

Post Route Maps of the State of Maine 1796 - 1942

The following links lead to digital copies of Post Route Maps of Maine.

The earlier maps, up until 1865, were developed on a quasi-official basis but privately published. The maps after 1865 were officially produced and published by the U. S. Post Office Department. You can view all of the following maps online, and in all cases the maps can be downloaded as high-resolution images. Watch for an article with more detail about these maps in an upcoming issue of *The Maine Philatelist*.



Excerpt from the 1796 map; image from Leventhal Map and Education Center at the Boston Public Library as cited below.

1796

Map of the United States exhibiting the post-roads, the situations, connections & distances of the post-offices, stage roads, counties, ports of entry... Abraham Bradley. [Excerpt shown on previous page]

This map, often displayed on the wall in the post offices in larger towns, was remarkable in its time for portraying the newly created United States as a single country with national borders. There are many incorrect spellings, e.g. "Norridgeworth." Places like Lewiston, Augusta, and Bangor, which did not yet possess post offices, are noticeably absent from the map. In addition, it shows the yet undetermined northeast boundary as extending far into the territory of the provinces now known as New Brunswick and Quebec.

High-resolution image of the map available here (via Boston Public Library):

<https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:8049g9359>

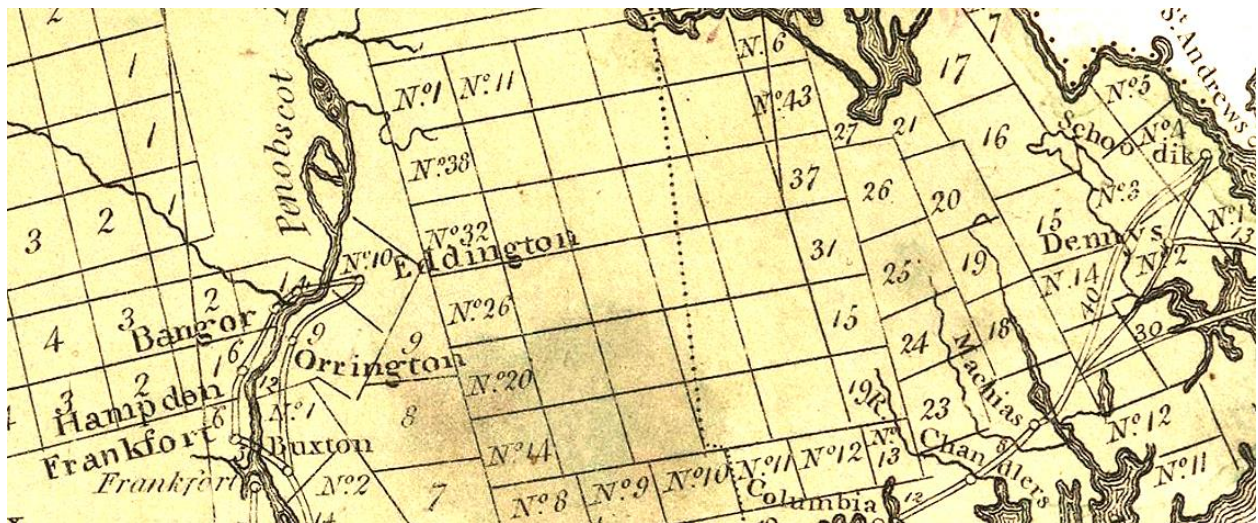
More background on the map is here (via the Smithsonian Institution National Postal Museum): <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/collections/object-spotlight/bradley-postal-map>

1805

Map of the United States, Exhibiting the Post-Roads, the situations, connexions and distances of the Post-Offices, Stage Roads... Abraham Bradley. [Excerpt shown below]

Compare with the 1796 map to appreciate the advance of settlement and establishment of new post offices in the interim. Map cuts off northern Maine but shows no post offices north of Norridgewock, Eddington, or the Calais area.

<https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/s/9guq6g> (via David Rumsey Map Library, Stanford University)



1839

Map of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Exhibiting the Post Offices, Post Roads, Canals, Rail Roads, &c David Burr.

Comparison with the 1805 map shows still more advance of settlement and the postal network. This map, which includes all the New England states, is part of a series that was bound together under the title of *American Atlas*.

<https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/s/sm7c6q>

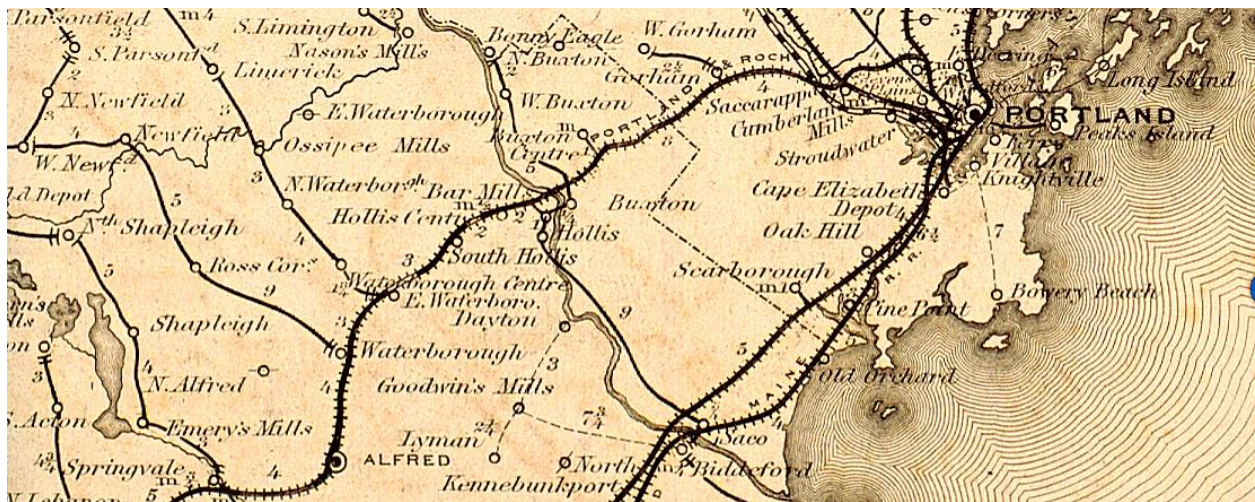
1869

Post route map of the state of Maine...

This appears to be the earliest map now available of the Post Route Maps for Maine officially published by the USPOD. The appearance and format of the maps remained the same up through the 1940s. The map reveals a very different railroad network than the one of our times. There were three railroads running southwest from Portland, but not much rail in eastern and northern Maine. (In fact, the only railway connections for Calais and Houlton were from New Brunswick. The map suggests that at this time mail reached the Calais area via Canadian rail links from Vanceboro to St. Stephen – rather than the famous four-horse stage coach that made the perilous overnight traverse of the Airline Road.) [Excerpt below from University of North Texas]

<http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph298381/?q=postal>

(via University of North Texas)



1873

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/25464517>

(via U. S. National Archives)

1875

<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/8ce07af0-a087-0134-5df1-00505686a51c>

(via New York Public Library)

1879

<https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/s/3on3rw>

(via David Rumsey Map Collection, Stanford University)

1880

Eastern Maine sheet

<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/9e193390-a07b-0134-0fbc-00505686a51c>

Western Maine sheet

<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/9df5c8d0-a07b-0134-fe25-00505686a51c>

(via New York Public Library)

1886

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/25464514>

(via U. S. National Archives)

1891

<http://maps.bpl.org/id/16411>

(via Boston Public Library)

1895

<http://maps.bpl.org/id/16445>

(via Boston Public Library)

1896

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/25464132>

(via U. S. National Archives)

1897

<http://maps.bpl.org/id/16470>

(via Boston Public Library)

1903

Portrays the Maine railroads as a nearly fully-developed network.

<http://maps.bpl.org/id/16604>

(via Boston Public Library)

1914

By this time, the development of Rural Free Delivery had taken its toll on small rural post offices. Many of those offices were gone by 1914.

<http://www.mainephilatelic.org/PostRouteMaps/MainePostRouteMap1914.pdf>

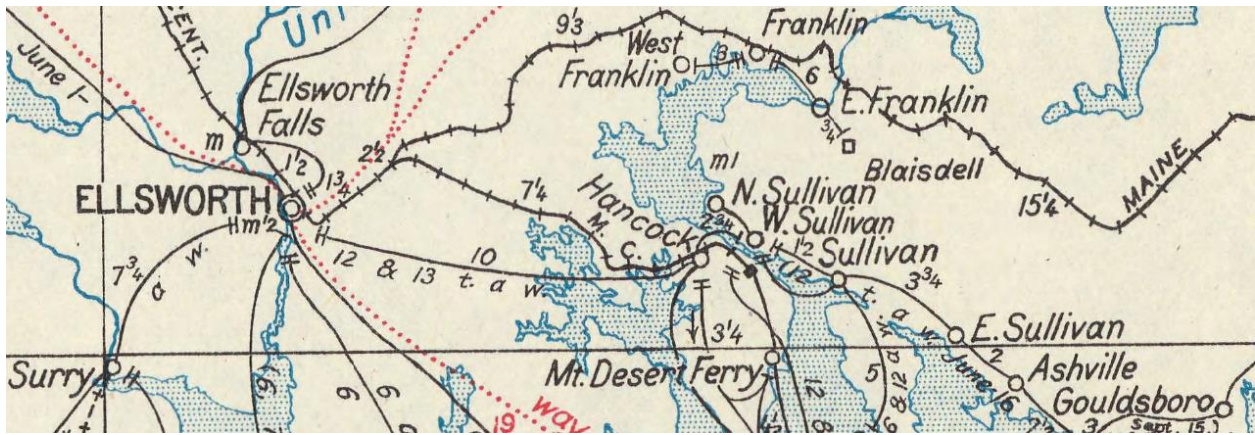
(via Maine Philatelic Society. MPS does not own this map but is in possession of a digital image of it, which is shared on our website.)

1941

By the 1940s, some railroad service had been curtailed, and more mail directed to rural post offices was moved by car and truck.

<https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/s/zrc923>

(via David Rumsey Map Collection, Stanford University)



From the 1942 map. All the Post Route Maps after 1869, officially published by USPOD, had similar format. Image from David Rumsey Map Library, as noted below.

1942

<https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/s/193qfo>

(via David Rumsey Map Collection, Stanford University)

Many thanks to Mike Ludeman for identifying and sharing most of the links that we've shown here. Check out his guides on the stampsarter.org website:

<https://stampsarter.org/learning/portals/SS Post Route Maps Portals.pdf>

<https://stampsarter.org/learning/PostalPortal.html>.

Last update for this document was 28 December 2022.

Please direct comments or questions to postalhistorymaine@gmail.com