**Postal Service**

**A letter written in a childish scrawl came to the post office addressed to “God”. A postal employee, not knowing exactly what to do with the letter, opened it and read: “Dear God, my name is Jimmy. I am six years old. My father is dead and my mother is having a hard time raising me and my sister. Would you please send us $500?” The postal employee was touched. He showed the letter to his fellow workers and all decided to kick in a few dollars each and send it to the family. They were able to raise $300. A couple of weeks later they received a second letter. The boy thanked God, but ended with this request: “Next time would you please deliver the money directly to our home? If you send it through the post office they deduct $200.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**On September 8, 1920, U.S. Air Mail service began from NYC to San Francisco. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**During the first coast-to-coast airmail flight in 1921, Jack Knight flew the North Platte, Nebraska to Omaha to Chicago legs at night through snow and fog with navigational aid from farmers and postal workers who lit bonfires along the route. Previously, airmail letters were flown only during daylight hours and were offloaded on railcars for nighttime transit. *(American Profile magazine)***

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**As late as 1890, nearly 75 percent of Americans had to fetch their mail from a post office. A community had to have at least 10,000 people to be eligible for home delivery, and most people lived in towns or on farms. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 173)**

**On June 14, 1920, the United States Postal Service announced that babies could not be sent by parcel post. Parcel post was an ingenious innovation, allowing the post office to deliver larger parcels throughout America. Some Americans, though, took advantage of the service and actually delivered babies under 11 pounds to relatives via the mail. One Ohio couple mailed their eight-month-old son James to a grandparent, paying only 15 cents (and insuring him for $50). In 1914, a four-year-old girl was mailed 73 miles away. After all, parcel postage was cheaper than a train ticket. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

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**Booming business, however, enabled the postal system to avert a crisis for decades. in 1900, 7 million pieces of mail were delivered; by 1960, the agency was moving 63 billion letters and parcels. The department often ran a profit, and it sowed those profits into new mail-delivery technologies. *(Politico, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 22, 2017)***

**In 1879, thirty-seven cats were used to deliver mail to villages in Belgium. It wasn't long before they discovered that cats were not disciplined enough to do this. *(Charlotte Lowe, in Fact-O-Pedia, p. 42)***

**The U.S. Postal Service delivered only 64 percent of first-class mail on time around Christmas. Performance was much worse for other mail, with only one-tenth of marketing materials and periodicals arriving on time in some parts of the country. *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, January 29, 2021)***

**In 1870, you could buy a mail-order church and get it delivered by train, boat and wagon. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**A single-sheet letter from New York City to Buffalo cost 25 cents, a prohibitive price in a time when a good day’s wage for a laborer was rarely more than one dollar. Add a couple of enclosures to the missive and the cost jumped to 75 cents. In 1845 a congressman calculated that a letter sent from the East or South to the Northwest cost the equivalent of a bushel of wheat – or a day’s labor. (John Ross, in Smithsonian magazine)**

**Costa Rica has the highest standard of living in Central America, but most of the country has no street names or addresses. As a result, it takes an average of nine days for the postal service to deliver a letter, and 20 percent of all mail never arrives at its destination. *(Los Angeles Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, November 16, 2007)***

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**On February 2, 1931, mail was delivered by rocket for the first time. Sent from one Austrian village to another about three miles away, the rocket landed with a small parachute. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**Until 1912, mail was delivered seven days a week. As the postal service grew in popularity and usage in the 1800s, local religious leaders noticed a decline in Sunday morning church attendance due to local post offices doubling as gathering places. These leaders appealed to the government to intervene and close post offices on Sundays. *(Harry Bright & Jakob Anser, in Are You Kidding Me?, p. 145)***

**U.S. postal folk didn’t start delivering mail to the countryside until 32 years after they delivered in the cities. *(L. M. Boyd)***

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**Mamie Adams always went to a branch post office in her town because the postal employees there were friendly. She went there to buy stamps just before Christmas one year and the lines were particularly long. Someone pointed out that there was no need to wait in line because there was a stamp machine in the lobby. “I know,” said Mamie, “but the machine won’t ask me about my arthritis.” (Bits & Pieces)**

**Mail reached many city dwellers at home by the mid-1860s and expanded to farmhouses and remote houses in the 1880s. Henry Ford built his first car in 1901. Four years later, the Post Office was experimenting with mail delivery by automobile. *(Politico, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 22, 2017)***

**On July 26, 1775, the Continental Congress appointed Benjamin Franklin the first postmaster general. The British had appointed him to a similar position many years earlier. He accepted the job for a yearly salary of $1,000 and served for 15 months. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**In a sense, innovation was baked into the Post Office from the beginning. America's national postal service precedes the founding: It was born in July, 1775, a year before the Declaration of Independence was ratified. During the American Revolution, the U.S. postal system's duty was to deliver communications between Congress and the military commanders fighting the British. And for the first postmaster general, Congress appointed an inveterate tinkerer, Benjamin Franklin. He rigged up a system of contractors to haul mail by horse and on foot. It worked. *(Politico, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 22, 2017)***

**In 1833 Abraham Lincoln made fifty dollars a year as village postmaster of New Salem, Illinois. (John & Claire Whitcomb, in Oh Say Can You See , p. 147)**

**On April 17, 1985, the U.S. Postal Service unveiled its new 22-cent LOVE stamp designed by artist Corita Kent. The stamp went on to become one of the most popular stamps ever offered. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**On June 8, 1959, the first official U.S. missile mail was launched from the submarine USS Barbero, stationed 100 miles off the Atlantic coast. A 36-foot winged missile carried 3,000 letters. The post arrived 22 minutes later at the Mayport Auxiliary Naval Station near Jacksonville, Florida. The letters (which had four-cent stamps on them) included a missive to President Eisenhower. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**In 1897, a year when mail was still largely delivered by horse and wagon, construction began on an innovative-scheme beneath the streets of Philadelphia. Using an intricate network of compressors and metal pipes, the new system could shoot a capsule holding a few hundred letters across a city in several minutes, far faster than a postman could get it there. The investor in this new technology wasn't some kind of delivery startup, the FedEx or UPS of its day. It was the U.S. Post Office. *(Politico, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 22, 2017)***

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**This new-look postal system had been conceived by a Nixon-appointed corps of brain trusters and businessmen with the aim of turning the agency into a public corporation with minimal political interference. Instead, the plan infused the new agency's DNA with some of the same clashing, political interests that were hobbling the agency. Big mailers benefit from subsidies written into the law. Postal workers must be unionized and are entitled to bargain collectively. Folks in far-flung Alaska and Hawaii are entitled to the same postage rates and services as everyone else -- no matter the cost -- and Congress continues to insist that mail be delivered six days per week to appease certain big mailers, postal unions, and some rural residents. *(Politico, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 22, 2017)***

**On August 12, 1970, American President Richard Nixon signed the bill that created an independent United States Postal Service. A year prior, 150,000 postal workers had staged an eight-day strike to protest stagnant wages and grueling workloads. Nixon's response was a massive reorganizing that made the Postal Service an autonomous agency. Workers were also afforded the right to negotiate wages, benefits, and working conditions. The change was the biggest in the agency's 181-year history. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

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**Overshadowing all the invention, however, was the creeping sclerosis of the Post Office as an institution. As a monopoly, it was insulated from competitive pressures, allowing inefficiency to creep in its operations and management. Worse, political interests had sunk deep, with Congress setting postage rates too low and too frequently trying to dictate the location of post offices and mail-sorting facilities. *(Politico, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 22, 2017)***

**The Pneumatic Transit Co, of New Jersey was the winning bidder, and a public-private partnership was born. It agreed to pay to build the system, then to charge the Post Office for its use. The first tube could shoot a capsule of mail nearly three-fifths of a mile through a 6.5-inch tube from the city's main post office to the East Chester Street Post Office. Soon, similar systems were installed in Boston, St. Louis, and Chicago. New York City's system, the largest, could move 6 million pieces per day at 30 miles per hour from the Bronx to Manhattan and Brooklyn. Collectively, the Post Office's pneumatic tube system ran more than 120 miles, with 130 postal "rocketeers" feeding mail into it every 15 seconds. *(Politico, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 22, 2017)***

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**Cost to mail a letter using the Pony Express: $5 per half ounce. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Extraordinary Book of Facts, p. 108)***

**The Pony Express was an expedited mail service crossing the North American continent from April 1860 to October 1861, using horseback riders to courier deliveries. Mail traveled from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast in about ten days. *(Charlotte Lowe, in Fact-O-Pedia, p. 195)***

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**On December 24, 1901, the American postmaster general issued an order allowing private companies to use the words Post Card rather than Private Mailing Card on their postcards. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**In 1790, the nation had 75 post offices; by 1900, there were more than 76,000. *(Politico, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 22, 2017)***

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**Comparison of first-class postage rates of the U.S.A., and other countries (up to 1 ounce): Japan - 80 cents; Germany - 64 cents; Denmark - 61 cents; Switzerland - 60 cents; Austria - 54 cents; France - 52 cents; Norway - 51 cents; Belgium - 47 cents; Italy - 46 cents; Netherlands - 46 cents; Sweden - 42 cents; Great Britain - 39 cents; Australia - 35 cents; United States - 32 cents; and Canada - 31 cents. (Dear Abby, in Rocky Mountain News , January 24, 1995)  
  
Ed: “Hey, Gord.” Postal carrier: “Ed, if you're going to give me a hard time about the postal rate increase, I'm not in the mood.” Ed: “Not at all. In fact -- I think it's a bargain one can mail a letter anywhere in the U.S. for 37 cents. Plus, America still has one of the lowest postal rates in the industrialized world.” Postal carrier: “Bless you.” *(Steve Breen, in Grand Avenue comic strip)***

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**How far does the average rural mail carrier drive on the job in a day? 55 1/2 miles. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Actor Rock Hudson, cartoon tycoon Walt Disney, and crooner Bing Crosby worked for the post office. Hudson as a letter carrier, Disney as an assistant letter carrier, and Crosby as a postal clerk. (Armchair Reader: Vitally Useless Information, p. 113)**

**Today is October 9, World Post Day. This holiday honors the establishment of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in 1874, an event that set off a global communications revolution, allowing letters to be delivered all over the world. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

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