Sources of Historical Information

on Post Offices, Postal Employees, Mail Routes, and Mail Contractors

Publication 119
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The Postal Service shall have as its basic function the obligation to provide postal services to bind the Nation together through the personal, educational, literary, and business correspondence of the people. It shall provide prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas and shall render postal services to all communities.

—Title 39, United States Code, Section 101

The history of the United States Postal Service® is one of innovation and adaptation—from the first use of railroads to carry the mail in the 1830s, to online stamp sales in 1997, to new developments in the 21st century. Within the history of the Postal Service lies the history of the nation as a whole, as mail routes and Post Offices™ spread westward, keeping the growing nation connected.

Historians, postmasters, genealogists, and others who want to learn more about the history of their communities will discover valuable sources of historical information on Post Offices, postal employees, mail routes, and mail contractors in this publication. Sources are listed chronologically and then discussed by subject. Following that, they are described in alphabetical order. The final pages list addresses for these resources and provide further references.
Sources Chronologically

1700s– Newspapers, city directories
1773–1774 Hugh Finlay’s journal
1775–1778 Benjamin Franklin’s ledger
1782–1799 Ledgers of the General Post Office
1789–1818 Record of First Returns Received from Postmasters
1789–1952 Letters Sent by the Postmaster General
1789– Annual Report of the Postmaster General
1789– Congressional Serial Set
1789– Federal Statutes
1790–1930 Census records
1803– Lists, tables, and directories of Post Offices
1814–1960 Contract route registers
1814–1971 Record of Appointment of Postmasters
1816–1911 Official Register of the United States
1830s–1940s Post route maps
1835–1953 Orders of the Postmaster General (“Journals”)
1837–1950 Site location reports of Post Offices
1861–1865 Confederate Post Office Department records
1863–ca. 1900 Record Cards of Letter Carriers Separated from the Postal Service
1880– Postal Bulletin (Daily Bulletin prior to 1919)
1890s–1986 Record cards of postmaster appointments
1896–1970s Rural route cards
1901–1934 Rural free delivery records
ca. 1901– Pay and personnel records
1986– Postmaster Finder
Sources by Subject
Post Offices and Employees

For information on Post Offices and postmasters before 1814, major sources include:

- Record of First Returns Received from Postmasters.
- Letters Sent by the Postmaster General.
- Hugh Finlay’s journal, a survey of post roads.
- Benjamin Franklin’s ledger.
- Newspapers.

For information after 1814, the primary source is the Record of Appointment of Postmasters.

For concise listings of Post Offices by state and alphabetically, sources include the lists, tables, and directories of Post Offices, as well as the United States Official Postal Guide and Official Register of the United States.

For postmaster salary information and lists of other Post Office employees, refer to the Official Register of the United States.

Pay and personnel records may be available for employees whose service ended after about 1901.

Site location reports of Post Offices provide geographic and other information on specific Post Offices.

Mail Routes and Contractors

For information on mail contracts and contractors before 1814, sources include:

- Letters Sent by the Postmaster General.
- Hugh Finlay’s journal.
- Newspapers.

Contract route registers are available beginning in 1814.
Names and salaries of contractors are listed in the biennial *Official Register of the United States*.

Rural route cards provide rural route establishment dates, as well as the names, dates of service, and salaries of rural carriers.

The historian of the United States Postal Service has compiled tables showing first rural routes established, by Post Office, through 1904, from issues of the *Postal Bulletin* and the 1901 *Annual Report*. These tables are available at [http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/first-rural-routes.htm](http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/first-rural-routes.htm).

Names and salaries of rural and city carriers are listed in the biennial *Official Register of the United States*.

Dates of service of city carriers whose service ended before about 1900 are available in *Record Cards of Letter Carriers Separated from the Postal Service, 1863-1899*.

Pay and personnel records may be available for rural and city carriers whose service ended after about 1901.

**Sources Alphabetically**

**Annual Report of the Postmaster General, 1789–**

Early editions of the *Annual Report* (title varies slightly) offer only brief summaries of a few pages each on mail service nationwide, but by the 1840s the report begins to include statistical tables on everything from missent mail (by state) to international money orders issued (by state). Although the subjects of the statistical tables vary year by year, the following remain fairly constant (year of first appearance given in parentheses):

- The lengths of mail routes and modes of conveyance, by state (1836).
- Railroad and steamboat contracts (1843 and 1845, respectively).
The number of Post Offices by state (1847).

Receipts/expenses by state (1851).

Statistics on city delivery (1873).

Establishment dates of rural free delivery, by Post Office (1897–1901).

More detailed financial statistics are often available on the largest U.S. Post Offices—for example, receipts, expenses, and money allowed for clerk hire and rent, light, and fuel. The 1970 Annual Report has a statistical overview of the history of the Post Office Department from 1789 to 1970, such as number of Post Offices and revenue. In 1971, the report reverts to a limited format, with statistics available for the most part on only a national basis.


**Benjamin Franklin’s Ledger, 1775–1778**

Benjamin Franklin was appointed the first Postmaster General™ under the Continental Congress on July 26, 1775. He and his successor, Richard Bache, kept a ledger of the quarterly accounts of the General Post Office from 1775 to 1778. This ledger includes sums paid to and received from Post Offices—serving as a useful list of early Post Offices—with postmaster names sometimes noted.

A facsimile of the original ledger was reproduced in 1976 as *The Ledger of Doctor Benjamin Franklin, Postmaster General, 1776*, by the Historic Documents Publishing Company in Vineland, New Jersey. A PDF copy is available for free at www.archive.org. This book
may also be available from your local library through inter-library loan.

**Census Records, 1790–1930**

Federal census records are available for every 10 years from 1790 through 1930, though most of the 1890 records were destroyed by fire. Records before 1850 contain little information beyond the name of the head of household. Beginning in 1850, the records list every household member by name, along with their age, occupation, and other information. The records are arranged by state and county, then by township or enumeration district, and then by household in the order visited by census takers. For information available by year, see “Availability of Census Records About Individuals” by the U.S. Census Bureau at www.census.gov/prod/2000pubs/cff-2.pdf.

Census records through 1930 are available on microfilm from the National Archives. Statewide indexes are useful for locating individuals in the microfilm records. Census records through 1930 have been digitized by Ancestry.com and HeritageQuest.com, making it possible to search for individuals by name only. Access to the records on these Web sites is available by subscription, and free-of-charge at some public libraries.

**City Directories, 1700s–**

Several of the largest U.S. cities had city directories by the end of the 1700s. By 1861, directories were printed in more than 80 cities. These directories list businesses, public and private institutions, residents and their addresses, and often contain detailed city maps. Occupation and race of residents are often noted in directories in the 19th century. City directories usually contain a separate section on the Post Office, listing the address and the name of the postmaster, and sometimes every employee, Post Office hours and mail schedule, and postal rates and regulations.
Directories through 1960 have been reproduced by Primary Source Microfilm as *City Directories of the United States*, and may be available from your local library through inter-library loan. Libraries, historical societies and state archives may have copies of local city directories. A list of directories beginning with 1861 is available at [www.loc.gov/rr/microform/uscite](http://www.loc.gov/rr/microform/uscite).

**Confederate Post Office Department Records, 1861–1865**

Surviving records of the Confederate Post Office Department are located at the National Archives and at the Library of Congress.

Records at the National Archives include:

- A list of Post Office establishments, discontinuances, and name changes in the Confederate states beginning in 1861 (undated).
- A register of accounts, 1864 to 1865, for Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas, listing name of Post Office, county/state, and receipts.
- An undated list of Kentucky Post Offices, by county.
- Confederate records on mail contracts and routes in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

Confederate Post Office Department records at the National Archives are part of the War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109.

Records at the Library of Congress include:

- An Appointment Bureau list of Post Offices, 1861 to 1865, with establishments, discontinuances, and name changes noted, along with names of postmasters and appointment dates, for Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas.
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- A register of accounts for the quarter ending March 31, 1862, for Arkansas, Florida, Tennessee, and Texas (includes Post Office and postmaster name and financial information on the office—sometimes incomplete).
- An Appointment Bureau list, 1861 to 1865, in no discernable order, of postmasters appointed in Arkansas, Indian Territory, Louisiana, and Texas (provides dates of appointment, bond and commission of the postmaster, the name and reason for leaving of the previous postmaster, the county of location, sureties’ names, and miscellaneous remarks).
- *Journal and Orders* of the postmaster general (contains lists of hundreds of postmaster appointments in the summer of 1861).
- Letters sent by the postmaster general, 1861 to 1862 (contain occasional references to postmaster appointments).
- Appointment Bureau letters sent, 1861 to 1865, partially indexed through November 4, 1863.
- Letters sent by the Contract Bureau, 1861 to 1864, mainly to contractors and postmasters, which are indexed by recipient or Post Office name and provide details on mail service.
- Confederate records on mail contracts and routes in the states of Mississippi and Virginia.

Confederate postal records at the Library of Congress are in the Manuscript Division as part of the Records of the Confederate States of America and have been reproduced on microfilm, which may be available from your local library through inter-library loan.

**Congressional Serial Set, 1789–**

From about 1817 to 1890, the *Serial Set* contains records of mail contract routes (also called “star routes”). Reports show the termini.
of the routes, the names of the contractors selected, and other information. General indexes to the *Serial Set* provide the years and volume numbers of mail route records, but they contain few references to specific mail routes.

The congressional *Serial Set* is generally available in federal depository libraries.

**Contract Route Registers, 1814–1960**

Registers of contract routes (also called “star routes”) from 1814 to 1817, in 1824, from 1828 to 1870, and from 1917 to 1960 (years vary by state) usually list names of stops along routes, names of bidders for the contracts, frequency of service, distances involved, and modes of transportation. They generally do not show the names of subcontractors or carriers employed by the contractors. In some time periods, there are indexes to mail routes by Post Office.

![Route 65112, Snyder to Stoneham, Colorado, as recorded in contract route register in 1918.](image)
Contract route registers are located at the National Archives as part of the Records of the Post Office Department, Record Group 28.

**Federal Statutes, 1789–**

In 1792, the Statutes begin to list post roads established and discontinued by Congress, with stops on the routes noted. While there is a general index by subject (“post roads”), there is no index by Post Office.

*Federal Statutes* are available online in digitized format via the subscription database HeinOnline at [http://home.heinonline.org](http://home.heinonline.org). They may also be available at your local library.

**Hugh Finlay’s Journal, 1773–1774**

Hugh Finlay was appointed surveyor of post roads by the British postmaster general in 1772. He kept a journal from September 13, 1773, to May 24, 1774, in which he described in rich detail the Post Offices, postmasters, and mail routes he encountered in his journeys through New England and the South. Finlay also included a description of his travels through Quebec and touched on mail service in the cities of New York and Philadelphia.

The journal was originally typeset and printed in 1867; a PDF copy is available for free at [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org). In 1975 the journal was reprinted by the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society as *The Hugh Finlay Journal: Colonial Postal History 1773–1774*. This edition may be available from your local library through inter-library loan.

**Ledgers of the General Post Office, 1782–1799**

The *Ledgers of the General Post Office* contain the quarterly accounts of the General Post Office. These accounts include mail contractor names, their routes, and sums paid, and an alphabetical listing of Post Offices, including the postmaster’s name, letter and newspaper...
postage collected and the postmaster’s commissions on the same, and sums paid for ship letters.

The *Ledgers of the General Post Office* are located at the National Archives as part of the Records of the Post Office Department, Record Group 28.

**Letters Sent by the Postmaster General, 1789–1952**

The earliest letters sent by the Postmaster General, between October 3, 1789, and December 31, 1836, are arranged chronologically in 50 volumes with an index of names of addressees. The letters reference specific Post Offices, postmasters, and mail contracts, and discuss mail transportation, postal laws and regulations, and budgetary matters, among other things.

These volumes have been reproduced as National Archives Microfilm Publication 601, *Letters Sent by the Postmaster General, 1789–1836*, which is available for purchase from the National Archives and may be available from your local library through inter-library loan.

**Lists, Tables, and Directories of Post Offices, 1803–**

Lists, tables, and directories of Post Offices are available for nearly half of the years from 1803 to 1870, and continuously from 1955 to the present. (For information on the intervening period, see the entry below for the *United States Official Postal Guide*.) Although there is some variation by year, the earliest lists typically provide an alphabetical listing of Post Office names, along with the name of the postmaster, county and state, and the distances from the Post Office to the state capital and to Washington, D.C. The 1831 *Table of Post Offices in the United States* provides the first listing of Post Offices by county, which is regularly featured beginning
in 1859. Directories of Post Offices from 1955 to 2004 list Post Offices, as well as stations and branches, alphabetically and by state and county, and provide the class of the Post Office (before 1975), as well as names of postal units discontinued in the preceding year. They do not show names of postmasters. Beginning in 1957, numbers of boxes served by Post Offices are listed. City delivery statistics are available beginning in 1979, when the Directory of Post Offices combined with the National ZIP Code Directory to form a new title, the National ZIP Code and Post Office Directory. This was last issued in 2004 as the National Five-Digit ZIP Code and Post Office Directory. Lists of Post Offices by state and county since 1986 are available at http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postmasterfinder/welcome.htm. (See Postmaster Finder, page 17).

Selected editions of the List of Post Offices in the United States, Table of Post Offices in the United States, Directory of Post Offices, and National Five-Digit ZIP Code and Post Office Directory (titles vary slightly) may be available from your local library through inter-library loan.

Newspapers, 1700s–

Early newspapers often contain advertisements for mail route bids and for service on various routes. They also might contain the schedule of mail arrival and changes to mail service, Post Offices, and postmasters. Note: In the 18th and early 19th centuries, postmasters were sometimes also the local newspaper editor/printer.

Hundreds of historic newspapers have been reproduced in searchable electronic databases, such as ProQuest Historical Newspapers™, Readex’s Early American Newspapers, and Gale’s 19th Century U.S. Newspapers, which are available online by subscription and at many research libraries. Some state and local libraries have also digitized portions of their newspaper collections and have made them available

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official register of the united states, 1816–1911

The biennial Official Register lists Post Offices and postal employees and their financial compensation in 1816, and in odd-numbered years from 1817 to 1911. The earliest editions of the Official Register list Headquarters employees, postmasters, Post Office clerks, and mail contractors. Route agents and mail messengers are first listed in 1855. Railway Mail Service employees and city carriers are listed beginning in 1867, and rural carriers beginning in 1899. From 1877 to 1905, the Official Register is indexed by employee name.

Selected editions of the Official Register of the United States may be available from your local library through inter-library loan.

orders of the postmaster general ("journals"), 1835–1953

The Orders of the Postmaster General, referred to as the Journals, are arranged chronologically in bound volumes covering the period from July 7, 1835, to March 5, 1953. Noted in these volumes are Post Office establishments, discontinuances, and name and site changes, as well as information on mail routes, contractors, and carriers. Also noted, upon their dates of appointment, are the names of postmasters appointed to Post Offices, as well as the names and reasons for leaving of the previously appointed postmasters (“moved away,” “resigned,” “declined position,” etc.). Although these volumes are unindexed, they are useful to Post Office historians as a secondary source to verify pre-1880 information found in the Record of Appointment of Postmasters. (After
1880, the *Postal Bulletin* is available and is easier to use.) The *Journals* are also helpful in identifying individuals who were appointed to the position of postmaster but who did not take office.

The *Journals* are located at the National Archives as part of the Records of the Post Office Department, Record Group 28.

**Pay and Personnel Records, circa 1901–**

Although personnel files—called “Official Personnel Folders” (OPFs)—were not created for postal employees until 1948 or later, information on the service of some employees prior to 1948 is available from other sources, such as Post Office payroll records. Note that employees at smaller Post Offices were sometimes employed directly by the postmaster, so federal personnel records were not kept. Also, personnel records were not kept for people who carried mail on a contractual basis.

Pay and personnel records of postal employees are located at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri ([www.archives.gov/st-louis/civilian-personnel](http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/civilian-personnel)). When submitting requests for information, researchers should provide as much identifying information as possible about the former employee and his or her place and dates of employment.

**Postal Bulletin, March 1880–**

The *Postal Bulletin* (entitled *Daily Bulletin of Orders Affecting the Postal Service* prior to 1919) lists postmaster names and dates of commission until 1942. Acting postmasters are listed from 1884 to 1942. Star (contract) route establishments, discontinuances, and schedule changes are listed from 1880 to 1942, and rural route establishments, discontinuances, and changes are listed from 1898 to about 1934. The *Postal Bulletin* also gives Post Office establishment and discontinuance dates,
Prior to 1919, the Postal Bulletin was titled the Daily Bulletin of Orders Affecting the Postal Service.

as well as information on Post Office name and site changes. Beginning in 1907, the establishment and discontinuance dates of Post Office stations and branches are also provided. Note: Since the Postal Bulletin is largely unindexed, it is useful mainly as a back-up reference.

The Postal Bulletin may be available from your local library through inter-library loan. PDF copies of issues for the current calendar year and some recent years are available on the Postal Service’s Web site at http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/welcome.htm.
Postmaster Finder, 1986–

Postmaster Finder is a database maintained by the historian of the United States Postal Service. It provides the establishment and discontinuance dates of Post Offices and the names and appointment dates of postmasters, acting postmasters, and officers-in-charge who served in between the tenure of two postmasters. Dates of Post Office name and county changes are also recorded. Since its creation in 1986, Postmaster Finder has been the sole national repository of postmaster names and appointment dates, by Post Office. Pre-1986 information on Post Offices is gradually being added to the database and currently is available for about 30 percent of active Post Offices.

Postmaster Finder is available on the Postal Service’s Web site at http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postmasterfinder/welcome.htm.

Post Route Maps, 1830s–1940s

Post route maps of counties, states, and groups or portions of states depict mail routes and show stops (Post Offices), distances between them, and frequency of service. Bodies of water, railroad lines, canals, and recently discontinued Post Offices are also sometimes shown. Statistics are sometimes given for the states depicted, including area in square miles, population and population density, number of Post Offices, and miles of railroads and canals.

Post route and rural route maps are located in the National Archives’ Cartographic and Architectural Section, at the National Archives at College Park, Maryland, and in the Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress.
Record Cards of Letter Carriers Separated from the Postal Service, 1863–ca. 1900

The record cards of letter carriers whose service ended by about 1900 are index cards filed alphabetically by state, Post Office, and the name of the letter carrier. The cards give the carrier's appointment date and the date and reason for his separation from service, such as “resigned,” “transferred,” “died,” or “removed.” Causes for removal are sometimes noted. Although the cards generally date to 1899, dates through 1902 and even later may be found.

The cards have been reproduced as National Archives Microfilm Publication M1846, Record Cards of Letter Carriers Separated from the Postal Service, 1863-1899 (3 rolls). They are available for purchase from the National Archives and may be available from your local library through inter-library loan.

Record Cards of Postmaster Appointments, 1890s–1986

The record cards of postmaster appointments (PS Forms 1094, 1095, and 1084) are index cards of postmaster and acting postmaster appointments and officer-in-charge installations at Post Offices from the late 1890s through 1986, filed alphabetically by state and Post Office. Post Office discontinuance/establishment information is also provided, along with dates when a Post Office was advanced to or relegated from the presidential class. (The president appointed postmasters at first-, second-, and third-class offices from 1864 to 1970. Classes were dropped in 1975.) These records are often the sole source of information on postmaster appointments at Post Offices from 1971 to 1986, although before 1971 they largely duplicate information found in the Record of Appointment of Postmasters.
The record cards before about 1971 are located at the National Archives as part of the Records of the Post Office Department, Record Group 28. Cards after 1971 are located in the office of the Historian of the United States Postal Service.

Sample record card of postmaster appointments, showing appointments at Oro Grande, California, from 1943 to 1979.

**Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1814–1971**

The *Record of Appointment of Postmasters* consists of ledgers of postmaster appointments by Post Office from 1814 to September 30, 1971. The records before 1832 are arranged alphabetically on a national basis, by Post Office name and state. County names are given beginning in 1824. After 1832, the records are arranged by state or territory, then by county, and then alphabetically by Post Office. The records show the names of Post Offices, the dates of their establishment and discontinuance, any name changes, and the names and appointment dates of postmasters. Surety information is sometimes provided before 1844. Beginning in the 1840s, presidential appointments are noted. Money order offices are noted beginning in the 1860s. After about 1870, the records show the names of Post Offices to which mail from discontinued offices was sent. Names of acting postmasters are listed beginning in the 1910s.
(See also the description of this record at www.archives.gov. Search for post office records.)

The postmaster appointment ledgers have been reproduced as National Archives Microfilm Publication M1131, Record of Appointment of Postmasters, October 1789–1832 (Rolls 2, 3, and 4), and M841, Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832–September 30, 1971 (145 rolls). They are available for purchase from the National Archives and may be available from your local library through inter-library loan.

**Record of First Returns Received from Postmasters, 1789–1818**

The Record of First Returns Received from Postmasters is a volume containing names of postmasters at Post Offices from October 1789 to July 1818, along with the dates of their first financial returns. Since postmasters were required to submit quarterly financial statements for their Post Offices, their first financial returns generally postdated their appointment by several months, although delays in submitting accounts were not uncommon. This volume is especially useful since records of postmaster appointments before 1814 were destroyed by a fire at Headquarters in 1836. (It is sometimes possible to find pre-1814 appointment dates for postmasters by searching for them in the index to the Letters Sent by the Postmaster General in the months preceding their first return date.)

This record has been reproduced as Roll 1 of National Archives Microfilm Publication M1131, Record of Appointment of Postmasters, October 1789–1832. It is available for purchase from the National Archives and may be available from your local library through inter-library loan.

**Rural Free Delivery Records, 1901–1934**

Among the records of the Division of Rural Mails from 1901 to 1917 and from 1930
to 1934 are correspondence, reports, and supporting documents (sometimes including maps and petitions) regarding proposed rural route establishments and changes, filed by state and county. The Division records also include correspondence, filed by state and Post Office, from 1909 to 1929 and from 1930 to 1932. Inspection reports, referenced in the above files and arranged by state and report number, contain further details on proposed route changes, such as discussions of local topography, existing mail service, and customers served.

The records of the Division of Rural Mails are located at the National Archives as part of the Records of the Post Office Department, Record Group 28.

**Rural Route Cards, 1896–1970s**

Rural route cards, filed by Post Office, list route lengths; establishment dates; and names, dates of service, and salaries of rural carriers.

Rural route cards are housed at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri.

**Site Location Reports of Post Offices, 1837–1950**

The reports of site locations are forms completed and submitted by postmasters, mostly from 1845 until 1945, giving the location of their Post Offices and other geographical information. The reports typically show Post Office locations in relation to nearby Post Offices and transportation routes. Some reports show locations in terms of legal land descriptions, small grid maps of the vicinity of the office, or both. Reports submitted for proposed Post Offices, referred to as “applications to establish the Post Office,” also list the number of patrons the Post Office would serve. (See also the description of this record at www.archives.gov. Search for post office records.)
Site location report for the Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, Post Office, with a hand-drawn map of Morgan County, West Virginia, submitted by Postmaster Ann M. Mead in 1868.
These reports have been reproduced as National Archives Microfilm Publication M1126, *Post Office Department Reports of Site Locations, 1837–1950* (683 rolls), which are available for purchase from the National Archives and may be available from your local library through inter-library loan.


The *United States Official Postal Guide* provides alphabetical lists of Post Offices nationwide, by state, and by state and county. Monthly supplements to the *Guide* show the latest Post Office establishments, discontinuances, and name and county changes.

Selected issues of the *United States Official Postal Guide* may be available from your local library through inter-library loan.

**Locations of Records**

**Historian**

**United States Postal Service**

475 L’Enfant Plaza SW  
Washington, DC  20260-0012

Copies of many of the publications described in this booklet are available in the Postal Service’s collection of historical materials, which is managed by the historian’s staff and is open to the public by appointment. The historian’s staff responds to requests for information on Post Offices and former postal employees, and the staff can provide guidance in researching specific aspects of postal history. For further information, write to the above address or send an e-mail to phistory@usps.gov.
Library of Congress

101 Independence Avenue SE
Washington, DC  20540-0002

The Library’s Manuscript Division houses some records of the Confederate Post Office Department. The Geography and Map Division has early post route maps. To see some of its other useful maps, go to http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html.

National Archives and Records Administration

700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC  20408-0001

The Records of the Post Office Department, Record Group 28, and the War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109, are housed here. Many of the records most useful to researchers have been reproduced on microfilm and are available from the National Archives and its regional branches, and they may be available from your local library through inter-library loan. For further information, write to the above address or go to www.archives.gov.

National Archives at College Park

8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD  20740-6001

Post route maps are located in the Cartographic and Architectural Section of the Archives’ College Park facility. For further information, write to the above address or go to www.archives.gov.

National Personnel Records Center

Civilian Records Facility
111 Winnebago Street
St. Louis, MO  63118-4126

The Civilian Records Facility has pay and personnel records for some postal employees whose service ended after about 1901. It
also houses rural route cards. For further information, write to the above address or go online to www.archives.gov/st-louis/civilian-personnel.

United States Board on Geographic Names

U.S. Geological Survey
523 National Center
Reston, VA 20192-0523

The United States Board on Geographic Names is tasked with standardizing geographic name usage. To search its domestic geographic names database, go to http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/index.html. Post Office names were typically suggested by prospective patrons; there are no postal records that explain their origin.

Further Reading

A detailed description of many of the postal records in the collection of the National Archives and Records Administration is available in Preliminary Inventory Number 168: Records of the Post Office Department, prepared by and available from the National Archives.

Many private researchers have compiled books on Post Offices by state, using postal records at the National Archives as well as local records. Your local library might be able to help locate copies of these and other local postal history sources.


For information on United States Post Offices before 1811, see the following publication: Stets, Robert J. *Postmasters & Postoffices of the United States, 1782–1811.* Lake Oswego, Oregon: La Posta Publications, 1994.