BEFORE THE

POSTAL REGULATORY COMMISSION

SIX-DAY TO FIVE-DAY STREET DELIVERY AND RELATED SERVICE CHANGES, 2010	Docket No. N2010-1

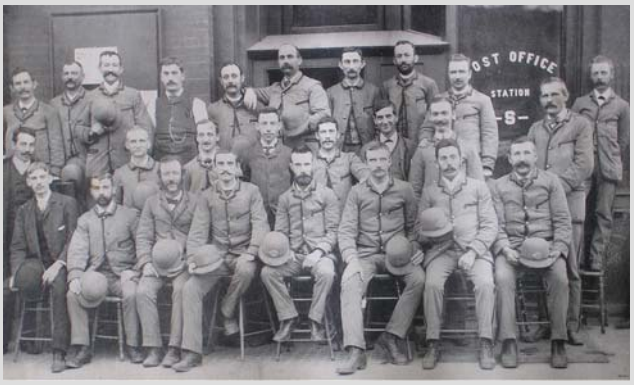
NALC-LR-N2010-1/9:

USPS website, *Delivery: Monday through Saturday since 1863*

Delivery: Monday through Saturday since 1863

City Delivery

Beginning July 1, 1863, free mail delivery was authorized in cities where income from local postage was more than sufficient to pay all expenses of the service.[1] Within a year, free delivery of mail by salaried letter carriers was offered in 65 cities nationwide. By 1880, free delivery was offered in 104 cities, and by 1900, in 796 cities.



Letter Carriers, Station S, Brooklyn, New York, 1888

From the start, carriers were expected to make deliveries "as frequently as the public convenience . . . shall require," Monday through Saturday.[2] Postmasters determined the appropriate levels of service for their cities; there were no nationwide rules governing the number of daily trips that letter carriers made.

Business districts, with heavier mail volume and more time-sensitive mail, typically received more frequent deliveries than strictly residential sections of cities. The number of daily deliveries varied by city – in 1905, letter carriers working out of New York City's main Post Office made nine daily deliveries, whereas in Saint Paul, Minnesota, some customers received their mail once a day. (See table "Number of Daily Trips Made by Letter Carriers from Main Post Offices, 1905.")

The 1922 *Annual Report of the Postmaster General* stated that "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."[3]

Number of Daily Trips Made by Letter Carriers from Main Post Offices, 1905

Baltimore, MD	7
Brooklyn, NY	5
Buffalo, NY	2 to 5
Cincinnati, OH	2 to 6
Cleveland, OH	2 to 5
Detroit, MI	2 to 5
Kansas City, MO	6
Minneapolis, MN	2 to 6
New York, NY	9
Philadelphia, PA	7
Pittsburgh, PA	2 to 6
Saint Paul, MN	1 to 6

Source: 1905 *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, 214-243

To save money, in 1923 the number of daily deliveries on many routes was reduced by one; in 1930, further reductions were made. For a few months in 1934, some residential areas received only one delivery a day. Some residential customers also temporarily received once-a-day delivery during World War II, due to manpower shortages. In 1947, some postmasters temporarily reduced the number of deliveries in their cities to stay within their operating budget, and in 1949 one delivery trip per day was eliminated in many cities to save money.

On April 17, 1950, "in the interest of economy," Postmaster General Jesse M. Donaldson ordered postmasters to limit the number of deliveries in residential sections to one each day.[4] The only change made in business districts in 1950 was that the number of Saturday deliveries would be one fewer than the standard number of weekday deliveries.

The 1969 *Annual Report* noted that, because of changing transportation patterns and new distribution procedures, few second or third daily deliveries to businesses were needed. Multiple daily deliveries to many business districts ended in the 1970s, and were largely phased out by the end of the 1990s.

Rural Delivery

Free mail delivery to rural Americans began experimentally in 1896 out of three Post Offices in West Virginia; within a year 44 routes were underway in 29 states. The service proved enormously popular and was declared permanent in 1902. The number of rural carriers climbed from fewer than 500 carriers in 1899 to more than 32,000 carriers in 1905.

As a rule, rural carriers have always delivered mail to their customers once a day, six days a week. A very small percentage of customers in sparsely settled regions have received tri-weekly service, getting mail every other day.[5]

Saturday Delivery

From the start, letter carriers delivered mail six days a week, usually Monday through Saturday.[6]

In May and June 1947, Saturday deliveries were temporarily eliminated in some cities due to budget shortfalls.

In 1957, Postmaster General Arthur E. Summerfield decided to end Saturday deliveries nationwide because of a budget crisis. On one Saturday – April 13, 1957 – there was no mail delivery. Public outcries prompted President Dwight D. Eisenhower to sign a bill more fully funding the Post Office Department three days later, and the next Saturday service resumed.

In May 1964 the Post Office Department ended Saturday delivery of Parcel Post in 6,091 cities where carriers made deliveries on foot – again, to save money. Delivery resumed in January 1966 after President Lyndon B. Johnson promised to seek increased funding from Congress. Johnson considered "a good, stable, dependable postal system . . . vital to the well-being of the nation's economy."[7]

Sunday Delivery

As a rule, letter carriers have never gone out on their rounds on Sundays, although a few communities receive mail delivery on Sunday in lieu of Saturday by choice. For example, mail is delivered on Sunday in Loma Linda, California, a city with a large Seventh-Day Adventist population which observes the Sabbath on Saturday.

Another exception to the "never on a Sunday" rule has been made for premium-paid, expedited delivery. Mail sent via special delivery, a service available from 1885 to 1997, was delivered on Sundays in many locations.[8] Express Mail, first delivered to addressees in some cities in 1973, has also been delivered on Sundays in many locations.

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[1]Before 1863, postage paid only for the delivery of mail from Post Office to Post Office – citizens picked up their mail at the Post Office, although in some cities they could pay an extra two-cent fee for letter delivery or use private delivery firms. In 1879 eligibility for free city delivery was extended to include any town with at least 20,000 residents within its corporate limits or any Post Office with at least $20,000 in annual revenue, and in 1887 to include any town with at least 10,000 residents within its corporate limits or any Post Office with at least $10,000 in annual revenue (*Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, 1893, 50). In 1948, the population requirement was dropped to 2,500, with the stipulation that "the territory must also be 50 percent improved with houses" (*Manual of Instructions for Postal Personnel*, 1948, 238). In 1972, "750 possible deliveries" was added as an alternative to the minimum population requirement (*Postal Service Manual* Issue 41, October 16, 1972).
[2] 12 Stat. 703.
[3] *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, 1922, 24.
[4] Ibid., 1950, 28.
[5]Tri-weekly rural routes were established where mail volume was not sufficient for six-day delivery. The 1906 *Annual Report of the Postmaster General* (page 330) indicates that .6% of rural routes were tri-weekly. A postal survey in 1999 found that approximately .06% of rural customers received tri-weekly delivery.
[6] A small percentage of customers in sparsely settled regions have received tri-weekly service, getting mail every other day. See note 5, above.
[7] Letter of January 14, 1966, from President Lyndon B. Johnson to the Postmaster General (copy in the files of the USPS Historian).
[8] At first the decision to deliver on Sundays was left to the local postmaster. Beginning in 1902, delivery of special delivery items was mandatory from offices that were open on Sundays; beginning in 1913, first- and second-class Post Offices also had to provide for Sunday delivery of special delivery mail (1902 *Postal Laws & Regulations*, 117; 1913 *PL&R*, 439).