



POST ROADS

A Boston tavern served as the first post office in the colonies in 1639. All mail from overseas was delivered there. In New York in 1673, the governor set up monthly mail delivery between New York and Boston. The road between the two cities was soon called a "post road." This is the term used for a road that carries official government mail.

The British Crown established the first colonial-wide postal service in 1692. Thomas Neale bought the rights to deliver mail from the British government. In 1707 the British bought back the rights to deliver the mail. The British Crown controlled mail delivery from 1707 until the time of the American Revolution.

Between 1707 and 1776 several men served as postmaster general in the colonies. Benjamin Franklin is the most well known postmaster from this time. He became postmaster of Philadelphia in 1737. He became deputy postmaster general of the colonies in 1753. He served until the start of the Revolution in 1776.

Benjamin Franklin made many important changes to the postal system. He created newer, shorter routes for mail delivery between cities. He placed milestones along all post roads. He also ordered his post riders to travel the post roads at night so that mail delivery would be faster. Benjamin Franklin's changes made mail delivery faster and more efficient.

After the American Revolution, the Articles of Confederation only gave Congress the power to create post offices. Adoption of the Constitution changed that. The Post Office Act of 1792 gave Congress the power to establish both post offices and post roads. In 1800 the US had 20,000 miles of post roads. In 1812 the US had over 39,000 miles of post roads that connected 2600 post offices. In 1838 Congress designated all existing and future roads as post roads.