

## African American Postal Workers in the 19th Century

African Americans began the 19th century with a small role in postal operations and ended the century as Postmasters, letter carriers, and managers at postal headquarters. Although postal records did not list the race of employees, other sources, like newspaper accounts and federal census records, have made it possible to identify more than 800 African American postal workers. Included among them were 243 Postmasters, 323 letter carriers, and 113 Post Office clerks. For lists of known African American employees by position, see “List of Known African American Postmasters, 1800s,” “List of Known African American Letter Carriers, 1800s,” “List of Known African American Post Office Clerks, 1800s,” and “List of Other Known African American Postal Employees, 1800s.”

### Enslaved African Americans Carried Mail Prior to 1802

The earliest known African Americans employed in the United States mail service were slaves who worked for mail transportation contractors prior to 1802.

In 1794, Postmaster General Timothy Pickering wrote to a Maryland resident, regarding the transportation of mail from Harford to Bel Air:

*If the Inhabitants . . . should deem their letters safe with a faithful black, I should not refuse him. . . . I suppose the planters entrust more valuable things to some of their blacks.<sup>1</sup>*

In an apparent jab at the institution of slavery itself, Pickering added, “If you admitted a negro to be a man, the difficulty would cease.” Pickering hated slavery with a passion; it was in part due to his efforts that the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 forbade slavery in the territory north of the Ohio River.<sup>2</sup>

In 1801, Postmaster General Joseph Habersham wrote to Isaac Gano, Postmaster of Frankfort, Kentucky, that “some objections” had been made to Edmund Taylor, the mail contractor on the Frankfort to Cincinnati, Ohio, route, “employing a slave as the Carrier of the Mail.”<sup>3</sup> Habersham explained that employing slaves as mail carriers

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*Slaves in general are more trustworthy than that class of white men who will [carry the mail].*

—Postmaster General  
Joseph Habersham, 1801

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*was generally allowed in the Southern States by my predecessors in office. I made no objection to it especially as it came within my knowledge that slaves in general are more trustworthy than that class of white men who will perform such services — the stages . . . [on] the Main Line are driven by Slaves & most of the Contractors employ them as mail carriers in the Southern States.*

*Mr. Taylor may therefore be allowed to employ one for his route.*

### Island Rebellion Triggers U.S. Fears

The employment of African Americans as mail carriers was banned by Congress in 1802. A well-planned slave rebellion in 1791 in the French colony of St. Domingue (now Haiti), closely watched by the American press, had contributed to a growing fear among Southern whites that American slaves would organize a rebellion.<sup>4</sup> Gideon Granger succeeded Habersham as Postmaster General in November 1801 and, in March 1802, wrote to Senator James Jackson of Georgia, Chairman of the Committee of the Senate on the Post Office Establishment:

*After the scenes which St. Domingo has exhibited to the world, we cannot be too cautious ... plans and conspiracies have already been concerted by [slaves] more than once, to rise in arms, and subjugate their masters.*

*... The most active and intelligent [slaves] are employed as post riders. ... By travelling from day to day, and hourly mixing with people ... they will acquire information. They will learn that a man's rights do not depend on his color. They will, in time, become teachers to their brethren.*

*... One able man among them, perceiving the value of this machine, might lay a plan which would be communicated by your post riders from town to town, and produce a general and united operation against you.<sup>5</sup>*

Congress heeded Granger's warning, and in an Act of May 3, 1802, declared that

*after the 1st day of November next, no other than a free white person shall be employed in carrying the mail of the United States, on any of the post-roads, either as a post-rider or driver of a carriage carrying the mail.<sup>6</sup>*

This prohibition endured until March 3, 1865, when Congress directed that "no person, by reason of color, shall be disqualified from employment in carrying the mails" (13 Stat. 515).

## First Known African American Post Office Clerk Appointed in 1863

In 1863, William Cooper Nell was appointed a clerk at the Boston, Massachusetts, Post Office. Nell is not only the first known African American employee of the U.S. Post Office Department, but also the first known African American civilian employee of the federal government. He also holds other distinctions — he was the first published African American historian and the chief champion of an 1855 Massachusetts state law that prohibited racial discrimination in public school admissions. He was the first of several African American clerks appointed by Boston's Postmaster, John Palfrey (1861–1867).

## African American Vote Influences Elections

In 1867, Congress made universal male suffrage one of the conditions for southern states to be readmitted into the Union and put federal troops in the South to maintain law and order.<sup>7</sup> In 1870, the 15th Amendment guaranteed the right to vote regardless of race.<sup>8</sup> For the first time in the nation's history, African American men had

### William Cooper Nell, Post Office Clerk

William Cooper Nell was born in 1816 into a middle-class family in Boston. He excelled in school and at the age of 14 went to work for abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, printer of the newspaper *The Liberator*. In Garrison's print shop, Nell advanced from errand boy to apprentice printer. Eventually he wrote articles for the newspaper, chronicling the challenges and achievements of Boston's black community and, like his mentor, devoting himself to the emancipation of slaves and civil rights for African Americans.

An active member of the New England Freedom Association, Nell helped coordinate money, clothing, and housing for newly arrived fugitive slaves. He also helped found several Boston organizations that encouraged self-improvement of citizens through reading, discussion, and lectures.

Beginning in 1844, Nell spearheaded a campaign to desegregate Boston's public schools. After years of petitions, appeals, and meetings, the Massachusetts state governor signed into law a bill prohibiting racial discrimination in public school admissions in 1855. The year 1855 was momentous for Nell for another reason — that year his book *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* was published in Boston, the first published history book researched and written by an African American.

In 1863, Boston's Postmaster, John Palfrey, appointed Nell as a clerk at the Boston Post Office — the first known appointment of an African American to a civilian federal position. In an April 1873 letter to Garrison, Nell wrote that because of increasing mail volume at the Post Office, he had been "detailed to put through the Night mails." His workdays started at 11 p.m. and generally ended at 5:30 a.m. He noted that he was "the first colored man employed about the United States Mail," and that during the course of his postal career he "never lost a day from sickness or any cause." Nell worked as a clerk at the Boston Post Office until his death in 1874.

Post office work has so increased, that I have been detailed to put through the Night mails, and relieve the morning gang. I go on now at eleven, and generally leave at 5:30 morning — my regular time however being 6. When I first went into the Newspaper Room 3. Clerk did the work now we have 12. 4 of them Colored, and <sup>Boston</sup> ~~the~~ happened to be the first Colored man employed about the United States Mail.

Detail of letter of April 9, 1873, from William Cooper Nell to William Lloyd Garrison

[Courtesy Boston Public Library Rare Books Department, Anti-Slavery Collection, at digitalcommonshealth.org](#)

political power. In many areas of the South, African Americans comprised the majority of voters. In three states — Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina — most of the population was African American.<sup>9</sup> After the Civil War, the black vote was decisive in the election of several Republican Presidents, including President Ulysses Grant in 1868.<sup>10</sup> In keeping with the political patronage system of the 19th century, more than 1,400 African Americans were appointed to political office in the South by the victorious Republicans, in what historian Eric Foner termed America's first attempt at a "functioning interracial democracy."<sup>11</sup> Foner noted that

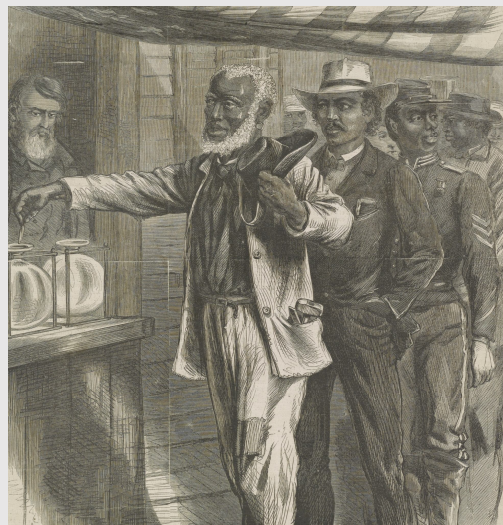
*because of the black population's concentration, nearly all of these officials served in or represented plantation counties, home of the wealthiest and, before the Civil War, most powerful Southerners. ... Former slaves ... assessing taxes on the property of their former owners, and serving on juries alongside them, epitomized the political revolution wrought by Reconstruction.<sup>12</sup>*

More than 800 African Americans are known to have served as postal employees in the 1800s. These individuals likely represent only a small fraction of the total number who served.<sup>13</sup> They reflected the diversity of the African American population of the time — some had been born as slaves, others as free men and women.

### **First Known African American Postmaster Appointed in 1867**

More than 200 African Americans are known to have served as Postmasters prior to 1900. The earliest known is James W. Mason, who was appointed Postmaster of Sunny Side, Arkansas, on February 22, 1867. The highest-paid African American Postmasters were Charles W. Ringgold of New Orleans, Louisiana, and Dr. Benjamin A. Boseman of Charleston, South Carolina; each earned \$4,000 annually. Both men were well-liked by the communities they served. In New Orleans, the newspapers of both political parties considered Mr. Ringgold a popular, honest, and able public servant.<sup>14</sup> A front-page article in the March 19, 1873, *Charleston Daily News* heralded Dr. Boseman's appointment as Postmaster, providing a brief biography and describing him as "intelligent, courteous and educated." His obituary in the February 24, 1881, issue of Charleston's *The News and Courier* noted that as Postmaster he was "civil and accommodating" and that "he enjoyed, deservedly, the reputation of being thoroughly honest."

Of the known African American Postmasters appointed in the 1800s, 20 were women. The earliest known and longest serving was Mrs. Anna M. Dumas, who was appointed Postmaster of the



**"The First Vote," by Alfred R. Waud, 1867**

*Courtesy of the Library of Congress*

This illustration of African American men voting in the election for Virginia's constitutional convention appeared on the cover of the November 16, 1867, issue of *Harper's Weekly*.



**James W. Mason, Postmaster**

*Courtesy of John E. Bush IV*

James W. Mason was born a slave in Chicot County, Arkansas, in 1841. His father, Elisha Worthington, was one of the wealthiest plantation owners in Arkansas. Worthington's wife left him because of his relationship with a female slave, which produced his only children, James and Martha. Worthington sent both his children to Oberlin College in Ohio when they were teenagers, and James went on to study at the prestigious St. Cyr Military Academy in France. During the Civil War, Worthington placed them in charge of Sunnyside, his largest plantation, when he relocated to Texas.

After the war, James Mason became a powerful political leader in Chicot County. He was appointed Postmaster of the Sunny Side Post Office on February 22, 1867, and served until about May 1871. Mason also served in the state senate, as county judge, and as county sheriff. He died in November 1874.

Covington, Louisiana, Post Office on November 15, 1872, and served until about June 1885. One of the best known was Mrs. Minnie M. Cox, who served two terms as Postmaster of Indianola, Mississippi, beginning in 1891.

Many black office-holders also served as elected representatives at the local, state, and/or national level, and helped establish schools for their communities.<sup>15</sup> Pierre Landry, Postmaster of Donaldsonville, Louisiana, from 1871 to 1875, became the first known African American to serve as mayor of a U.S. city when he was elected mayor of Donaldsonville in 1868. While serving as Postmaster, he also served in the Louisiana House of Representatives and, later, the Louisiana state senate.

More than a dozen African Americans served as the first Postmasters in newly-established predominantly black towns. Among these pioneers were Zachary Fletcher, Postmaster of Nicodemus, Kansas, from 1877 to 1886, and Isaiah Montgomery, Postmaster of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, from 1888 to 1894. Both men sought to forge their own destinies by helping create new communities free from racial oppression.<sup>16</sup>

### Difficulty in Obtaining Bonds

Like other political appointees, Postmasters needed to be bonded for anywhere from several hundred to several thousand dollars before taking office. John R. Lynch of Mississippi, a former slave who was elected and served as a U.S. Congressman from 1873 to 1877, described his own troubles securing a bond following his appointment as a justice of the peace in 1869:

*Then the bond question loomed up, which was one of the greatest obstacles in my way, although the amount was only two thousand dollars. How to give that bond was the important problem I had to solve, for, of course, no one was eligible as a bondsman who did not own real estate. There were very few colored men who were thus eligible, and it was out of the question at that time to expect any white property owner to sign the bond of a colored man. But there were two colored men willing to sign the bond for one thousand dollars each who were considered eligible by the authorities. These men were William McCary and David Singleton.<sup>17</sup>*

William McCary, the son of a prosperous, free black barber, became Postmaster of Natchez, Mississippi, in 1883.<sup>18</sup>

### African Americans Serve as Letter Carriers by 1869

More than 300 African Americans served as letter carriers in the 1800s. (See "List of Known African American Letter Carriers, 1800s.") The earliest known was James B. Christian, appointed as one of the first letter carriers in



**Minnie M. Cox, Postmaster**

*Courtesy of Zellie Orr*

Minnie M. Geddings Cox was born in Mississippi in 1869 and was educated at Fisk University. In the 1890s, she was among the most respected and prosperous citizens of Indianola in predominantly black Sunflower County, Mississippi.

Postmaster General John Wanamaker appointed Cox as Postmaster of Indianola on January 16, 1891. She served until 1893, and was appointed to a second term in 1897. In January 1900, the Indianola Post Office was advanced to third-class due to increased office revenue, and Cox was reappointed by President Theodore Roosevelt.

In the fall of 1902, some white citizens of Indianola drew up a petition demanding that Cox resign. Following veiled threats to her safety, she agreed. However, President Roosevelt refused to accept her resignation. According to a report in *The New York Times* on January 3, 1903,

*The President decided that this was the best possible time to test ... whether the Federal government was powerless to interfere in the race problem.*

Roosevelt ordered that the Indianola Post Office be closed until the townspeople accepted Minnie Cox as Postmaster. Meanwhile, the town's mail was sent to Greenville, 25 miles away. The situation resolved itself in January 1904 at the expiration of Cox's 4-year term. She adamantly refused reappointment and instead recommended the appointment of William Martin, one of her bondsmen and a loyal friend throughout her troubles.

Cox and her husband went on to found the Delta Penny Savings Bank, the largest African American-owned bank in Mississippi.

Richmond, Virginia, on June 1, 1869. Later that same year Civil War hero William Carney began delivering mail in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Carney — the first African American to earn a Congressional Medal of Honor — carried the mail for nearly 32 years until he resigned on October 15, 1901.<sup>19</sup>

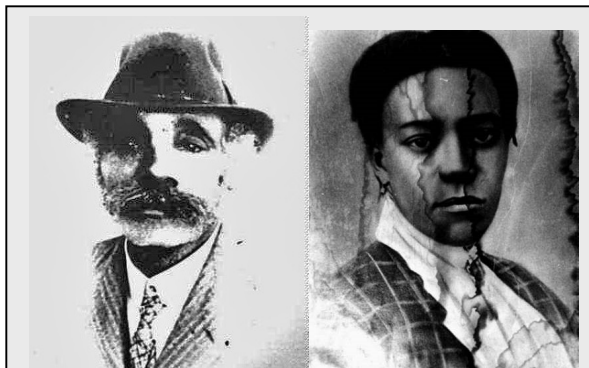
John W. Curry, another early letter carrier, started as a clerk at the Washington, DC, Post Office in 1868 and joined the carrier force on April 20, 1870. He served until about 1899. His obituary in the June 1899 issue of *The Postal Record*, the monthly publication of the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), praised his “steadfast devotion to duty” and his advocacy of carriers’ rights. The April 29, 1899, issue of the African American newspaper *The Washington Bee* reported that he was “the first colored letter carrier” in Washington and “did much to open the way for admission of other colored carriers.” The *Bee* also noted that Curry was “an active participant in political affairs and assisted in securing to our colored citizens the system of public schools which we now enjoy.”

David W. Washington, a letter carrier in Memphis, Tennessee, from 1874 to about 1920, served as Sergeant-at-Arms of the NALC in 1891 and was profiled in Marshall Cushing’s book, *The Story of Our Post Office*.<sup>20</sup> Another African American prominent in the NALC was John H. Sherman, who worked for the Railway Mail Service in Florida beginning in 1874 before being appointed as one of Jacksonville’s first letter carriers on April 14, 1883. Sherman delivered mail until July 31, 1886, and then again from 1890 until 1916. The June 1899 issue of *The Postal Record* noted that he had been elected as a state delegate to the national convention of the National Association of Letter Carriers. Sherman helped organize the Knights of Labor (a labor organization) in Jacksonville, was a charter member of the Jacksonville Auxiliary Association, and served as the first elected city marshal of greater Jacksonville.<sup>21</sup>

In 1879, all five of the letter carriers at Petersburg, Virginia, were African American. Prior to the Civil War, Petersburg had one of the largest communities of free African Americans in the United States. One of Petersburg’s letter carriers — Joseph P. Evans — had served two terms as a state senator earlier in the decade.<sup>22</sup>

At least 16 African Americans served as letter carriers in Washington, DC, in the late 1800s.<sup>23</sup> In February 1895, ten of these carriers served as pallbearers at the funeral of Frederick Douglass. One of the carriers so honored, Richard B. Peters, explained:

*When the news of the death of Frederick Douglass was whispered around amongst the carriers, a meeting was*

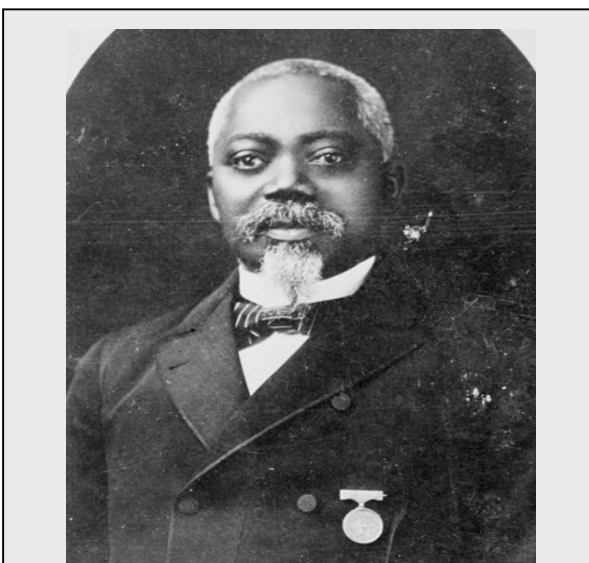


**“Z. T.” and Jennie Fletcher, Postmasters**

*Courtesy of the Library of Congress*

Nicodemus, Kansas, was a frontier town founded in 1877 by African Americans from the South seeking a better life. Zachary T. “Z. T.” Fletcher, one of the first settlers, was appointed as the first Postmaster on September 12, 1877. His wife, Frances Jennie, was Postmaster from 1889 to 1894, and also served as the town’s first schoolteacher.

Nicodemus was designated a National Historic Site by Congress in 1996. For more information on its history, visit the National Park Service’s website at [www.nps.gov/nico/learn/historyculture/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/nico/learn/historyculture/index.htm).



**William H. Carney, Letter Carrier**

*Courtesy of the Library of Congress*

William H. Carney was appointed a letter carrier at New Bedford, Massachusetts, on November 16, 1869, and served until he resigned in 1901.

Carney was the first African American to earn the Congressional Medal of Honor, for his valor during the Civil War. The bravery displayed by Carney and the rest of Massachusetts’ 54th Regiment in the assault on Fort Wagner, South Carolina, inspired the acclaimed 1989 movie *Glory*.

*immediately called, and a committee sent to ask the family the privilege of appointing or selecting pallbearers from our force. The offer was accepted.*<sup>24</sup>

Afterwards, along with a military escort, the letter carriers accompanied the hearse to the train depot, making their way through a crowd of thousands of mourners.<sup>25</sup>

## First Known African American Postal Inspector Appointed in 1870

Isaac Myers of Baltimore, Maryland, was the first known African American Postal Inspector. He was appointed on March 7, 1870, and served until 1879. According to his obituary in the April 1891 issue of the *African Methodist Episcopal Church Review*, Myers helped solve several notorious cases, including the case of the “English swindler, William Parker, M.D.,” and the “celebrated Dead Letter Office case.”<sup>26</sup> His investigations also helped lead to the arrest of George W. Claypole, a thieving clerk in the Baltimore Post Office. A story in the August 24, 1874, issue of *The New York Times* noted that Claypole had “puzzled the efforts of the shrewdest detectives in the Post Office Department.” Myers is also known for his early efforts to organize black labor unions.<sup>27</sup>

## Threats, Violence and Murder

In 1877, Republican candidate Rutherford B. Hayes was declared the winner of the hotly disputed 1876 Presidential election. As a compromise with Southern Democrats, the newly elected President agreed to pull federal troops out of the South.<sup>28</sup> Soon, fraud, intimidation, gerrymandering, and exclusionary voting requirements such as the poll tax excluded many African Americans from the polls and from political life.<sup>29</sup>

African Americans continued to serve in postal positions, mainly in areas where they held onto political power. But African Americans in general, and political appointees in particular, became targets of racial discrimination and violence. Black office-holders were lightning rods for white supremacists, who rallied white voters with cries of “negro domination” to prevent blacks from holding office.

National newspapers reported on black Postmasters who were threatened, intimidated out of their jobs, and even murdered. In September 1897, attempts were made to kill Isaiah Loftin, Postmaster of Hogansville, Georgia, to stop him from serving as Postmaster; he eventually resigned.<sup>30</sup> Frazier Baker, Postmaster of Lake City, South Carolina, was murdered along with his infant daughter by an angry mob in February 1898.<sup>31</sup> Chief Post Office Inspector George Hamlet sent two of his best inspectors to investigate, identify and arrest the suspected murderers.<sup>32</sup> Eleven white citizens were tried for the murder, but the case resulted in a mistrial when the jury could not reach a unanimous decision.<sup>33</sup>



**Frazier Baker's Widow and Surviving Children, 1899**

*Courtesy Library of Congress*

In July 1897, Frazier Baker was appointed Postmaster in predominantly white Lake City, South Carolina. The townspeople protested and immediately took action. Baker was threatened, shot at, and his office was burned and boycotted. Someone also shot and wounded his assistant. Still, Baker fulfilled his duties as Postmaster.

At around 1 a.m. on February 22, 1898, a white mob set fire to Baker's home, which also served as the Post Office. The mob opened fire on Baker and his family as they tried to escape the flames. Baker and his infant daughter were killed; his wife and three of their children were shot but managed to flee, while two children escaped unharmed.

The murders sparked national outrage. After a thorough investigation, 11 men were prosecuted — “not guilty” verdicts were returned for 3 defendants, but the jury deadlocked on a verdict for the other 8 men. The judge declared a mistrial, and the case was never retried.

In 2013, a historical marker was placed on the site of the former Lake City Post Office, commemorating the tragedy.

## Support for and from Coworkers

In New Jersey, letter carriers stood by their own. A story in *The New York Times* on April 17, 1893, reported:

*A slight put upon Letter Carrier [Louis A.] Sears because of his color has aroused considerable excitement among Newark wheelmen. Sears is a colored man who has been many years engaged in the Post Office. He is the first, so it is said, who utilized a bicycle in the performance of his duties. Several of the other letter carriers followed his example.*

*Recently a party of wheelmen known as the "Select Few" arranged a run and sent invitations to bicycle riders throughout the county. Cards were received by every bicyclist among the Newark letter carriers except Sears. His fellow-carriers became indignant at the slight, and have unanimously voted to decline the invitation.*



**Louis A. Sears, Letter Carrier**

Detail of an early 1888 photograph of Newark, New Jersey, letter carriers. The carrier at the center may be Louis A. Sears, said to be the first carrier in Newark to use a bicycle to deliver the mail.

## African Americans Appointed to High-Ranking Positions

In 1897, two African Americans were appointed to high-ranking positions in the Post Office Department: George B. Hamlet became Chief Post Office Inspector and John P. Green became the Postage Stamp Agent.

George Hamlet, originally from Ohio, became a Post Office Inspector on May 19, 1897, and within months was promoted to the top spot. He was named Inspector-in-Charge of the Washington Division on July 8, 1897, and Chief Post Office Inspector on August 3, 1897, at a salary of \$3,000 a year. (See "George B. Hamlet, Chief Post Office Inspector," on page 8.)

John Green was an attorney, a Republican Party leader, and the first African American elected to the Ohio state senate. At the urging of President William McKinley (a former governor of Ohio), Green was appointed Postage Stamp Agent on August 2, 1897.<sup>34</sup> As Postage Stamp Agent, Green was responsible for ensuring that each stamp issued by the Department matched the contract between the Department and the Bureau of Printing and Engraving with respect to paper, color, perforations, and adhesive.<sup>35</sup> An article in the August 3, 1897, issue of *The Washington Post* noted that Green's position was "one of the most lucrative sinecures in the department," and that he would supervise "a force of eight white persons."<sup>36</sup>

In a circa-1899 Republican Party publication, *The Colored American Republican Text Book*, Green was quoted as saying that President William McKinley gave

*more official patronage to the colored American than any other President before him; and would have done more for the colored Republicans of the South, if the murderous assaults made on federal appointees there had not discouraged it.*<sup>37</sup>

Green served as Postage Stamp Agent until 1906, when the clerical force of the Postage Stamp Agency was transferred to the office of the Third Assistant Postmaster General and his position was abolished.<sup>38</sup>

The 19th century was a time of enormous change in the postal workforce — from 1802, when Congress banned African Americans from carrying U.S. Mail, to the late 1860s, when newly-enfranchised African Americans began serving as Postmasters, clerks, and city letter carriers. At a time when most workplaces were closed to African Americans, postal jobs provided an avenue of advancement into the middle class.



**George B. Hamlet, Chief Post Office Inspector**

*Courtesy of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service*

George B. Hamlet is the only African American known to have been appointed as Chief Post Office Inspector, although at the time of his appointment, he identified himself as white.

Hamlet was born in Ohio around 1852. His father, a noted composer and musician on Ohio River steamboats, was from England; his mother was reportedly born in either Kentucky, Ohio, or Virginia.

In 1869, Hamlet moved to Louisiana and quickly became a leader in Republican Party politics. He was appointed mayor of Monroe, Louisiana, in 1873. In early 1874 he was appointed city recorder, and later that year was elected sheriff of Ouachita Parish. While sheriff, he was a well-known champion of African Americans, risking his own life to protect the lives and rights of others. In 1876 he was nominated as the Republican candidate for state senate, and he served in the legislature. His political career in Louisiana ended shortly thereafter when the Democrats in the state gained power.

Hamlet moved back to Ohio and by 1883 accepted a job with the Treasury Department in Washington, DC. He had friends in high places — including James Gary, a Republican Party leader who was appointed Postmaster General in March 1897. In May 1897, Postmaster General Gary appointed Hamlet as a Post Office Inspector. In July 1897, he was made Inspector-In-Charge of the Washington Division, and the next month he was promoted to Chief Post Office Inspector. In November 1898, he was reassigned to a Post Office Inspector position.

In 1900, Hamlet was investigated for improper use of government transportation. He was allowed to resign from the Post Office Department rather than face dismissal, and was soon appointed to a new position as a customs inspector in the Treasury Department. He retired from government service in 1922, at the age of 70, and died four years later at his home in Maryland.

HISTORIAN  
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE  
OCTOBER 2017

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<sup>1</sup> Pickering to John Hargrove, August 8, 1794, National Archives Microfilm Publication 601, *Letters Sent by the Postmaster General, 1789-1836*, Roll 3, 372-373. Pickering, from Massachusetts, served under General George Washington during the Revolutionary War and filled several top government posts during the 1780s and 1790s (see his biography at <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/pmg-pickering.pdf>).

<sup>2</sup> "To suffer the continuance of slaves until they can gradually be emancipated in States already overrun with them may be pardonable, because unavoidable without hazarding greater evils; but to introduce them into countries where none now exist . . . can never be forgiven," Pickering wrote to Rufus King (member of the Continental Congress), March 16, 1785. "Your ideas have had weight with the committee who reported this ordinance," King to Pickering, April 15, 1785. "Mr. King of Massachusetts has a resolution ready drawn . . . for preventing slavery in the new State. I expect Seven States may be found liberal enough to support it," William Grayson to James Madison, May 1, 1785. Pickering letter cited in Charles R. King, editor, *The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, Comprising His Letters, Private and Official, His Public Documents, and His Speeches* (New York: De Capo Press, 1971), Volume I, 46. Text of King and Grayson letters, as well as the Northwest Ordinance, are available online in the Library of Congress' *A Century of Lawmaking*, at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lawhome.html>. For further information on Pickering's opposition to slavery, see *"Negro President": Jefferson and the Slave Power*, by Garry Wills (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Habersham to Isaac E. Gano, Postmaster of Frankfort, Kentucky, National Archives Microfilm Publication 601, *Letters Sent by the Postmaster General, 1789-1836*, Roll 10, 321.



- <sup>4</sup> For information on the influence of events in St. Domingue on American politics, see Donald R. Hickey, "America's Response to the Slave Revolt in Haiti, 1791-1806," in the *Journal of the Early Republic*, 1982, 2 (4), 361-369, and Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).
- <sup>5</sup> Walter Lowrie and Walter S. Franklin, eds., *American State Papers, Class VII: Post Office Department* (March 4, 1789, to March 2, 1833) (Washington, DC: Gales and Seaton, 1834), 27.
- <sup>6</sup> *Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America from the Organization of the Government in 1789, to March 3, 1845 ... Volume II* (Boston, MA: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1850), 191.
- <sup>7</sup> Act of March 2, 1867. *The Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations, of the United States of America, from December, 1865, to March, 1867* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1868), 429.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Statutes at Large and Proclamations of the United States of America, from December 1869 to March 1871, and Treaties and Postal Conventions* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1871), 1131.
- <sup>9</sup> Henry Gannett, *Statistics of the Negroes in the United States*, Occasional Papers, No. 4 (Baltimore: The Trustees of the John F. Slater Fund, 1894), 21, online in the Library of Congress' *From Slavery to Freedom: The African-American Pamphlet Collection, 1822-1909*, at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aapchtml/aapchome.html> (accessed June 30, 2017).
- <sup>10</sup> John R. Lynch, *The Facts of Reconstruction* (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1913), 96-98. The Republican Party was the party of Abraham Lincoln and, after the Civil War, espoused a strong federal government and civil rights for blacks. Socially-conservative Southern Democrats wanted a return to the old social order.
- <sup>11</sup> Eric Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders during Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), xii.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.
- <sup>13</sup> For example, in a letter to Booker T. Washington, James S. Clarkson claimed to have appointed "over eleven hundred" African Americans while serving as First Assistant Postmaster General from March 14, 1889, to September 29, 1890 [letter of February 7, 1896, in *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, Volume 4: 1895-98 (Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 111].
- <sup>14</sup> *The Daily (New Orleans) Picayune*, April 8, 1875; *The New Orleans Weekly Louisianian*, April 10, 1875.
- <sup>15</sup> See individual biographies in Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders during Reconstruction*.
- <sup>16</sup> For further information on the history of these predominantly black towns, see Norman L. Crockett's *The Black Towns* (1979) and Kenneth Marvin Hamilton's *Black Towns and Profit: Promotion and Development in the Trans-Appalachian West, 1877-1915* (1991).
- <sup>17</sup> Lynch, 28-29.
- <sup>18</sup> Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers*, 1993, 145.
- <sup>19</sup> See "NALC Pioneer William Carney: From Runaway Slave to Civil War Hero," in *The Postal Record*, February 2001.
- <sup>20</sup> Marshall Cushing, *The Story of Our Post Office* (Boston, Massachusetts: A. M. Thayer & Co., 1893), 817.
- <sup>21</sup> *The Postal Record, A Monthly Journal of the National Association of Letter Carriers*, June 1899, 161.
- <sup>22</sup> Virginia State Library, *The General Assembly of Virginia, July 30, 1619 - January 11, 1978* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1978), 514, 519.
- <sup>23</sup> In 1890 about a third of the city's residents were African-American (see "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1979 to 1990, for Large Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States," by Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, U.S. Census Bureau, at [www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0076/twps0076.pdf](http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0076/twps0076.pdf), accessed October 19, 2017).
- <sup>24</sup> *The Washington Post*, February 27, 1895, 9.
- <sup>25</sup> *The Washington Post*, February 22, 1895, 2. The February 24, 1895, issue of *The Washington Post* identifies the carriers who served as pallbearers as Dorsey Seville, John W. Curry, John H. George, Richard B. Peters, W. H. Marshall, W. H. Cowan, H. W. Hewlett, Raymond Russell, Mercer S. Alexander, and John D. Butler.
- <sup>26</sup> *African Methodist Episcopal Church Review*, vol. 7, no. 4, April 1891, 354-355, in the Ohio Historical Society's *African-American Experience in Ohio 1850-1920*, Serials, at <http://dbs.ohiohistory.org/africanam/html/serial/index.html> (accessed October 19, 2017).
- <sup>27</sup> See "Isaac Myers: Pioneer of the African-American Trade Union Movement," in the American Postal Workers Union's *Labor History Articles*, at <http://www.apwu.org/labor-history-articles/isaac-myers-pioneer-african-american-trade-union-movement> (accessed May 24, 2017).
- <sup>28</sup> Lynch, 130.
- <sup>29</sup> For examples of disenfranchisement tactics, see Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 319-328.
- <sup>30</sup> *The Washington Post*, September 18, 1897, 1; January 27, 1900, 9.
- <sup>31</sup> Some sources spell Baker's first name "Fraser."
- <sup>32</sup> See page 8 for more information on George Hamlet.
- <sup>33</sup> *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 23, 1898, 1; *The Washington Post* April 3, 1901, 4.
- <sup>34</sup> For information on Green's relationship with McKinley, see his 1920 autobiography, *Fact Stranger than Fiction: Seventy-Five Years of a Busy Life with Reminiscences of Many Great and Good Men and Women*, online in HathTrust.org at [https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nc01\\_ark:/13960/t1cj8p600](https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nc01_ark:/13960/t1cj8p600) (accessed June 30, 2017).
- <sup>35</sup> *The New York Times*, March 18, 1899, 12.
- <sup>36</sup> The 1899 *Official Register* lists Green as the head of the Postage Stamp Agency, earning an annual salary of \$2,500, with a staff consisting of a chief clerk, six clerks, and three laborers.
- <sup>37</sup> *The Colored American Republican Text Book* (Washington, DC: The Colored American Publishing Company, ca. 1899), 36, online in HathTrust.org at <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/emu.010002702612> (accessed June 30, 2017).
- <sup>38</sup> Green, 272.