



TOPICAL TIDBITS

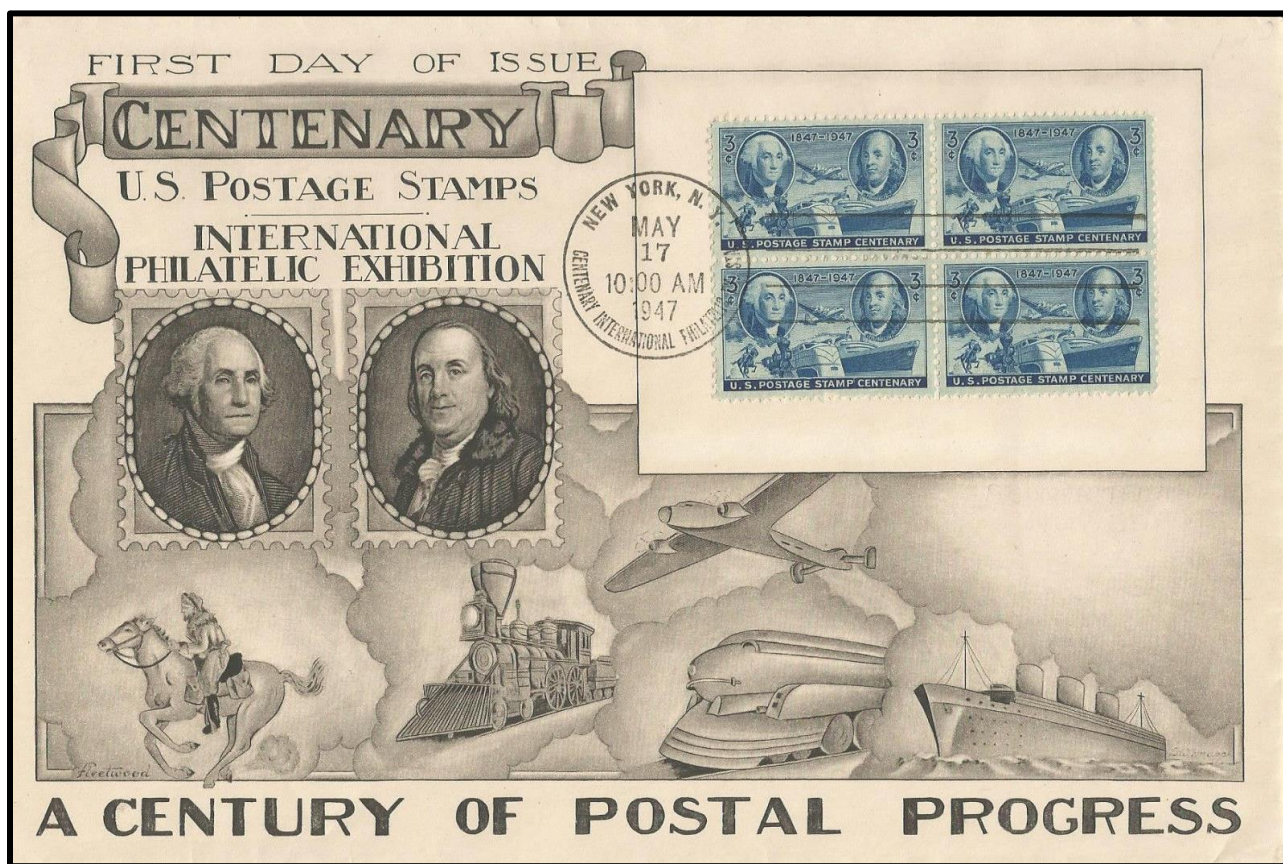
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Moving the Mail

Have you ever wondered how the mail was sent from one town to another? In the past, it could take weeks or even months for a letter to reach its destination. Today, most letters only take a day or two. The Smithsonian National Postal Museum has a fun game on its website about moving the mail. You get to decide whether to send it by stagecoach, train, or ship. Here's the link:

<http://postalmuseum.si.edu/RSOM/RSoOM.html>. Have fun playing and learning about how the mail moves.



This oversized Fleetwood cover has a block of four stamps that were issued in 1947 to mark the centenary (100 years) of the first U.S. postage stamps. Some of the ways the mail has been delivered over time are pictured on the cover.

Moving the Mail

Draw a line to match each stamp to the correct date on the left.

1799 – Stagecoaches used to deliver the mail.

Early 1800s – Steamboats began moving the mail along rivers and canals.

1838– Trains started carrying the mail.

1860– The Pony Express began delivering mail from Missouri to California.

1911– First experimental airmail delivery. Regular air postal service began in 1918.



By balloon



By dogsled



By zeppelin

Over the years, mail has been delivered in some unusual ways.

The ZIP Code

During World War II, when thousands of postal employees left to serve with the military, the Post Office Department began a zoning address system in some of the largest cities, in order to move the mail faster. Under this system, delivery zones were identified by one or two numbers between the city and state (for example “Birmingham 7, Alabama”) so that mail could be easily separated by employees. Twenty years later, the department began an even farther reaching plan, the **Z**oning **I**mprovement **P**lan (ZIP) Code.

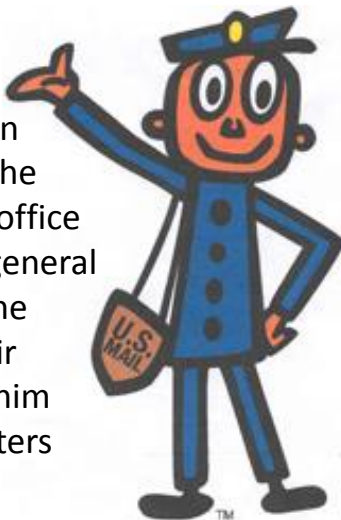
Social correspondence of the 19th century had gradually given way to business mail. By 1963, 80% of all mail in the U.S. was business mail. The development of the computer brought centralization of accounts and sent a growing mass of utility bills and payments, bank deposits and receipts, advertising, magazines, credit card transactions, mortgage bills and payments, and Social Security checks through the mail. Yet while mail volume grew, the methods and much of the equipment used by post offices remained the same as in Benjamin Franklin’s day. A better way to sort mail was needed.

After many tests and studies, the postmaster announced that the ZIP Code would be launched July 1, 1963. Transportation centers were set up around 85 of the country’s larger cities to deflect mail from congested city streets. This idea was expanded to 552 sectional centers, each serving between 40 and 150 surrounding post offices. Next, codes were assigned to the centers and the postal addresses they served. By July 1963, a five-digit code had been assigned to every address throughout the country. The first digit designated a broad geographical area of the United States, ranging from zero for the Northeast to nine for the far West. This number was followed by two digits that more closely pinpointed population concentrations and those sectional centers accessible to common transportation networks. The final two digits designated small post offices or postal zones in larger zoned cities.

The ZIP Code began as scheduled. At first, use of the new code was not mandatory for anyone, but in 1967, the Department required mailers of second- and third-class bulk mail to presort by ZIP Code. The public and business mailers alike adapted well to its use. *(From USPS.com)*

Mr. ZIP

Mr. ZIP, known informally as “Zippy,” is a cartoon character used in the 1960s by the post office to encourage the general public to include the ZIP code on all their mailings. Look for him attached to old letters and stamps.



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