



NEWSLETTER

Vol. 54 No. 10 October 2025

History of National Stamp Collecting Month

National Stamp Collecting Month began in 1981 when the U.S. Postal Service and the Council of Philatelic Organizations decided to work together on a shared goal. Then-Postmaster General William F. Bolger announced the observance through the Postal Bulletin, calling stamp collecting the world's most popular hobby.

The idea aimed to invite both new and seasoned collectors to engage with stamps in fresh ways. Organizers hoped people would see stamps not just as payment for mail but as small works of art filled with meaning.

The President of the time, President Roosevelt (FDR) an avid stamp collector, had all stamp designs come to him personally for approval and revisions. FDR made a big impact on the world of stamp collecting by improving the quality and design of these stamps.



While sometimes referred to as the hobby of kings, the middle of the Great Depression saw a diversification of stamp collecting as it boomed in popularity among the general public. At this trying time in American history, stamp collecting provided an inexpensive way to enjoy a hobby and a much needed distraction from the financial difficulties of the time. These efforts encouraged younger audiences to try the hobby and gave experienced collectors a reason to share their passion.

Over the years, post offices, museums, and clubs have joined in, offering exhibits, workshops, and contests to mark the occasion. The observance continues each year with new themes and designs that add excitement.

National Stamp Collecting Month still celebrates more than a pastime. It's a chance for people to discover history, culture, and art on something as small as a stamp. That simple square connects generations and sparks curiosity in unexpected ways.

By 1860 there were already thousands of collectors in Europe and by 1880 the first albums were being printed. Across the

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Meetings / Activities

Meetings are held on 1st and 3rd Mondays (adjusted for holidays) at Christ Church 3440 Shroyer Rd Kettering OH 45429

For the Zoom invitation and link, please email daytonstampclub@gmail.com

Member's Socializing and Silent Auctions begin at 7:00 PM - Club Meeting & Programs begin at 7:30 PM Board Meetings begin at 7:00 PM.

OCTOBER

10/6 >>Club CASH Auction PREVIEW

7:00-7:25PM<< Mineral & Fossil

Stamps DSC ember Speaker - Greg Brown and Pat Westby

10/13 DSC Board Meeting

10/20 DSC AUCTION #6 - Club CASH Auction

NOVEMBER

11/1 WOOPEX. Wooster Stamp Club 2025 Annual Stamp Show. Exhibits, Multiple dealers, USPS Reps, Silent Auction & FREE admission. Ida Sue School, 266 Oldman Rd, Wooster OH. HRS: 9am-5pm.

11/3 ***SILENT AUCTION 7:00-7:20PM*** Round-Table Discussions on Buying & Selling via APS, eBay, & Hip-Stamp

11/10 DSC Board Meeting Set 2025 calendar & budget review

11/17 Club Election for 2025 & How to Evaluate (or Research) a US Cover DSC Member Speakers - Dennis Callison & Doug Filer5t23wa

DECEMBER

12/1 DSC HolidayPEX Party Starts at 6:30 pm at Church Dinner Party at Church

12/8** 2nd Monday AUCTION #7 - Auction - Type TBD

12/15** 3rd Monday Board Meeting

Revised: 7/15/2025



DSC NEWSLETTER

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#80083

U.S. Military Mail

By Douglas Files

"You well know how anxiously the officers and soldiers of the Army watch and wait for letters from home, and the receipt of them is the greatest pleasure they enjoy, and when a long period has elapsed and there is no mail, no news from home, a feeling of despondency and gloom seems to settle on all."--Major General O. O. Howard to Special Postal Agent A. H. Markland, May 22, 1865.

"I feel that our country needs my help & I am willing to do all that I can & heaven give my life for your liberty & our beloved child's" —Letter from Private David Walters to his wife, Rachel, Civil War, September 29, 1862.



Modern Military Mail sorting for Distribution.

How American military mail travels is a key part of our nation's postal history. The story of military mail transport and delivery begins soon after the pilgrims arrived in the New World - and it continues to the present day. Throughout American history military mail has been prioritized because soldiers and sailors and their families attach great value to it. Military commanders agree because mail from home greatly improves military members' morale. Over the years maintaining mail service between service members and their

hometowns has required extensive coordination between civilian postal authorities and military logisticians. Due to the patriotic and operational priority placed on military mail, however, significant problems have been worked out in order to keep mail flowing back and forth, particularly in wartime when more people are separated from their families.

During the colonial period mail moved, though not in the large quantities encountered in later years. Collector Ravi Vora showcased colonial U.S. military mail in a well-known exhibit. He covered the history of free franking of mail from Great Britain to colonial officials in the beginning in 1660. And his exhibit continued through the adoption of the U.S. constitution in 1789.

Many readers know that Benjamin Franklin served as the first Postmaster General of the U.S. But mail delivery was carried in



a less organized way generations before Franklin's tenure. In the 1600s people handed their mail to people or stagecoach drivers headed in the direction of the addressee on the letter. Over more frequently travelled routes, people paid "runners" to carry a satchel of mail by foot or on horseback. For some routes, a stagecoach carried mail in and out once a week. For overseas mail senders paid a ship captain to carry the letter to their destination port.

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Atlantic, the United States issued its first postage stamp in 1847 honoring Benjamin Franklin, the first Postmaster General and George Washington. Soon after, the United States began with the Columbian stamps honoring the discovery of honoring the discovery of America in 1492 and stamps commemorating the Trans-Mississippi Exposition. The production of these commemorative stamps helped make stamp collecting popular in America. The American Philatelic Society, counterpart to England's Royal Philatelic Society, was founded in 1886.

Other prominent early stamp collecting societies included the Collectors' Club of New York, founded in 1914, and the British Philatelic Association with roots that date back to 1923.



The first time stamps were used to commemorate a public figure was in 1893. The first commemorative stamp was part of the 400th-anniversary celebration of Christopher Colum-

bus. Charlie Chaplin was an avid stamp collector, and so were Freddie Mercury, Jacques Costeau, Ayn Rand, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Currently, Maria Sharapova has let the public in on her passion for stamp collection. Patrick Dempsey shares her interest, as well as Nicolas Sarkozy, Warren Buffet, and Queen Elizabeth.

Today, over 20 million Americans collect stamps. In 1993, the Elvis Presley stamp became the most popular US postage stamp to be sold. An estimated 120 million copies were sold.



The first time stamps were used to commemorate a public figure was in 1893. The first commemorative stamp was part of the 400th-anniversary celebration of Christopher Columbus. The universal postal union is the second oldest international organization and is responsible for safe delivery of postal 'snail mail'.

The main goal of National Stamp Collecting Month is to honor this illustrious tradition and, most importantly, to generate interest, especially from young people, in the stamp hobby.

Whatever area of collecting you wish to collect in, there is an enormous amount of information available to help you enjoy your hobby. The best place to start is a local stamp club.

You've probably already made that first step, now you can try and decide which kinds of stamps or envelopes you'd like to collect and which materials you'll need to help you.

Good luck, and remember—enjoy yourself, because the main reason for collecting stamps is for the fun of it!

"Stamp Collecting dispels boredom, enlarges our vision, broadens our knowledge, makes us better citizen and in innumerable ways, enriches our lives." — President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.



Hello. Hopefully you get more about AIRPEX for the October newsletter but several people wanted to see the show special "invert". I helped Mike Komienky put out signs and since the show was on the other side of the interstate we ran short of signs pointing in the right direction. So we inverted the sign to have the arrow pointing in the correct direction. Please see attached photo.
— Thank you, Pat Westby



DAYTON STAMP CLUB Needs to hear from YOU!

What is your favorite stamp?

Write an ARTICLE for newsletter

Sponsor a young person to start a stamp collection!

Consider being a Club officer or activity chair next year

AIRPEX 2025 DAYTON STAMP CLUB



DSC Officer Dennis Rose welcoming visitors and other stamp collectors to AIRPEX 2025.



DSC Member Joe Shearer talking about exhibit with potential new member



DSC Member Steven Solomon, photographer
Check out picture on page 3 on this month's Newsletter

Island of Sark Begins Its Own Philatelic Program—First Postage Stamp Issued September 27, 2025

Philately is in a State of Sark Small Channel Island of Sark Begins Its Own Philatelic Program The Channel Island of Sark is set to release its inaugural postage stamps, marking a significant milestone in its history. It is the first island to initiate a postage stamp program in over 40 years, following Alderney's



As the Channel Island of Sark steps into the world of philately, one of its first issues will commemorate the 80th anniversary of the island's liberation from German forces in 1941; this is the £1.81p stamp in that series.

introduction of its own stamps in 1983. The postal authorities of the Bailiwick of Guernsey, a Crown Dependency, will administer the Sark stamp program. The initial offering will consist of two sets of Sark stamps, which will be released on August 27 and September 3, respectively. The initial issue is a set of stamps to commemorate the island's wartime history with stamps that highlight pivotal events from the Nazi German Occupation during World War II, as well as commemorate the 80th anniversary of Sark's liberation from German occupation (which as celebrated on the island on May 10, 2025).

The second set will be a 15 stamp set featuring Sark's wildflowers (denominated one-pence through five pounds). Each stamp will showcase a different apices. The series is scheduled for release on September 3, 2025.



Sark's second foray into philately will be a series of stamps featuring the island's wildflowers.

For many years, Vatican City, with a population of approximately 850, has been the least populous legitimate stamp-producing territory in Europe; however, Sark, with a population of 500, will now hold that title. Stamp production there will undoubtedly be in excess of the islanders' postal needs, so perhaps this might be the moment when Channel Island philately has jumped the Sark. Reprinted from *Brandywine Valley Stamp Club*, September 2025.

Precanceled Stamps

Precanceled stamps are special stamps that come in small denominations and are specifically for Presorted First-Class Mail and USPS Marketing Mail mailings. Mailers apply these special stamps to envelopes at a lower postage price and pay the difference when they drop off the mail at the Post Office.

Precanceled stamps are available in various non-denominations in coils for the following classes of mail:

- Presorted First-Class Mail only
- Presorted First-Class Postcards only
- Regular USPS Marketing Mail only
- Nonprofit USPS Marketing Mail only



Turn in the completed Form 3615 at your local Post Office. There is no application fee to get a permit to use precanceled stamps.

- Mailing permits are given out at your local Post Office
- Although there is no fee to use precanceled stamps, there is an annual mailing fee to mail in bulk.
- Mailpieces bearing precanceled stamps must be brought to the Post Office where you hold your permit. They CANNOT be dropped in a collection box or given to a carrier.



Sark is an island in the southwestern English Channel, off the coast of Normandy, and part of the archipelago of the Channel Islands. It is a self-governing British Crown Dependency, with its own set of laws based on Norman law, and its own parliament. It was a royal fiefdom until 2008, when the Constitution of Sark went into effect.

Sark has a population of about 500. Including the nearby island of Brecqhou, it has an area of 2.10 square miles (5.44 km²). Sark is one of the few places in the world where cars are banned from roads, and only tractors, bicycles, and horse-drawn vehicles are allowed.

BOPHUTHATSWANA STAMPS — NOW A “DEAD” COUNTRY!

Bophuthatswana was one of the South African *homelands* or *bantustans* created under the apartheid system. Located in fragmented territories within South Africa, it was declared “independent” by South Africa in 1977—though no other country recognized it as such. Like the other homelands (Transkei, Venda, Ciskei), Bophuthatswana issued its own postage stamps until it was reincorporated into South Africa in 1994.

The last Bophuthatswana stamps were issued in early 1994, just before South Africa’s first multiracial elections. After April 27, 1994, South African stamps replaced homeland issues. During the 1960s the white rulers of the apartheid South Africa government established what they called bantustans or autonomous homelands for native peoples in various parts of the country.

“Dead” countries are former colonies and republics that issued stamps but no longer do. Stamps from these lost countries are a lot of fun to collect. You’ll get an insider’s look into each late country’s leaders, events, and history as a whole. And with these unique stamps in your album, you’ll convert it to a little museum, preserving each country’s extinct history.

Republic of Bophuthatswana—was a Bantustan (also known as “Homeland”, an area set aside for members of a specific ethnicity) that was declared

(nominally) independent by the apartheid regime of South Africa in 1977. However, like the other Bantustans of Ciskei, Transkei and Venda, its independence was not recognized by any country other than South Africa. Bophuthatswana was the second Bantustan to be declared an independent state by the

try’s interim constitution. Its territory was distributed between the new provinces of the Free State, Gauteng, Mpumalanga and North West Province.

Centuries ago an unknown philosopher counseled, “De mortuis nil nisi bonum,” which roughly translates as “Never speak ill of the dead.” Let’s

modify that phrase for the stamp hobby and make it, “Never speak ill of the dead countries.”

What is a dead country? Any area that has ceased existence and no longer produces postage stamps is looked upon by collectors as a dead country. One example of the hundreds of

dead countries is Straits Settlements. A former British colony, the Straits Settlements were actually a number of smaller widely scattered areas on the west side of the Malay Peninsula, including Singapore, Panang, and a place with the unusual name of Dindings. While the name may imply a collecting area that isn’t active, the truth of the matter is that dead countries are often rich with possibilities. They can provide some very satisfying stamp collecting opportunities.

These stamps were not officially recognized by most postal authorities but were generally tolerated on mail. They appear in stamp catalogs with the stamps of South Africa. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bophuthatswana>



Apartheid government, after Transkei. Its territory constituted a scattered patchwork of enclaves spread across what was then Cape Province, Orange Free State and Transvaal. Its seat of government was Mmabatho, which is now a suburb of Mahikeng.

The South African government declared political independence for these four enclaves — Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Transkei and Venda — but that declaration was never recognized by any other country. At the same time, South Africa began issuing stamps inscribed with the names of these areas.

On 27 April 1994, it was reintegrated into South Africa with the coming into force of the coun-

FALL OCTOBER 2025 USPS NEW ISSUES



October 1, 2025 President Jimmy Carter

Honor the 39th President of the United States with the **Jimmy Carter** stamp from the U.S. Postal Service. **President Jimmy Carter** (1924-2024) represented a new generation of progressive Southern politicians, serving as president from 1977 to 1981. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002 for his later humanitarian work.

Issued in a pane of 20, the stamp features a 1982 oil on-linen work created as a life study by artist Herbert E. Abrams (1921-2003) in preparation for painting his official White House portrait of **Jimmy Carter**.

Art director Ethel Kessler designed the stamp.

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The methods above were used for both civilian and military mail prior to 1775, but larger cities did have postal services. Benjamin Franklin was appointed postmaster of Philadelphia in 1737, almost 40 years prior to the outbreak of the Revolution. The British government appointed him

Postmaster General of the Colonies in general in 1753 (jointly with William Hunter of Williamsburg,

Virginia). He relished this job because he could send out the newspapers he printed faster than other printers could.

During the American Revolution the colonies needed to coordinate plans so exchanging information was highly valued. Accordingly the Continental Congress authorized the "Constitutional Post" in July

1775 – a year before the Declaration of Independence. Because of the importance of their duties transporting letters and newspapers among the colonies, post riders were exempted from military service during the war.

Early Free Franking

In the colonial period, officials most often wrote "On His Majesty's Service" on their official letters, and they would be delivered for free. Building on this practice, in 1775 the First Continental Congress granted free frank privileges to congressmen in sending letters to constituents as well as to Continental soldiers. The practice continued throughout the American Revolution when many letters were sent regarding organization, personnel and logistics issues for the Army and Navy. Officers commonly wrote "on public service" or "free" on their mail. The right to free frank letters was important to military officials and military operations. Funding of the military was often inadequate during the war and sending mail was expensive. Regular soldiers often just asked

someone travelling in the direction of their family to take a letter back to them, and this was often done for free, out of friendship or patriotism. When the Articles of Confederation were enacted in 1782 the Continental Congress confirmed this process and military officers were given the right to send and receive letters through free franking.

In the early 1800s the population of the U.S. expanded westward. Mail was exchanged between friends and family out west and those who had remained in the east. In addition, the War of 1812 and the Mexican War expanded the reach of mail service and the volume of letters and dispatches. So from 1800 to 1865 -and beyond - military needs often drove expansion of the civilian postal authorities.

Civil War

When the Civil War broke out in



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1861 the Post Office Department took responsibility for carrying military mail. Additionally, at the outset of hostilities Southern post offices held large quantities of U.S. postage stamps. Postmasters were directed to return these to Washington, DC but many ardent Southerners refused. The Union thus invalidated their former stamps to prevent Southerners from using them.

Soon thereafter the Confederate states invalidated the use of U.S. stamps and until they could print their own stamps postmasters allowed stampless mail. Some Southern post offices also printed provisional stamps in the interim period

but in such small quantities that many Confederate provisionals can be tough to

find today. During early 1861 postal workers were forbidden to transmit mail from North to South so express companies took over this work until that too was prohibited a few months later.

Another feature of the Civil War mail system was the great increase in mail volume. Around that time postal charges decreased which allowed more people to be able to afford to send mail. Also, large numbers of people were separated from family members during combat operations, increasing the need to communicate over long distances with loved ones. As in other major wars, American soldiers were permitted to send mail home without stamps or other payment during the Civil War.

When the United States entered the "Great War" in 1917 civilians from the U.S. Post Office Depart-

ment initially handled mail for the military. Letters sent to troops in Europe were usually carried by train to New York City and transported to Europe on commercial cargo ships. Once in France, the mail was processed by civilian postal workers who would get it to military units. In 1918 the U.S. Army took over mail operations in France and ran field post offices. This represented the first U.S. mail service handled exclusively by the military and it was known as the Military Postal Express Service (MPES). To



Mail delivery by wagon

U.S. using the APO number as their main address. If the enemy captured the mail, it would only know a number, not the geographic location of that military unit.

The first Army Post Office (APO) set up in France during World War I was given the designation APO 1. That was in St. Nazaire in July 1917. After that American Expeditionary Force post offices were numbered sequentially in the order of their establishment, except that at one point the numbering was restarted at number 700 to avoid

confusion with British and French postal service designations. In May 1918 the Military Postal Express Service (M.P.E.S.) was stood up and the military services became responsible for mail acceptance and delivery in Europe.

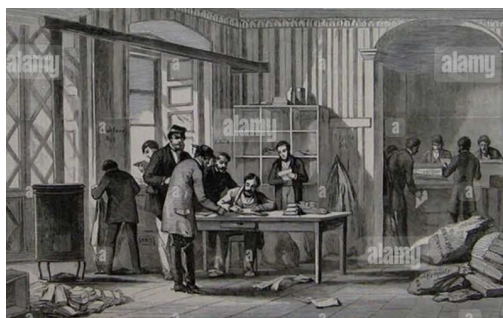
Many military mail issues were worked out by postal inspectors. From the Civil War to World War II many issues dealing with military

mail were handled by postal inspectors. This also occurred in the Spanish-American War and the First World War.

Free franking of letters was granted to deployed soldiers, sailors

and marines on October 3, 1917. They would simply write "On Active Service" or "O.A.S." in the upper right portion of the envelope. Meanwhile military personnel inside of the United States still had to place stamps on their mail. Censorship was practiced during the

war to make sure no military member disclosed operational information that might benefit the enemy if the mail was captured. Again, the amount of mail sent through the U.S. mail-



Army Post Offices (APO) maintain order to mail.

keep things orderly newly established Army Post Offices were numbered. The main idea of the numbers was that military members could send mail back and forth to the



Soldier's mail from World War I. Image by U.S. Army Allied Expeditionary Forces Censor (hand stamp) - The Cooper Collection of U.S. Postal History, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10692999>

stream greatly increased during the war, and postal authorities struggled to process it efficiently. Some mail in both directions was delayed reaching its recipient. After World War I ended most soldiers were released from the military. U.S. military stations still existed in other countries but mail to

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October Dayton Stamp Club Meeting

October 6 Club CASH Auction PREVIEW 7:00-7:25PM and
7:30 pm Meeting & Program Mineral & Fossil Stamps, DSC Member Speakers: Greg Brown and Pat Westby

October 13 7:00 pm -- Board Meeting All are WELCOME

October 20 7:00 pm — DSC AUCTION #6 - Club CASH Auction



AMSIPLEX-26
www.amsipex.com

AMSIPLEX-26 Newsletter No.1.2, June 2025

We are pleased to announce AMSIPLEX-26, the 2nd International Virtual Aero- and Astrophilatelic Exhibition, to be held from 14th to 22nd February 2026. As part of these proceedings, we will celebrate World Air Mail Day on 18th February 2026 with an International Webinar, Special Cover release, and other activities.

We have confirmed support from the following societies as Joint-Organisers:



American Air Mail Society



British Air Mail Society



Cercle Aérophilatelique Français

Gold Sponsor



David Feldman
INTERNATIONAL AUCTIONEERS

Silver Sponsor

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AMSIPLEX-25 held in February 2025, marked a significant milestone in the field of aero- and astrophilately. This was the 1st International Virtual Exhibition, and it received overwhelming global participation (the AMSIPLEX-25 report is attached). We introduced several pioneering initiatives aimed at inclusivity, education, and engagement:

While we have posted our IREX, and will be posting the schedule and entry form shortly. You can start planning your individual exhibits as well as forming your teams for the single frame World Championship medal for your country.

I request all clubs and societies to come forward and sign up as joint-organisers and to share this communication with your fellow members. Please write to me in you want a translation of this message in a language of your choice.

For more details about AMSIPLEX-26, please visit our official website: www.amsipex.com which we will constantly update.

With Warm Regards,

Mr. P.K. Khaitan FRPSL, FPCI
Convenor, AMSIPLEX-26
Chairman
Air Mail Society India Foundation
E: pk@khaitan.in
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and from these locations was usually handled by the postal system in that nation. Military mail to and from U.S. territories such as Puerto Rico, Panama and Cuba was handled by the U.S. Post Office Department.

Occasionally these civilian postal

employees developed malaria or yellow fever and this delayed mail handling in those territories.

Just before the United States entered World War II the military began to establish its own Army Post Offices in foreign locations. Seven of these existed in the Atlantic region when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entered the fray. The amount of postage charged differed depending on the location, with the highest postage rate being 50 cents for sending a letter from the U.S. to the Naval Post Office in the Philippines. As the war continued, the number of deployed servicemen and women increased and so did the amounts of mail sent. The number of U.S. Navy post offices increased from 891 in 1941 to 4,632 in 1945 in order to handle the large volumes of mail.

The main military post office for the European Theater of the war was established in Northern Ireland. One officer and 11 soldier postal clerks served every 10,000 troops, and nearly a thousand APO's were in use by the end of the war in 1945. During World War II overseas soldiers could send mail to the United States for free, provided that they wrote "Free" in the upper right corner and listed their name, rank and military branch in the return address. This privilege was extended partly in order to avoid having to ship stamps to myriad locations. But also, at that time

sending overseas mail was quite expensive, prohibitively so for junior enlisted troops.



A Marine corporal delivers a package. U.S. Marine Corps photo from <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/mail-call>

then reconstituted onto paper at the other end. This process allowed for 50 times more letters to be sent on planes and ships and it saved 98% on cargo weight.

After WWII free mail and victory mail were both discontinued in 1947 but a few years later free franking for military personnel was re-started as troops were sent to Korea. Huge numbers of letters were sent to troops in Korea requiring as much as 11 tons of cargo space on aircraft each day. This

volume overwhelmed the cargo capabilities of ships and aircraft. In later conflicts military personnel were also extended the free franking privilege. It was more efficient than shipping many denominations of stamps to every location.

And it improved morale for troops and on the home front.

In Vietnam in the 1960s military postal units were organized under each theater-level command. That is, they were set up only at major headquarters. Mail headed to and from the Pacific was organized

Another feature of WWII military mail was V-mail (Victory mail). Letters were photographed, placed onto a roll of microfilm, mailed and

through San Francisco and mail headed to and from Europe was organized through New York City. These stations were called Joint Military Mail Terminals. Around Vietnam the military set up 24 post offices at different times during the war. One innovation in the 1960s was military parcel air lift where boxes were placed in empty space aboard civilian cargo flights. The use of commercial airliners was new because in World War II most mail to and from deployed troops had been carried on military planes and ships. This new system improved the speed of delivery in that some mail to and from Vietnam could be delivered within as little as three days.

In 1980 the Department of Defense stood up the Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA) to handle military mail. Ten years later the 4401st Air Postal Squadron was organized to support Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. But the MPSA continues to the present day to carry military mail to and from over 50 nations. In Operation Desert Shield during the

summer of 1990 eleven military post offices were functioning in Saudi Arabia as American troops gathered to defend Kuwait from attack. After Iraq invaded Kuwait, over a half million service members gathered – mostly in Saudi Arabia. The Secretary of Defense authorized free mail for service members deployed in support of Desert

Storm operations and the practice greatly increased the volume of mail soldiers and sailors sent home. Cell phones and e mail were not yet available in 1991 so mail was still the main way for ser-

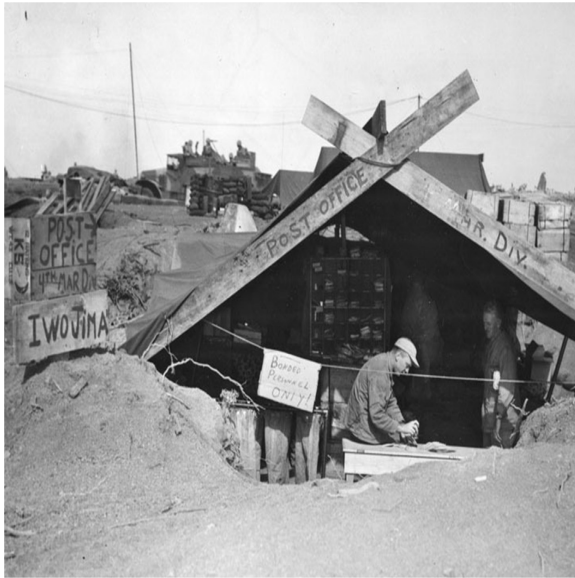


Clerk sorting mail in WWI. Image from the Smithsonian Institution Libraries, <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/mail-call/postal-operations>

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vice members to communicate with loved ones. At the peak of Gulf War operations 1300 U.S. military postal clerks operated 203 military



Marine Post Office on Iwo Jima in WWII. Image from the National Archives, <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/mail-call-the-mail-piece/delivering-more>

post offices and serviced 150 tons of mail daily. Various techniques were developed to prevent bombs from being placed into the military mailstream and many of these are still in use today.

At the turn of the 21 st century Army postal operations were transferred to personnel service battalions. Individual postal units were down-sized but more, smaller units were created. Each office might have two or three postal clerks assigned. One innovation in the first decade of the 2000s was moto mail. In this case family members could e mail their deployed member in order to cut down on the physical transport of letters. But since the members did not have the ability to receive e mail in many cases, the postal workers downloaded the messages and printed them in the deployed location, delivering the e mailed messages to the recipient on paper.

By 2013 most deployed service members had access to the Internet so moto mail was discontinued. Currently the U.S. military operates

over three hundred Army, Air Force and Navy post offices around the world. The system has grown more complex, with just the Central Command (in the Middle East) hosting 4 mail terminals and 32 different levels of post offices. Navy fleet post offices are mobile and operate with FPO zip codes. Military postal clerks these days function similarly to workers of the United States Postal Service in that they use regular USPS equipment and affix postage meters to parcels. It is just that their mail travels through military channels instead of civilian ones in many cases. Sometimes the military contracts for cargo flights to carry mail as well.

During Desert Storm the APO/FPO system divided

the world into regions. Zip codes starting with 09 were handed through the New York Post Office and zip codes starting with 96 were handled through San Francisco. Numbers starting with 34 were handled through Miami, Florida and ones with 98 were routed through Seattle, Washington.

Prior to 1991 mail sent from the United States to service members had borne the name of the post office handling the mail, but after 1991 the city name was replaced by "AA" for the Americas, "AE" for Europe and "AP" for the Pacific region.

One new feature in the First Gulf War was that mail could be sent to "Any Service Member" and it would be delivered to a random soldier,

sailor or marine. Department of Defense leaders authorized this program to improve morale but it was so popular that the volume of mail sent put strain on the overall system. In fact, so much patriotic mail was sent to "Any Service Member" that the delivery of mail to and from family members was greatly delayed. Piles of mail built up in Saudi Arabia, waiting for weeks to be delivered. A study years later found that service members had been deeply dissatisfied with mail delivery times while they were deployed to Desert Storm.

Free franking was granted during Desert Storm, as it had been in prior conflicts. The free franking of mail continued to be permitted to deployed troops through 1995, more than four years after combat relented. One newspaper reported that free franking over a five year

period had cost the military about \$8 million. Twelve years later U.S. military mail to and from the Middle East in the Second Gulf War averaged 377,000 pounds each day. The average time for mail delivery was kept to around 11 to 14 days, much better than in Desert Storm.



Navy officers censoring mail in WWII. image from the National Archives, <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/mail-call-the-mail-piece/delivering-more>

Currently the United States Postal Service website advertises that letters and care packages can be sent to military addresses overseas at domestic prices. Post offices and the USPS website offer free military shipping kits and advice on filling out customs forms. Some countries prohibit mailing certain items into their country, even if you are sending it to a deployed U.S.

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service member through the military postal service. Shipments to Army Post Office/ Fleet Post Office addresses require the recipient's name, rank and unit. It is recommended that senders do not add country or city names where the person is deployed or the mail might exit the military postal system and enter normal international mail channels. The Military Postal Service contributes about \$55 million a year to USPS revenue. A sample APO address is given below:

PFC JOHN DOE
PSC 3 BOX 4120
APO AE 09021

Over three centuries of American military operations some trends have persisted. First, military mail has been prioritized by postal officials and military leaders. Official military mail contributes to combat and peacetime missions. Plus mail delivery greatly improves morale both at the front and back home. Another trend is that deployed military members have often been granted the privilege of sending mail back home for free. Family and friends in the United States have to pay to send items to military personnel, but they pay domestic mail prices as opposed to overseas rates. Another trend that has re-occurred over time is that the structure of military mail systems matters. The more efficient mail delivery is, the better the morale of deployed troops and the better the attitudes of their family members back in the U.S. Tracing the postal history of military organizations is an engaging activity and much more work can be done in this area. Most military covers won't break your budget, which is another positive feature of military postal history.

For those who are interested, the Military Postal History Society is always seeking new members. The author belongs to this group, and you can investigate the organization's website at <https://militaryphs.org/indexx.html>.

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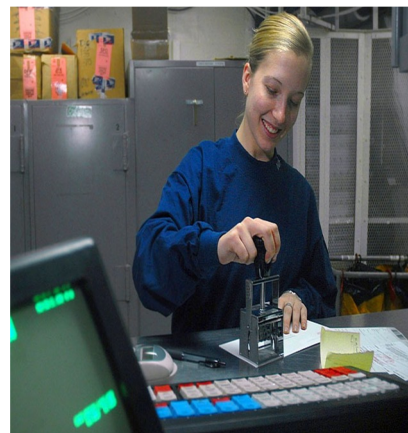
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U.S. Navy postal clerk cancelling mail in 2008. Image from <https://>