

# NO ZIP PART 3

By Randall Priest

The next city is Philadelphia. The post office is called the B. Free Franklin Post Office. As we began to think of our first Postmaster of the United States, we need to go back before there was a United States. From the founding of Jamestown the moving of the mail has always been a quest of those in charge to provide the people a chance to send and receive mail. How do you keep the mail moving? Remember that until 1776 much of what was going on in the New World was being controlled at least in part by the Crown (Great Britain). In 1775 the break came -- the Revolution was on.

Now what about the man Benjamin Franklin? He was born in Boston Mass. Jan. 17, 1706 and started his life learning to become a printer. This was just one of so many titles that he would be called throughout his life. The list:

1. Oldest Signer of both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution,
2. Scientist,
3. Diplomat,
4. Author,
5. Printer,
6. Publisher,
7. Philosopher,
9. Philanthropist
10. Postmaster,
11. Self-made, and
12. Self-educated man.

Throughout his life printing was his passion. He wanted his epitaph to read 'BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, PRINTER'.

Before B. Franklin became the New Nations first Postmaster, he had experience improving the mail delivery system. From 1737 to 1753 Franklin became the postmaster of Philadelphia. He next became deputy postmaster in charge of the Northern colonies. The 'post office' was in the printing office of 'The Pennsylvania Gazette.' which was being printed by Franklin. He took over this job from another printer who published his newspaper, the "American Weekly Mercury" and had the 'post office' in his office. This change was done by the Postmaster General Colonel William Spotswood. The location of the Printing Office with the Post Office was located on what became Market Street. At this time the buildings had no addresses. In fact it took almost 50 years before the numbering of buildings became a standard system. The location was noted as "New Printing-Office near the Market".



Figure 1

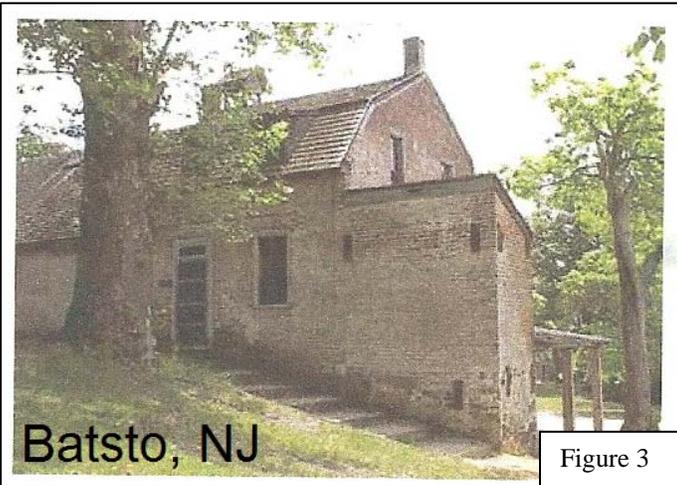
The B. Free Franklin Post Office is located in a three-story row house in the heart of Philadelphia that was owned by Franklin.(figure 1) As can be seen in (figure 2) the post mark is a signature. This is the way Ben Franklin signed his name. This was his way of reminding all that we are 'Free' from the crown. This post office is the only

post office named after a signature. There is no flag flying on the post office, all other post offices in the nation must fly the American Flag. How do they get away with no flag? When this Post Office was in service there was no flag for the country. When you go into this special post office there are no ballpoint pins allowed. Use a quill in an inkwell --- and of course no Zip Code!



Figure 2

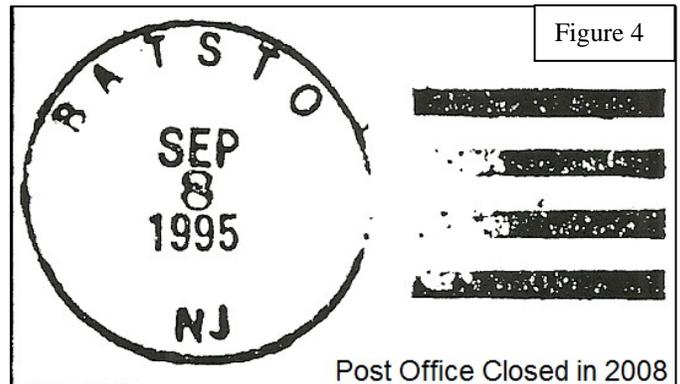
Now on to New Jersey to a little town called Batsto. This town was established in June 28, 1852. President Millard Fillmore appointed Jesse Richards as Batsto's first postmaster. The town had a population of about 1000 and a thriving window glass industry. By 1870 the glass industry went into a sharp decline and the U.S. Post Office Department took away the postal facility and moved it to nearby Pleasantville Mills.



Agriculture became the economic force and on Dec. 26, 1882 the post office came back. In August 1893 the Batsto post office was replaced with RFD service. (Rural Free Delivery) The State of New Jersey purchased the property in 1954 and with the cooperation of the Batsto Citizens Committee re-opened the post office June 25, 1966. The Division of Philately and Postal History of the Smithsonian Institution also gave its endorsement and support to the project. Outgoing mail was hand canceled and processed without a Zip Code.

One of the things that set this post office apart from others is its original location under its original name and with its original furnishings in its original building. (figure 3) I

had sent a request for a postmark from Batsto, but had not gotten any response. So I called and got a number to contact someone about the post office. I was told that the post office had been closed back in 2008. (figure 4) To my surprise in the mail Aug. 15, 2011 I get a letter that I had sent to get a post mark from Batsto, N J, (figure 5)



The four cities that we have been looking at are unusual but also have much in common. These four cities also represent many cities in the New World that made changes in the postal system and how we learned to

survive and grow as a new society.



Each has a story and a connection to making the U.S. Postal System what it is today. They also had a part in making United States of America a country different from all other countries. History is what we were, and if we understand and learn from it we will be able to look to the future and create a present that we can be proud of.

Part I can be found in the newsletter from July while Part II is in the August issue. Both newsletters can be found

on the club's website at [www.CentralFloridaStampClub.org](http://www.CentralFloridaStampClub.org) – click on the ARCHIVES button.