mail service, experimental
1863- Free city delivery
1863- Uniform postage rates, regardless of distance
1863- Domestic mail divided into three classes
1864- Post offices categorized by classes
1864- Railroad post offices
1864- Domestic money orders
1869- Foreign or international money orders
1872- Congress enacts Mail Fraud Statute
1873- Penny postal card
1874- General Postal Union (later Universal Postal Union)
1879- Domestic mail divided into four classes
1880- Congress establishes title of Chief Post Office Inspector
1885- Special Delivery
1887- International parcel post
1893- First commemorative stamps
1896- Rural free delivery, experimental
1898- Private postcards authorized
1902- Rural free delivery, permanent
1911- Postal savings system
1911- Carriage of mail by airplane sanctioned between Garden City and Mineola, NY; Earle H. Ovington, first U. S. mail pilot
1912- Village delivery
1913- Parcel post
1913- Insurance
1913- Collect-on-delivery
1914- Government-owned and -operated vehicle service
1916- Postal Inspectors solve last known stagecoach robbery
1918- Airmail
1920- Metered postage
1920- First transcontinental airmail

An article in the 08 April 1922 Boston Globe describes the first Post Office:

"The first post office in Boston—and probably in the first in America—was established in the home of Richard Fairbanks, on or very near the site of the [old] Boston Globe building in 1639. On November 6 of that year, the Court voted:

'For preventing the miscarriage of letters; & it is ordered, that notice bee given that Richard Fairbanks his house in Boston is the place appointed for all letters which are brought from beyond the seas, or are to be sent thither, are to bee brought into; and hee is to take care that they bee delivered or sent according to their directions; and hee is allowed for every such letter 1 penny, & must answere all miscarriages through his owne neglect in this kind; provided, that no man shalbee compelled to bring his letters thither, except hee please.'

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Richard Fairbanks was an influential person in Boston, England, and had immigrated to Boston, New England with Reverend John Cotton in 1634. His house also served as a public tavern, and was licensed to sell "stronge water" by the government. The property had a large garden that extended east to Devonshire Street, then known as Black Jack Alley.



Map of the Old Post Road in Connecticut



Post Road Mile Stone
7 miles to Boston – 30 to
Springfield

First Pony Express. Local authorities soon began operated post routes within the colonies when, in 1673, Governor Francis Lovelace of New York set up a monthly post between New York and Boston — the first long distance "pony express" service in America was established. The service was short-lived, but the memory lives on in that the path of the riders became known as the Old Post Road, and parts of it were incorporated into U.S. Route 1/I-95 more than 200 years later.

Ten years later, in 1683, William Penn established Pennsylvania's first post office in Philadelphia. In the southern colonies, private messengers, usually slaves connected the huge plantations. An interesting practice of the southern service was the fine of a hogs-head of tobacco (a barrel 48 inches long and 30 inches in diameter at the head capable of holding about 1000 pounds of tobacco) for failing to relay mail to the next plantation or market center.

Sources:

<http://www.celebrateboston.com/first/post-office.htm>

<http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blmailus1.htm>

To be continued

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