

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

The Colonial Period – Part 3 (continued)

Benjamin Franklin was postmaster of Philadelphia (1737-1753) and Joint Postmaster General of the Colonies (Crown Post) from 1753 to 1774 when he was dismissed by the British Crown for exposing the letters of Massachusetts Governor Thomas Hutchinson. It was this association with Franklin while he was serving as postmaster in Philadelphia played an important role when Franklin introduced many of the reforms and improvements needed in the colonial postal system in use then.

Goddard continued the this process of innovation and reform for a postal system that grew between the various colonies prior to the advent of the American Revolution. Goddard's improvements to postal system stem from of a series of conflicts involving his newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Chronicle*, and the Crown Post, the formal name of the postal administration and mail delivery system that was in use in the British colonies prior to the advent of American independence, under the authority of the British crown.

As the idea of revolution began to take root throughout the colonies the British government began manipulating the Crown Post by blocking the mail and communications between the various colonies in an effort to prevent them from spreading seditious ideas and organizing with each other. The Crown also resorted to the delaying or destroying of newspapers and opening and reading private mail, a form of postal censorship that the British crown considered perfectly legal – except when Franklin did it.

Since Goddard's *Pennsylvania Chronicle* was sympathetic to the revolutionary ideas being put forth by that traitorous devil Benjamin Franklin (among others), this publication was routinely criticized and under the constant scrutiny of the Crown Post authorities.

So adamant was the Crown towards Goddard and his paper that the local Crown postmaster intercepted and refused to deliver mail and other newspapers from other cities and towns to Goddard thus depriving him of a critical source of information. The Crown Post also imposed a heavy tax on any newspaper delivery. In 1773 the *Pennsylvania Chronicle* was finally forced to go out of business when the Crown post refused to deliver the newspaper in the mail.

Goddard in defiance, circumvented these efforts by designing an alternative, and distinctly American, postal system and challenged the Crown post, and the principles of free speech that it was supposedly founded on, by creating the **Constitutional Post** which among other things involved establishing a postal route in and between Philadelphia and New York. Goddard's Constitutional Post came into use in May 1775, right after the start of American Revolution at Cambridge, MA.

The Continental Congress on 26 July 1775 authorized a Goddard's post office plan, but to be run by the government. They then passed over Goddard by naming Benjamin Franklin as the first American Postmaster General. He was greatly disappointed when Franklin was given the position of Postmaster but did accept the post as Riding Surveyor for the new organization and expanded the service from Portsmouth NH to Savannah GA.

The Crown Post went out of business on 25 December 1775 unable to compete with this new upstart.

Franklin served as postmaster for one year (he became involved in other duties) at which time the Postmaster's position was given to Franklin's son-in-law, Richard Bache (Postmaster from 1776-1782). Godard was deeply disappointment for being passed over again and resigned soon after going back to publishing.

The third and last colonial Postmaster General was Ebenezer Hazard (1744–1817) who prior to his appointment in 1782, was a businessman and politician, deputy Postmaster of New York City. He served in this position until 1789. During his tenure as Postmaster General under the new Articles of Confederation, he reorganized the Post Office and introduced movement of mail and packages by stagecoaches on main routes, displacing the old horse and rider system.

*The Constitutional Convention signed the **United States Constitution** on 17 September 1787 in Philadelphia. The Constitutional Convention convened in response to dissatisfaction with the Articles of Confederation and the need for a strong centralized government. After four months of secret debate and many compromises, the proposed Constitution was submitted to the states for approval. The Constitution was ratified and the new Federal government came into existence in 1789.*

To be continued

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