

Postal Service Mission and “Motto”

Mission of the Postal Service

The United States Postal Service is an independent establishment of the Executive Branch of the Government of the United States and operates in a business-like way. Its mission statement can be found in Section 101(a) of Title 39 of the U.S. Code, also known as the Postal Reorganization Act:

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.

“Motto” of the Postal Service: Two Postal Tributes Chiseled in Stone

Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.

While the Postal Service has no official motto, the popular belief that it does is a tribute to America's postal workers. The words above, thought to be the motto, are chiseled in gray granite over the entrance to the New York City Post Office on 8th Avenue and come from Book 8, Paragraph 98, of *The Persian Wars* by Herodotus. During the wars between the Greeks and Persians (500-449 B.C.), the Persians operated a system of mounted postal couriers who served with great fidelity.

The firm of McKim, Mead & White designed the New York General Post Office, which opened to the public on Labor Day in 1914. One of the firm's architects, William Mitchell Kendall, was the son of a classics scholar and read Greek for pleasure. He selected the "Neither snow nor rain . . ." inscription, which he modified from a translation by Professor George Herbert Palmer of Harvard University, and the Post Office Department approved it.

Another, less well known inscription can be found on the building that formerly was the Washington, D.C., Post Office and now is the home of the Smithsonian Institution's National Postal Museum. It is located on Massachusetts Avenue and North Capitol Street, N.E.

*Messenger of Sympathy and Love
Servant of Parted Friends
Consoler of the Lonely
Bond of the Scattered Family
Enlarger of the Common Life*

*Carrier of News and Knowledge
Instrument of Trade and Industry
Promoter of Mutual Acquaintance
Of Peace and of Goodwill Among Men and Nations.*

The original of this inscription was called "The Letter" and was written by Dr. Charles W. Eliot, former president of Harvard University. President Woodrow Wilson changed the text slightly before the inscription was carved in the white granite of the Post Office.