

*Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century
Connecticut Postmasters*



William J. Duffney

Introduction

This work is a chronological listing of the tenures of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Connecticut postmasters organized by counties. It has been presented in a format that is intended to be intuitively understood, without long explanation.

Post office names and periods of operation are important and integral parts of this research. Post offices often changed locations within their townships without changing names. However, many post offices did undergo name changes. Traditional cross referencing is employed to cover these concerns. There are occasions when a given post office name was discontinued, then reassigned to a different office. In these cases the name is followed by [1], [2], etc.

There were 785 post offices in Connecticut during the time period covered. The county maps are from *Atlas of the State of Connecticut* published by D.H. Hurd, Boston, 1893. While the maps do not show every post office listed, it is a worthy representation of many of them.

The handwritten documents submitted by postmasters were subject to misreading. There are many spelling errors found in the primary sources. Just as we today have difficulty reading the old style penmanship (usually the Spencer method), so did the clerks and typesetters of the time. The letter *u* was often confused with the letter *n*. Therefore, we find Mashapaug listed erroneously as 'Mashapang'. The Middlebury Post Office was recorded as 'Middleburg' for years because the clerks in Washington, D.C., misinterpreted the postmaster's poor penmanship.

There were many other cases of mistaken letters in the spellings of the names of postmasters: *M* confused with *H*; *I* with *J*; *F* with *T*; *S* with *L*, and the list goes on... Where known signatures were found on free franked mail, the spelling used by the actual postmaster was accepted. The symbol ☒ indicates that there are known free frank example(s) of a specific postmaster.

The vast majority of the dates and years listed are from Post Office Department records. One must be wary of using the terms *date of appointment* and *establishment date* because that information is so inexact, especially in the earlier records. The dates in the primary source records could be the date that the first returns were received from any particular postmaster, the date that the postmaster's bond was received, or the date that the postmaster's letter of appointment was written. The amount of time it took to send and receive mail is not considered (see Figure 2). Some early Connecticut postmasters were found to be running informal post offices without compensation before being officially appointed. So, the postmaster in most cases was in the job either before or after the date given, usually within a fiscal quarter. We will probably never know the exact day a person began performing his or her duties as postmaster, or the exact day that an office began to operate, unless it is found mentioned in contemporary correspondence.

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~William J. Duffney
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Credit should also be given to the following sources: United States Post Office Department microfilms *Record of Appointment of Postmasters* (October 1789-1832 and 1832-1901); *Official Register of the United States* (1816-1901); *Connecticut State Register* (various years 1813-1862); United States Postal Service Postmaster Finder <http://usps.com/>; *Connecticut Manuscript Postmarks* by Raymond F Longobardi and Ralph A. Edson, CPHS, 1997; *The Post Offices of Connecticut* by Alan H. Patera, The Depot, 1977; *Postmasters & Post Offices of the United States 1782-1811* by Robert J. Stets, La Posta Publications, 1994; *Connecticut Post Offices and Postmarks* by Arthur J. Warmesley, published by the author, 1977.

I, Moses Seymour Junr of Litchfield in the County
of Litchfield, and State of Connecticut, Merchant,
do swear, that I will faithfully perform all the
duties required of me, and obtain from every thing
forbidden by the law in relation to the establishment
of Post Offices and Post Roads within the United States,
And I do solemnly swear that I will support the
Constitution of the United States
Litchfield Feb 9th 1802 Moses Seymour Junr.

Sworn before the subscriber, Justice of the Peace
in the County of Litchfield this ninth day of
February 1802.

Moses Seymour Justice of Peace

N. B. The person who takes the above oath, should
sign his name above the magistrates certificate, & his
manner of employment should be mentioned.

Copy of the Original
J. O. Stone

Figure 1 — Manuscript copy of the oath of office taken by Litchfield Postmaster Moses Seymour, Jr., which was administered by his father Justice of the Peace Moses Seymour, Esq., on February 9, 1802, some thirteen days after the official appointment.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,

APPOINTMENT OFFICE,

Washington, Dec. 11, 1837

SIR:

The Postmaster General has appointed you POSTMASTER at *Hamden,*
County of *New Haven,* State of *Connecticut,*
in which capacity you will be authorized to act, upon complying with the following requirements:

1st. To execute the enclosed bond, and cause it to be executed by two sufficient sureties, in the presence of suitable witnesses, and the sufficiency of the sureties to be certified by a qualified magistrate.

2d. To take and subscribe the oath or affirmation of office enclosed, before a magistrate, who will certify the same.

3d. To exhibit your bond and qualification, duly executed and certified as aforesaid, to *Chauncy B. Fote,* — or the person having charge of the Post Office of *Hamden,* — and then to deposit them in the mail, addressed to me.

You will then be entitled to enter on the duties of the office, without waiting for a commission, and to take charge of the public property belonging to the Post Office aforesaid, such as desks, cases, boxes, maps, tables of post offices, laws and instructions, mail keys, blanks, letters and papers on hand, and stationery.

After the receipt, at this Department, of your bond and qualification, duly executed and certified, and the approval of the same by the Postmaster General, a commission will be sent you.

It will be your duty to continue in the charge of the office, either personally or by assistant, until you are relieved from it by the consent of the Department, which will be signified by the discontinuance of your office, or the appointment of your successor.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

Rob. Johnston

Second Assistant Postmaster General.

John Lounsbury, Esq. 9

N. B.—The quarters expire on the 31st of March, 30th June, 30th September, and 31st December. Accounts must be rendered for each quarter within two days after its close.

Postmasters are not authorized to give credit for postage. Want of funds, therefore, is no excuse for failure of payment.

A Postmaster must not change the name by which his office is designated on the books of the Department, without the order of the Postmaster General.

Be careful, in mailing letters, to post-mark each one, in all cases, with the name of your office and State; and, in all communications to the Department, to embrace in the date the name of your Post Office, County, (or District,) and State.

Figure 2 — Post Office Department Appointment Notice with proper procedures for taking office, sent to John Lounsbury of Hamden, December 11, 1837.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,

APPOINTMENT OFFICE,

Ap, 25

1837.

SIR :

Your official bond was destroyed by the fire which consumed the building in which this Department was kept, on the 15th December, 1836.

By direction of the Postmaster General, I enclose to you a new bond, which you will please to execute and return to me with as little delay as practicable. The new bond should be signed by the same persons who were your sureties in the former bond, if their signatures can be obtained ; but if that cannot be done, then you will procure new sureties ; and, in either case, the sufficiency of the sureties must be certified by a magistrate, according to the form annexed to the bond.

I also enclose blank forms for the oath of office to be taken by yourself and assistant, which you will please to have filled up and return them with your bond.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

ROBERT JOHNSTON,

Second Assistant Postmaster General.

AUDITOR'S OFFICE OF THE TREASURY,
FOR THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,

March 15, 1848.

Sir:

It appears by the Weekly Report of the P. M. General, just received, that a new appointment has been made for your office, and that your services as Postmaster are now to cease. It becomes me, therefore, to adopt the proper measures for the early and final adjustment of your accounts.

The first step to be taken is the transfer of the office to the new incumbent as soon as he shall have executed his bond and taken his oath of office, and, having exhibited these documents to you, shall have duly mailed them addressed under an envelope to the 2d Assistant P. M. General. No delay ought to take place in this transfer; and, if any should happen, the party innocent of it should immediately free himself from the responsibility, by at once reporting the fact and the cause to the 2d Assistant Postmaster General.

Your successor's functions and responsibility for the office will commence from and after the day on which he mails his bond and oath; and yours will cease on the day next preceding the day on which his commences. The returns of the two should strictly conform to the rule here stated. You should immediately make out your final return to the day next prior to the commencement of his service; and his first return should be made out from that day to the end of the current quarter. Your final return, so made out, you will immediately transmit, else you may be subjected to the payment of double the amount of postages received; and you will note at foot that it is your final return, and get your successor to note thereon, also, the day on which he has taken possession of the office.

If the late Postmaster to whom this circular may be addressed, has already removed from the place, or is dead, the sureties of such Postmaster will see that his assistant or other person in charge of the office transmit his final return in manner above stated, and otherwise comply with the injunctions herein contained.

At the same time that you transmit this final return to the Postmaster General you will transmit to me your successor's receipt for the Post Office property turned over to him, and a statement of your general account kept in compliance with the following regulations published in 1843:

" 387. Every Deputy Postmaster will keep in his office a general account with the United States, for the service of the Post Office Department, subject to the inspection of the Postmaster General, or of any general or special agent of the Department, and a copy of which is to be furnished to the Auditor from time to time, when he may so require.

" 388. In this general account, every deputy postmaster will credit the United States with the balances due on his quarterly returns as acknowledged, and when notified by the Auditor of any corrections made on examination thereof, he will make the corresponding corrections in the general account, or enter the proper credit therefor.

" 389. The deputy postmaster will likewise credit all sums collected by, or deposited with him, on account of the Department, and will debit the account with all sums paid over for the general service of the Department, whether by deposit, upon draft, or upon collection order."

If upon inspection of the books of this office, there shall appear to be a balance of any moment at this time in your hands, I shall request a draft to be issued for the amount, as a preliminary measure, to be taken into view upon the settlement to be made after the receipt of the accounts now required, and after the same shall have been duly ex-

amined, and the entries arising out of them shall have been duly carried into the books. This draft you will of course hold yourself prepared to pay, not only because the law designs that the public money shall never be used for any private purpose whatever, but because it makes a refusal to pay a draft prima facie evidence of embezzlement.

This examination, and these entries having been completed, I purpose to send you thereupon a general statement of your account as kept in this office, either for the whole period of your service, or from the time to which you may have been previously furnished with such statement; and if the balance be in your favor, your own account being duly compared, to pay it to you without delay.

If the balance appear to be due from you to the United States, I request that upon receiving the official statement, you will immediately examine it, and if you find any exception to it, or any voucher not credited, you will, without delay, advise me of the one, and forward the other. If, within a reasonable time, say one week over and above the course of the mails, I do not hear from you, I shall consider the balance claimed as admitted, and have a draft issued for its collection accordingly.

Although I do not anticipate in many cases any difficulty in the payment of such drafts, yet it seems proper for me, in preparing a circular to be addressed to all, to state, that in case there should be difficulty after such notice, and after the agent employed to collect shall have been at the trouble, and perhaps the expense of presenting the draft, excuses for non-payment will be received with very little favor.

In respect to Postmasters generally, I may express the hope that few, if any, will force me to the necessity, in performing my duty, of subjecting them to the expense and trouble of civil actions for the recovery of balances due, or to the more serious annoyances of criminal prosecutions for default.

Respectfully,

Auditor.

Esq.,
Late Postmaster.

Figure 4 (page 2) — Auditor's Office for the Treasury instructions to postmasters making their final returns when leaving office, datelined March 15, 1848.