



# Heartland Science

Ohio's Legacy of Discovery & Innovation



## Communications

From Greenbacks to Lexis-Nexis

### Home Mail Delivery

Joseph W. Briggs instituted the first free home mail delivery in Cleveland in 1863, and the Federal Government called him to Washington to institute the system nationwide. He also designed the first mail carriers uniform. Briggs said he thought of home delivery during the winter of 1862-1863 while watching how women had to wait in line in freezing weather for letters from loved ones fighting in the Civil War.



Though not required to do so, Briggs encouraged other postal employees to deliver mail to the citizens of Cleveland for free. Home delivery was such a hit with residents that the idea swiftly expanded to other cities. In 1863, 49 northern offices participated, which employed some 450 letter carriers. Letter carriers were encouraged to wear distinctive blue-grey uniforms beginning in 1968.

Until 1887, the Post Office Department determined that cities eligible for free delivery had to have a population in excess of 20,000. After 1887, threshold dropped to cities with 10,000 residents, or with postal revenues in excess of \$10,000. By the end of the 1800's, 13,696 letter carriers were delivering city mail. Today, over 250,000 men and women deliver mail to cities across the U.S.



### Did You Know?

- American households were required to have mailboxes beginning in 1916, when the Post Office Department made them mandatory.
- Before every house had its own mailbox, postmen were instructed to "ring twice" to alert residents to the arrival of the mail.
- The first uniforms for letter carriers were blue-grey, to distinguish them from the dark blue worn at the time by the police and firefighters.

### Find out more...

- [National Postal Museum - History of Home Delivery](http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibits/2b1b_carriersmail.html)  
(www.postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibits/2b1b\_carriersmail.html)
- [National Postal Museum - Short silent film depicting letter carriers in 1903 leaving a post office for the day's delivery](http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibits/2b1b1_5_briggs_movie.html)  
(www.postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibits/2b1b1\_5\_briggs\_movie.html)
- [Photo of Joseph Briggs](http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibits/2b1b1_1_briggs.html)  
(www.postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibits/2b1b1\_1\_briggs.html)
- [U.S. Domestic Postage Rates: 1845 - Present](http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/museum/1e1_letter.html)  
(www.postalmuseum.si.edu/museum/1e1\_letter.html)