

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT
Washington 25, D. C.



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The Nation's first permanent Postal History Museum - vividly portraying American postal development from Colonial days to the present - was officially opened today (Tuesday, February 23, 1960).

The Postal History Museum, located on the first floor (Rooms 1412-1416) of the Post Office Department Building at 12th and Pennsylvania Avenue, N. W., will be open to the public permanently without charge. Hours are from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, starting today.

The Postal History Museum is most easily reached by entering the Post Office Department Building via the side entrance off 13th Street. The new Museum is located near another major attraction of the Postal Service - the Philatelic Exhibition housed near by in Room 1315.

The Postal History is expected to be a new and unusual historical attraction for local residents as well as the thousands of visitors that come to Washington each year. The Museum portrays the progress of the United States Post Office from the early post riders of several centuries ago to the recent experiment with Missile Mail.

In the hallway just outside the Museum, the visitor first sees a Wells Fargo stage coach model, one half the size of the original coaches which carried the mails between the remote western settlements in the latter half of the 19th century. In 1858, for example, the first transcontinental stage line - "Butterfield

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The story of the Overland Express Stages and the Pony Express is shown on the panels. Adjacent to the panels are a strong box, a Pony Express "mochilla" (a leather saddle cover with mail containers) and scores of other articles used by postal pioneers to help win the west.

The Pony Express era - April 3, 1860--October, 1861 - opened a notable Century of progress in the American Postal Service and electrified the Nation by carrying letters 2,000 miles across the trackless American wilderness in ten days time.

Following the Pony Express, the Exhibition shows the advent of Railway Mail Service, followed by a view of the first official test of a railroad post office car in 1864.

Later advancements of the "Iron Horse" and the role it played in speeding mail service are also related through pictures and artifacts.

The birth of Rural Free Delivery in 1896, a major step in rendering postal service to over 22,000 families living in sparsely populated areas of the Nation, is a feature of the Museum. At present, 9,189,211 families are receiving rural service.

The development of airmail starting in 1918 when mail was first officially flown from Washington to New York is shown. In its initial year 17,831 pounds of mail were carried by air; last year the total was 115,207,000 pounds.

A final exhibit climaxing the display tells the story of the first official mail delivery by guided missile on June 6, 1959, opening a path for further exploration of a new technique of communication -- "Missile Mail."

Anyone may visit the Museum or Philatelic Exhibition during regular hours without making advance arrangements. Groups which wish guided tours, or visits at times other than regular hours, should communicate in advance by letter or telephone to: The Special Assistant to the Postmaster General, Post Office Department, Washington 25, D. C.

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