

## Benjamin Franklin Award

The Benjamin Franklin Award, the highest award given by the Postal Service, dates back to 1960, when Postmaster General Summerfield approved a Benjamin Franklin Award for presentation to members of special advisory groups, members of Congress, or employees making a contribution not connected with official employment or beyond that recognized in the existing awards program.

On December 15, 1960, Summerfield presented the Benjamin Franklin Award, in the form of a certificate, to the 12 members of the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee: William H. Buckley, Arnold J. Copeland, Ervine Metz, Franklin R. Bruns Jr., Bernard Davis, Sol Glass, Harry Lindquist, Abbott Washburn, Robert Sivard, C. Robert Payne, Roberts E. Fellers, and Donald R. McLeod. Summerfield also presented the award to his liaison to the committee, L. Rohe Walter, the Special Assistant to the Postmaster General, Public Information.

In 1962, Summerfield's successor, Postmaster General J. Edward Day, approved the Benjamin Franklin Award for appointed (non-career) postal officials who demonstrated outstanding and unusual leadership. The major purpose of the award was to honor officials who could not be considered for the Department's regular awards, which were limited to career postal employees. On November 2, 1962, in Headquarters Circular 62-42, Day announced the establishment of the Benjamin Franklin Award and outlined the following criteria:

- a. *Recipient will have served at least two years in a responsible position in the Department.*
- b. *His accomplishments will have had a unique impact on major programs of the Post Office Department.*
- c. *His accomplishments will have had one or both of the following effects, to an unusual degree: significant improvement of service to the public or general overall improvement of operations.*
- d. *His accomplishments are within the personal knowledge of the Postmaster General.*

*The Postmaster General designates persons to be honored by this award; nominations are not made to him.*

Frederick C. Belen, Assistant Postmaster General, Operations, received the first Benjamin Franklin Award under the new guidelines on February 25, 1963. The award was described as "a walnut plaque, appropriately routed to hold a Parian Ware bust of Benjamin Franklin, an original 1847 issue of a five-cent Benjamin Franklin stamp, and an engraved metal plate."<sup>1</sup> Parian ware is a hard white porcelain resembling marble.

In 1965, the two-year employment requirement was waived when the award was issued to Ira Kapenstein, and on July 8, 1969, revised instructions eliminated this requirement. Since 1971, the non-career requirement has no longer been applicable, as all postal officials appointed since Reorganization have been career employees. A list of award recipients follows.



Postmaster General Albert V. Casey received the Benjamin Franklin Award shortly before he resigned in August 1986. He was the first Postmaster General to receive the award while still in office. Postmasters General Anthony Frank (1992), Marvin Runyon (1998), and John Potter (2010) also received the award near the end of their terms.

## Benjamin Franklin Award Recipients

Name and Title	Postmaster General	Date
Franklin R. Bruns, Jr. Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee	Summerfield	12/31/1960
William H. Buckley Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee	Summerfield	12/31/1960
Arnold J. Copeland Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee	Summerfield	12/31/1960
Bernard Davis Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee	Summerfield	12/31/1960
Robert E. Fellers Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee	Summerfield	12/31/1960
Sol Glass Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee	Summerfield	12/31/1960
Harry Lindquist Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee	Summerfield	12/31/1960
Donald R. McLeod Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee	Summerfield	12/31/1960
Ervine Metzl Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee	Summerfield	12/31/1960
C. Robert Payne Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee	Summerfield	12/31/1960
Robert Sivard Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee	Summerfield	12/31/1960
Abbott Washburn Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee	Summerfield	12/31/1960
L. Rohe Walter Special Assistant to the Postmaster General	Summerfield	12/15/1960
Frederick C. Belen Assistant Postmaster General, Operations	Day	2/25/1963
James F. Kelleher Special Assistant to the Postmaster General for Public Information	Day	8/8/1963
Ralph W. Nicholson Assistant Postmaster General, Finance and Administration	Gronouski	9/17/1964
Ira Kapenstein Special Assistant to the Postmaster General for Public Information	Gronouski	8/27/1965
Richard J. Murphy Assistant Postmaster General, Personnel	O'Brien	11/4/1966
William M. McMillan Assistant Postmaster General, Operations	O'Brien	11/3/1967
Timothy J. May General Counsel	Watson	1/17/1969
Frederick E. Batrus Assistant Postmaster General, Transportation	Watson	1/17/1969
David A. Nelson General Counsel	Blount	7/24/1969
Paul N. Carlin Executive Assistant to the Postmaster General	Blount	9/25/1970
E. T. Klassen Deputy Postmaster General	Blount	11/12/1970
Frank Nunlist Assistant Postmaster General, Operations	Blount	6/4/1971
James W. Hargrove Senior Assistant Postmaster General, Finance	Klassen	3/1/1972

Edward Dorsey Senior Assistant Postmaster General, Operations	Bolger	6/2/1979
James V. P. Conway Deputy Postmaster General	Bolger	7/11/1980
Myron A. Wright Chairman, Board of Governors	Bolger	2/6/1981
Emmett E. Cooper, Jr. Regional Postmaster General, Southern Region	Bolger	1/26/1983
Carl C. Ulsaker Senior Assistant Postmaster General, Special Projects	Bolger	2/4/1983
C. Neil Benson Deputy Postmaster General	Bolger	5/30/1983
Robert L. Hardesty Chairman, Board of Governors	Bolger	9/10/1984
Warren M. Bloomberg MSC Manager/Postmaster, Baltimore, Maryland	Bolger	10/11/1984
William F. Bolger Postmaster General	Carlin	1/4/1985
Joseph F. Morris Senior Assistant Postmaster General, Employee and Labor Relations	Carlin	3/1/1985
Francis X. Biglin Senior Assistant Postmaster General, Administration	Carlin	5/22/1985
Albert V. Casey Postmaster General	Strange (Deputy Postmaster General)	8/7/1986
Jackie A. Strange Deputy Postmaster General	Tisch	12/8/1986
Louis A. Cox General Counsel	Frank	3/6/1990
William Ford Chairman, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, U.S. House of Representatives	Frank	1/31/1991
Anthony M. Frank Postmaster General	Coughlin (Deputy Postmaster General)	2/27/1992
Marvin Runyon Postmaster General	Board of Governors	5/4/1998
Michael S. Coughlin Deputy Postmaster General	Henderson	5/18/1999
Clarence E. Lewis, Jr. Chief Operating Officer	Henderson	3/20/2000
Richard Porras Chief Financial Officer and Executive Vice President	Henderson	3/20/2000
James F. Van Loozen Manager, Public Policy Communications	Henderson	10/13/2000
Richard J. Strasser, Jr. Chief Financial Officer and Executive Vice President	Potter	11/18/2004
Patrick R. Donahoe Deputy Postmaster General	Potter	10/19/2009
John E. Potter Postmaster General	Board of Governors	11/12/2010
Megan J. Brennan Former Postmaster General	DeJoy	6/15/2020

**Endnote:**

1. Post Office Department Memorandum dated October 8, 1965, from the director of Employee Benefits and Services Division, Bureau of Personnel, to the Deputy Assistant Postmaster General for Industrial Relations, Bureau of Personnel (in files of USPS Historian).