

Deliveries per Day

Free city delivery began on July 1, 1863.¹ In its early years, carriers were expected to make deliveries "as frequently as the public convenience may require," according to Section 92 of the *Postal Laws and Regulations* of 1873, and deliveries were made as many times per day as mail was received in the Post Offices.

The 1922 *Annual Report of the Postmaster General* noted that business sections in smaller cities received three daily deliveries, those in larger cities averaged three to four, and those in the largest cities received deliveries three to seven times a day.²

In 1949, steps were taken to reduce all four-trip routes to three trips in business sections and all three-trip routes to two trips in strictly residential areas.³ An order dated April 17, 1950, limited the number of deliveries in residential sections to one each day. It also reduced the number of deliveries to business districts by one on Saturdays only; businesses continued to receive multiple deliveries during the week.⁴

The 1969 *Annual Report* noted that, because of changing transportation patterns and new distribution procedures, few second or third deliveries to businesses were needed.⁵ Although areas in New York with exceptionally heavy mail volume received two daily deliveries until the late 1990s, this practice has been phased out. Today, standard policy limits business deliveries to one per day.

Endnotes:

1. *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, 1863, 8:

"The law authorizing the free delivery of mail matter by carriers took effect on the first day of July last. About that time the system was put in operation at 49 of the larger offices, with a competent corps of carriers to each, numbering in the aggregate 449, at an aggregate annual compensation of \$300,680.

Our own experience and that of Europe demonstrates that correspondence increases with every facility for its conduct, and free delivery in the principal towns and cities has been proved in the mother country to be a facility attended with very remarkable results. Further time is required to prove whether it will operate in the same way here, but, as far as ascertained, the results are highly satisfactory.

In the city of New York there are now, daily, five deliveries from the office, and six collections of letters for the mails from the depositories in the various parts of the city. During the quarter ending September 30, 1863, there were delivered by carriers 2,069,418 letters and 1,810,717 collected for the mails and city delivery, being an increase of 968,825 letters (about 25 per cent.) over the preceding and last quarter under the old system. Returns from other offices indicate results equally flattering."

2. *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, 1922, 23-24:

"This service was established at 70 additional post offices during the fiscal year ended June 30, 1922, as compared with 75 in 1921. City delivery is now in operation in 2,229 post offices. The employment of 143 additional carriers was required in this extension of service by which approximately 1,045,350 people additional are enjoying the advantage of the delivery of their mail.

The law provides for the delivery of mail as frequently as the public conveniences may require in cities containing a population of 50,000. In the discretion of the Postmaster General this service may be provided in cities having a population of 10,000, or where the gross receipts of the post office are \$10,000 for the preceding fiscal year.

As a condition precedent to the establishment of city delivery it is required that the minimum population to be served shall be 2,500 if the receipts of the office are \$10,000, that the city shall be provided with street lights,

street signs, continuous sidewalks and crosswalks, and that the places of business and dwellings shall be numbered and the latter provided with slots in the doors or a receptacle of some kind for the delivery of mail.

In the early years of this service, and again in the early nineties, some effort was made to induce patrons to provide boxes for the deposit of mail on delivery by the carriers. Why this was not made a requisite of delivery service the same as street signs and house numbers is not apparent. As a result of intermittent campaigns since 1909, suggesting the advantages of receptacles and urging their use, 70 per cent of the private dwellings are provided with door slots or boxes of various kinds. In this way the safe delivery of the mail is insured without the necessity of answering at once the carrier's signal, and when the patron is absent. The time of the carriers is also conserved. Since so great a number of private dwellings are already equipped with receptacles, and in view of the advantages to the patrons and to the service, it has been ordered, by virtue of the law authorizing the Postmaster General to prescribe regulations for the government of the Postal Service, that on or before January 1, 1923, all private dwellings shall be equipped with a receptacle, preferably a slot in the door, the delivery of the mail being conditional upon a compliance with this requirement.

The law contemplates the delivery of mail in cities 'as frequently as the public convenience may require.' The volume and importance of the mail govern the number of deliveries, hence the deliveries are more frequent in business sections. In the smaller cities three daily deliveries in business sections is the general rule, in larger cities three or four, and in the largest cities three to seven deliveries.

Of the 12 largest cities, in only 2 are there 7 deliveries daily, Brooklyn having seven 7-delivery districts out of a total of 61, and Philadelphia four out of a total of 139. In New York the maximum number of business deliveries is 6, and in Chicago 5, and these are restricted to the sections in which the mail is heaviest.

Such service in large cities is not excessive. It is demanded by large business interests, and the volume of mail is so great as to necessitate frequent trips in order to effect deliveries expeditiously. In the residential districts not more than two deliveries are authorized except when required, because the amount of mail is so great that satisfactory service can not be given by reason of the late hour at which the first delivery will be completed. Under the law eight hours is a day's work for letter carriers, although overtime is permitted under certain conditions. Their schedule of work and deliveries must be arranged accordingly and this influences the arrangement of deliveries. In residential districts in which a large amount of mail, including quantities of papers and magazines, must be delivered, two deliveries daily are not satisfactory, because in order to schedule the carriers for eight hours' service the district is so large that the first delivery is completed at so late an hour as to cause complaint.

In determining what the 'public convenience may require' the department seeks to maintain the service on an economical basis and meet the reasonable demands of the people served."

3. *Annual Report of the Postmaster General, 1949, 20-21:*

"Mail of all classes is delivered directly to the place of business or private residence of everyone served by the United States Postal Service wherever it is practical to effect such delivery with due regard to the cost thereof. To make this delivery involves the use of city delivery carriers, village delivery carriers, rural delivery carriers, and special delivery messengers.

At the close of the fiscal year 1949 there were 86,359 full-time city delivery carriers assigned to business and residential foot routes, mounted routes, collection routes, and delivery of parcel post. In addition to the full-time employees, 32,273 substitute city carriers were used to serve the routes during the absences of the regular carriers and to assist on days when the volume of mail was unusually large. This type of service is in operation in most of the cities and towns of the United States where the gross receipts of the local post office are \$10,000 or more per annum and 2,500 or more persons are served. Every effort was made to provide the proper delivery service for new housing developments as rapidly as such developments were completed and occupied.

During the fiscal year, city delivery service was established in 143 additional communities, increasing to 4,413 the number of cities in which it is in operation. Of this number, 10 were caused through conversion of village delivery to city delivery service.

During the past year, steps have been taken to reduce all four-trip routes to three trips in business territory, thus effecting a saving in the expense of city delivery service without impairment of the deliveries made to business firms. Action has also been taken to reduce deliveries in strictly residential territory from three to two trips, which also will effect savings and at the same time provide patrons with adequate city delivery service."

4. *Annual Report of the Postmaster General, 1950, 27-28:*

“At the close of the fiscal year 1950 there were 90,189 full-time city delivery carriers assigned to business and residential foot routes, mounted routes, collection routes, and delivery of parcel post. In addition to the full-time employees, 27,944 substitute city carriers were used to serve the routes during the absences of the regular carriers and to assist on days when the volume of mail was unusually large. This type of service is in operation in most of the cities and towns where the gross receipts of the post office are \$10,000 or more per annum and 2,500 or more persons are served. Every effort was made to provide the proper delivery service for new housing developments as rapidly as they were completed and occupied.

During the fiscal year city delivery service was established in 219 additional communities, increasing to 4,632 the number of cities in which it is in operation. Of these, 60 were caused by conversion of village delivery to city delivery service by Public Law 431.

On April 17, 1950, an order was issued to postmasters readjusting the number of deliveries in residential sections from two to one trip each day. No change was made in the deliveries accorded business sections except that on Saturdays the business section would get one delivery less than on other days of the week. Parcel post deliveries were placed on a one-trip basis in both business and residential territory with few exceptions. Postmasters were directed to readjust the collection service to the minimum number of collections needed to give patrons adequate service and so that the last collection would reach the main office not later than 8:30 p.m. These adjustments were made in the interest of economy and to enable the Department to stay within the appropriation authorized.”

5. *Annual Report of the Postmaster General, 1969, 19-20:*

“City delivery service was initiated in 48 additional communities during fiscal year 1969, thus keeping pace with small towns experiencing growth and meeting the legal and regulatory requirements for this service. New housing and business developments were provided city delivery service, promptly benefiting 1,198,332 residential families and 42,495 business places. At June 30, city delivery service was being provided at 6,219 post offices.

There are now 126,873 city delivery routes, an increase of 4,191 routes (3.4 percent) over the prior fiscal year. The number of possible deliveries jumped from 54 million to 55 million (1.9 percent).

Motorized Routes. At the beginning of the year, 53,265 letter carrier routes were motorized. During the year an additional 7,061 routes were put on wheels, so that as of June 30, 60,326 routes were motorized.

Multiple Trip Delivery Routes. Present transportation patterns make the bulk of preferential mail (such as first-class letters) available for first-trip delivery. Only a small part of airmail and local originating mail is received after the first trip, requiring delivery on subsequent trips. Fewer second trips are needed and the third trip is rarely necessary.

To keep abreast of changing conditions, postmasters periodically review the need for multiple-trip service and recommend changes in frequency when indicated.”