

issue of the paper was one in which George Washington of Mt. Vernon in Virginia offered for sale twenty thousand acres of western lands.

On November 20th the publisher of the *Maryland Journal* apologized once more for the irregular issue and delivery of his paper, but he pledged himself, now that he had returned from the north restored in health, henceforward to make its publication the primary object of his attention. It seemed for a few months that he had been sincere in making this promise to his public, but clearly he had made it without reckoning on the attraction of that other and more absorbing interest which was gradually taking possession of his thoughts. In February 1774, his sister, Mary Katherine Goddard, assumed control of the newspaper for what she doubtless thought would be the temporary absence of her brother. A year later, however, he had not returned to take up his responsibilities and his name was removed from the imprint of the journal, where it did not reappear until nearly a decade had passed. During the first two years of this period Goddard was busy at a task for the successful performance of which he has been given credit, but only scant praise, by historians; that is, the establishment of the postal system which was afterwards taken over by the Continental Congress, and which exists today as the United States Post Office.

WILLIAM GODDARD AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE "CONSTITUTIONAL POST OFFICE"

In seeking for the beginnings of Goddard's interest in American postal operations it is necessary to go very far back indeed in his life, for at one time, Dr. Giles Goddard had been postmaster of New London, and it is probable that throughout the receptive years of boyhood, the future founder of the United States Post Office had heard in his father's house much discussion of the British colonial postal system. While in Providence he was himself for a short time deputy postmaster of that place, and during his youth and early manhood his constant employment in and management of newspaper offices had kept him in intimate association with a system for which he seems to have acquired nothing but contempt and aversion.¹ His former associates, James Parker and John Holt, had been postmasters at New Haven, and John Holt became in later years a virile critic of the colonial post.² The delivery of newspapers to their rural subscribers seems to

¹ There was in colonial days, as there is now, a close connection between the post office and the publisher. This condition is interestingly set forth in Mr. Paltsits's article on John Holt referred to earlier in this chapter; in *American Archives*, 4th series, 2: 537, and in "Letters from James Parker to Benjamin Franklin" in *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 2d series, 16: 186-232, May 1902.

² See Mr. Paltsits's article before referred to. See also *American Archives*, 4th Series, 2: 537.