



## The USPS Postal Service:

### July 26, 1775: US Postal System Established



On July 26, 1775, the U.S. postal system was established by the Second Continental Congress, with Benjamin Franklin (pictured) as its first postmaster general.

Franklin (1706-1790) put in place the foundation for many aspects of today's mail system. During early colonial times in the 1600s, few American colonists needed to send mail to each other; it was more likely that their correspondence was with letter writers in Britain. Mail deliveries from across the Atlantic were sporadic and could take many months to arrive. There were no post offices in the colonies, so mail was typically left at inns and taverns.

In 1753, Benjamin Franklin, who had been postmaster of Philadelphia, became one of two joint postmasters general for the colonies. He made numerous improvements to the mail system, including setting up new, more efficient colonial routes and cutting delivery time in half between Philadelphia and New York by having the weekly mail wagon travel both day and night via relay teams. Franklin also debuted the first rate chart, which standardized delivery costs based on distance and weight.

In 1774, the British fired Franklin from his postmaster job because of his revolutionary activities. However, the following year, he was appointed postmaster general of the United Colonies by the Continental Congress. Franklin held the job until late in 1776, when he was sent to France as a diplomat. He left a vastly improved mail system, with routes from Florida to Maine and regular service between the colonies and Britain.

President George Washington appointed Samuel Osgood, a former Massachusetts congressman, as the first postmaster general of the American nation under the new U.S. constitution in 1789. At the time, there were approximately 75 post offices in the country.

Today, the United States has over 32,000 post offices and the postal service delivers 167 billion pieces of mail each year to over 153 million addresses in the United States. The postal service is the nation's largest civilian employer, with over 489,000 career workers. More than 40 % of the world's mail volume is handled by USPS.

July 2014

[www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com)