

106 Years Ago in Mekeel's:

United States Postage Rates

by J. W. Sampson (From Mekeel's Weekly, Feb. 23, 1918, with photos added)

Chapter I—1845 to 1850.

From 1827 to 1845, a period of eighteen years, United States postage rates remained unchanged, regardless of the country's industrial and commercial development, and marked improvements in transportation.

At the beginning of this period the mails were carried entirely by stagecoach and by postmen on horseback, overland, and to a limited extent by steamboats on inland waterways. But by 1845, there were over 4,000 miles of railway in operation, linking the principal cities along the Atlantic seaboard and running far inland, carrying the major part of the domestic mail at radically reduced cost. Yet the rate for a single sheet letter from Philadelphia to New York remained 12-1/2 cents, and it continued to cost the public 18-3/4 cents to send a letter from New York to Boston. The minimum rate for any distance not over 400 miles was 6 cents, and the maximum, for any distance over 400 miles 25 cents, with double rates for "letters composed of two pieces of paper."

progressiveness, plus the prodding of their constituents, finally impelled the lawmakers at Washington to take action, and on March 3rd, 1845, a "New Post Office Law" was passed by Congress, under which the following rates became effective:

"Single letters, any number of pieces not exceeding half an ounce, 300 miles or less, 5 cents.

"If over 300 miles, 10 cents.

"Drop letters (not mailed) 2 cents

"For each additional half ounce or part thereof, add single postage thereto.

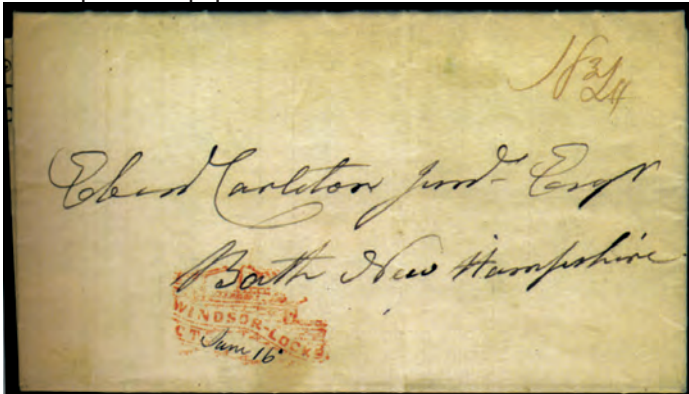
"Newspapers of 1900 square inches or less, sent by editors or publishers from their office of publication, any distance not over 30 miles, free. Over 30 and not exceeding 100 miles, 1 cent. Over 100 miles, 1-1/2 cents.

"Pamphlets, magazines and periodicals, any distance, for 1 ounce or less, 2-1/2 cents; for each additional ounce, 1 cent.

"Circulars, for each sheet unsealed, any distance, 2 cents."

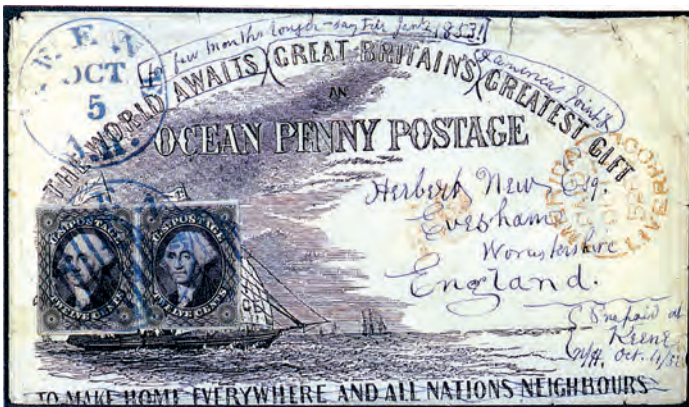
No definite action was taken, however, in regard to issuing postage stamps, the need of which was already widely recognized and as a consequence, the post masters of various cities acted independently, resulting in the Postmasters' Provisionals, which appeared in New York, in Baltimore, St. Louis, Providence, New Haven, and other cities in 1845 and 1846.

In July, 1847, the long-delayed governmental issue appeared, in 5 cent and 10 cent denominations. These two stamps did not cover all requirements, a 1 cent stamp being obviously needed for use on circulars and drop letters, but post masters



Another example of the rates at this time: it cost 18-3/4 cents (manuscript notation upper right) to send this folded letter from Windsor Locks, Conn., to Bath, N.H. in 1843.

In the meantime Great Britain had (in 1840) adopted penny postage and put postage stamps into use. This example of



This Ocean Penny Postage illustrated propaganda cover was used in 1852 from Keene, N.H., with a pair of 12¢, Sc. 17, paying the then-current 24¢ rate to England.



While almost all Postmaster Provisionals were used from the city in which they were issued, a few were carried outside the issuing area on or off envelopes and used from those towns or cities. The New York Postmaster did experiment with supplying Albany with a supply of stamps for use on mail addressed to New York City. This folded letter shows two Five Cent Provisionals, Sc. 9X1, to pay the double rate. Posted from Albany, the prepayment was not recognized by the Albany P.O., but it was accepted in New York and handstamped "Paid" on arrival.

were permitted to continue their practice of accepting cash payment and writing or stamping "Paid" on the letter or circular. Neither the prepayment of postage nor the use of stamps was compulsory, and during the first two years the 1847 issue was in service comparatively few stamps were used outside of the larger cities, many of the smaller post offices never being supplied with this issue.

From 1847 to 1851 the rate to the Canadian provinces, overland, was the same as the domestic rate, 5 cents if under 300 miles, 10 cents if over that distance. The time taken in carrying a letter overland, however, was so much in excess of the length of passage by sea that mail addressed by business houses to correspondents in Nova Scotia was commonly forwarded by ship to Halifax, although this more than doubled the cost, 24 cents being the "Ship rate to British colonies." Letters so forwarded commonly show the use of one 5 cent and two 10 cent stamps.



An 1849 folded letter from Baltimore, with a 5¢ and two 10¢ 1847s overpaying the Steamer rate to Nova Scotia.

To any British colony, as to Great Britain itself, the rate on a letter conveyed by a foreign packet was fixed in June, 1848, at 24 cents for one-half ounce, though it was provided that if sent by a "foreign private ship" the charge should be only 16 cents.



This cover to Davenport, England, bears five 1847 5 cent singles overlapping each other, overpaying by 1 cents the 24¢ treaty rate to England. The cover bears a "19" credit, "America/Paid/AP29/+50E/Liverpool" transit handstamp and Charleston/Apr 11/S.C." c.d.s., with matching grids tying the stamps.

These, it should be noted, were the rates for letters mailed at New York, and if mailed elsewhere it was necessary to add postage covering the regular domestic rate from the point of origin to New York. This explains the existence of various covers

bearing a single 5 cent 1847, or a pair, addressed to England, to Belgium, or to France. Collectors have sometimes assumed that these examples indicated the possible or probable existence of a five or ten cent rate to those countries, whereas in reality the stamps were used merely to pay the postage to New York, the foreign rate being either prepaid without the use of stamps or the letters forwarded unpaid. In 1848, according to contemporary proclamations, 24 cents postage was required to send a half-ounce letter from New York to Bremen by U.S. Mail Packet. The rate to Hamburg was 30 cents, to Prussia 36 cents, to Denmark 46 cents, to Sweden 63 cents, to Russia (St. Petersburg only) 48 cents.

To Austria, the rate for one-quarter ounce was 42 cents, to Bavaria 46 cents, to Switzerland 45 cents, to Egypt 61 cents. Half-ounce letters by British Steamer to any British West Indies island cost 25 cents, to Martinique, Porto Rico, St. Thomas, or any West Indies island not British, 50 cents.

To Havana (presumably by Yankee ship) the rate was 25 cents and to Chagres, Panama, Valparaiso "or any port on the Pacific," 75 cents. A few months later, however, the rush to the newly discovered gold fields of California resulted in a vastly increased volume of mail, as well as increased facilities for carrying it, and under "New Post Office Regulations, July, 1849" the rate to Chagres is given as 20 cents, to Panama 30 cents, and to San Francisco 40 cents. At the same time the rate to Havana was reduced to 12-1/2 cents, and the following announcement was made:



Four singles of the 10¢ 1847, Sc. 2, pay the 40¢ transcontinental rate on this folded letter with a light "Philada. Pa. Oct. 1" 1849 c.d.s., also with manuscript "Paid" and "40" upper right.

"For other foreign countries, if sent by British Steamers, United States inland postage, any distance, is 5 cents for a single half ounce, or ten cents for an ounce, prepaid. If sent in American Steamers to go through the British mail, the whole postage from any United States post office is 21 cents for a single half ounce, prepaid. If sent by American Steamer, all letters to France, Holland, the Netherlands and Spain must be prepaid."

This is not as explicit as might be wished, but seems to indicate that the "private ship" rate of 16 cents, fixed in June, 1848, plus a definite inland rate of 5 cents for any distance, now covered prepayment of postage on all European and presumably some other foreign letters as far as England, the British post office assuming the risk of collecting any further charges at destination.

To Be Continued

106 Years Ago in Mekeel's:

United States Postage Rates

by J. W. Sampson (From *Mekeel's Weekly*, June 15, 1918, with photos added)

CHAPTER IV.—1869

From the standpoint of a student of postage rates, who cares comparatively little for the particular stamps issued and in use during the period under consideration, the devotion of a separate chapter to 1869 rates may seem unjustified. No radical changes were made in domestic rates during this year, and comparatively few in rates to foreign countries, several of the reductions mentioned in the following paragraphs having gone into effect in 1868, and others early in 1870. The fact remains, however, that the pictorial issue of United States stamps, which made its appearance in 1869, has always been one of the leading favorites among collectors....

When the 1869 issue was first contemplated, the rate to Great Britain was 12 cents for a letter weighing 1/2 ounce (Figure 1, page 14), and aside from the 6 cent Canadian rate (Figure 15) and the convenience of having a stamp to cover double the domestic 3 cent rate, there had been little reason for issuing a 6 cent stamp. In fact, essays of the 1869 issue show that a 5 cent stamp was contemplated (Figure 2); but before the stamps were actually issued, the rate to Great Britain was again cut in half, a 6 stamp...showing the head of Washington made its appearance as this denomination.



Fig. 2. Sc. 115-E1 Large Die Essay as Five Cents

To France, or to Algeria by French mail (Figure 4), the old rate of 15 cents for a quarter-ounce, 30 cents for a half-ounce, continued in force. Prepayment being optional, letters were frequently forwarded with the postage only partly prepaid, so that all manner of odd combinations exist to puzzle collectors (Figure 5). It should be noted, however, that before the 1869 issue was entirely out of use (in 1870), the direct rate to France was reduced to 10 cents. At the same time, arrangements were made by which letters could be forwarded to France by way of England upon prepayment of only 4 cents, the balance to be collected by the British post office, and covers showing pairs of the 2 cent 1869 used to France are interesting examples of the odd provisions of postal treaties (Figures 6 and 7).

In 1869, the prevailing rate to the German and Austrian States, by direct route, was 10 cents, and for letters forwarded via England, 15 cents (Figure 8). The Scandinavian rates had been materially decreased, and it cost only 13 cents to send a half-ounce letter to Denmark, 14 cents to Sweden and 15 cents to Norway. Letters to Italy, including Rome and the Papal States, required 15 cents postage. The rate to Spain remained at 21 cents. To Russia direct, 15 cents; if via England, 18 cents. To Switzerland via North German Union, 15 cents; via England, 20 cents; via France, 21 cents.

To China, the rate on letters sent via San Francisco and thence by American ship, was 10 cents, but if forwarded by way of the North German Union, the cost was 27 cents, and if via England,

34 cents (Figure 9). To the British East Indies, the rate via San Francisco was also 10 cents, but if sent via Southampton, 28 cents. To Egypt, the rate was 20 cents.

On the American continents, letters to Cuba, Mexico and Panama (and presumably also to Chagres and Aspinwall), required 10 cents postage; to other points in New Granada, 18 cents. To Brazil by American packet, the rate was only 10 cents: to Chile and Peru, 34 cents (Figures 10, 11), although a rate of 22 cents to Peru had been effective for several years before 1869. To the British West Indies, the rate was 10 cents, with the exception of the Bahamas, to which a letter could be mailed from New York for 3 cents.

In addition to the foregoing, officially declared or unofficially published during the period in which the 1869 issue was in service, rates to other foreign countries are indicated by covers now in collections. The stamps used on a cover, of course, are by no means positive proof of the existence of a rate; the postage might have been underpaid or overpaid, and the stamps might or might not have included a registration fee. On the other hand, it must be considered that underpaid mail was usually marked "Insufficiently Paid" (Figure 5), and the chances of letters being overpaid are always small, while registered mail of this period is ordinarily easily identified as such (Figure 12). On the whole, therefore, it seems fairly safe to assume the stamps used show the rate then existing to the points to which the covers were addressed. (Figures 16, 17.)

For the following we are indebted to Mr. Van Dyk Mac Bride, must of the covers mentioned being in his specialized collection of the 1869 issue:— To Singapore, via England, 34 cents. To Batavia, Java, via England, 22 cents. To Beirut, Syria, 20 cents. To St. Helena, 24 cents. From Portland, Oregon to Canada, via British Columbia, 10 cents plus 5 cents British Columbia postage (Figure 13). New York to New Brunswick, 10 cents—probably forwarded by steamship. New York to Nova Scotia, 10 cents and 20 cents—presumably single and double rates by steamship. To Hawaii, 10 cents. From Sitka, Alaska (Alaska was purchased by the United States from Russia in 1869) via Port Townsend, Wash., to Vancouver, B.C., 10 cents.

Another phase of this subject, which merits more than the passing mention which can be given it here, is the use of United States Stamps to pay postage on letters to this country from certain foreign points, or to pay forwarding charges to destination in the United States after reaching its borders, or for transit through Uncle Sam's dominions and forwarding to some other foreign point....Covers bearing stamps of the 1869 issue show the following:—A rate of 10 cents from St. Thomas to New York, also 10 cents from Porto Rico to New York, none except the U.S. stamps being used. Also 10 cents from Hawaii to various cities in this country (Figure 14), 22 cents in U.S. postage with 5 cents in Hawaiian postage, on a cover from Honolulu to London, via San Francisco and New York. 20 cents, double rate, from the U.S. Postal Agency at Shanghai, China, to New York. Other covers probably exist showing the use of the 1869 issue from Japan to the United States, as stamps of this issue are frequently seen with Yokohama, Kiobe, or other Japanese cancellations (Figure 15).

Top, Figure 1, showing four 3¢ stamps (Sc. 114) paying the 12¢ rate to Great Britain in



Fig. 7. Although the mailer affixed 10¢, Sc. 116, it was treated in London as paying only the 1870 4¢ British Open Mail rate. A

“Paid Only To England” handstamp was applied and a “5” decimes due was applied to the reverse.



September 1869. Bottom, Figure 3, showing a 6¢ (Sc. 115) paying the reduced 6¢ rate to GB in 1870.

Fig. 4. Two 6¢, Sc. 115, and one 3¢, Sc. 114, paying the 15¢ rate to Algeria via France in August 1869.



Fig. 5. 10¢, 3¢, 2¢, Sc. 116, 115, 114, to France. Mailing was over the 1869 15¢ 1/4 oz. rate and was

marked “Insufficiently Paid”, with the part payment totally ignored and “16” decimes due handstamp applied.



Fig. 6. Two 2¢, Sc. 113, paying the 4¢ rate to GB for this 1870 cover to Paris, with a “GB/40¢” accountancy mark. A “Short

“Paid” and “5” decimes due handstamp on the back was applied for the postage from GB to France.



Fig. 8. 15¢, Sc. 119, pays the 15¢ rate to Bavaria via England in 1869.



Fig. 9. 10¢ and 24¢, Sc. 116, 120 pay the 34¢ rate to China via England on April 7, 1869—the earliest

documented usage of the 24¢.

Fig. 10. 10¢ and two 12¢, Sc. 116, 117, pay the 34¢ 1869-early 1870 rate of 34¢ to Chile via British Packet. (Note “pr Henry Chauncey” manuscript instruction at top.)



Fig. 11. 12¢ 1869, Sc. 117 and 10¢ Bank Note, Sc. 150, pay the 22¢ 1871 rate to Chile via British Mail.

Fig. 12. 1¢, two 10¢, Sc. 112, 116, were affixed to this 1869 cover to Prince Edward Island with "933" blue crayon registry number to



pay what was believed to be the 6¢ rate to Canada plus 15¢ registry fee; however, the registry fee to Canada was 5¢, not the 15¢ U.S. domestic rate, so the sender overpaid by 10¢.



Fig. 13. On this 1870 cover, the 10¢, Sc. 116, pays the postage to British Columbia, with an additional B.C.

5¢, Sc. 9, paying the postage in Canada.

Fig. 14. Two 10¢, Sc. 116, plus two Hawaii 5¢, Sc. 32) pay the double 5¢ Hawaiian and 10¢ U.S. rates to U.S. destinations.



Fig. 15. Three 2¢ and one 10¢ cover the postage from Japan via San Francisco paying the 1870 trans-pacific rate

of 10¢ plus the 6¢ rate to Canada.



Fig. 16. Most of the covers in this article come from the Siegel Galleries auction catalog for the Elliott Coulter Collection of 1869 Pictorial Issue Usages, one section of which is devoted to the 1870-71 "Phantom Rate" to France. As explained in the auction catalog, starting in 1870 the announced rate to France was 4¢ per half-ounce by British Open Mail with French postage of 5 decimes per 7.5 grams due from the addressee. However, the New York Postmaster employed an unannounced fully-prepaid rate to France via England—listed under the rates to Algeria rather than France and not generally announced until October 28, 1871; thus the "phantom rate." This cover with a "San Francisco Cal. Oct. 1" (1870) c.d.s. shows a 10¢, Sc. 116, paying the full rate, with a "6" being the credit to England. (From January 1 to June 30, 1870, the single "phantom rate" was 12¢ to France with an 8¢ credit to England.)

Fig. 17. This cover passed through five postal systems. As explained in the Siegel catalog, with credit to Jeffrey Foster's 1982 Register article, it originated Feb. 9, 1870 in Haverhill, Mass. (top center c.d.s.) with 15¢, Sc. 119, affixed to pay the North German Union

Fig. 17. This cover passed through five postal systems. As explained in the Siegel catalog, with credit to Jeffrey Foster's 1982 Register article, it originated Feb. 9, 1870 in Haverhill, Mass. (top center c.d.s.) with 15¢, Sc. 119, affixed to pay the North German Union



(NGU) Direct Rate to Aleppo, Syria (Turkey), the U.S. retaining 10¢ and crediting 5¢ to the NGU. From Bremen it went to Vienna, into the Austrian system, which had offices in Turkey, being postmarked at the Austrian P.O. in Constantinople March 10 (double circle date stamp just below the two Turkish postage due stamps. Without an Austrian office in Aleppo, it was turned over to the Turkish P.O., which decided it should be sent by French Mail, applying the 1 piastre and 20 paras (c. 7-1/2 cents) postage dues, the cover being carried by French Mail to Beirut (upper left double circle date stamp), then to Alexandretta (3 April double circle on back at left) for the final leg to Aleppo, with the French P.O. assessing "6" decimes (12¢) postage due.

108 Years Ago in Mekeel's:

United States Postage Rates

by J. W. Sampson (From Mekeel's Weekly, June 29, 1918, with photos added)

(Color photos, pages 14-15)

In 1870, America's industries had largely recovered from the effects of the Civil War, commerce with foreign countries had reached proportions hitherto unapproached, and the desirability of advantageous postal treaties became increasingly apparent.

Sailing ships had mostly given place to steamships as mail carriers; the Suez Canal had been opened, shortening the route to the Orient; there was sharp competition between British, French and German lines for the carrying of mails; and the increased volume of business also made it possible to materially reduce the cost of transportation and the postage rates to foreign countries.

The 6 cent rate to England, established in 1869, remained in effect throughout this period (Figure 1), representing as it did a 50% reduction from the rate but recently in force.

The 15 cent quarter-ounce rate to France, effective for many years, was reduced in 1870 to 10 cents on letters sent by the line of French steamers sailing from New York. If sent via England, it was necessary to use only 4 cents postage, which prepaid the letter only to that country, Great Britain collecting the balance on delivery, as noted in Chapter IV (reprinted in *Mekeel's & Stamps*, May 24, 2024).

In 1873, a further change was made in the rate to France via England, covering full prepayment of postage, as follows:

For a letter weighing 1/3 ounce or under, 10 cents (Figure 2);

over 1/3, and not over 1/2 ounce, 16 cents;

over 1/2 and not over 2/3 ounce, 20 cents;

over 2/3 and not exceeding 1 ounce, 26 cents.

This odd division of the ounce into thirds is the only case of its kind noted among United States rates of any period.

The following year, 1874, a more advantageous treaty was concluded, and a rate of 9 cents announced on half-ounce letters to France (Figure 3).

In 1870 the letter rate to Prussia and the Austrian and German States was reduced to 7 cents, if sent via North German Union direct, and this necessitated the issuing of a 7 cent stamp, which was added to the series making its appearance that year. The rate to these countries via England, however, was reduced only to 10 cents.

In 1871, the rate to Prussia and the German and Austrian States was cut to 6 cents on direct mail and to 7 cents if forwarded by way of England (Figures 4, 5). In 1873, it was further announced that letters could be sent via Stettin for 6 cents, or for 10 cents by "open mail" via England.

The rates to Denmark show similar reductions; first from 13 cents (Figure 6) to 10 cents (in 1871), then the following year the addition of a 9 cent rate via North German Union, and in 1872 a 7 cent rate via Stettin, the old 10 cent rate via England meanwhile continuing. In 1873 letters should also be sent to Denmark by way of Bremen or Hamburg for 7 cents.

In 1870 the rate to Belgium was 10 cents, to Sweden 11 cents, to Norway 12 cents, to Holland 10 cents, to Spain and Portugal 16 cents. In 1873, the rate to Belgium was cut to 8 cents, the rate to Sweden and Norway reduced to 10 cents, and the Spanish rate to 12 cents.

It cost 12 cents to send a half-ounce letter to Switzerland via North German Union in 1870, or 15 cents via England, but two years later the postage required was only 8 cents via North German Union, and 12 cents via England. In a schedule of rates published in Philadelphia in 1873, a 10 cent rate to Switzerland was mentioned,

but the route not specified, though presumably this constituted a further reduction of the rate via Great Britain.

To Italy, the rate by North German Union in 1870-74 was 11 cents, by way of England, "open mail" 14 cents, or "closed mail" 10 cents (Figure 7). To Russia, 15 cents postage was required if sent via England, or 12 cents via North German Union. To Greece, 14 cents, and to Egypt, 10 cents.

In rates to South and Central American countries some radical reductions were made in this period. Letter postage to Chile, Ecuador and Bolivia was reduced to the previous Peruvian level of 22 cents (Figure 8), while the rate to Brazil was fixed at 15 cents, and to Central American points 10 cents. To Montevideo and Buenos Ayres, 18 cents; to Venezuela by British mail, 18 cents, or 10 cents if sent by American Packet. The rate to Mexico continued to be 10 cents, which was also the rate to Panama (Figure 9).

To islands in the West Indies, including Bermuda, which were reached by direct mail from American ports, the letter postage was 10 cents (Figure 10), but if forwarded through the British mail via St. Thomas or Havana, the charge was 18 cents. To the Sandwich Islands, 6 cents was required.

The rates to Asiatic points also show some reductions in this period. To China, the rate via England was reduced from 34 cents to 27 cents, and to the British East Indies from 28 cents to 22 cents. Letters to these points, however, could be forwarded by American ships from San Francisco upon prepayment of only 10 cents, as formerly. To Japan, also, 10 cents.

The postage to Australia through England was cut to 16 cents, and letters fully prepaid to Cape of Good Hope cost 28 cents (Figure 11).

The 1867 rate of 6 cents to all the British North American Provinces except Newfoundland remained in force throughout this period, and the Newfoundland rate was reduced from 10 cents to the 6 cent level in 1873. The registration fee on letters or parcels to Canada, Nova Scotia or New Brunswick continued to be only 5 cents.

In 1871 it was stated that "letters to any part of the United States may be registered by paying postage in full and a registration fee of 15 cents, or a fee of 8 cents on letters to the United Kingdom, but letters to France *cannot be registered*."

In 1874, as a result of strong public demand for a lower domestic registration charge, the fee of 15 cents on letters to any part of the United States was dropped to 8 cents, and this new home rate was designated as also covering registration to not only Great Britain, but also Germany, Italy, Switzerland (Figure 12), Holland, the West Indies and Panama. Letters could also be registered to "certain ports and cities of Asia and Africa" (names not given), at fees "varying from 8 cents to 17 cents." France is not mentioned in this connection and it may be assumed that the Postoffice Department still encountered the difficulties existing in 1871, which led to the announcement noted in the preceding paragraph.

Obstacles in the path of progress were rapidly being overcome, however, in most matters relating to postal service, and the principal nations had arrived at the point where the importance of closer cooperation was so generally recognized that arrangements were made for an international convention, which was held in Switzerland in 1875.

(To be Continued)



Fig. 1. 1¢ 1869 used with 5¢ Brown (Sc. 112, 76), from Hoosick N.Y April 24, 1871, paying the 6¢ rate to England.

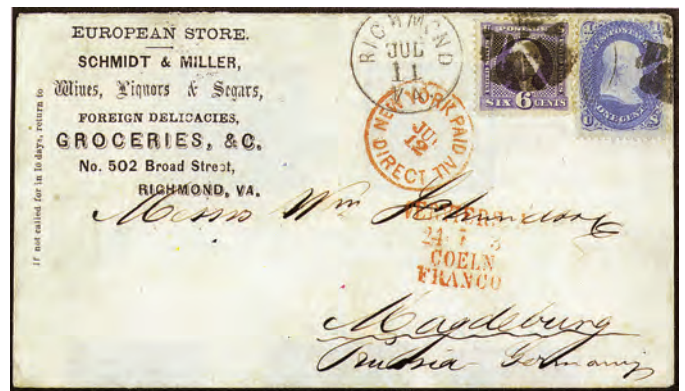


Fig. 4. 6¢ 1869, Sc. 115, 1¢ blue, Sc. 63, tied by "Richmond, Va. Jul. 11" c.d.s. paying the 7¢ North German Treaty rate to Germany on this 1973 advertising cover.



Fig. 2. 3¢ green, 7¢ vermilion (Sc. 149) tied by "Medford Ms. Jul. 9" c.d.s. on 1873 cover to France with red Boston transit datestamp and red London transit, paying 10¢ rate via England.



Fig. 5. 12¢ Pictorial, 2¢ red brown, 3¢ green (Sc. 117, 147) tied by Nagasaki "N" cancels, with matching "Yokohama Japan Aug. 22" c.d.s. on circa 1872 cover to Germany, with sender's routing "via New York" and "San Francisco Cal. Sep. 13" c.d.s. and red "New York Paid All Br. Transit Sep. 21" transit. The 17¢ postage pays the 10¢ transpacific rate to San Francisco and the 7¢ North German Union Closed Mail rate via England to Germany.



Fig. 3. 2¢ Brown, 5¢ Blue (Sc. 157, 179) tied by New York Foreign Mail cancel, with red "New York Paid Aug. 11" c.d.s. paying 9¢ rate on 1875 folded letter to France.



Fig. 5. 3¢ 1869 Pictorial, 1¢ blue F Grill, Sc. 114, 92, tied by segmented cork cancels, cover with "Hartford Conn. Feb. 8" (1870) c.d.s. paying the 13¢ rate to Denmark via Bremen.



Fig. 7. 1¢ Pictorial, 6¢ carmine (Sc. 112, 148) on 3¢ entire with quartered cork cancels and “Natchez Miss. Mar. 8” (1871) duplex datestamp, paying 10¢ rate to Italy, cover also with red “New York Paid All Br. Transit” c.d.s.



Fig. 10. 10¢ Pictorial (Sc. 116) with “Holmes Hole Mas. May 18” (circa 1870) c.d.s., paying the rate to Bermuda.



Fig. 8. 12¢ 1869, 30¢ F Grill, 2¢ red brown (Sc. 117, 100, 146), tied by segmented cork cancels, with “Portland Me. Mar. 27” c.d.s. on circa 1871 cover to the captain of a ship at Valparaiso, Chile, cover with red “New York 24 Mar. 28” credit datestamp, red “25” and “45” rate handstamps. This 22¢ rate consisted of 10 cents for U.S. postage to Panama by American Packet and 12 cents for British Packet service to Chile.



Fig. 11. 12¢, 30¢ Pictorials, 6¢ carmine (Sc. 116, 117, 148) paying the 28¢ rate to the Cape of Good Hope on this 1870 cover.



Fig. 9. 10¢ Pictorial tied by rosette cancel and duplex “New-York Aug. 17” c.d.s. on opened folded cover to Vera Cruz, backstamped by sender in Paris, France, and “Forwarded by O. K. King & Co. New-York Aug. 17, 1869” oval datestamp, also with manuscript “Str. ‘Cleopatra’ to Vera Cruz” direction applied by the forwarder. The cover is an example of how mailers in Europe avoided the transatlantic postage by utilizing forwarders to send mail to Central and South America via American packet, the 10¢ stamp paying that American packet rate.



Fig. 12. 2¢, 6¢ Pictorials, 30¢ F Grill (Sc. 113, 115, 100) on registered cover to Switzerland, paying double the 15¢ rate to Switzerland and 8¢ registry fee, tied by cork cancels, with “Petaluma Cal. Apr. 12” (1870) c.d.s., also with manuscript registry marking and “Chargee” in frame and “PD” handstamps.

108 Years Ago in Mekeel's:

United States Postage Rates, 1881-1918

by J. W. Sampson (*From Mekeel's Weekly, July 13, 1918, with photos added**)

(*Color photos, pages 14-15)

During the closing years of the nineteenth century comparatively few changes were made in United States postage rates to foreign countries, as the membership of the Universal Postal Union had rapidly increased, and the uniform 5 cent letter rate had been accordingly extended to include nearly all nations whose commerce was of consequence (Figures 1, 2, 4).

By 1894, Chili, Guatemala and Salvador had joined the UPU, leaving Bolivia the only country on the American continent which could not be reached by 5 cent letter postage (Figure 9). The rate to Bolivia, via Colon, was 17 cents.

An official announcement of the Post Office Department, dated August 13th, 1884, gave the following rates to countries still outside the Postal Union: To the west coast of Africa (except Liberia, and the British, French, Spanish and Portuguese Colonies), 15 cents for one-half ounce. To Australia and New Zealand, to Cape Colony, Natal, Orange Free State and St. Helena, by British mail, 15 cents (Figure 5). To China by British mail, 13 cents. To Madagascar, 23 cents. To Transvaal, 23 cents.

For a number of years there had been a strong and persistent movement in favor of a reduction in the rate of domestic letter postage, and in 1883 the rate was finally cut from 3 cents to 2 cents for 1/2 ounce. Congress passed the act authorizing this reduction with the expectation that the post office receipts might show a loss of eight or ten million dollars per year in consequence. Letter writing was so encouraged by the lower postage, however, that the actual annual decrease in postal revenue was less than two millions, and in 1890 the Postmaster General reported a clear profit of nearly thirty millions the previous year on the carrying of first class mail; this notwithstanding the fact that the weight allowance was increased from 1/2 ounce to 1 ounce in 1885.

Parcel post service was another subject which had been agitated for many years. The need of a special merchandise rate was recognized as early as 1863, when a third class of miscellaneous mail matter was created, with a rate of 2 cents for each four ounces. Unfortunately, it was considered advisable to increase this rate in 1879, when printed matter and merchandise were separated into different classes, and a rate of 1 cent an ounce established for merchandise, the limit of weight being placed at four pounds.

In 1880 and a few years following, negotiations with various Central and South American countries resulted in the concluding of parcel post treaties with them, but it was not until 1899 that the first parcel post convention with any European government was signed. In August of that year an agreement was made with Germany, under which parcels weighing not over 4 lbs. 6 oz. were carried from the United States to that country and delivered at destination at the rate of 12 cents per pound. At the same time, the rate from Germany to us was fixed at 1 mark, 40 pfennigs per parcel, regardless of what weight (within the specified limit).

Following this, similar treaties were concluded with other governments, and in 1908 parcels not exceeding eleven pounds in weight could be sent to the following countries at the general rate of 13 cents a pound:

Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Mexico, Colombian Republic, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Uruguay, all the Central American Republics, most of the West Indies, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and parts of China.

Up to this point, however, no provision had been made for parcel

post service within the borders of our own country. A resident of New York could mail a two-pound package to the town of Howojo, in Fang-huan-cheng Province, Manchuria, on the other side of the world, for 24 cents, but if he mailed a similar package of the same weight to Philadelphia, ninety miles away, the post office department insisted on 32 cents for the service.

The inconsistency and injustice of this was perfectly obvious, yet the wheels of progress were clogged for years by those whose interests would not be served by an internal parcel post system, and it was not until 1912 that Congress finally passed the bill which put the system into operation. Under the plan adopted, rates were for the first time since 1863 regulated by the distance, ranging from 5 cents to 12 cents per pound for the first pound, and from 3 cents to 12 cents for each additional pound, according to the zone to which the parcel was forwarded. These rates were later reduced, and the limit of weight increased, while, in 1914 books and printed matter were classified as parcel post matter, with a rate of 1 cent for each 2 ounces up to 8 ounces and regular parcel post rates if over that weight.

In 1893, the registration fee was reduced from 10 cents to 8 cents (Figures 5, 6, 7, 8), the rate that had existed for such a short period in 1874. In this instance, the reduction proved more lasting, though not permanent, for in 1908 the 10 cent fee was again established (Figure 12).

In 1897 the fifth congress of the Universal Postal Union was held for the first time in the United States, at Washington. Fifty-five countries were represented, and it was reported that China and the Orange Free State were the only organized governments remaining outside the Union, while both of these had signified their desire to come in as soon as satisfactory arrangements could be completed.

The 1897 letter rate to China and Orange Free State was 10 cents for 1/2 ounce. In 1899 the rate of 2 cents an ounce for first class mail was extended to Uncle Sam's new possessions, Guam, Porto Rico and the Philippines (Figure 10), and later to the Canal Zone. In 1908 this rate was made effective to Great Britain (Figure 13) but in this case the regular Universal Postal Union rate on postals, post cards and printed matter remained in force (Figure 3). Shortly afterward, a 2 cent rate to Germany was announced (Figure 11), this covering, however only letters dispatched by steamers touching at German ports, and it was provided that letters carrying full Postal Union postage would be sent by the quickest route. The regular Postal Union rate was also changed to 5 cents for the first ounce and 3 cents for each additional ounce or fraction (Figure 14).

The domestic letter rate was gradually extended to apply to more and more of the West Indies and neighboring British Colonies, and in 1918 was effective to the following: Antigua, Bahamas, British Honduras, British Guiana, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Dutch West Indies, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Kitts and the Virgin Islands.

In November, 1917, following the example of Canada in raising revenue for war purposes, the 2 cent rate was increased to 3 cents (Figure 12), this covering both inland postage and postage to all outside points where the domestic rate had prevailed. The rate on letters delivered in the same postal district where mail was fixed at 2 cents, and the price of postal cards was raised to 2 cents.

At this writing (1918) postal communication with Germany, Austria, Hungary, Turkey, Bulgaria, Roumania and most of Russia has been discontinued, but the purple three cent stamp is carrying letters to upward of a million American soldiers in Flanders and France.



Fig. 1. 10¢ Pictorial 1875 Re-Issue (Sc. 127) tied by "New York Reg" oval on 10¢ Brown entire (U189) to London, cover with G. B. Calman (stamp dealer) corner card, "New York, N.Y. Registry Div. 4-21 1884" double-oval datestamp. The 20¢ prepaid double the 5¢ UPU rate plus the 10¢ registry fee.



Fig. 5. 3¢, 4¢ Bank Notes, 1¢ Small Bank Note, 5¢ Columbian (Sc. 214, 215, 219, 234) on 10¢ Columbian entire (U351) on cover to Victoria, Australia, tied by purple handstamps, cover with "Registered May 25, 1899, West Hoboken N.J.", New York and San Francisco registry labels. 23¢ pays the 8¢ Registry fee plus 15¢ rate to Australia.



Fig. 2. 1¢ Pictorial 1880 Re-Issue (Sc.133) cancelled by cross-roads on 4¢ green entire with "Doylestown Pa., Mar. 6, 1890" c.d.s., to Dresden, Germany, paying the 5¢ UPU rate.



Fig. 6. 8¢ Trans-Mississippi (Sc. 289) tied by "Madison Square Branch" oval cancel on 5¢ Blue on amber entire to Copenhagen, Denmark with New York registry label, also with May 10, 1901 origination backstamp. 13¢ pays the 5¢ UPU rate + 8¢ Registry fee.



Fig. 3. 1¢ blue (Sc. 264) tied by "Mobile Ala. Apr. 23, 1897" duplex cancel on 1¢ Postal Card to Abyssinia, Africa, with Aden and French Paquebot transits on front, paying 2¢ postal card rate.



Fig. 7. 1¢-5¢ Pan-American (Sc. 294-297), tied by oval cancels or "Buffalo N.Y. Jun. 2, 1901" waving-flag exposition machine cancel on registered cover to Germany, paying the 8¢ registry fee plus 5¢ UPU postage rate.

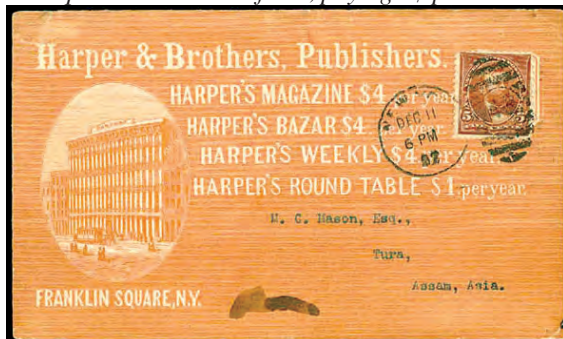


Fig. 4. 5¢ chocolate (Sc. 270) tied by "New-York Dec. 11 6PM 97" duplex on Harper's Magazine illustrated ad cover to Tura, Assam (India), paying the 5¢ UPU rate.



Fig. 8. Back of registered cover to Assiout, Egypt with 8¢ Pan-Am (Sc. 298), two 1¢ (294), one 5¢ (297) and top imprint and plate no. strip of four of 2¢ (295), tied by target cancels and registry markings, with "Newton Center Mass. Aug. 3, 1901" c.d.s. on the front. 23¢ pays the 15¢ rate plus the 8¢ Registry fee.



Fig. 9. 2¢ Trans-Mississippi (Sc. 286) used with 1¢ Pan-Am (Sc. 294) tied by "Chicago Ill. May 5, 1902" c.d.s. on 2¢ entire to Uruguay, paying the UPU rate.



Fig. 10. 2¢ Shield issue, Sc. 319, tied by "Washington Nov 19, 1903" wavy line machine cancel—the earliest document use of this stamp—paying the 2¢ rate to the Philippines.

Fig. 13. 2¢ rose red (Sc. 425) tied by New York Apr. 30, 1915 wavy-line machine cancel and Salisbury (England) May 10 forwarding machine cancel on cover forwarded from Salisbury to the Seagrove Hotel. Cover also shows a "PER S/S 'LUSITANIA'" straightline handstamp and a crossed out marine insurance company corner card. This cover from the Arthur White Collection of Trans-Oceanic mails was offered by Siegel Auction Galleries in 2006 with the explanation, "the Lusitania sailed from New York on May 1, 1915, and was torpedoed by a German U-Boat on May 7—she sank 18 minutes after being hit, so it seems unlikely that any mail bags were salvaged—worth further research."



Fig. 11. 2¢ Hudson-Fulton (Sc. 372) tied by "New York N.Y. Sta. W. Sep. 25, 1909 10PM" first day machine cancel on picture postcard to Bavaria, Germany, paying the UPU postcard rate.



Fig. 12. 1¢ Green, 3¢ Offset (Sc. 498, 530) tied by oval "U.S. Postal Agency, Shanghai, China R.D." handstamps on registered cover to New York, with March 8, 1919 origin backstamp, censor's label at right over one stamp, showing the 3¢ War Emergency rate plus 10¢ Registry fee.



Fig. 14. 1¢ 1902 booklet pane, Sc. 300b on 2¢ entire (U414) to England tied by "Lewes Del Aug. 19 1908" duplex cancels, during the period when the UPU rate was 5¢ for the first ounce plus 3¢ for each additional ounce.

