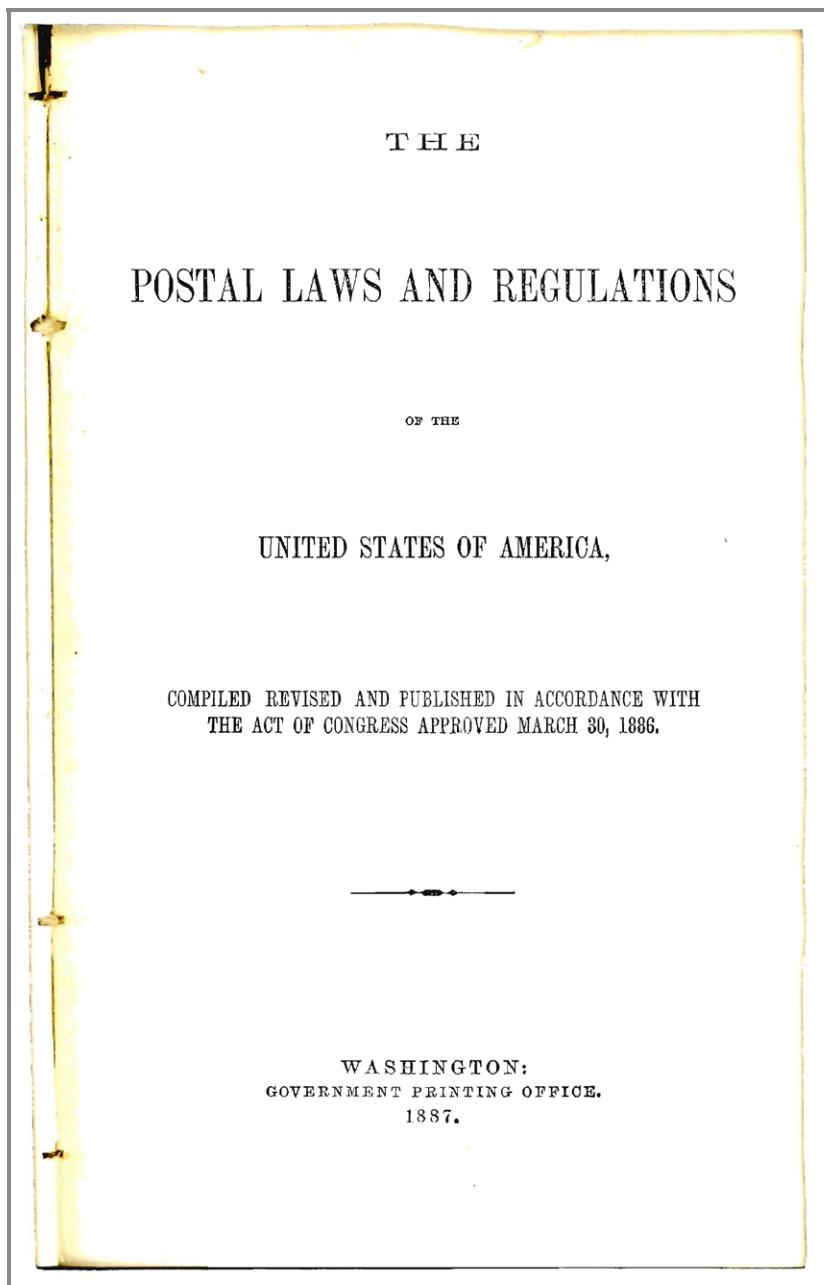


# US Postal Laws & Regulations

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Clerks



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their own boxes, as authorized by section four hundred and ninety, are not required to make deposits for keys furnished by themselves, but must for keys furnished therefor by the postmaster.

Postmasters who provide their own boxes may require a key deposit at their option, not to exceed fifty cents per key. If they omit the requirement, they must inform the First Assistant Postmaster-General.

#### ASSISTANTS, MAILING CLERKS, ETC.

**Sec. 496. Assistant Postmasters.**—Each postmaster shall employ an assistant, so that the office may not be left without a person duly sworn and qualified to perform its duties in case of his necessary absence, sickness, resignation, or death. The wife, son, daughter, or surety of the postmaster may, if competent, be such assistant. All members of his family who are competent and are liable, in his absence, to be called upon to receive or deliver mail, should take the oath of a postal employé. (See section 43.) An ex-postmaster should not be permitted to have access to or handle mail matter in the office unless he takes the oath anew. An unnaturalized person may be such assistant, provided he has in proper form declared his intentions. No contractor or subcontractor for carrying the mails, mail messenger, or assistant mail messenger can be clerk in a post-office. (See section 773.)

**Sec. 497. Classification of Clerks and Employés in Post-Offices.**—Within said sixty days it shall be the duty of the Postmaster-General to separately arrange in classes the several clerks and persons employed, or in the public service, at each post-office, or under any postmaster of the United States, where the whole number of said clerks and persons shall together amount to as many as fifty. And thereafter, from time to time, on the direction of the President, it shall be the duty of the Postmaster-General to arrange in like classes the clerks and persons so employed in the postal service in connection with any other post-office; and every such arrangement and classification upon being made shall be reported to the President. (Act of January 16, 1883, § 6 in part, 22 Stats., 406.)

**NOTE.**—Under the foregoing provision from the Civil Service law, post-offices where such classification and arrangement have been made by order of the Postmaster-General, are within the "Classified Postal Service"; and all employment and appointment of clerks or carriers are made upon selection from those found eligible after a competitive examination by an examining board appointed by the Civil Service Commission. For the manner of application for examination, procedure thereon and mode of appointment, reference is made to the Civil Service Rules. The provisions of the Civil Service law (see sections 19 to 24 and 78 to 81) apply to clerks and employés in the Classified Postal Service.

**Sec. 498. Superintendent of Mails.**—At such post-offices of the first and second classes as he shall deem necessary, the Postmaster-General will appoint a clerk to be known as the “superintendent of mails,” whose duties shall be—

1. To have entire charge of the distribution and dispatch of all mails at such post-offices, and to prepare and correct from time to time all necessary schemes or lists for distribution, subject to the approval of the division superintendent of Railway Mail Service.
2. To see that each distributing clerk is required promptly to examine such orders relating to or changing official schemes, or giving directions as to the making up and dispatch of mails from the office, as may from time to time be received.
3. To conduct the case examinations prescribed in the next section, and make report thereof to the postmaster and division superintendent.
4. To keep a record of all errors and irregularities checked by or against each clerk under his charge, and make report thereof to the postmaster and division superintendent monthly, or oftener if required.
5. To examine all slips in which errors are noted, which have been returned to the post-office, compare the same with the schemes and orders, make a record thereof and return them to the respective clerks by whom the distribution was made, or, in case checks were erroneously made, to the division superintendent, in order that proper credit may be given.

**Sec. 499. Case Examinations.**—Postmasters at first and second class offices will require their distributing clerks to be examined from time to time on schemes of such States as are to be distributed at their post-offices. Such examinations, conducted by the superintendent of mails, will consist in the distribution from memory, into a case for that purpose, of cards representing post-offices, towns, or counties of any State for which distribution is made. After such distribution, the cards will be examined by the superintendent, tested by the schemes, and record kept of the number of errors noted. Clerks should also be sharply questioned frequently as to the proper routes on which mails are dispatched from their offices, and as to the orders given them for making up the mail. Incompetent distributing clerks will be removed when the record of case examinations or of errors made in distribution shows their incompetency.

**Sec. 500. Order Books; when to be Kept.**—Postmasters at first and second class post-offices will keep an order book in which all orders relating to the making up and dispatch of mails at their offices, and all official changes in schemes which are received from division superintendents, are to be inserted or recorded, and require distributing clerks

to examine the same daily; and may require each clerk to sign his initials at the foot of each order to indicate that he has examined it.

#### MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS.

**Sec. 501. Official Guides and Department Circulars.**—The United States Official Postal Guide, of which a copy is sent to each postmaster, is to be carefully preserved, and all orders and instructions attentively perused and their requirements complied with. Printed circulars received by postmasters from any office of the Department must receive the same attention and obedience as if they were manuscript letters or direct special communications.

**Sec. 502. Instructions on Doubtful Matters.**—Whenever a postmaster is in doubt as to a provision of law or regulation affecting a matter upon which he is to act, he should, before taking action, ask instructions from the proper office of the Department. But care must be taken to first thoroughly examine the Postal Laws and Regulations and the Guide, and not to ask for instructions or information which may be found therein.

**Sec. 503. Correspondence with Department.**—The postmaster in his correspondence with the Department should carefully observe the following directions:

1. Write the name of the post-office, county, and State at the head of the letter, if a letter head giving the same be not used.
2. Write only upon one subject in the same letter.
3. Sign and date every letter or indorsement sent to the Department.
4. Promptly answer all communications from the Department requiring reply.
5. All letters of inquiry, applications, or complaints which, having been addressed to the Department and referred to a postmaster for explanation or information, must, without fail, be returned in the same inclosure with the report or answer made respecting the same, which may be indorsed upon or appended thereto when convenient, duly signed and dated as above required.

**Sec. 504. Commissions of Post-Office Inspectors to be Demanded.**—To avoid impostures postmasters should always insist upon the exhibition of commissions of persons representing themselves to be post-office inspectors unless such persons are personally known to them to be such officers. Every post-office inspector carries a commission signed by the Postmaster-General.

**Sec. 505. Political Assessments Forbidden.**—Postmasters will carefully observe the provisions of law forbidding political assessments.

The postmaster and his employés are forbidden, under severe penal-

ties, from soliciting or receiving, directly or indirectly, or being concerned in soliciting or receiving any assessments, subscriptions, or contributions for political purposes from any officer, clerk, or employé in the service of the United States; and it is forbidden to any person to solicit or receive money or other thing of value for political purposes in any post-office or other room or building occupied by any officer of the United States for the discharge of official duties; and postmasters will be held responsible for its prevention. Postmasters and their assistants or employés are forbidden to discharge, promote, or degrade, or change the rank or compensation of any officer or employé, or to threaten so to do, for giving or refusing to give any contribution of money or other valuable thing for any political purpose. It is also forbidden to any officer, clerk, or employé of the United States to give or hand over such contribution to any other officer, clerk, or person in the service of the United States. (Sections 78 to 81.)

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## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN.

### OF THE TREATMENT OF MAIL MATTER IN POST-OFFICES.

#### GENERAL PROVISIONS.

Sec. 506. Privacy of First-Class Mail Matter.—The statutes defining crimes against the Post-Office establishment admonish every person in the postal service of the absolute sanctity of a seal. Under no circumstances will any person in the postal service, except those employed for that purpose in the Dead-Letter Office, break or permit to be broken the seal of any letter or packet, while it is in custody of the postal service. Neither postmasters, inspectors, employés of the Department, nor officers of the law, without legal warrant therefor, have authority to open a sealed letter while in the mails, under any pretext; that it may contain improper or criminal matter, or furnish evidence for the conviction of offenders, is no excuse. (See sections 1447 and 1448.)

NOTE.—The inviolability of the seal is very clearly declared in a decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, in *ex parte Jackson*, 96 U. S., 733, thus: "A distinction is to be made between different kinds of mail matter—between what is intended to be kept free from inspection, such as letters and sealed packages subject to letter postage, and what is open to inspection, such as newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and other printed matter, purposely left in condition to be examined. Letters and sealed packages of this kind in the mail are as fully guarded from examination and inspection, except as to their outward form and weight, as if they were retained by the parties forwarding them in their own domiciles. The constitutional guaranty of the right of the people to be secure in their papers against unreasonable searches