

Your Postal Podcast 45th Edition Transcript – February 2012

Source: yourpostalpodcast.com

Richard Watkins: Welcome to Your Postal Podcast. This is Richard Watkins of the Postal Service's Corporate Communications Office. In this edition we'll hear about the unique way a group of Arizona letter carriers deliver the mail, and we'll visit a Post Office building with an historic claim to fame.

Bicycling Carriers Segment

Watkins: "Going Green" is nothing new for the Postal Service, which is recognized as an environmental innovator and has received more than 75 major environmental awards. Rob Soler visited one Arizona post office where "Green" delivery routes have been the norm for a quarter of a century.

Rob Soler: Sun City, Arizona, known for its mild winters and outdoor activities, is also the ideal location for a unique type of mail delivery. Thirty-seven of the city's 55 delivery routes use bicycles to deliver the mail.

Walk through the post office parking lot and the first thing you notice is the bicycle racks mounted on postal vehicles with a bicycle parked nearby. City letter carriers here load the mail and their bicycle.

Now they are ready to deliver the mail.

Robert Franco has been on a bicycle route for 22 years, 17 of them on the same route in South Sun City.

Robert Franco: It's the historic district. It's actually built the same year I was born. So it's kind of interesting [laughs].

Soler: Bicycle routes fit Sun City. As the name implies, it is sunny year round, and although this is a retirement community, people here like their outdoor activities.

Franco: I'd say the majority of them are pretty active. They come out here because they like playing golf. You'll see them out here early in the morning walking. Sometimes they are heading to go grocery shopping on foot. You get a lot of golf carts out here, so you have to kind of watch out for those.

Postal Customer, Ramona Prihara enjoys having a bicycle letter carrier.

Ramona Prihara: He's very nice, polite, and he, most of the time, is on time."

Soler: Robert enjoys his customers.

Franco: Overall it is like having 450 pairs of grandparents out here.

Soler: Bicycling your route does have its challenges – like flat tires. Letter carrier Terry Hesselrode finds that flats tend to happen at the worst possible time.

Terry Hesselrode: The other day I got one and I was about as far away from my truck as I could get (laughs). No respecter of persons. You run over a tack, a roof nail, and mostly thorns really. We'll get them. And they just get a slow leak and it kind of fish tails a little bit every time you turn the corner.

Soler: The intense desert sun can be challenging too. Franco fits his bicycle seat with a special cover.

Franco: We have to put those on because it gets so hot out here. It gets up to 115 at times and black vinyl in the sun gets pretty hot on your bottom. It just kind of gives you a little more comfort. Helps you get through the day a little quicker.

Soler: Overall, the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. By one estimate, Sun City bicycle routes save the Postal Service \$20,000 per year in fuel costs and reduce carbon emissions by 61 cubic tons.

Old Post Office Building Segment

Watkins: There are nearly 27,000 Post Office buildings across the country, but none quite like the one in our next story. Diedre Tillery takes us to a New England Post Office building with a record for longevity.

Diedre Tillery: Nestled in Southwest New Hampshire near the borders of Vermont and Massachusetts, lies the town of Hinsdale.

According to Postal Historian Jennifer Lynch, the Hinsdale Post Office, at 13 Main St., has operated continuously in the same building longer than any other in the nation.

The building opened in 1816 in what was a general store. The brown, two-story wooden structure includes four columns in front supporting a colonial-style porch on each floor. Today the Post Office takes up the first floor, and four apartments are on the second.

To lend some perspective to the age of the Hinsdale Post Office, in 1816, the Civil War was still 45 years away, Abraham Lincoln was seven years old, and the first U.S. postage stamp wouldn't be issued for another 31 years. Postage could be paid in advance by the writer, collected from the addressee on delivery, or paid partially in advance and partially upon delivery.

Cindy Mason has been Hinsdale's Postmaster for just three years, but she has quickly learned the building's history.

Cindy Mason: Once you come in the door we have the façade for our retail window is all oak, and the kind of like bubbled glass windows in the enclosure for the retail window. We have tin ceilings. As you walk back into the Post Office the floor goes up and down, so it's quite a fascinating trip to go from the front to back. You know you've kind of walked back into time.

Tillery: Through the centuries, the Hinsdale Post Office has seen many changes and even a couple robberies during the tenure of one long-time postmaster.

Mason: Mrs. Barrows, her name was Adelia, and she was the postmaster from November 1888 until 1922. The village store had been kind of discontinued and the Post Office occupied the entire front of the building. In 1899, and as it fits 10 years later, 1909, there were two robberies and what they did is the thieves came, they blew up the safe. So she had quite an interesting tenure as postmaster.

Tillery: Historic or not, Mason recognizes any Post Office is only as good as its employees.

Mason: They're absolutely awesome. They are conscientious. They are wonderful ambassadors for the Postal Service.

Tillery: Mason looks back with pride on the Postal Service's role in the development of a nation.

Mason: For as long as this country has been a country there's been a Post Office. You walk in the door and you just have some of these thoughts of this history that you've read and you just say, wow. And this building was here for some of it, and this Post Office was here for some of it. It is amazing.

News Roundup

Watkins: And now, here's a roundup of recent Postal Service news: The Postal Service ended the first three months of its 2012 fiscal year with a net loss of \$3.3 billion. Management expects large losses to continue until the Postal Service has implemented its network re-design and down-sizing and has restructured its healthcare program. Additionally, the return to financial stability requires legislation which gives the Postal Service typical commercial freedoms, including delivery flexibility, returns more than \$10 billion of amounts overpaid to the Federal Government and resolves the need to prefund retiree healthcare at rates not assessed any other entity in the United States.

And in late January, businesses mailing First-Class Mail automation, presort letters using "2nd Ounce Free" pricing can mail letters weighing up to 2 ounces at the 1-ounce postage rate. First-Class Mail automation, presort letters are primarily generated by commercial mailers of bills and statements — or transaction mail. 2nd Ounce Free pricing provides these customers with greater value from their transaction mailings by letting them include an additional ounce that can be used for operational or marketing purposes at no additional cost.

Bills and statements delivered via First-Class Mail are opened more than 95 percent of the time and, on average, the receiver spends two to three minutes with each piece, which makes transaction mail a highly effective medium for target marketing.

Thanks for listening to Your Postal Podcast. Now we'd like to hear from you. Please send your feedback and story ideas to YourPostalPodcast@usps.com. And special thanks to Rob Soler and Diedre Tillery for their work on this month's podcast. A production of USPS Western Area Corporate Communications. Copyright 2012, All Rights Reserved.

###