



The Mini Page

Betty Debnam, Founding Editor and Editor at Large

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Postal Inspectors

Protecting Our Mail

What was in your mailbox today? Was there something special for you? You may not have thought much about how letters and packages leave one location and arrive at another.

The U.S. Postal Service moved 22 million pieces of mail *every hour* in 2013! Mail is delivered to about 153 million addresses in the United States.

With all that mail moving around every day, postal inspectors have a big job: protecting post office employees, equipment and customers from attacks and crime.

This week, The Mini Page talks with a curator at the “Behind the Badge” exhibit at the Smithsonian’s National Postal Museum in Washington, D.C., to learn more about this special job.



photo by Joseph Barillari

A U.S. Postal Service truck in Massachusetts. The USPS uses more than 200,000 vehicles to deliver mail.



The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

When mail was carried on horseback or by stagecoach, criminals could easily attack. Mail at that time might have included large amounts of cash or other valuables. Keeping the routes safe was important. Benjamin Franklin, the postmaster general, appointed William Goddard as the first postal surveyor in 1776. In 1880, the title “post office inspector” was first used.

What kinds of crimes involve the mail?

Our Postal Service makes it simple for us to share items and information. We can easily send a letter, a bill for payment or a package to someone.

But this convenient service also makes it easy for criminals to abuse the system. Crimes involving our mail system include:

- **Fraud.** Customers may receive mail that promotes a dishonest scheme trying to **scam** them out of money.
- **Theft.** Items may be stolen from mailboxes. This could include packages, or it might be a letter that

has private information in it. That information could be used to steal from the person it was sent to.

- **Shipping illegal items.** People may try to send illegal drugs or other items through the mail.

- **Mail terrorism.** Dangerous materials can be sent through the mail, such as bombs or poisons.

Postal inspectors investigate these types of crimes and educate the public and Postal Service employees about how to identify fraudulent or dangerous mail and stay safe.

Dangerous Mail

Trusting the mail

When you get a letter or package in the mail, aren't you excited to open it? Most of us look forward to receiving something.

People don't expect attacks through the mail. They trust that an item received by mail is safe for them to open.

Experts say that violent attacks through the mail are unusual. For instance, over the history of the Postal Service, fewer than 10 pieces of mail have been found to have a dangerous chemical or biological substance.

Still, an explosive or dangerous chemical sent through the mail could hurt many people at once.

The Postal Inspection Service works with managers of mailrooms at big companies and government offices and with postal employees to teach them how to identify a suspicious package.

It also protects post offices and their employees and customers from theft and assault.

Anthrax-laced letters mailed to members of Congress and the national media were deposited in this Princeton, New

Jersey, collection box. The box has a dusty coating from the decontamination process.



photo courtesy Smithsonian National Postal Museum

Case history: Anthrax

In October 2001, government officials and members of the media began receiving letters with a deadly bacteria dusted on them. Anthrax is the disease caused by the bacteria.

Twenty-two people were infected, and five people died.

Two different post offices, along with part of the U.S. Capitol, had to be cleaned and fumigated after contaminated mail passed through their mail processing machines.

Case history: Mail bomb

In 1991 in Alaska, a mail bomb killed a man and injured his wife. The bomb was sent to their son by three people who helped a convicted murderer plan and build the bomb for revenge.

Postal inspectors worked with the Anchorage Police Department in solving the crime.

This X-ray image is part of a hands-on exhibit in the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum.

Postal inspectors are trained to distinguish safe packages from those that could be hazardous. This image reveals a shape, density, wiring and switch that suspiciously look like a pipe bomb.

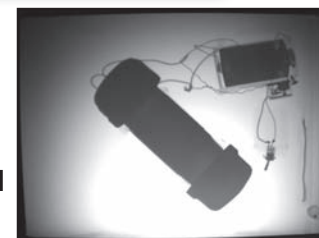


photo courtesy U.S. Postal Inspection Service

Ready Resources



The Mini Page provides ideas for websites, books or other resources that will help you learn more about this week's topics.

On the Web:

- bit.ly/1AVB535

At the library:

- "Working at the Post Office" by Katie Marsico
- "How It Happens at the Post Office" by Dawn Frederick
- "Sincerely Yours: Writing Your Own Letter" by Nancy Loewen



Basset Brown's

Try
'n'
Find

Postal Inspectors

M	S	I	R	O	R	R	E	T	M	V	K	N	L	S
L	C	E	L	O	P	Z	E	F	R	A	U	D	E	C
L	A	K	L	L	T	O	S	T	C	U	I	U	T	I
A	M	C	V	B	E	C	L	E	S	R	S	L	T	S
T	P	A	C	K	A	G	E	I	R	A	I	T	E	N
S	B	T	J	G	Q	U	A	P	C	V	S	M	R	E
O	Y	T	H	E	F	T	L	L	S	E	I	I	E	R
P	X	A	R	H	T	N	A	A	M	N	J	C	D	O
Y	R	A	R	O	P	M	E	T	V	H	I	B	E	F

Words that remind us of postal inspectors are hidden in the block above. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find: ANTHRAX, ATTACK, CRIME, DISASTER, FORENSICS, FRAUD, ILLEGAL, INSPECTOR, LETTER, MAIL, PACKAGE, POLICE, POSTAL, SCAM, SERVICE, TEMPORARY, TERRORISM, THEFT, TRUST, VALUABLES.



Mini Spy

Mini Spy is helping some postal inspectors at work. See if you can find:

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> envelope | <input type="checkbox"/> fan | <input type="checkbox"/> bird | <input type="checkbox"/> funny face |
| <input type="checkbox"/> word MINI | <input type="checkbox"/> letter A | <input type="checkbox"/> pencil | <input type="checkbox"/> letter B |
| <input type="checkbox"/> wrench | <input type="checkbox"/> sailboat | <input type="checkbox"/> letter E | <input type="checkbox"/> basket |
| <input type="checkbox"/> saw | <input type="checkbox"/> needle | | |



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Rookie Cookie's Recipe Spicy Fall Cider

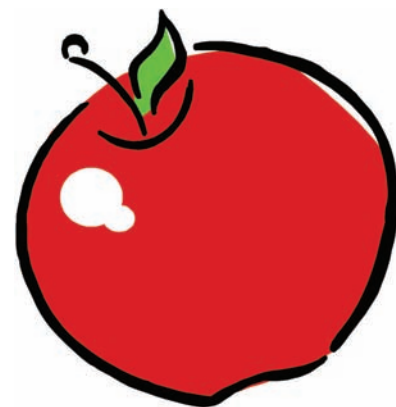
You'll need:

- 16 cups apple juice or cider
- 1 cup red cinnamon candies

What to do:

1. Heat juice and candies in a saucepan over medium heat until candies are dissolved. Serves 16.

You will need an adult's help with this recipe.



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Meet Freddie Prinze Jr.



photo by Sandy Huffaker, © 2014 Disney Enterprises Inc. All rights reserved.

Freddie Prinze Jr. is the voice of Kanan in the new Disney XD animated series "Star Wars Rebels."

He has acted in several movies, including the "Scooby-Doo" films, as well as in many TV shows. He has been a voice actor in several video games. He has been a producer and director for World Wrestling Entertainment.

Freddie, 38, was born in Los Angeles. He grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and spent his summers in Puerto Rico with his grandmother. When he was a kid, he acted in a children's theater in Albuquerque.

He enjoys tap dancing, martial arts, swimming, running marathons and collecting comic books. He speaks Spanish and English. Freddie supports charities such as those helping kids with AIDS.

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Jordan Windle

Gus Goodsport's Supersport



Height: 5-2
Birthdate: 11-13-1998
Hometown: Sihanoukville, Cambodia

People enter a swimming pool in many different ways. Some step in or slide in, while others may shout "Cannonball!" As a diver, Jordan Windle excels at splashing into the water from high above it. On Aug. 17, Jordan won the 10-meter competition at the U.S. national diving championships, jumping from a platform more than 30 feet above the water.

Jordan was born in a small village in Cambodia. When he was a baby, both of his parents died. He was adopted by an American couple and came to the United States before he turned 2. Five years later, he attended a summer camp and learned about diving. He's been somersaulting, tucking and twisting ever since.

Jordan's goal is to reach the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. His favorite diver — and friend — is Olympic gold medalist diver Greg Louganis. He also enjoys playing tennis, basketball and video games, and hopes to become a marine biologist.



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Mighty Funny's Mini Jokes

All the following jokes have something in common. Can you guess the common theme or category?

Mary: If a postal carrier drops a letter in the mud, what do you call it?

Millie: Blackmail!



Maurice: What are the best letters to read when it's hot?

Monty: Fan mail!



Manny: Why was the letter wet?

Mark: Because there was postage dew!



Inspectors at Work

Special events

Imagine you wanted to send a fan letter to a favorite athlete during the Super Bowl next February. Did you know the Postal Service operates temporary post offices during big events, such as the Olympics or political conventions?

The Postal Inspection Service helps to set up these temporary offices and make sure they are safe. Inspectors work with employees of these offices to train them how to **screen**, or check, the mail.



photo by Daniel Afzal, U.S. Postal Service

Postal Inspectors Mark Viggiano (left) and Gregory Botti examine the Sea Bright, New Jersey, post office after a power outage following Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

Disasters and emergencies

After a natural disaster such as a hurricane, post offices may be damaged, and mail can be lost. At these times, victims really depend on receiving paychecks or money from insurance companies.

Postal inspectors help to return service to normal. They make sure the mail is delivered where it should be, restore equipment to working order, and re-route the mail when needed to avoid the damaged area.

Would you like to work as a postal inspector? Here are some of the jobs you might do.



photo courtesy U.S. Postal Inspection Service

Postal police officers help protect customers and employees at post offices all around the country.

Postal police

- Provide security for post offices, mostly in urban areas.

photo by Allen McHenry, courtesy U.S. Postal Inspection Service



Postal Inspectors Brenda Redman (left) and Kelly Pacheco gather and preserve prospective evidence at a crime scene.

Inspectors

- Investigate crimes.
- Prevent crimes.
- Provide information to the public about identity theft and mail fraud.

Next week, The Mini Page is about what's new in space exploration.

Sometimes the most important clues are the tiniest. Forensics Specialist Jennifer Jones analyzes envelopes at the National Forensics Laboratory using special lighting and a magnifying glass.



photo courtesy U.S. Postal Inspection Service

Forensic specialists

- Analyze documents and chemicals.
- Collect fingerprints from crime scenes.

The Mini Page thanks Lynn Heidelbaugh, curator at the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum, for help with this issue.

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