



Inauguration of the U. S. Parcel Post Service in Philadelphia,
January 1, 1913

ADDENDUM

STORE'S INTRODUCTION OF THE PARCEL POST, 1913.

Yet one more achievement must be chronicled in connection with the work of John Wanamaker—the establishment of the United States Parcel Post service, such as he proposed when he was Postmaster-General, from 1889 to 1893. It was one of several forward steps which he then urged; many of these, such as rural free delivery and the use of pneumatic tubes in city mail delivery, have since been adopted. By the Act of August 24, 1912, the Government authorized a nationwide Parcel Post, to go into operation January 1, 1913. And the first official Parcel Post Stations in any New York or Philadelphia stores were those opened in the Wanamaker Stores on January 2.

Mr. Wanamaker's interest and instrumentality in securing the Parcel Post were recognized in the ceremony with which the new service was inaugurated in Philadelphia, at a reception held by Postmaster Smith in the Federal Building on the night of December 31, 1912, as the New Year came in. Here Mr. Wanamaker addressed a distinguished assemblage of officials high in public life, judges, members of Congress, city officers and representative business men, and himself opened the service by mailing to President Taft the first parcel sent through the Philadelphia Post Office. The privilege was accorded him by the following special invitation from Postmaster Smith:

DECEMBER 23D, 1912.

HON. JOHN WANAMAKER,
Philadelphia, Pa.

My Dear Mr. Wanamaker:—As the time draws near to the date upon which the entire country will witness the inaugural of the Parcel Post System, I am thinking more and more of the desirability of having some special feature connected with its commencement here that will impress itself upon and eventually become part of the history of the

experience of the Philadelphia office, and I can conceive of nothing more appropriate than that you, who have for so long a period of time, and especially during your administration of the postal affairs of our Government, advocated such system, should be the first to avail yourself of its facilities. May I suggest, in view of your very close friendship for our Honorable President, that it will please me very much if you can see your way clear to be our first original patron on the morning of January first with a parcel addressed to Hon. William Howard Taft, President of the United States, Washington, D. C.?

Very sincerely yours,
(Signed) THOMAS B. SMITH,
Postmaster.

To which Mr. Wanamaker replied:

DECEMBER 26TH, 1912.

MR. THOMAS B. SMITH,
Postmaster, 9th and Chestnut Streets,
Philadelphia, Pa.

My Dear Mr. Smith:—It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge your esteemed letter of the 23d of December. I thank you for the thoughtful courtesy of a New Year's present that you offer me as the Postmaster of Philadelphia, and for the graceful way that you have presented it.

There are many things in one's lifetime that a man interests himself in that have worn away by the footsteps of time, but I am glad to be able truthfully to say that I have never lost the interest in postal affairs, to which I devoted four years of strenuous labor, nor have I lost the sense of comradeship with the men in the postal service.

It will give me great pleasure to join you in sending at the first moment possible under the new Law the first parcel from the Philadelphia Post Office to the Presidential Mansion, at the Capitol, to my old friend, the distinguished Honorable William H. Taft, President of the United States.

Very sincerely yours,
(Signed) JOHN WANAMAKER.

The address by Mr. Wanamaker was as follows:

"It is by the gracious courtesy of the Postmaster of the city of Philadelphia, Thomas B. Smith, that we are sharers with him in the inauguration of the American Parcel Post, an event of national and historic importance. I appreciate highly the privilege accorded to me tonight to speak to my fellow-citizens as the guests of the Postmaster.

"We stand together, as the old year breathes its last, upon a moving platform that carries forward the postal affairs of the nation. Far too much credit has been given to me for the part it was my duty and pleasure to take in this work years ago. Some of the measures I worked upon from 1889 to 1893 have come into operation, thanks to the splendid work of Postmaster-General Meyer, now Secretary of the Navy. But for the masterful work of Postmaster-General Hitchcock we would not be here tonight, with the honorable Postmaster of the city, to assist in the establishing of the Parcel Post as the twin sister of the postal savings bank, both resulting from the Postmaster-General's great work under the Taft administration. Honor to whom honor is due.

"The probable labors of Postmaster Smith incident to the introduction and operation of this single branch of the postal service, the Parcel Post, will exceed the entire work of his illustrious predecessor, Benjamin Franklin, in whose shoes he stands tonight, in the same city, as the servant of the Government.

"On January 1, 1863, in the White House at Washington, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, signed the proclamation of emancipation that gave freedom to 4,000,000 slaves.

"On January 1, 1913, under Postmaster-General Hitchcock's proclamation, 100,000,000 of the people of the United States are emancipated from the bondage of the express corporations.

"All human issues require fidelity to work them out. The people are bound to have their day in court some time. The struggle of humanity never ceases, and it is always upward, though some of the roads are long and steep.

"I have been on the Parcel Post turnpike since 1889, when I made an earnest and urgent argument for it and other postal service in my first annual report to President Harrison.

"The cost of living and the prices of many things would not have been as high the last twenty years if Parcel Post, postal savings and cheapened telegraph service had been granted to the people when other nations had proved them and were successfully operating them.

"This midnight hour will ring out over every hill and valley to all the people of this broad land chimes of gladness for the nation's New Year gift of 1913.

"It is a new star of hope in the sky, though the present measure of the new Parcel Post is but a fair half of what it will be when enlarged and amended by future legislation when better understood.

"It makes a good beginning to give to the poor and rich alike an equitable service beyond monopolizing control. Nor can it ever become possible for a trust to take it over, or a court, high or low, to undo it.

"The possibilities of the postal system to settle up the sparsely populated sections of the country, compel construction of roads for mail deliveries, and contribute to the content and prosperity of the nation by mail services, are beyond any arithmetical calculation, especially when compared to the value of warships to this nation.

"Now that progress is manifest in the post office department, now under civil service in almost all divisions, why not divest it entirely of politics and give it a fair chance under simple, well-tried business principles, and let the postage stamp and postal distributors be the people's common carriers throughout the new million of miles to be reached by the act creating the Parcel Post?

"There were five postal things concluded under President Harrison's administration:

"Anti-lottery act.

"American shipping act, adding four great steamers as naval vessels under the American flag.

"International post offices, assorting mail on the ocean ships.

"City tubular post routes.

"Rural free delivery.

"The next administration can possibly double the benefits of the post office service. Two things it surely can do: Give us one-cent postage, and—of still greater value to the business and social world—a postal telegraph service further-reaching, quicker and cheaper.

"With a Congress at the President's command, let the call of the common people be heard: Give us postal telegraph next.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 2, 1913

My dear Mr. Wanamaker:

I am greatly touched by your beautiful memorial of the beginning of the parcel post, in which you have taken so great an interest ever since we were members of General Harrison's administration. I shall cherish the interesting gift which you have sent me as one of the pleasantest remembrances of my public life.

With best wishes for the New Year, believe me,

Sincerely yours,

Hon. John Wanamaker,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

President Taft's Letter of Thanks to Mr. Wanamaker

"The nation was chained twenty years to the express companies. Let us not be chained for twenty years more to the telegraph corporations!"

The reception was held in the room of the Circuit Court of Appeals, where on a table lay Mr. Wanamaker's gift to the President—a handsome case containing a set of fifty-eight enameled gold spoons—the only set of its kind in existence. The shield-shaped leather case bore the grand Seal of the United States, and below this a silver plate engraved with a presentation inscription in Mr. Wanamaker's writing. The exquisitely designed spoons represented the States of the Union and our insular possessions, that representing the District of Columbia being larger than the others. The handle of each spoon was formed by the American eagle in relief under the national motto, and against its breast was the national shield in colors; below the eagle was enameled the name of the State represented. The bowl showed the State Seal and motto enameled in colors. This unique gift was peculiarly appropriate to the occasion, representing every part of the country through which the new Parcel Post operates, and its shipment set in motion the machinery of the Parcel Post in Philadelphia.

As the striking of twelve brought in the New Year, Mr. Wanamaker addressed the parcel containing the case, and wrote on it—as required by the law—his name and address as sender: "John Wanamaker, 2032 Walnut Street."

It was then weighed, and stamps and an insurance tag were affixed. Then Postmaster Smith dropped the parcel into the waiting mailbag, and it was taken out to the West Philadelphia station of the Pennsylvania Railroad, by Parcel Post delivery motor car, to meet the express for Washington, so that the President might receive it early on New Year's morning.

At the same hour of midnight Mr. Rodman Wanamaker mailed in the New York City Post Office a parcel from Mr. John Wanamaker to Postmaster-General Hitchcock, containing a silver vase commemorating the opening of the service in New York. The vase bears this inscription:

To the Honorable Frank H. Hitchcock,
Postmaster-General of the United States,
during whose administration the
American Parcel Post
was established.

This being the first parcel mailed at
the moment of its inauguration,
12 o'clock midnight,
January First, Nineteen thirteen,
at the City of New York,

by
Edward M. Morgan, Postmaster,
from
John Wanamaker,
Postmaster-General of the United States,
1889 to 1893.

The announcement of the opening of the official Parcel
Post stations in the Wanamaker Stores was made thus,
in the advertisement of January 1, 1913:

It gives us great pleasure to announce
that the United States Government has es-
tablished official Parcel Post stations in the
the Wanamaker Stores.

These Wanamaker stations will, of
course, do everything that any other official
Parcel Post station can do, selling special
Parcel Post stamps, receiving articles to be
mailed by Parcel Post and giving full and
official information on all subjects concern-
ing the new service.

They will be a great convenience to the
public because of their central locations,
and we shall be glad to have them used
freely by the tens of thousands of people
who visit the Stores every day.

But the new Parcel Post is a country-
wide service. It is not for any one section
or community. It belongs to the American
people, wherever they may live.

To co-operate with the Government in
this universal extension of the Parcel Post,
we inaugurate, beginning January 2, 1913,
the Wanamaker Free Delivery by United
States Parcel Post, supplementing the
Stores' regular wagon delivery.

To make this free delivery equitable to
all, and to give to no one an advantage over
another, we have followed the Government
plan, dividing the country into eight zones,
regulating according to these zones and the
weight of parcel the amount of purchase
on which delivery charges will be prepaid.
Parcels weighing four ounces or less will
be delivered free anywhere in the United
States when the purchase is \$1 or more.