

**Digital Resources on the Internet
Useful for Researching the
United States Post Office Department**

Mike Ludeman

Feb. 2015

PRELIMINARY VERSION

Copy Provided

Courtesy of the TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

www.texascovers.org

Monograph US-01

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

Digital Resources on the Internet Useful for Researching the United States Post Office Department

**By
Mike Ludeman**

Introduction

The predecessor of the United States postal system we know today was established by Article 1, Section 8, of the United States Constitution in 1789, but was based on practical experience gained from the British postal system in the British Colonies, as well as the American postal system which operated under the Articles of Confederation. This original system was known as the General Post Office until about 1828, when the term Post Office Department came into more popular use. The name was not officially changed until 1878, when the Post Office Department was added to the Cabinet during the term of Ulysses S Grant.

Research into the early operation of the United States postal system is largely dependent on access to a small number of official publications which were created on a regular basis, both to instruct postmasters on the rules of operation, and to report on the activities of the postal system to the Congress. The primary reports which are available may be grouped into a small number of categories:

1. Annual Reports of the Postmaster General
2. Postal Laws & Regulations
3. Postal Guides
4. Postal Bulletins
5. Official Register
6. Congressional Serial Set
7. Statutes at Law
8. Post Route Maps
9. Pre-UPU Postal Conventions/Treaties

The access to many of these publications is often difficult for the independent researcher. A relatively small number of many of these reports were printed initially, and few copies survived outside of institutional libraries. Most, if not all, of the early volumes were published both as individual reports in paper wrappers, and on occasion, as a House or Senate document in the Congressional Serial Set (CSS), which were bound in sheepskin bindings, and which unfortunately, tended to disintegrate over

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

time. The United States Congress authorized that a number of federal repositories be identified, and copies of many of these publications were deposited there and thus were made available to the public.

In reality, very few depository libraries have a complete set of the CSS, often because they were not designated a federal depository until some later date after the series began in 1823, and even more often, do not possess the complete sets of the documents of interest relating the Post Office. And when a researcher is able to locate a few volumes of interest, it is often difficult or inconvenient to visit that library, and the condition of many of these volumes are now such they are so fragile and difficult to handle and photocopy for research purposes that libraries chose not to make them available for Interlibrary Loan.

There is one bright spot in this story, and that is the emergence of several digital libraries during the past decade whose goal is to make older, out-of-print books and other original source materials available and stored on-line on the Internet, where access is easily available to anyone with a home computer. The three largest and best known of these digital libraries are (1) the **Google Books Project**, (2) the **Internet Archive**, and (3) the **Hathi Trust** Project. These three digital libraries each provide access to many government reports and publications, as well as other published works which are no longer protected by copyright. There are also a number of other similar digital library projects with which I have less experience, so I will not attempt to discuss them here.

The balance of this Monograph has three major sections. The first describes the three major digital library projects, and discusses the strengths and weaknesses of each one. The second section describes the facility which I have constructed to simplify the access to the various categories of government publications which are available. For lack of a better name, I have elected to simply call these **Link Tables**, because they provide an easy to access link between the user and the URL (the http universal resource locator) linkage or connection between the user and the file containing the digitized document. The third section is a overview of the different government publications, and some discussion regarding their contents and how they might be useful.

1. Review of the Major On-Line Digital Libraries

The following sections provide a description the three digital libraries used for this project. These descriptions are intended to provide only a brief overview of the scope and function of these libraries, and are not intended to provide any details on how to use them in one's own research. Each library has available pages to describe the scope, function, and use of the materials in their respective libraries, and the reader is invited to examine these for additional information on how to use them.

GOOGLE BOOKS PROJECT

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

The Google Books Project began as early as 2002 with some preliminary investigations into the difficulties that would be encountered in scanning a single book, and the effort that would be required to scan entire libraries. Starting with just a few books, the project has grown to where by 2012, it is claimed that over 20 million books have been digitized and are available for access by anyone interested. When the project started, Google partnered with a number of major libraries, including the Harvard University Library, University of Michigan Library, New York Public Library, University of Oxford Bodleian Library at Oxford, England, and the Stanford University Library. For a brief overview of the Google Books projects, see the Wikipedia entry.¹

Of particular interest to anyone interested in historical research, a significant number of the books digitized were government publications, but since each library had different holdings, not every volume in a series was available to be digitized, and in some instances, multiple copies of the same book were digitized when they were encountered in different libraries.

There are some difficulties with Google Books. The digitization process is primarily performed using the Elphel 323 scanner, which can digitize pages at the rate of 1000 pages per hour. Those books which have been digitized and which are now available on-line, can suffer from missed pages, incompletely scanned pages, and in particular, many pages which were placed into books as fold outs, usually illustrations, maps, or large tables, are not processed in a proper manner.

The cataloging of books following the digitization process is sometimes not accurate or reliable. Searching books by the usual cataloging points: title, author, subject, publisher, dates, etc., especially in long series of publications, is often difficult, and the information or metadata associated with the book is often incomplete, or inaccurate. As one significant example, the Congressional Serial Set, which is in reality a collection of a diverse set of reports, is nearly always titled only as "Congressional Serial Set", without further descriptive information to describe the actual content. The focus of the effort seems to be more on the number of books digitized, and not the quality of the record associated with the books.

Google Books also provides these digital books to its users in three different viewing formats: full, snippet, and preview modes. In the **full view** mode, the entire book is available, and the contents can be read, searched, and even downloaded in its entirety. This mode is available for nearly all books which are not still under copyright protection. In the **snippet view** mode, which is used for books which are under copyright protection, but for which the authors have given Google Books permission to display selected pages (generally in the hopes that once viewed, the reader will be interested in purchasing the book), there are usually 20% of the pages available for viewing. The **preview** mode offers the typically catalog information about the book, e.g., title, author, publisher, date, but does not allow for viewing of any of the pages. This mode is used for books which have already been digitized but are presently under full copyright protection or copyright review.

¹ Wikipedia, "Google Books", http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Books, (accessed Aug. 9, 2012).

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

Google Books allows for the downloading of all books which are present in the full view mode. There is one significant limitation, in that when a book is downloaded as a PDF file, the underlying OCR database for that title is not downloaded, so that one can no longer search the book automatically. This is inconvenient, as it makes it less desirable to simply download books to one's own computer to create a personal library all volumes of current interest since they cannot be readily searched. It could be pointed out that for those users who have access to a program such as Adobe Acrobat, it is possible to reprocess such a downloaded digital book, and restore a searchable component. The quality of the reconstructed search data will naturally be a function of the ability of the processing program to correctly OCR the text of the book. I have executed this procedure for some of the books which I have downloaded, but when there are many such books of interest, this can be a daunting task.

The ability to download is important for another reason, though. There are limited capabilities provided by Google Books to allow a user to print or extract information from a page from the book while viewing it on Google Books. One can always "snip" a short segment from a page using the Windows **Snipping Tool**, and then save that image, but there is no way to print an individual page or group of pages from the on-line view.

As a result, when I have the requirement to extract one or more pages from a book, I have found it necessary to download the book as a PDF file, and then I can use either a PDF manipulation program to extract out from the complete file just those pages which I want to save as a separate file using a PDF manipulation tool (I use a freeware program called **PDFRider** for this purpose), or I will simply print a selected set of pages to another PDF file rather than to a printer (I use another freeware program called **CutePDF Writer** for this purpose). Both of these alternatives have worked well for me, but I am certain that there are many others that perform these functions as well. One thing to keep in mind when using these tools is that the page numbers in a book will typically not correspond to the page numbers on a printed page, so it is advisable to view the downloaded file in a PDF viewer (Adobe Reader or an equivalent), and manually identify the internal page numbers which are to be printed or extracted.

Many of the books in full view mode can be downloaded as a free **eBook** as well, but I have no experience with the formats that are available, or how well this process works.

Google Books also has some interesting views on copyright protection. They tend to consider every book published after 1922 (and soon to be 1923) to be still under copyright protection, including most US government publications. Thus many reports that by law are and never were under copyright protection because of their origin with the United States government are not available in full view mode. There are also some restrictions on which books can be viewed by users outside the United States. I have provided links in the past to specific publications to such users, only to learn that they were unable to access that publication from their computer. The Google Books explanation for this particular restriction is typically to indicate that the copyright laws of the foreign country are such as to make the book subject to the copyright protection of that country, or some similar explanation.

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

Google Books can be accessed from the main Google home page, go to the **More** tab, click, and then select **Books** from the drop down list. There is also an **Advanced Book Search**, which allowed one to qualify his search by title, author, publisher, dates of publications, and keywords in various combinations, but it does not appear on every search screen, and can often be difficult to locate. A direct link to their **Advanced Book Search** is here:

http://books.google.com/advanced_book_search

Google books also offered a feature called **My Library**, by which a user could create a series of **Bookshelves**, and then flag individual books on a subject to be positioned on those shelves. This is useful for grouping books on a particular subject in such a way that one can find them again, perhaps more quickly than would be possible by performing a new search. For example, I have been able to locate and place on bookshelves in **My Library** over 200 different digitized versions of the USPOD **Annual Reports of the Postmaster General**, for most years between the years of 1850 and 1922, which is a useful resource for researching activities with the USPOD. Unfortunately, this feature has undergone some changes in recent months, and is not as reliable as it once was. My recent efforts to place the books found for a recent project relating to publications about Canal Zone postal history was successful in terms of placing the books on bookshelves, but several of the facilities for retrieval now have incorrect links. This has been reported, but there is no telling how long it might take to correct.

INTERNET ARCHIVE

The Internet Archive is one of the competitors to Google Books, although “companion” might be a better descriptor than “competitor”.² It both digitizes books in its own right, although on a smaller scale, and also works with partner libraries to digitize the library holdings, and allows the public to upload and download digital material to its data cluster. As a result of this latter feature, some people have downloaded books from Google Books and then uploaded them. In many cases, an entry located at the Internet Archive will simple re-direct the link to Google Books when the user requests a file download.

The primary difference in the types of material found on Internet Archive that is not present in Google Books is found in the materials digitized as part of their partnerships with individual University Libraries. One example of importance to the present audience is the many volumes on the Panama Canal and Canal Zone which have been digitized in conjunction with the Panama Canal Museum and the University of Florida Library Digital Collections project. These will be discussed in the next section following this one.

The Internet Archive home page can be found at the following link:

² Wikipedia, “Internet Archive”, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_archive , (accessed Aug. 9, 2012)

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

<http://archive.org/>

There is a **Search** box on this page, and there is an **Advanced Search** function which can be accessed from the same page.

Books on Internet Archive will also have the ability to be searched for keywords or phrases, just like on Google Books. The Books found at Internet Archive are all full text view (they don't appear to have the equivalent of the "snippet" or "preview" modes). They can be read on-line, and can also be downloaded in a PDF file format, and as several different eBook formats for Kindle and Daisy readers.

HATHITRUST PROJECT

The HathiTrust partnership started in 2008 as collaboration between thirteen Universities, primarily from the University of California and University of Virginia systems, with the goal to build and preserve a digital archive of library materials. There are presently more than 70 partners, primarily University Libraries.

The HathiTrust home page, and a **Search** box, may be found at the following URL:

<http://www.hathitrust.org/home>

Books in the HathiTrust Digital Library have the ability to be searched for keywords or phrases, just like on Google Books. The Books found at HathiTrust are all full text view (they don't appear to have the snippet or preview modes implemented). They can be read on-line, but cannot be downloaded as freely as in Google Books or Internet Archive. The download of individual pages is allowed, but the download of a complete book is limited to individuals associated with the partner universities.

Because many of the volumes in the HathiTrust Digital Library were originally digitized for Google Books by the various partnership libraries, many of the same books found in Google Books and Internet Archive are also found here. One significant difference is that the HathiTrust view of copyright is less rigid for government publications, so many of the titles found in Google Books, published after 1923, and found there only in the **snippit** or **limited view** modes may be found in **full view** mode in the HathiTrust Library.

2. The Portals

When I began my effort to systematically document the locations of the various digital copies of these Post Offices reports and documents, I used the Google Books **My Library** feature. Over time, I ended up with over 200 different bookshelves, and some shelves ended up with over 200 entries. There was limited organizational capability for placing volumes on these bookshelves in a desired order, e.g., by date, etc., and time consuming to do so. Because of the limited descriptions in some book titles, I

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

began to add additional details about the title, year, volume, edition, etc., for each book, a chore that became burdensome. And in the end, it was never straightforward to select a bookshelf and locate the desired volume and access it. To address these inconveniences, I started to create a series of Excel worksheets, with one for each category of book. After adding the title, date and edition information, I added a direct link to the Google Books entry. This simplified the access to most volumes immensely.

I continued to add new entries, often new links to books already in the Excel worksheet, primarily because I had discovered that the scan quality of the digitized books varied, and when one volume had a bad page, it was often scanned properly in a second volume. When I conceived the idea of creating a version of these **Link Tables** for use in the postal history community, I decided to refer to them as **Portals**, as they essentially served as a gateway to a vast collection of resources. At the same time, I realized that they would be even more useful if I were to expand their scope to include other digital libraries, since there were some limitations to the access on Google Books that were not present in other libraries. Thus the present set of **Portals** was created.

It should be noted that when I was able to locate multiple copies of any one publication in multiple digital libraries, I often included two and even three links to three different digitized volumes at multiple digital libraries.

The accompanying **Portals** are in a PDF file format, and can be viewed using a standard PDF file reader such as Adobe Reader, Foxit, or any other PDF file reader convenient to the user. The following **Portals** are part of this initial **beta test** version:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| (1) ARPMG-Portal | The Annual Reports of the Postmaster General |
| (2) PL&R-Portals | Postal Laws & Regulations |
| (3) PG(Early) Portal | Postal Guides published between 1803 and 1870., including a few privately published volumes. |
| (4) PG(Official) Portal | Postal Guides published under the title Official Postal Guide, including later publications titled Directory of Post Offices , and National ZIP Code Directory . |
| (5) Official Register-Portal | Volumes of the Official Register . |
| (6) ASP-Portal | American State Papers . |
| (7) US Statutes-Portal | Various editions of the United States Revised Statutes and Statutes-at-Large . |
| (8) Post Route Maps-Portal | Various editions of USPOD Route Maps |

Installation and Use

The various **Portal Tables** can be placed in any convenient directory or folder on the user's personal computer. For my own use, I created a folder on my computer **Desktop** called **USPOD Publications**, and then placed the group of PDF files in that folder. When I want to access a resource

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

document, I can simply double-click on the icon for **USPOD Publications**, and then click on the icon for the **Link Table** for the set of publications I wish to view. Once the appropriate **Link Table** PDF file is opened, I can then select the link to the document I want to view, and it is loaded into my browser.

Depending on the security settings on the computer, there may be a warning message displayed the first time that a file is accessed, requesting permission to open the requested file. Once the user has relied **YES** the first time, this message will not appear again.

The present group of **Portals** are to be considered **beta test** versions, and may have errors, etc., so users are invited to provide me with feedback regarding the following items:

- (1) Other publications which should be added to this Link Table.
- (2) Broken Links
- (3) Incorrect Links or errors in Titles, etc.

3. Description of the Various Groups of Post Office Records

The following sections describe the most important and most useful categories of Post Office Records, at least in the opinion of this writer. These sections are not intended to provide a complete description or understanding of their contents, or how they may be used. Instead, a brief overview of their historical context, together with some of their most interesting features is provided, together with some basic references that one might investigate to gain further insight into their contents and usage.

A. ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE POSTMASTER GENERAL

The annual **Report of the Postmaster General** to Congress is precisely what it says it is. It is the report prepared by the Postmaster General to report to the Congress what the Post Office Department has accomplished during the previous fiscal year. These reports were prepared and submitted to the Congress on an annual basis, but were not always ordered to be printed for distribution until about 1817, when the document series which we know of today as the Congressional Serial Set (CSS) was initiated. This massive set of publications will be discussed further in a later section. Beginning with the report from 1817, both the Senate and the House of Representatives ordered copies of this report to be printed, and as such, these were printed and distributed as individual reports and were also collected into the report volumes of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. In virtually all instances, the two reports are identical.

These annual reports were published following the end of each fiscal year, and thus contained the operational record of the Post Office Department from July 1st through June 30th of the previous year. The contents of these reports varied considerably over time. For years prior to 1880, there was typically a single report prepared under the name of the Postmaster General, which summarized the

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

activities of the Department. Beginning in 1880, the annual report volume was expanded considerably, and now included separate reports from the First, Second, and Third Assistant Postmaster Generals, the Superintendent of the Railway Mail System, the Auditor, and various other miscellaneous reports. The subject matter, and the level of detail presented, appears to be governed by what the current Postmaster General holding the office wanted to present, without regard to what information had been included by his predecessor. This irregularly makes it difficult to monitor certain types of activities over extended periods of time.

Beginning with the 1880 edition, these volumes began an expansion from a few hundred pages in length to six hundred pages and eventually to more than one thousand pages in length, and included considerable detail about all forms of postal operations. In 1907, however, a decision was apparently made to reduce the size of these reports, and subsequent editions were in the 300 page range. By 1917, the size had been reduced to 150 pages, and this trend continued through the end of the Post Office Department era in 1970.

Access to these reports is available in many large public libraries and at university libraries, but coverage is variable. Because this annual Report of the Postmaster General is published as part of the Congressional Serial Set, one can always find this publication in the appropriate volume of the CSS.

Digital versions of many editions of these reports may be found in Google Books, the Internet Archive, and the Hathaway Trust. Locating these is tedious, and not all years are available from any single source.

There is one resource which has all of the volumes of the Congressional Serial Set digitized and in a searchable format. The Lexis-Nexis division of Reed Elsevier, Inc., working with the U. S. Senate Library, digitized the entire set of over 13,000 volumes by the end of 2006. The product was sold to **ProQuest** on Nov. 30, 2012. Access to this resource is by subscription only, and is not practical for direct access by individual researchers. However, the **ProQuest Congressional** service is available through many university libraries, and I have made use of this service at my local University of North Texas Library at no charge. One can search for a report by Serial Set sequential number, by title and Congress, or by keyword. The resulting reports can be downloaded in PDF format to the researcher's computer.

It is my understanding that only users within the United States can access the **ProQuest Congressional** product; it is not available to users in Europe or other foreign countries.

A Portal has been created for the various editions of these annual **Reports of the Postmaster General**, titled **ARPMG**, which the author has been able to locate in the three digital libraries referenced. The reports available through these Link Tables primarily cover the years between 1847 and 1970, although there were several intermediate editions for which no digital copy was located. Links to multiple copies of many of these reports has been provided, as the scanning and OCR quality for some of these books may have missing pages, etc.

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

B. POSTAL LAWS & REGULATIONS

The function and scope of operation of the Post Office Department originated with the Constitution, augmented by laws passed by the Congress. The Congress, at each regular session, would pass laws to instruct the Postmaster General as to how they believed that the Post Office should operate.

These laws were then augmented by the Postmaster General by adding “instructions” and later “regulations” that described how the individual post offices were to operate in order to meet the requirements set forth by these laws.

There are several sources for these laws, or Acts of Congress, available to the postal history researcher. The first is the publication of these Acts as found in the reports of the individual Congresses. Such records are difficult to locate and access for the early sessions of the Congress, as there was no systematic procedure for the publication and distribution of these records. Private publication of the laws were available for use by the legal system, but it was not until 1817 when the organized publication of Congressional records in the form of what is now known as the Congressional Serial Set (see later section on this series of publications), that these acts were published and preserved in a systematic manner.

Even this was not sufficiently convenient for general use. In 1845, the Congress directed that a compendium of all laws passed by the Congress since 1789 be collected and published in a series of publications to be titled in general as **The Public Statutes-at-Large**. During the years between 1845 and 1848, a total of eight volumes were published that collected all of the Laws enacted by Congress between 1879 and March 3, 1845. In the years that followed, new volumes were published to cover each successive session of Congress.

Richard Frajola, as part of his **Philamercury** web site, has extracted many of these Acts dated prior to 1872 which are related to the Post Office department, and has made them available to researchers.³ This site also includes copies of a number of similar Acts relating to postal operations during the Colonial Period.

The operation of the United States Post Office Department required that all postmasters and postal employees operate from a common base of knowledge relating to these postal laws, as well as the instructions as to how implement them in a uniform fashion. This was accomplished by the publication of a series of pamphlets, and later books, generally known as the **Postal Laws and Regulations**, although in fact, the actual title varied over the years. The earlier editions were titled as **The Post-Office Laws, with Instructions and Forms, Published for the Regulation of the Post-Offices**.

³ Frajola, Richard. **Philamercury, Postal History Resources**, <http://www.rfrajola.com/resources/resources.htm>, accessed Feb. 5, 2013.

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

Beginning in 1847, the title changed to **Laws and Regulations for the Government of the Post Office Department**.

The format of these volumes included one section in which the applicable postal laws were listed in chronological order, and as new laws were enacted, the replaced section from the older law was deleted from its earlier placement, and the new statute added at the end. This made it quite tedious to locate the law relating to a specific postal activity. A second section was included with the Instructions of the Postmaster General to the individual Postmasters as to how the post office was to be operated, the records to be maintained, accounting procedures, and how to use the standard blanks (forms) used to communicate records of operation back to the Post Office Department Headquarters. This latter section was generally organized by subject, and was straightforward for the postmaster to follow in order to execute his duties.

A significant improvement to the format of these postal laws and regulations volumes occurred in 1856, when D. T. T. Leech, at the time an employee of the Department, reorganized the publication into a volume organized by topic, and then within each topic, presented the applicable laws, which were then followed by the regulations applicable to implement those laws. This format continued well into the Twentieth Century. The final edition in this format was published in 1948.

In 1948, the Post Office Department issued the first **Manual of Instructions for Postal Personnel**, which was a compendium of the instructions and regulations then in effect. This was followed in 1952 with a similar publication titled **Post Office Manual**, which was intended to replace the 1948 edition. This **Post Office Manual** was replaced on December 1, 1954 with a new loose-leaf publication, the **Postal Manual**, which was then updated at irregular intervals with Transmittal Letters, which consisted of pages to be inserted into the existing loose-leaf manual, and some original pages removed. The **Postal Manual** was comprised of two chapters: **Chapter 1 – Post Office Services (Domestic)** and **Chapter 2 – International Mail**. The **Postal Manual** was actually prepared in two versions, one for POD employees, with “Employees’ Edition” on the cover, and a second version for sale to the public. There was apparently no difference in the two versions as originally issued.

It is not clear in what format the actual postal laws were distributed to Post Office employees after 1948. By this time, the author suspects that most postal employees had little need for access to the postal laws, as their everyday activity would have been well defined by the various regulations and procedures found in the **Postal Manual**. However by 1956, the Post Office issued POD Publication 11, **Postal Laws**, that was a compilation of the various sections of the US Code that was applicable to the post office operations, in a format that implied that it would also be updated using the Transmittal Letter process.

Many of these editions are available at large public libraries and university libraries, and most editions published from 1879 to the present are readily available in the used book market, using resources such as Amazon and ABEBooks. During the 1980s, Theron Wierenga reprinted a number of the earlier postal laws editions (1832, 1843, 1847, 1852, and 1866). While researching these both these

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

postal laws and the related postal guides for his reprinting project, Wierenga spent several sessions in Washington, DC, at the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and the USPS Library, and compiled a detailed bibliography of all of the editions of these postal laws and regulations which he encountered. He eventually published his lists in **The Chronicle**, the official publication of the United States Philatelic Classics Society.⁴ In his lists, he described in detail those individual volumes which he had examined, and supplemented that list with additional editions for which he had found a reference but had not had the opportunity to personally examine.

A Portal has been constructed for these Postal Laws and Regulations editions, **PL&R**, which includes a reference to copies of each edition of these various Postal Laws & Regulations which has been discovered in any of the Digital Libraries. To maintain a correspondence of sorts between the detailed titles compiled by Wierenga, and those in the link Table, his titles were used, as was the full title from the title page of other entries, rather than an abbreviated entry.

During 2013, Anthony S. Wawrukiewicz was able to digitize a number of these Postal Laws & Regulations, and add them to his web site, so that they were searchable in the same manner as the **Official Postal Bulletins**.

C. POSTAL GUIDES

The term **Postal Guide** is a general one used to refer to a series of irregularly published volumes by the Post Office Department up through 1874, and then on a regular basis between Oct. 1874 and July 1, 1953. During that period, a number of private publishers also utilized the information contained in the volumes, and published their own version for distribution to the public.

The early editions were generally titled as "**Table of Post Offices...**", or in some instances, "**List of Post Offices...**". Each of these editions consisted of a listing of all post offices in operation as of the date of publication in a single alphabetical sequence, the county in which the post office was located, the name of the current postmaster, and in many volumes, the distance from the post office to Washington, DC. In later years, other lists were included. There was no pattern in the frequency of publication, however, new editions tended to appear every three to five years, and are known to have been compiled through 1874.

The lists of post offices and distances were essential to the operation of the Post Office Department, because it was critical that every letter be addressed to an established post office in order to insure delivery. The distances were necessary to aid the postmaster in the computation of the rate as early postal rates were based both on weight (actually sheets of paper in the letter) and the distance between the post offices.

⁴ Wierenga, Theron, "*A Reference List of Postal Laws and Regulations and Post Office Lists and Directories*", **The Chronicle**, Whole No. 194, May 2002, Vol. 54, No. 2, p 87.

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

The Post Office Department initiated a new serial publication, which it titled as **United States Official Postal Guide**, in October 1874. The First Series of this publication was published quarterly beginning with the October 1874 edition (No. 1), and ended with the publication of the July 1879 edition (No. 20). It was distributed to every postmaster for his use in the operation of his post office. The contents of these quarterly editions consisted of sections detailing instructions and regulations related to the operation of the post office, and lists of post offices.

Following the publication of the July 1879 edition, the Post Office Department initiated the Second Series of the **Official Postal Guide**. Volume one of the new series consisted of five monthly issues that listed only the changes to the post office lists published in the July edition. The new series consisted of a monthly publication, with the January edition being a large volume which included the usual instructions and regulations, together with three lists of post offices: (a) alphabetical by post office name, (2) alphabetical by post office name by state, and (3) a list of post offices by state and county. The subsequent monthly issues included new instructions, and lists of new post offices established and discontinued since the annual volume. Virtually none of these monthly **Postal Guides** have been digitized, and they are extremely difficult to locate in libraries. This second series continued publication until the June 1908 issue.

The Third Series of the **Official Postal Guide** began in July 1908 with the annual edition being changed to appear in July of each year, to correspond with the start of the Post Office Department fiscal year. The monthly supplements were published between August and June of the following year.

The Fourth Series appeared on July 1, 1921 and continued through July 1, 1936, with the monthly supplements continuing. Beginning in 1937, the **Official Postal Guide** was split into two parts for the Fifth Series, with Part 1 containing instructions for the Domestic Postal Service, and Part 2 for International Postal Service. The frequency of publication also changed, with the full annual volume of the Part 1 -- Domestic Postal Service volume now appearing only once every two years. The Part 2 -- International Postal Service editions appeared erratically, apparently new editions were published as required to meet the changing picture of the world during the Second World War. The supplements included updates to both the Domestic and International parts, and were published monthly, with 23 issues appearing between the large annual volumes.

The Sixth and final series, began with the July 1, 1945 edition, and continued through July 1, 1953. The International edition continued to be published on an irregular basis until July 1, 1953 as well. Another change that went into effect with the Sixth Series was that the supplementary issues were now issued quarterly rather than monthly.

The Post Office Department replaced the **Official Postal Guide** with a new publication titled **Directory of Post Offices**, which retained the three previous types of lists of post offices found in the Guide: (a) alphabetical sequence for the entire United States, (b) alphabetically by state, and (c) alphabetical by state and by county within each state. These publications did not include any

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

instructions or other information for the postmaster. The title of this publication was changed in 1963 to accommodate the introduction of the ZIP Code system, and the title became **Directory of Post Offices, with ZIP Codes** through the final edition issued on July 1, 1975.

The content of this **Official Postal Guide** publication has varied over the years. A discussion of the contents and organization of these was prepared by Robert Dalton Harris, and published in several issues of **PS: A Quarterly Journal of Postal History**.⁵ He also published a series of articles in the same journal which described the contents of the advertising which appeared in the issues prior to 1894, when the Post Office Department ended such advertising.⁶

There were two other lesser known publications issued in the years between 1945 and 1970 which contained supplementary information to that found in the **Directory of Post Offices**. One series was titled **Receipts and Classes of Post Offices with Basic Salaries of Postmasters**, which was issued annually for years between 1945 and 1970, and the second was **First Class Post Offices with Names Stations and Branches**, which listed offices with classified units attached.

Because of the ephemeral nature of the information they contained, and the time of publication, only a limited number of these editions from the period prior to the Civil War have survived, and access was limited to researchers who were able to visit large city or university libraries. At some point in time about 1980, the Chester County Historical Society reprinted six of these editions (1803, 1811, 1813, 1819, 1836 and 1854) and during the 1980s, Theron Wierenga also reprinted several of the official and privately published volumes, as well as some of the postal laws and regulations.

While researching these postal guides for his reprinting project, Wierenga spent several sessions in Washington, DC, at the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and the USPS Library, and compiled a detailed bibliography of the editions of these postal guides and postal laws and regulations which he encountered. He eventually published his lists in **The Chronicle**, the official publication of the United States Philatelic Classics Society.⁷ His list was organized into two components, those volumes which he had personally examined, and those for which he had encountered only by a secondary reference.

The author had been compiling his own list of these same publications for some years when the Wierenga article was discovered. The two lists were merged, and a decision was made to include the full, often very wordy title, in order to eliminate any ambiguity as to what editions were being described.

It was also decided, because of the large number of editions of these postal guides, to construct two separate Portals for the **Postal Guides**. The first portal, **PG(Early)-Portal**, was constructed to

⁵ Harris, Robert Dalton, *Postal Guides PS: A Quarterly Journal of Postal History*, Vol VIII, No. 30, p. 34, Vol VIII, No 31, p 78.

⁶ Harris, Robert Dalton, *Survey of Postal Guide Advertising*, **PS: A Quarterly Journal of Postal History**, Vol. VIII, No. 32, p. 113; Vol IX, No. 33, p 23; Vol IX, No 34, p. 59,; and Vol. IX, No 35, p. 87.

⁷ Wierenga, Theron, *A Reference List of Postal Laws and Regulations and Post Office Lists and Directories*, **The Chronicle**, Whole No. 194, May 2002, Vol. 54, No. 2, p 87.

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

provide access to all editions of these publications which had been published prior to the beginning of the **Official Postal Guide**. A second link table, **PG(Official)-Portal**, was constructed to provide links to the digital images of the **Official Postal Guides, Directory of Post Offices, National ZIP Code and Post Office Directory, Receipts and Classes of Post Offices, with Basic Salaries of Postmasters, and First Class Post Offices with Named Stations and Branches**.

D. POSTAL BULLETIN

The **Postal Bulletin** is a generic title used to refer to the daily publication which the Post Office Department used to communicate changes in post offices and postal procedures to postmasters on a regular basis. It was first issued as the **Daily Bulletin of Orders Affecting the Postal Service**, on March 4, 1880, and was published five days a week, and was sent to every postmaster. On March 20, 1918, the name was changed to the **Postal Bulletin**.⁸ Over the years, the publication frequency was changed to three days a week, to twice a week, to weekly, and then bi-weekly. The issue for Aug 9, 2012 was the 22,343rd issue published.

The content has expanded over the years. In the beginning, it was primarily used to provide information to postmasters about the establishment and discontinuance of post office, site location changes, and mail routes. Information about the appointment and commissioning of postmasters was included. The size varied, and was as large as 11" x 14" at one time. The frequency of publication, and the ephemeral nature of the contents, resulted in few copies being preserved, even in federal depositories. The American Philatelic Research Library, and the Postal Service Library, both have bound sets. The **Postal Bulletin** has also been microfilmed for years between 1880 and 1980, and could be borrowed from the APRL.

In 2010, postal historian Anthony S. Wawrukiewicz undertook a private project to digitize and place on-line all issues of the **Postal Bulletin** through 1971 in a searchable PDF format.⁹ He was later joined in this project by several philatelic organizations, which assisted with the funding of this monumental project. The project was completed earlier this year, and announced in the philatelic press in a series of articles prepared by him¹⁰. The latter article has a great tutorial on how to use this web site, and there is a similar tutorial available at the site. These issues of the **Postal Bulletin** between 1880 and 1971 can be accessed at the following URL.¹¹

<http://www.uspostalbulletins.com>

The **Postal Bulletin** is one of the few Post Office Department publications which continued into the era of the US Postal Service beginning in 1971. Wawrukiewicz notes in his introductory article that

⁸ "The Postal Bulletin-Your Source for Trusted Information", **Postal Bulletin 22097**, (3-6-03), p 5.

⁹ "Project to digitize the U. S. 'Postal Bulletin moves ahead slowly'", **Linn's Stamp News**, Feb. 14, 2011, p 28.

¹⁰ Wawrukiewicz, Anthony S., **The United States Specialist**, Volume 83, No. 5, May, 2012, p.201.

¹¹ **The Digitized US Postal Bulletins**, website, <http://www.uspostalbulletins.com>, (Accessed Aug. 24, 2012).

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

he hopes to extend his digital resource into the US Postal Service period.¹² This has recently been accomplished.

In 1996, the US Postal Service began to publish issues of the **Postal Bulletin** in a digital format on its web site.¹³ Unfortunately, during a web site redesign about 2012, the archive of issues for years 1995 – 2008 was eliminated, and only the years for 2009 to present are available. These issues between 2008 and 2014 can be found at the URL:

<http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/welcome.htm>

Apparently some collectors had anticipated that the Postal Service might take this action someday, and copies were downloaded and preserved, and are now hosted on the web site for the Lake County Philatelic Society, APS Chapter #423, and these issues between 1995 and 2014 can be accessed at the following URL.¹⁴

<http://lcpshome.org/links/links-postal-bulletins.htm>

There are two publications which could be considered to be privately published forerunners to the **Postal Bulletin** series. The first is **The United States Postal Guide and Official Advertiser**, published monthly for the 24 months between July 1850 and June 1852. This publication was in a newspaper or magazine format, and included information about the Post Office Department official Orders, lists of post offices established and discontinued, and much of the other information found in other **Postal Guides** of the period, and the **Postal Bulletins** of later years. Links to this publication are found both with the **Postal Guides** and **Postal Bulletins**.

This publication was reprinted in two bound volumes in 1982 by Theron Wierenga.¹⁵

The second publication was the **United States Mail and Post Office Assistant, 1860-1872**, which was published between 1860 and about 1876. This was also a private publication, edited by J. Gayler, who was a Special Agent of the Post Office, who had contacts with and the endorsement of high officials within the Post Office Department.¹⁶ Original copies of significant numbers of this publication were believed to be non-existent until a set of the issues between 1860 and 1872 were located by Michael Laurence, who arranged to have them reprinted by the Collectors Club of Chicago in 1975. This publication continued to be produced until 1875, but no complete run has been located, so this set of issues has not been reprinted. A list of the known and missing issues has been summarized in Laurence's work. Copies of this important publication have not been located in a digital format as of the present time, but the reprint appears to be readily available from most philatelic libraries.

¹² Wawrukiewicz, Anthony S., **The United States Specialist**, Volume 83, No. 5, May, 2012, p.202

¹³ <http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/welcome.htm>, (Accessed Aug 24, 2012).

¹⁴ **Postal Bulletin Index**. <http://lcpshome.org/links/links-postal-bulletins.htm>, (Accessed Aug 24, 2012).

¹⁵ **The United States Postal Guide and Official Advertiser**, Reprint, Theron Wierenga, 1982.

¹⁶ Stendel, Robert, **U. S. Domestic Postal Card Regulations, 1874 to 1885**. UPSS,2010, p. 2

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

E. OFFICIAL REGISTER

The **Official Register** is a generic title used to identify a series of publications which began in 1817 (for the year 1816) and continued to be published until 1959. The Official Register was published on a bi-annual basis in odd-numbered years, and over its lifetime was published as a number of different series, each with its own unique title, which makes locating individual copies of the Official Register difficult at times. It was also published by different departments within the government during different periods of time.

The Official Register was created by an Act of Congress in order to provide a comprehensive listing of all civilian, military, and naval employees, officers, and agents of the United States government. The organization of the Register varied over the period of publication. The great value to postal history research is that its lists all postal employees, including postmasters, and some mail contractors, and included salary information. Between the 1817 and 1877 it was published as a single volume, but the growth of the Postal System was such that in 1879, the Official Register was split into two volumes, with the Post Service comprising the second volume, which was expanded to include virtually every permanent employees of the Postal Service. This continued through the edition for 1911, at which point, the Congress reduced the scope of the Official Register, and eliminated virtually all of the employees of the Postal Service other than the top administrative officials, resulting in a one page listing for the Post Office Department in the 1913 edition.¹⁷

A brief overview of the Official Register, and how to use it for research, was prepared by the National archives in 2006.¹⁸ An article in the NARA publication **Prologue** for the Winter 2004 issue also contains some descriptive information together with some examples for using the Register for genealogical research using the Post Office section.¹⁹

Figure 1, on an adjacent page, illustrates what must have been a common letter of inquiry, asking the postmaster at Pat Clinton, PA for information about the state where he was born, which was to be published in the **Official Register**.

¹⁷ **The Official Register of the United States, 1913, Directory.** Department of Commerce, 1913, P. 69.

¹⁸ "Using the 'Official Register of the United States' to Research Federal Employees, 1916-1959", National Archives and Records Administration, Oct. 2006.

¹⁹ Deeben, John P. "Genealogy Notes: The Official Register of the United States.", **Prologue**, Winter 2004, Vol. 36, No 4, Published by the National Archives and Records Administration. <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2004/winter/genealogy-official-register.html> (Accessed Aug 23, 2012).

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

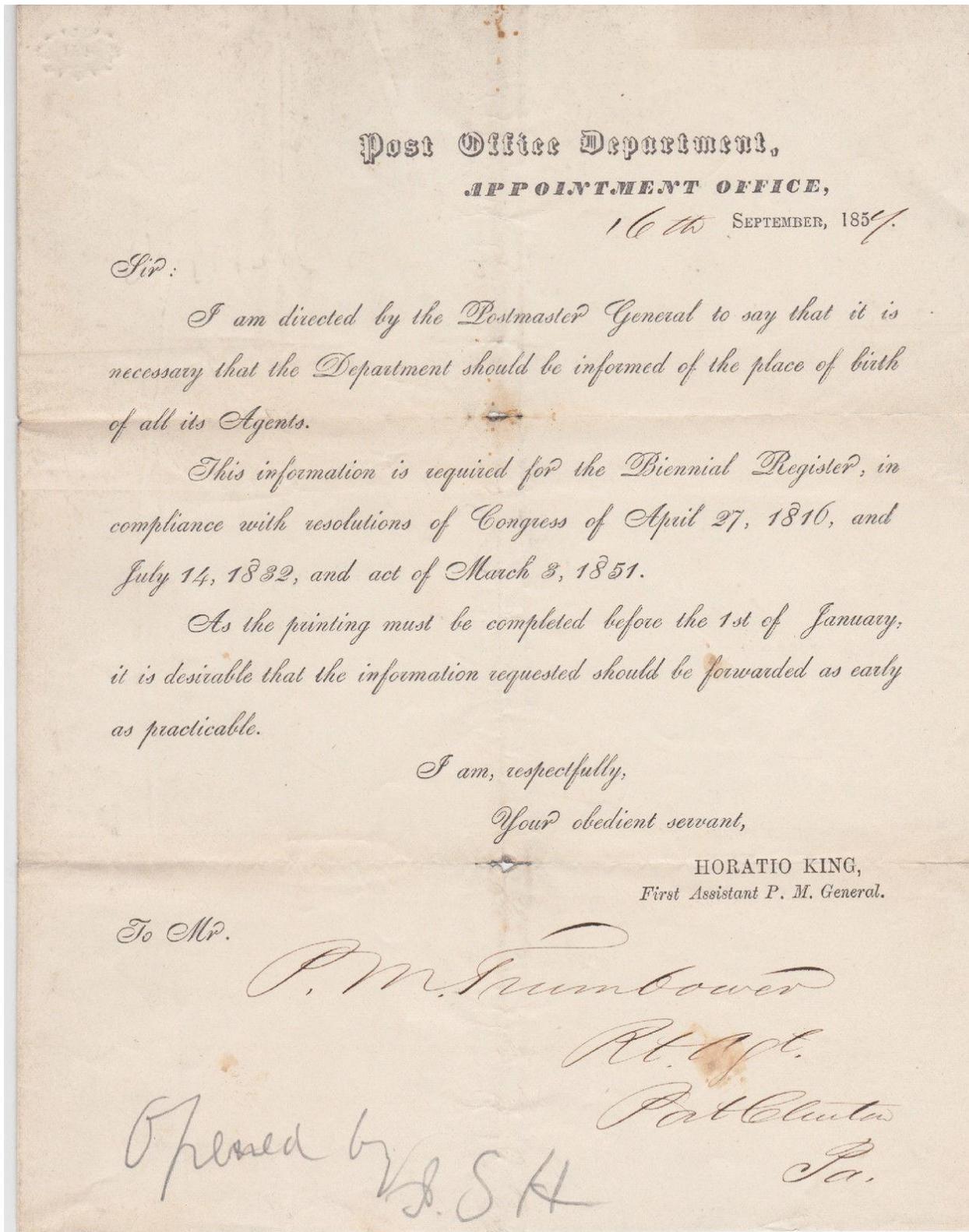


Figure 1. Letter requesting information to be used in the Official Register.

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

There have also been several articles written for the philatelic press that have discussed the **Official Register** and how to make use of the information contained therein. The most detailed that I have encountered was a six-part series authored by Robert Dalton Harris which appeared in issues of **P.S.: A Quarterly Journal of Postal History** between 1977 and 1982.²⁰ Another overview of the **Official Register** was prepared by Randy Stahle for publication in **La Posta**.²¹ A private effort to digitize the Postmaster Compensation sections for editions between 1816 through 1869 is described in a presentation made by Michael C. O'Reilly at the First Annual Winton M. Blount Symposium on Postal History.²²

F. CONGRESSIONAL SERIAL SET

The **Congressional Serial Set** is a massive compendium of all documents and reports authorized by the Congress of the United States to be printed and distributed to the public in order to document the activities of the United States Government. The printing of these documents was authorized by Congress in 1832. An excellent overview of the history of the Congressional Serial Set has been prepared by Richard J. McKinney, and is posted on the web site of the Law Librarian's Society of Washington, D. C., Inc.²³ The original published volumes were treated as individual volumes, with no systematic manner of identification. By the end of the 51st Congress in 1890, the number of published volumes had reached 2890, and it was at that time that the decision was made to facilitate access to the many reports and document by assigning each published volume with a sequential access number. This work was performed by Dr. John G. Ames, who was at the time the head of the Document Division in the Department of the Interior.²⁴ Once this step was completed, it was possible to index the various reports and documents, and simplify the task of locating a particular report. This system of assigning sequential numbers to each volume published has continued into the present.

The Congressional Serial Set consisted of over 15,000 through the 111th Congress in 2009. Although many federal depository libraries were provided copies of the major volumes, few institutional libraries have a near complete set of volumes. There are many volumes of documents and reports relating to the Post Office Department, the most significant of which are the Annual **Reports of the Postmaster General**, and documents relating to the proposals and contracts for carrying the mails. The

²⁰ Harris, Robert Dalton, "*The Official Register*", **P. S.: A Quarterly Journal of Postal History**, aGatherin', Wynatskill, NY. Part 1: PS. No. 2, nd, p 12; Part 2, PS No. 3, p 21; Part III, PS No. 4, p 20; Part 4, PS No 5, p 9; Part 5, PS No 7, p. 11; Part 6, PS No. 14, p. 13.

²¹ Stehle, Randy. "*The Official Register of the United States – Background and Application to Postal History Research*. **La Posta: A Journal of Postal History, Whole No. 210, Jan. 2005, p. 40.**

²² O'Reilly, Michael C, "*Providing Access*", from Panel 7: The Gold Mine of *Official Register* Data, Nov. 4, 2006. http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/symposium2006/papers/OReilly_files/v3_document.html, (A 38 slide PowerPoint presentation, Accessed Aug. 23, 2012)

²³ McKinney, Richard J., "*An Overview of the U. S. Congressional Serial Set*", Last revised in May, 2012. <http://www.llsdc.org/sch-v/#Overview>, (Accessed Aug. 24, 2012)

²⁴ **U. S. Serial Set Organization**, http://www.lexisnexis.com/help/CU/Serial_Set/Serial_Set_1-3.htm, (Accessed Aug 24, 2012).

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

Congressional Information Service has prepared a 56 volume index to the Congressional Serial Set covering the years 1789 to 1969.²⁵

Even with the Index, which is available at many University libraries, finding documents relating to the Post Office Department can be time consuming. However, Robert Dalton Harris, again writing in **P. S.: A Quarterly Journal of Postal History**, has simplified our work by creating three sets of articles which provide information about Post Office documents and reports. The first article is titled "*Postal Documents in the Serial Set*"²⁶, and describes many of the documents found in the **American State Papers** (see next section), and provides an introduction to the types of reports that can be found within the series.

His second article addressed the inclusion of reports relating to mail contracts for carrying the mails, "*Mail Contracts: Congress & the PMG*".²⁷ Prior to 1837, various reports relating to mail contracts were printed in the Congressional Serial Set. Beginning in 1837, and continuing until 1890, the Postmaster General generally prepared four separate reports relating to the mail contracts, many (but certainly not all) of which were eventually printed in the Serial Set. These were (1) Reports of Mail Contracts which had been advertised, (2) Reports of Mail Contracts which had been let to a successful bidder for the contract, (3) A report of additions and curtailments to the mail routes, and (4) a List of Fines and Deductions levied against mail contractors for not delivering the mail according to the schedule of the contracts.

The final series of four articles consist of listings of Post Office Department reports and documents which appeared in the **American State Papers** and the **Congressional Serial Set** between 1790 and 1859.²⁸

With these three articles as a guide, a researcher has direct access to the *major* articles relating to the Post Office Department for the periods discussed.

With over 15,000 volumes, the digitization of the Congressional Serial set alone would be a massive effort. Google Books has digitized over 1,000 volumes, and may well have passed 2,000 volumes by the time this is written. The problem with the Google Books version is two-fold. First, a large number of the digitized volumes of the Congressional Serials set area identified only by the title, with no indication as to the assigned sequential number or contents. In some instances, the librarian from the holding library will have written on the flyleaf the assigned number, but when that it not present, it is

²⁵ **United States Congressional Serial Set**, Wikipedia Entry, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congressional_Serial_Set, (Accessed Aug. 24, 2012).

²⁶ [Harris, Robert Dalton], "*Postal Documents in the Serial Set*", **P. S.: A Quarterly Journal of Postal History**, Vol. VIII, No. 31, 1986, p. 89.

²⁷ [Harris, Robert Dalton], "*Mail Contracts: Congress & the PMG*", **P. S.: A Quarterly Journal of Postal History**, Vol. X, No. 39, 1988, p. 65.

²⁸ [Harris, Robert Dalton], "*Postal Gov Docs Chronicle: 1790-1833*", **P. S.: A Quarterly Journal of Postal History**, Vol. XII, No. 45, 1990, p. 22; "*Postal Gov Docs Chronicle: 1833-1841*", Vol XII, No. 47, p. 90; "*Postal Gov Docs Chronicle: 1841-1849*", Vol. XII, No. 48, p. 119; "*Postal Gov Docs Chronicle: 1849-1859*", Vol XIII, No. 2, p.50.

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

not possible to easily identify which volume it is, nor use the index to determine the contents. The second problem arises in the necessity to create a systematic way to map the individual volumes of the Congressional Serial Set into some form of table which allows a user to determine if the volume which he seeks is present in Google Books or elsewhere.

The **Portal** approach used for the other series of publications discussed in this article simply was not practical. A solution was found with the use of the **U. S. Congressional Serial Set Inventory Project**, now hosted by the University of North Texas Libraries at Denton, Texas.²⁹ (Which conveniently is my home town.) Their web site can be accessed at URL:

<http://digital.library.unt.edu/govdocs/ssi/index.php>

The objective of this inventory project was to provide a consolidated catalog of the holding of partner libraries which identified showing which volume was present at which library. AS originally structured, the site does not provide access to digital copies of these volumes, simply serves as a catalog of where one can locate a physical volume. At the present time, there are 35 university and institutional libraries which have incorporated their holdings into a single list. A user can search by volume number to locate which libraries have a copy of the volume which they need.

After some discussions with the Project Director, I was able to convince them to add a pseudo-institution identified as the **Google Books Project**, and using the **Notes** field associated with each record, I was able to include a link to the digitized copy of the Congressional Serial Set volume found in Google Books. At the present time, I have been able to include only about 100 volumes, primarily from the 16th through the 27th Congresses, because of the considerable effort to find, identify, and then update the Project database.

The Library of Congress American Memory Project has digitized a select number of these volumes, which are available for viewing by the general public. These volumes are limited to those years between the 23rd Congress (1833) and the 64th Congress (1917). There are very few volumes digitized from each session of Congress. The site for accessing these volumes can be found at URL:

<http://rs6.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwsslink.html>

There is one resource which has all of the volumes of the Congressional Serial Set digitized and in a searchable format. The Lexis-Nexis division of Reed Elsevier, Inc., working with the U. S. Senate Library, digitized the entire set of over 13,000 volumes by the end of 2006. The product was sold to **ProQuest** on Nov. 30, 2012. Access to this resource is by subscription only, and is not practical for direct access by individual researchers. However, the **ProQuest Congressional** service is available through many university libraries, and I have made use of this service at my local University of North Texas

²⁹ **U.S. Congressional Serial Set Inventory**, <http://digital.library.unt.edu/govdocs/ssi/index.php>, (accessed Aug. 24, 2012).

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

Library at no charge. One can search for a report by Serial Set sequential number, by title and Congress, or by keyword. The resulting reports can be downloaded in PDF format to the researcher's computer.

It is my understanding that only users within the United States can access the **ProQuest Congressional** product; it is not available to users in Europe or other foreign countries.

G. AMERICAN STATE PAPERS

An adjunct to the Congressional Serial Set is a privately prepared and published series known as the **American State Papers**. Prior to the creation and initial publishing of the volumes comprising the current Congressional Serial Set, there was no formal plan to publish government reports in a systematic basis. Congress passed the Act of 2d March 1831, which directed that a compilation of Congressional documents be compiled and published by the firm of Gales & Seaton.³⁰

In the years between 1832 and 1861, a group of 38 physical volumes were prepared and published containing many significant papers and reports in ten subject classes covering subjects ranging from Foreign Relations to Public Lands. These volumes do not contain all of the governmental reports and document from the period prior to the initiation of the Congressional Serial Set in 1816, but represent the only systematic effort to fill in the gaps for this period. One volume is devoted to the Post Office Department.

The American State Papers have been digitized and are available at several locations. The Library of Congress American Memory Project is one source.³¹ This site can be found at URL:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwsp.html>

The image quality at this site is very good, and both the books and the index to the books can be searched. The viewing is a little awkward, and the user must turn one page at a time to view the contents. Many of the volumes are present on Google Books and the Internet Archive sites. The Postal Service volume has also been digitized by Internet Archives, and a Portal Table is available for these volumes, called **ASP-Portal**. There is also a link to the Post Office Volume in the Portal Table for the Postal Laws and Regulations, **PL&R-Portal**.

³⁰ "Introductory Notice", **American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol I**, 1833, p 1(unnumbered). <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsp&fileName=001/llsp001.db&recNum=6>, (Accessed Aug. 24, 2012).

³¹ **American State Papers**, Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwsp.html>, (Accessed Aug 24, 2012).

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

H. REVISED STATUTES and STATUTES-at-LARGE

To be added.

I. USPOD POST ROUTE MAPS

From the beginning, the new Post Office Department found it desirable to have available for its Agents and Postmasters, maps which would identify the connection of the post roads between post offices. Before 1837, the Post Office Department primarily relied on maps prepared by commercial firms.³² However, in 1837, the USPOD established the Topographer's Office, and appointed David H. Burr as the Topographer for the Department.

In 1862, Postmaster General Montgomery Blair directed the Topographer's Office to prepare a comprehensive set of maps. During the next decade, these new maps were prepared and distributed. The earliest maps for each state or region appear to have been prepared between 1866 and 1875. These were large maps, typically on the order of 160 cm by 140 cm (5.0 ft by 4.0 ft).

In their initial format, these maps often included the post roads and offices for several contiguous states. In some instances, the same state might appear on two different maps from the same date series. However, by 1895, the format appears to have changed so that most maps only included a single state, and in a few cases, the larger states, e.g., California and Texas, were prepared on two or for map sections.

These maps were updated on a continual basis, and reprinted as needed. It appears from observation that some maps could have been revised and reprinted on a quarterly basis. A relatively few number of each map was printed. A portion of each print run was reserved for distribution to members of Congress, and to the Railway Mail Service. These maps were not, as a rule, distributed to individual post offices, although it is likely that there were copies sent to the postmasters at major cities in each state.

Because of their large size, and the ephemeral nature of the information on these maps, they were not regularly preserved, and as a result, not many of the maps printed during the 19th century have survived. In fact, it is not likely that there is a complete and accurate list of all of the maps prepared, given the irregular frequency of publication.

³² "Post Office Department Reports of Site Locations, 1837-1950", National Archives, URL=<http://www.archives.gov/research/post-offices/locations-1837-1950.html>, accessed Sept 18, 2014.

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

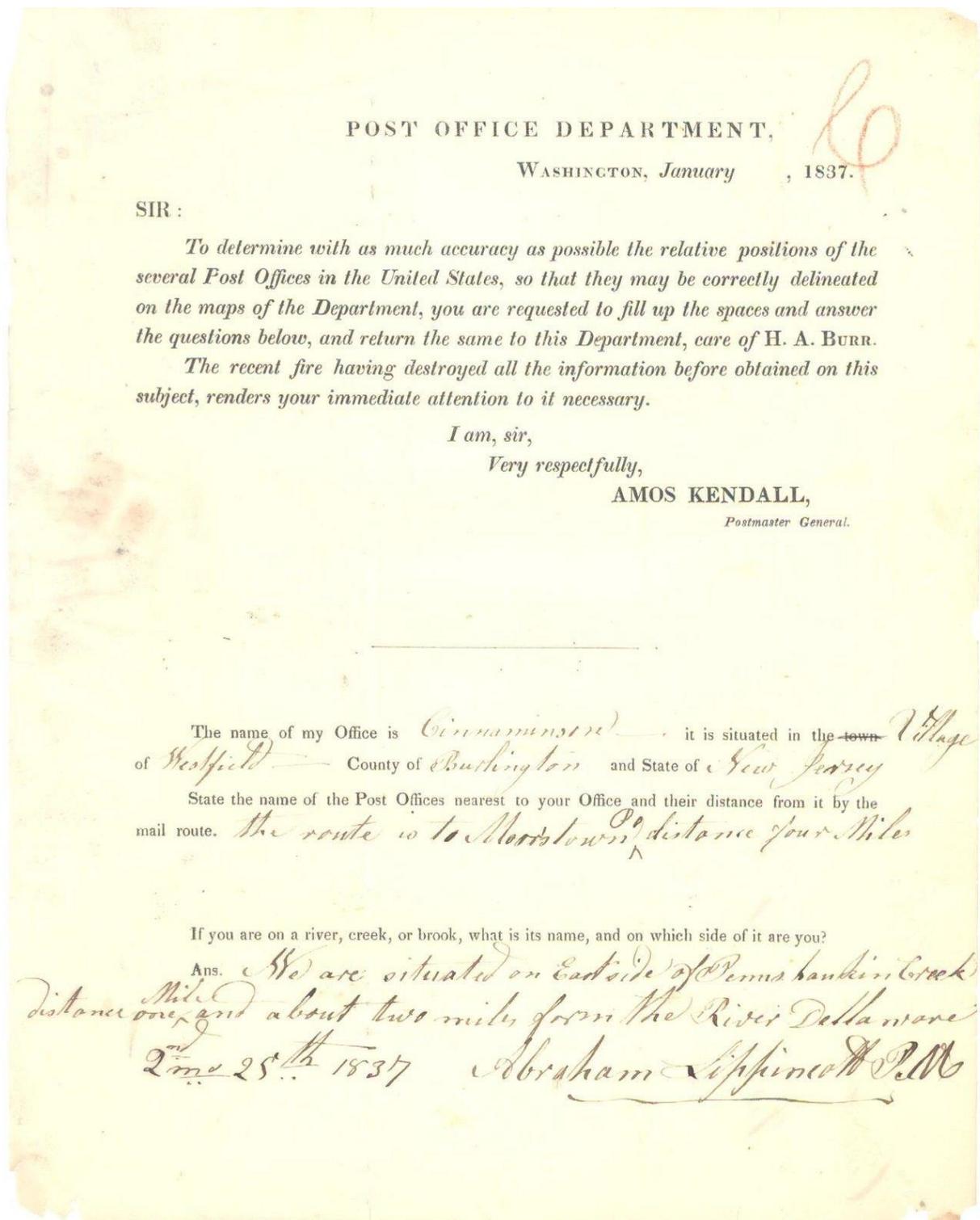


Figure 2. Typical Letter from the Topographer Office requesting information to update a post route map.

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

The Library of Congress Map Division and the National Archives have large holdings of these maps, but only a few have been digitized and made available on the Internet. The largest holding of digital maps which has been located was at the Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library, which is the origin of most of the maps available through the **Postal Route Map Portal**. This Boston Public Library collection had over 100 digital copies of these post route maps, and had some additional maps waiting to be digitized. Included in this collection is a strong representation of the maps produced with the issue dates of October 1, 1891 December 1, 1895, December 1, 1897, and December 1, 1903.

A smaller number of these maps were present in the David Rumsey Map Collection. In addition to these large holdings, a few additional maps have been located in the digital collections of a number of major university libraries, although in most cases, their contributions are limited to maps of their state or geographic region.

Most of these Post Route Maps can be downloaded. I've never encountered any problems with the maps from the David Rumsey Map Collection site, although in order to download the highest resolution maps, you must create an account with that site. Downloading the map files from the Boston Public Library was more of a challenge, as I was successful only about half the time. Their servers could accommodate only a very low download speed (on the order of 200 KB/second), and I experienced timeout errors. The problem was reported, and they are working to address it.

Several maps of Hawaii and California/Nevada were located on the website of the American Geographical Society Library (AGSL) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. These maps are viewable at high resolution but cannot be downloaded. Digital files of the high resolution images are available for purchase. A few maps were found on the dealer web site for Barry Rudermann (BR). It should be noted that these maps may not remain there indefinitely (copies were downloaded by the author to preserve them.)

Two groups of "unofficial" post road maps were also included. The first group is taken from **Colles's Survey of the Roads**, prepared by Christopher Colles in 1789. This is a series of 83 maps, numbered (1) to (33) and (40) to (89), and it is believed that maps (34) to (40), which were apparently intended to map the road from West Point, NY to New York City, were never prepared. Each map represents approximately 12 miles of road. An incomplete copy is found in the David Rumsey Digital Map Library, and the Library of Congress has two copies which have been digitized. A modern index map was prepared by Walter Ristow, and that index is also provided. The original book is available as a print-on-demand title, and Walter Ristow's revised edition with several indexes is also readily available. [An original edition of the Survey was located on the ABEbooks site for \$175,000 for the discriminating student of these road maps.]

The second set of these "unofficial" post route maps were a set of maps prepared by David H. Burr, who was Topographer to the Post Office between 1832 and 1838, and then served as the official geographer to the House of Representatives between 1838 until 1847. In 1838 he published **The American Atlas**, a collection of twelve maps which included details about post offices and post roads in

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

27 states and territories. A thirteenth maps which included the whole of the eastern United States was also present in the Atlas. As no official Postal Route Maps have been found from this period, this set of atlas maps serves as a reasonable substitute.

The maps included in the **Post Route Map Portal** are organized in alphabetical order by state. For maps which include the routes for two or more state, that entry is placed in chronological order under **each** state which is represented on the map. The duplication increases the size of the listings in the portal, but simplifies locating all of the maps with a postal route for a particular state. For convenience, the maps for the state of **Oklahoma** and those for **Indian Territory** are all grouped under **Oklahoma**.

There is a second category of postal route maps, which are the county maps which identify the routes which the Rural Free Delivery carriers would travel to deliver their mail. These are even less common than the state postal route maps. A small number of these were located and they are included in the **Post Route Map Portal**.

J. PRE-UPU POSTAL TREATIES/CONVENTIONS

The rates of postage and handling of the mails between the United States and foreign countries was governed by individual treaty between the United States and the respective foreign countries. These treaties were negotiated individually, and approved by the Congress. Most are recorded in the **Statutes** of the Congress and the various **Statutes-at-Large**. After 1875, these postage rates were governed by the General Postal Union, which became the Universal Postal Union in 1878³³.

Duane O. Littauer, of the US Philatelic Classics Society, has researched these Pre-UPU Postal Conventions, and has many of these posted on the USPCS web site at...

<http://www.uspcs.org/uspcsPostalConventions.html>

These links are also included in the Link Table for the Postal Laws and Regulations, **PL&R-Link**.

³³ Universal Postal Union website: About History, <http://www.upu.int/en/the-upu/history/about-history.html>, (accessed Feb 11, 2013).

Digital Resources for US Post Office Department

Summary

This completes the discussion of these government publications and the corresponding Portals. Users are encouraged to bring to my attention any problems encountered, or suggestions for improvements.

Mike Ludeman

mike@ludeman.net