

HOUSEHOLD MAIL BOXES
REVOLUTIONIZE THE
LETTER CARRIER SERVICE

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THE COMMENTS OF AN ENGLISHMAN IN 1862 JUST BEFORE THE END OF THE CARRIER FEE PERIOD

“The United States Post Office does not assume to itself the duty of taking letters to the houses of those for whom they are intended but holds itself as having completed the work for which the original postage has been paid when it has brought them to the window of the post office of the town to which they are addressed. The recognized official method of delivery is from the post office window. Merchants and persons in trade have boxes at the windows for which they pay. In some towns letters can be received by the subsidiary official carriers and persons availing themselves of this service must pay for them separately. But the poorer classes of the community have to obtain their letters from the post office window.”

LETTER CARRIERS IN WASHINGTON CITY (1798-1863)

- April 18, 1798 Washington City Postmaster Lund is authorized to hire a “letter carrier for the delivery of letters in Washington City”
- Feb. 27, 1804 Edward Eno publishes an announcement in the DC National Inquirer that he is resigning as a “letter carrier on the 31st of March.”
- 1822 John Bailey is listed as a letter carrier in the Washington City Directory.
- 1834 George Venable is listed as a letter carrier in the Washington City Directory.
- 183? John E. Neale is appointed letter carrier.
- Jan. 13, 1843 James H. Ross is appointed to replace Neale.
- April 19, 1845 James F. Bartlett is appointed to replace Ross.
- 1845? T.O. Clark is appointed letter carrier.
- June 30, 1845 Joseph W. Davis replaces Clark. He appears in the City Directory as “Penny Post” in 1846.
- Aug. 30, 1849 Thomas F. Harkness, E. Kealey, Thomas Sessford and A. U. Young are appointed letter carriers.
- Dec. 1849 James E. Neale replaces Sessford, who resigned.

LETTER CARRIERS IN WASHINGTON CITY (1798-1863) (CONT.)

- June 2, 1853 Alexander Gross replaces K. Kealey who was removed.
- 1855 The Washington City Directory lists five letter carriers: Robert G. Ball, Thomas F. Harkness, V.R. Jackerson, Douglas Tolson and John H. Tucker
- June 29, 1857 Cornelius A. Dougherty replaces John H. Tucker.
- Sept. 30, 1861 Charles J. Wright is appointed letter carrier.
- Oct. 14, 1861 George B. Clark is appointed letter carrier.
- Mar 3, 1862 D.E. Brewer is appointed.
- May 11, 1863 John H. Johnson replaces Vincent R. Jackson.

SUMMARY OF LETTER CARRIERS IN WASHINGTON CITY

- Approximately 1798 to August 30, 1849 One Letter Carrier
- August 30, 1849 to 1854 Four or Five Letter Carriers
- 1854 to 1861 Five Letter Carriers
- 1861 to 1862 Seven Letter Carriers
- 1862 to 1863 Eight Letter Carriers
- July 1, 1863 Ten Letter Carriers
- December 1864 Eleven Letter Carriers

CITIES WITH CARRIER SERVICE 1850 TO 1890

<u>Years</u>	<u>No. of Cities</u>	<u>No. of Carriers</u>	<u>Requirement</u>
1850s	16	?	Big Cities
1863	49	412	Cities that had carrier service during fee period
1873	87	2,049	40,000 residents
1883	154	3,680	20,000 residents

POST OFFICE INITIATIVES IN 1880s and 1890s

- Pneumatic tubes
- Mail wagons
- Street cars
- Commemorative stamps
- Rural free delivery
- Home collections
- Residential letter boxes

CARRIER SERVICE ISSUES IN 1890

- Post offices were running out of space for boxes (New York had 10,000)
- Carriers were estimated to spend one-fourth of their time waiting for residents to answer the doors and accept mail

WHAT IS MEANT BY “LETTER BOX”

- Collection boxes on street
- Collection boxes on lamp posts
- Boxes at post offices
- Boxes on posts besides highways
- Boxes attached to or built into walls or doors of residences

THE 1890 COMMISSION

- Appointed by Postmaster General John Wanamaker
- Five of the leading U.S. postmasters
- Directed to entertain proposals for a small, safe and inexpensive letter box

THE COMMISSION'S CRITERIA FOR A LETTER BOX

- Inexpensive
- Neat
- Weatherproof
- Safe
- Difficult to break
- Quick to open
- Attractive looking
- Big enough for newspapers
- Sign to show presence of mail

INVENTORS WERE ENCOURAGED

- 217 patents for letter boxes were issued in the 10 years from 1887 to 1896
- 108 patents were issued in 1891 and 1892 alone

FOUR BOXES ACCEPTED BY THE POSTMASTER GENERAL

- Combination collection and delivery box for inside use (Cushing & Mitchell)
 - Accepts letters, magazines, newspapers and small packages
 - Can be adapted to doors and walls
- Small delivery box (Ringgen)
 - Cheapness and strength
- Outside collection and box (Taylor)
 - Can be placed on walls, doors and posts
- Outside collection and delivery box (Taylor)
 - Has automatic sign

WASHINGTON, D.C. AND ST. LOUIS EXPERIMENTS

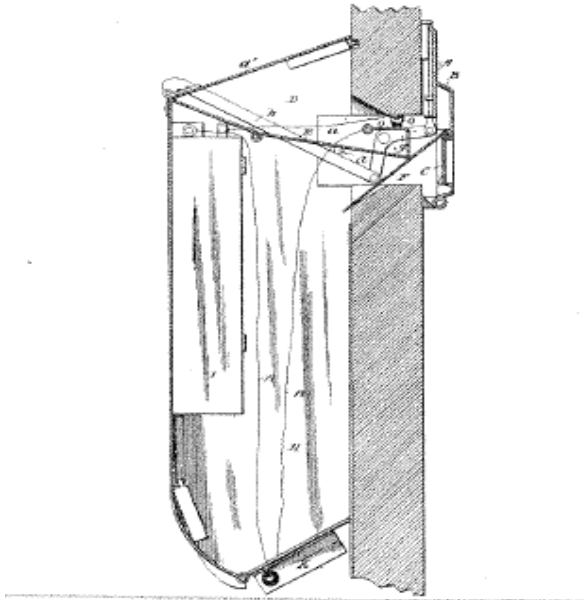
- Washington, D.C.
 - An easy-to-use box was installed
 - Carriers saved one hour each day
- St. Louis
 - A difficult-to-use box was installed
 - No additional time was spent by carriers
 - Mail volume increased by 400 percent

SEPTEMBER 9, 1892 POSTMASTER GENERAL ORDER

- Applied to free delivery cities (with approximately 3 million residences)
- Provided for free collections, as well as free deliveries
- Areas qualified when 2/3 of the houses had installed an approved letter box

CUSHING AND MITCHELL LETTER BOX (No. 491,533)

491,534. HOUSE-DOOR LETTER-BOX. ALFRED D. CUSHING and ALEXANDER MITCHELL, Wheeling, W. Va., assignors to the Postal Improvement Company, Norristown, Pa. Filed Oct. 8, 1891. Serial No. 408,077. (No model.)



Claim.—1. The combination of a face plate having a port, a door having a mail slot or port, a box or receptacle for mail to be collected, an apron flexibly connected with the box, a flap and means, controlled by the door, for holding the apron above the flap when the door is closed and for permitting it to drop and form a chute over or on to the door when the same is opened, substantially as described.

2. The combination of a face plate having a port, a door having a mail slot, a flap pivoted to the door, a box or receptacle for collection mail, an apron flexibly connected with the box and a tongue connected with the door for holding and dropping the apron, substantially as described.

3. The combination of a mail box, a lid or cover for said box, a door leading from outside a wall to said box, a signal outside the box, a lever directly connected with the signal, a direct connection between the lever and the lid and a catch or dog arranged to engage the signal bar and hold it in adjusted position when the door is closed, substantially as described.

ADVERTISEMENT OF POSTAL IMPROVEMENT COMPANY ASSIGNEE OF CUSHING AND MITCHELL)

.. Postal Improvement Company..

(INCORPORATED).

**Manufacturers of Devices for the improvement
of the Mail Service.**

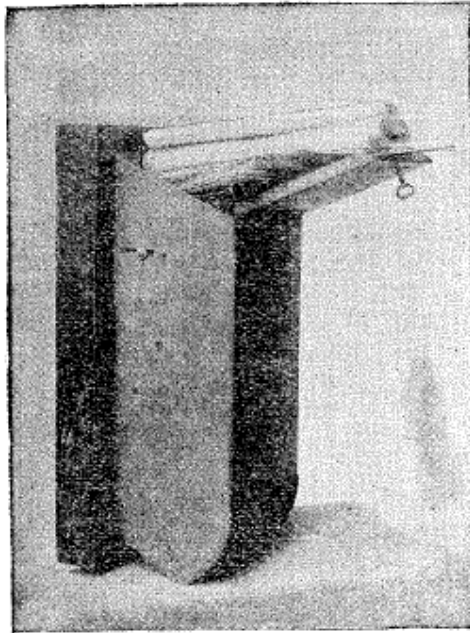
Exclusive makers of the devices recommended by the House Letter Box Commission and tested and adopted by the Post Office Department for extending the house-to-house collections system to towns and cities having free delivery.

General Office and Factory at Norristown, Pennsylvania.

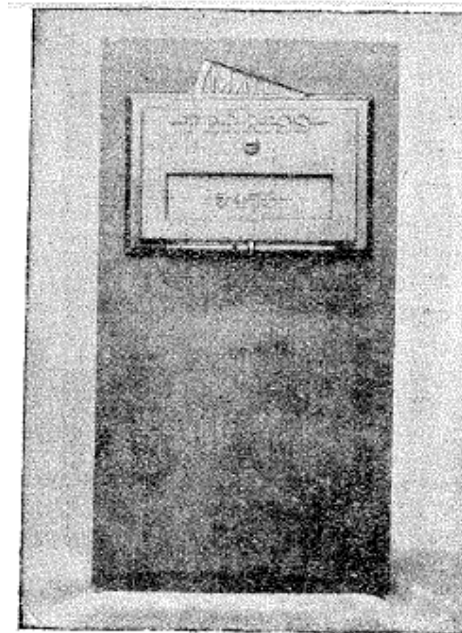
Office of the Secretary and Washington Director, 1901 Q Street Northwest, Washington, D. C.

SOURCE: *The Postal Record*, Vol. 9, No. 9 (Sept 1896)

ILLUSTRATIONS OF AN APPROVED BOX



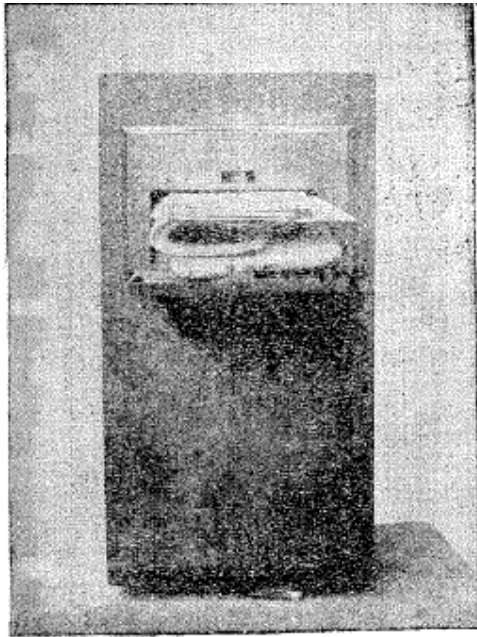
The inside delivery and collection box attached to a door, giving a view of the device on the inside of the house with mail posted by householder for collection by carrier, the lid being left open for increased capacity.



As the box appears on the outside of a door, the call-disk having been raised automatically by the opening of the cover to posting compartment. The name "Ferriss" is the householder's name and the number—5473—the house number.

SOURCE: 1892 ANNUAL REPORT of the *Postmaster General of the United States*.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF AN APPROVED BOX



Here the carrier has unlocked the door of plate to collect mail posted—the call-disk having dropped automatically when the carrier's door is unlocked.



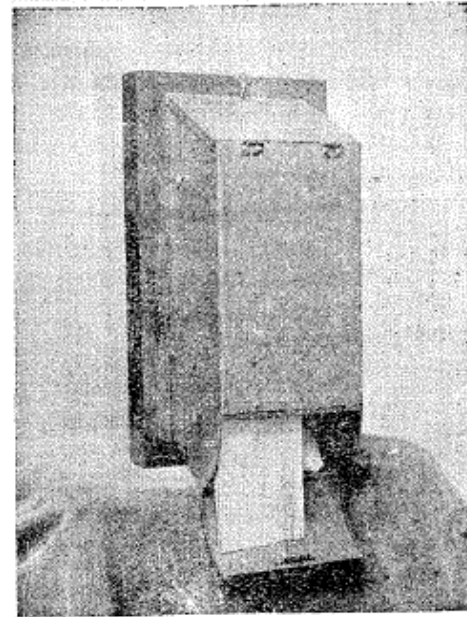
The carrier is delivering a bundle of mail matter through the delivery port.

SOURCE: 1892 ANNUAL REPORT of the *Postmaster General of the United States*.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF AN APPROVED BOX



In this view the carrier is delivering a package, the larger opening being obtained by unlocking the carrier's door.



Here the householder has unlocked the lower compartment preparatory to taking out the mail delivered by carrier. Another application of this box is its construction in the wall of a house, bringing the back of the box flush with the inside wall.

SOURCE: 1892 ANNUAL REPORT of the *Postmaster General of the United States*.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF AN APPROVED BOX



A view of the outside delivery and collection box, with call-disk up to indicate to carrier that there is mail to collect.



Showing the operation of delivering mail to the outside device through the delivery port in the bottom of the box.

SOURCE: 1892 ANNUAL REPORT of the *Postmaster General of the United States*.

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