

revenue. In 1895 the amount paid to postmasters, was over sixteen million dollars.

Between those two dates there is a development whose recital forms the most marvelous and romantic chapter of our history. For, while the population of the country has increased less than twenty fold, the number of post offices has increased nearly a thousand fold.

The gross revenues of the post office at Pueblo, Col., Battle Creek, Mich., or Fitchburg, Mass are now larger than the postal revenues of the entire country in the first year of the administration of Washington. In that year five hundred thousand pieces of mail matter were handled and now over five billion pieces, or an increase of ten thousand fold.

But there was an American postal system prior to the year 1790. True, there was no general post office in England for half a century after the first settlers came to Jamestown, and for nearly half a century after that was established the few post offices in America were under the patronage of their respective colonies.

On the "seventeenth of February, 1691-2 William and Mary granted by letters-patent to Thomas Neal power and authority 'to erect within every or any of the Chief Ports of the several Islands, Plantations or Colonies in America, an Office or Offices for receiving and dispatching away of letters or packquettas.' The rates of postage were to be the same as those prescribed by the act of Charles II, or such other rates as the Planters or others will freely give."

Under this patent Andrew Hamilton was appointed Postmaster-General of America, and was successful in securing concessions from the separate colonies. He established a weekly post from Portsmouth, N. H.,

southward all the way to Virginia; but in doing this he necessarily ran into debt, for it seems that the expenses of the first four years were about five thousand dollars annually, while the revenue was less than two thousand dollars.

In 1707 the crown bought back the Neale Patent, and in 1710 Parliament erected a post office for America, with New York as the centre of operations, and prescribed rates of postage, with summary process for their collection.

From the purchase of the Neale patent until 1775 postmasters were appointed from London, the best known among them being Spotswood of Virginia and Benjamin Franklin. Franklin was appointed postmaster at Philadelphia in 1737 by Colonel Spotswood, late Governor of Virginia, and then Postmaster-General,

Franklin was postmaster at Philadelphia from 1737 until he became Postmaster-General for the Northern division in 1753, in association with Wm. Hunter for the Southern division, who had been a printer and postmaster at Williamsburg, Va. Franklin was postmaster-General for twenty-one years, for a large part of which time however, he was out of the country. He was removed in 1774, as he says by "a freak of ministers."

The Continental Congress as early as July, 1775,—a year before the Declaration of Independence,—assumed control of the postal service of the colonies, and appointed Benjamin Franklin Postmaster-General for the purpose of running a line of posts from Falmouth or Portland, in Maine, to Savannah, in Georgia, with as many cross-posts as he might see fit. Franklin's son-in-law Richard Bache, was the deputy, and was chosen Postmaster-General on November 7,