

Postmaster Generals of Jamaica

Fred Sullivan

Born 1834+/-1 died 5 Jan 1892

		Salary
Clerk, Governor's Secretarys office	3 Mar 1853 to 30 Apr 1859	£100
Acting private Secretary	1 May 1859 to 30 Mar 1859	£150
Chief Clerk Govt Secretaries Office	1 Dec 1859 to 30 Apr 1860	
Private Secretary	1 May 1860 to 28 Feb 1861	£300
Chief Clerk PO Dept	1 Mar 1861 to 30 Apr 1870	£355
Acting PMG (according to PO Notice)	by 12 Aug 1869	
Postmaster for Jamaica [CO137-547] [Blue Book of 1870]]	1 May 1870 to 31 Oct 1891	£600 to 30 Sep 1877 £800

Blue Book of 1868

... states appointed 1 March 1861.

Date of First Appointment under Colonial Govt 1858.

The DAILY. GLEANER, Wednesday OCTOBER 21st, 1891

The Postmaster General

For some days the rumour has been current that Mr. Fred Sullivan, Postmaster for Jamaica has tendered his resignation, We learn on enquiry that while Mr. Sullivan's resignation is very likely in consequence of his ill-heath, but as yet it has not been sent in. Mr. Sullivan, has seen 40 years service in the Jamaica Civil Service, and is most highly respected amongst all the heads of departments. He is 55 years of age, and his resignation will be all the more regretted, if it will be from failing health and not from, what would be more satisfactory, retirement at the maximum age of service. Since the 9th inst. Mr. Sullivan has-been absent from the office on leave and as is usual, Mr. George K. Pearce, has been appointed acting Postmaster General.

CO137-547 at the National Archives

Governor despatch of 12 Dec 1891 reports resignation due to ill-health (and acting appointments).

Governor despatch of 26 Dec 1891 reports pension details.

Governor despatch of 9 Jan reports death.

The DAILY. GLEANER, Wednesday January 6th, 1892

On Tuesday, the 5th instant, at 7 am., at his residence. Drominagh. Halfway Tree, FREDERIC SULLIVAN, Esq., late Postmaster for Jamaica, in his 57th year.

The DAILY. GLEANER Wednesday January 6th, 1892

Although an event not unlooked for by the few, the announcement of the death of Mr. Frederick Sullivan late Postmaster General for Jamaica will come as a painful surprise to the people of this Island. Mr. Sullivan was rapidly failing in health in October last when he retired from the position he had held for so long a period, and since then he has gradually been sinking, in spite of the assiduous attention of Dr. Saunders. Last week it was seen that the end was time, and yesterday morning at seven o'clock the patient aspired.

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Mr. Sullivan was born, we believe, in England.. His mother was 'before marriage an English lady, and his father was Irish, both being, of honourable ancestry. The boy was educated in England, and when still quite a lad, came with his parents to Jamaica, where he entered on a career in the public service, The life of such officials are, as a rule, destitute of any striking features of general interest, and Mr. Sullivan's was as uneventful as the majority, The chief circumstances of his life can be briefly told,. At the age of 18 he entered the then Governor's Secretary's office. This was at Christmas 1852, and from February of the following year he was employed as clerk in various degrees until May 1869 when being chief clerk he acted as Private Secretary to Governor Darling until November. He was confirmed in this appointment in May of the succeeding year, and continued to hold the office until March 1861 when he was transferred to the Post Office Department as chief clerk.. Finally on 1st May 1870, he was appointed Postmaster General for Jamaica, in succession to Mr. Kemble an office which he held until he retired in October of the past year on a well earned pension.

It is only by looking back and reviewing in detail the improvement which have been effected in the Post Office system of the colony that we can realise how much we owe to the zeal and enterprise of Mr. Sullivan, Previous to his appointment as the head of the department the facilities granted to the public were few and expensive. The rates of inland postage were high, being for a letter not exceeding half an ounce 4d if conveyed a distance not exceeding 60 miles; 6d if not conveyed over 60 miles but not exceeding 100 miles; and 8d if conveyed over 100 miles. From the times that Mr. Sullivan entered office these rates were gradually reduced until on 14 January 1890 the penny postage, system was introduced into the Island. The overseas letters were also high. In 1863 the rate of postage from and to the United Kingdom was 1s. per half ounce; subsequently it was reduced to 6d and then to 4d and in January 1891 it was fixed at 2½d at which it remains. In 1891 [should be 1890] the rate to the United States and Canada had been reduced to a like figure.

On the 1st January 1872 Mr. Sullivan inaugurated a general house delivery of correspondence in Kingston simultaneously with the introduction of the prepaid system. The issue of Post Cards for use within the island took place in 1877. The commencement of another great boon to the public occurred in 1870 when a mail coach was established between Kingston and Mandeville -for the conveyance of mails, passengers and Parcels. The system of mail-coaches gradually extended under the fostering care of Mr. Sullivan until at the present time every village of importance is connected by this useful metre of communication. During the year 1879 Mr. Sullivan imported a set of American 'lock-boxes' and erected them in the Post Office for the



THE LATE MR. FRED. SULLIVAN.

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convenience of business-men who desired their letters as soon after their arrival as possible, and who were willing to pay a small sum for the privilege. These boxes have now become indispensable to merchants and others, and their use has extended to other towns throughout the island.

The last decade witnessed many improvements in the Post Office. An extension of the foreign Money Order system was effected; Parcel Post Exchange with the United Kingdom and other countries was established; and last, but not the least important, the Postal Order System setup was introduced. The benefits of the Department were also extended throughout the island, until at the present time there are 106 district Post Offices, where there were only 49 in 1860. The establishment of a system of inland postal telegraphs was one of the most important improvements effected under the supervision of Mr. Sullivan; and was effected directly at his instance. The matter had been mooted so long back as 1869 but it was Sir Anthony Musgrave who acted on the suggestion of the Postmaster General and conferred the boon on the public. An Act was passed in 1879 and immediately after a school of Telegraphy was opened in Kingston where the operators were trained for the work. Telegraphic communication was first established between Kingston and St. Ann's on the 20th Oct. 1879 and the circuit of the island was completed on the 4th March 1881. Telegraph Offices are now in existence in every principal village and town in the island.

One of the last undertakings in connection with his department in which Mr. Sullivan took a deep interest and devoted a great deal of his time and attention was the laying out of the Post Office Court in the Exhibition. The miniature Post and Telegraph Office there exhibited, was imported by him from the United States and re-erected under his own supervision, and in the perfecting of all the arrangements — so ably carried out by Mr. Pearce and Mr. Wilson — he evinced the liveliest interest. He was one of those who regarded the Exhibition with great satisfaction and so far as lay in his power, endeavoured to bring the claims of the undertaking before the people of other countries.

Thus briefly and imperfectly have we endeavoured to indicate the useful nature of Mr. Sullivan's official career. It was his fortune to enter on his office when the department was still in its infancy, and he had therefore opportunities ready to his hand to prove his powers of creation and organization. The present institution, so admirably managed in all its ramifications, is the visible result. But none can estimate the amount of pains, which must have gone to produce this result; we see the complete structure but cannot tell the infinite labour that has been bestowed on every part before it reached the final stage. Browning expresses the idea in stronger language:—

“There's none cares, like a fellow of the craft
For all the unestimated sum of pains
That go to a success the world can see,
They praise him, but the best they never know.”

The Post Office Department, as it exists to-day will be Mr. Sullivan's best monument. No fitter could be raised to him and none will better serve to perpetuate his memory. As a public officer he was faithful, painstaking and courteous — he was always, emphatically, the gentleman. After so long a service it is a mournful circumstance that he did not live long enough to enjoy his well earned respite from daily labour and thought. To those who are left bereft we tender our sincere sympathy and condolence. The funeral took place last evening at Half-way-Tree Churchyard.

1928 Jamaica handbook: Description

The old Postmasters of the good old days and slow old ways may be left to rest in peace, but mention must be made of Mr. Frederic Sullivan, as all who collect the stamps of Jamaica owe a great deal to his able administration of the Post Office.

Mr. F. Sullivan, who became Chief Clerk of the Post Office in 1861, and Postmaster on 1 May, 1870, though for some years previously he had been practically in charge, was the first Postmaster of the new school, spending his time in his office and always being found at his post.

Mr. Sullivan realized that real efficiency could only be gained by meeting the demand for increased wages in order to procure efficient men.

The Commissioners in 1883 had stated that the illiterate character of the Postmasters was a bar to any attempt to add to their responsibilities.

As, however, the island finance could not meet higher wages, without increased taxation, Mr. Sullivan endeavoured to keep his Department self-supporting, at the same time realizing the first necessity was a cheap and efficient post.

Writing to the Secretary of State on 14 May, 1890, Mr. Sullivan said : " Rigid economy has ever been my rule in the disbursement of Funds, but at the same time I advocated a liberal treatment of those who contribute to the Service, not only by economizing expenses but by realizing revenue. The only blame that has been attached to my administration of the Post Office Department is that it was too advanced."

The advance was well illustrated by Acting-Governor Rushworth in 1877 "When Jamaica took over control there were only two island posts a week and comparatively few Ocean Mails, and the work of the Office was effected with comparative ease by five officers, while now it is with extreme difficulty maintained with a staff of 16 officers ; the duties now comprising a letter delivery in Kingston, three posts a week, a business of £40,000 a year in Money Orders, 81 District Post Offices to control, and Ocean Mails averaging eight a week. . . . When Mr. Kemble retired Mr. Sullivan was then appointed Postmaster for Jamaica and has since conducted the business of the Department to the entire satisfaction of the Government. He is as energetic and zealous an officer as is to be found in the Service, and the generally admitted efficiency is to be attributed to his assiduity and devotion . . . and the Community has benefitted by the improvements that have of late years taken place in the Postal System of the Colony."

The Post Office continued to show a series of intrepid advances, utilized opportunities, and spirited reforms (Colonial Standard, 2 Oct., 1889 ; 29 Dec., 1890) ; with the nett result that the twenty years of Mr. Sullivan's administration witnessed the introduction of the prepaid system, a general house to house delivery by letter-carriers, the admission of Jamaica into the Postal Union, the issue of reply-paid postcards, the establishment of a mail coach service, the authorization of an Inter-Colonial Money Order System, the establishment of a Parcels Post Exchange between Jamaica and the U.S.A. and England, the introduction of the Postal Order System, and the reduction of the local postage to a uniform rate of a penny.