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# World of Topicals: The Olympics, Part 2

*(As explained in Part 1, this comprehensive study is a compilation of material from various articles that have appeared in Mekeel's & STAMPS over the years. Unless color is essential to the point being made, some images in the early articles have been incorporated here in black and white, as originally published. JFD.)*

## **The Modern Olympics**

The modern Olympic Games were revived by Baron Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1943), educator and sportsman, son of the French painter, Charles Louis de Fredy Coubertin. In 1894 he sent letters to all the governing bodies of sports with his proposal that the games be revived as an international series of amateur sport competitions.



Haiti CB1:  
Pierre de  
Coubertin



The cover page of the official report for the Games of the 1896 First Olympiad connects the Games of Antiquity and the first Games of the modern era with such elements as the inscription "776-1896" (upper left), the 1896 Olympic stadium in a newly designed horse-shoe shape (lower right), the Acropolis (faint in the background, right), and the girl personifying the goddess Athena and presenting the branch of wild olive intended for the victor.



*A First Day Cover with the 1896 1 lepta-60L Olympic Issue, Sc. 117-124, the eight lower values of the set, each tied by "6/Athens/6/25 March 1896" first day cancels on a cover front to Germany.*

As a result of his action, the modern Olympics were inaugurated in 1896 at Athens, Greece, and since 1896 more than 80,000 athletes, representing 59 nations, have competed in the games. Pierre de Coubertin, who incidentally is pictured on the Haiti semi-postal and airpost semi-postal stamps of 1939, Scott B1 and CB1 and CB2, became president of the International Olympic Committee in 1894, which post he held until 1925. The supreme control rests with this Committee, and over fifty countries have national Olympic associations.

The modern Olympic Games follow a four-year cycle, the exceptions, having been 1916, 1940, and 1944, when world wars forced cancellation of the games. Women have gradually taken an increasingly important part in them. The games occupy a period of fourteen days, and opened with an impressive ceremony. Every competitor must be an amateur according to the Olympic requirements. [This is no longer the case. JFD.]

At the 1936 meeting, a relay of torch-bearers ran two thousand miles across Europe from Athens to the Berlin Stadium, and this rite was again observed in the next Olympics in London in 1948. Most of the major games in the London Olympics were run in the Wembley Stadium. These 1948 games brought great honor to the United

States of America, for between the 59 countries represented, the United States came in first, with 662 points.

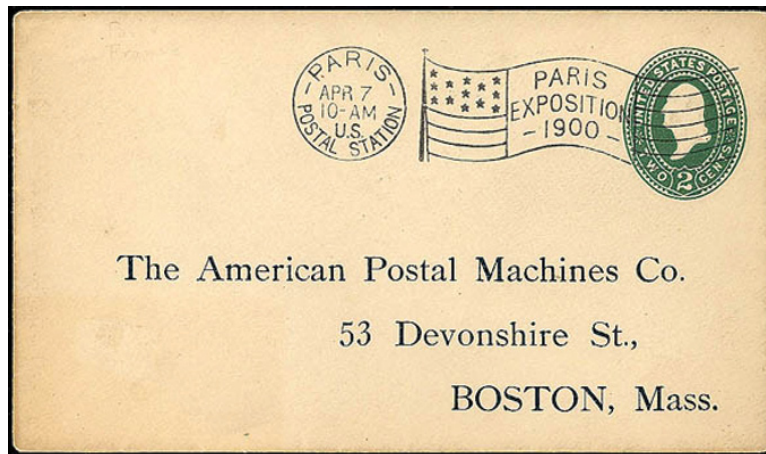
In 1924, Winter Olympics were introduced, when such winter sports, as skating, ice hockey, bob sleighing, sky racing, and skiing were included. The Winter Sports Olympics have been held in 1924 at Chamonix, France; 1928, St. Moritz, Switzerland; 1932, Lake Placid, New York; 1936, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany; 1948, St. Moritz; and 1952, Oslo, Norway. The summer Olympics for the same years were in Paris, Amsterdam, Los Angeles, Berlin, London, and Helsinki.

### **Olympian Stamps**

Until 1920 only Greece issued stamps for the Olympic Games, but since that time it has become more general practice by other nations. The modern Olympic Games have been held in the following years at the places designated, and where stamps were issued, they are mentioned by Scott numbers.

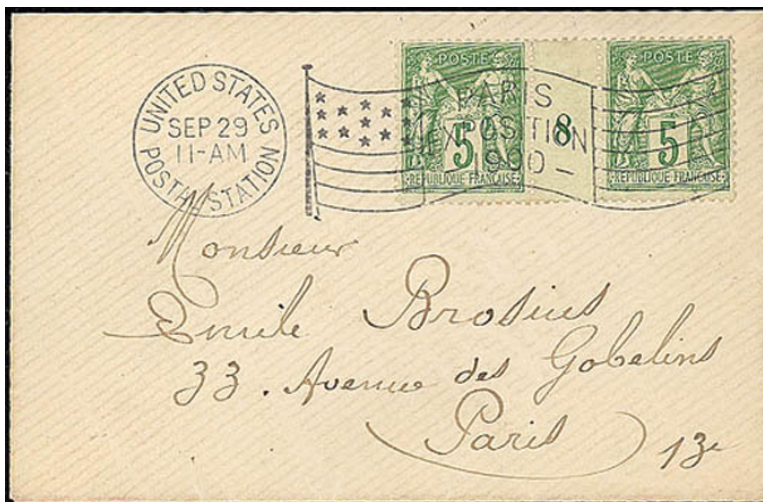
*(On the pages that follow we list the Games mentioned in this article with illustrations of stamps, covers, and other memorabilia from those Olympic Games. JFD.)*

### **1900, Paris, France**



*The 1900 Games were held at the 1900 Paris Exposition, where the United States had a Postal Station. This 2¢ entire with the printed address of the American Postal Machines Company in Boston bears a U.S. Postal Station/Apr. 7, 1900 machine cancel rejected design that was not put into use. Less than 15 copies are known.*

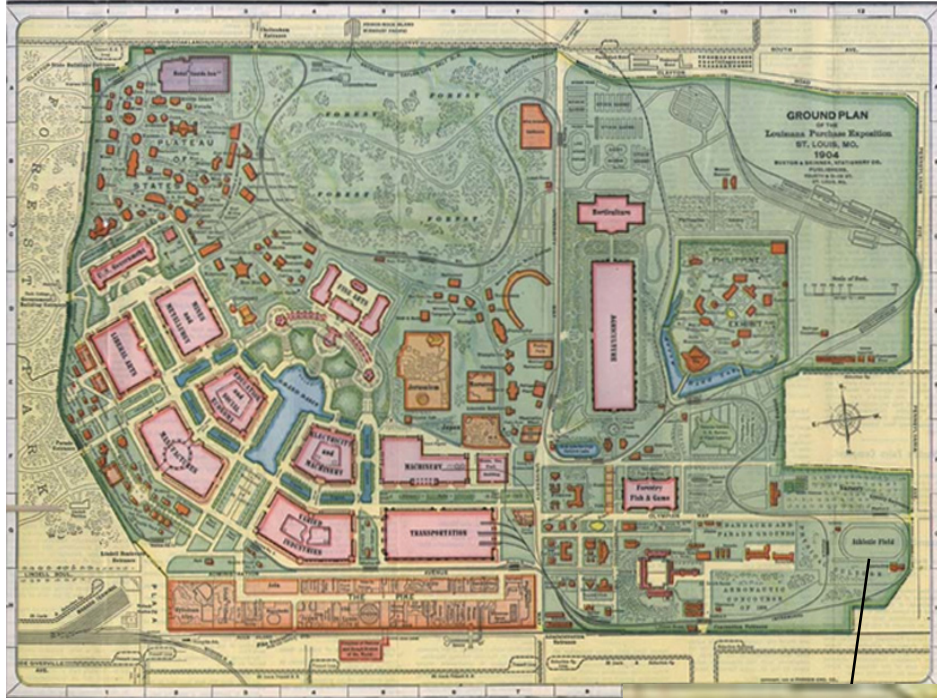
## 1904, St. Louis, USA



An accepted "United States Postal Station/Sep. 29, 1900/Paris Exposition" machine flag cancel (Bomar type P00-07) tying a 5 centimes Sage design issue Gutter Pair to a small locally address cover.



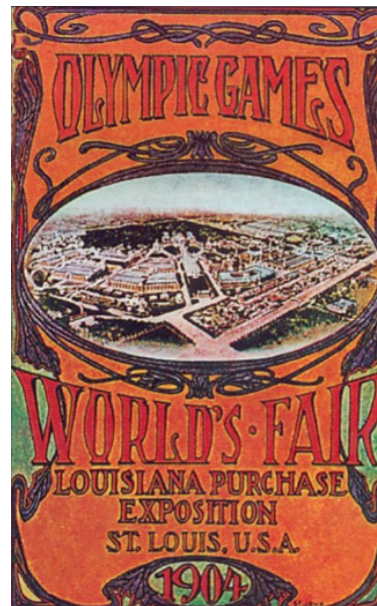
A locally addressed plate proof on card, with four strikes of a "U.S. Postal Station/Paris Exposition/Sep. 5, 1900" duplex cancel (Bomar type P00-01) tying the France 1c-4c Sage issues. The reverse shows a Bird's Eye View of the Exposition, and the sender mentions sending the card from the American Pavilion at the Exposition.



From the Missouri History Museum, a site plan of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition grounds. In the bottom-right corner of the map is the campus of Washington University. The field for the Olympics was Francis Field, now the primary Athletic Field of Washington University, and the building in the lower right of the magnified view (arrow) was the school's gymnasium, where Olympic events also were held.



Above, the front and back of an Olympic medal; right, The poster for the 1904 Summer Olympics in St. Louis. The Games were hosted at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, and the cover of the expo's daily program was used for the Olympics poster.





The 2¢-5¢ Louisiana Purchase issue (Sc. 324-326) tied by oval registry cancellations to a local street address, with a magenta “Registered St. Louis Mo. Apr 29 1904” circular date stamp. This is the largest and unique combination franked pre-First Day cover, the official first day of issue being April 30.

The corner card is that of the Mekeel Stamp & Publishing Co. At that time they were a major stamp dealer as well as being the publisher’s of Mekeel’s Weekly, which is now part of our sister publication, Mekeel’s & STAMPS Magazine.

### 1906, Athens, Greece



1907 New Years Presentation card showing 9 of the 14 Olympic values (Sc. 184-197) from the Greece 1906 series. This die proofs card was given out by the Greek Director General of the Post and Telegraph.



*Complete presentation sheet with all 14 Olympic values (Sc. 184-197) in issued colors, sunk on gold gilt edge card with "J. P. Segg & Co./ London W, England" sunk at bottom, one of about 26 Presentation Proofs Sheets that are believed to have been made.*





A picture post card showing an Olympic Games Discus Thrower on the reverse, addressed to Cambridge, Mass., with an Athens Stadion/ 21 Apr. '06 Olympic double circle postmark tying a pair of 5 lepta Olympic stamps (Sc. 187). This postmark was used at the entrance to the stadium.

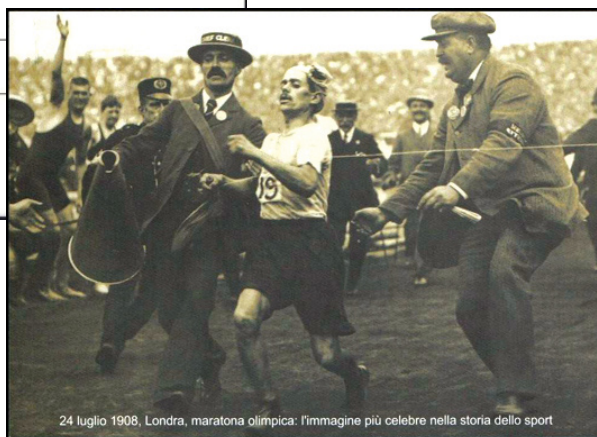
The addressee was the wife of R. Barton Perry, the American philosopher who had earned his Masters degree from Harvard (in Cambridge) in 1899, and in 1906 was an assistant professor at Williams and Smith Colleges in Massachusetts. Later, in 1936, he wrote a biography of the American philosopher William James (who died in 1910) that won the 1936 Pulitzer Prize for Biography or Autobiography.

## 1908, London



There is very little available in the way of philatelic material from these Games. In 2008 Italy commemorated the centennial of the 1908 Mar-

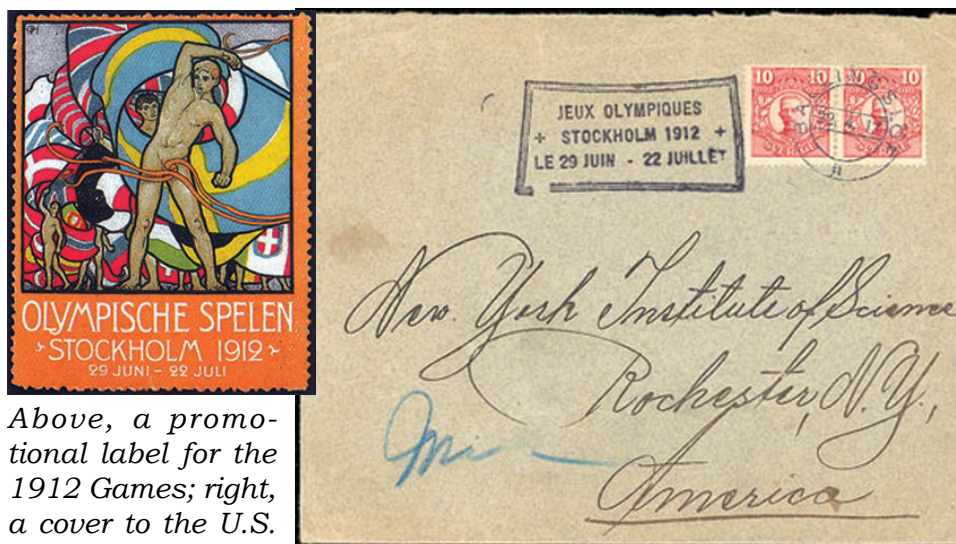
athon, in which Italian Dorando Pietri won the Marathon, but was disqualified because he was assisted after having collapsed during the race.



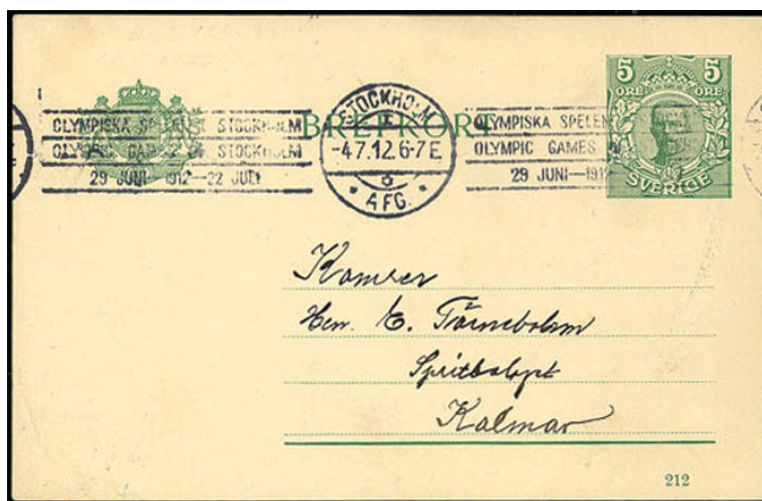
A promotional label for the 1908 Games produced by the British Olympic Committee



## 1912, Stockholm



Above, a promotional label for the 1912 Games; right, a cover to the U.S. with a 10 ore King Gustav pair tied by Ballingslof/22.412 postmark of origin, also with a "Jeux Olympiques/Stockholm 1912/Le 29 Juin - 22 Juillet" promotional transit cachet.



A 5 ore King Gustav postal card to Kalmar with an Olympic Games of Stockholm/4.7.12. bilingual machine cancel. On this day the International Olympic Committee awarded the 1916 Olympic Games to Berlin.

## 1916, Berlin




Top, a special 5 pfennigs Germania postal card prepared especially for the Inauguration of the Olympic Stadium with a commemorative stadium vignette at top left;  
Bottom, the picture side of a commemorative postcard of the newly built stadium franked on the other side with a 5pf Germania tied by a "Berlin 8/.8.6.13 8PM" postmark, the Inaugural Day of the stadium. The 1916 Olympiad was awarded to Berlin, and this stadium was built to accommodate the Games. The opening ceremony of the stadium was attended by Kaiser Wilhelm II. However, due to the outbreak of World War I, the 1916 Games did not take place.

*To Be Continued*

Many of these images are from *The Manikian Olympic Games Collection* section of the Schuyler Rumsey 2011 WESTPEX auction, accessible at <http://www.rumseyauctions.com/auctions/sale/44>

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