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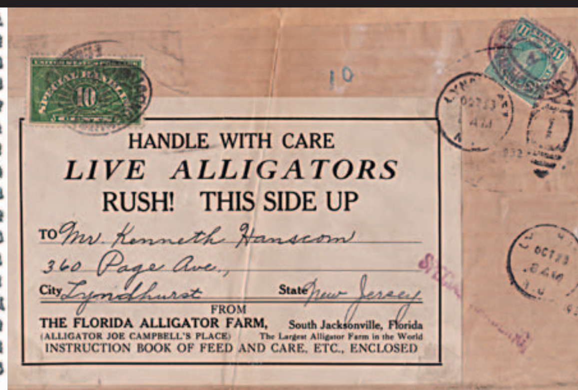

The Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposia

Select Papers, 2010–2011

Thomas Lera
Editor

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SMITHSONIAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO HISTORY AND TECHNOLOGY • NUMBER 56

The Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposia

Select Papers, 2010–2011

Edited by
Thomas Lera

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WASHINGTON D.C.
2012

ABSTRACT

Lera, Thomas. The Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposia: Select Papers, 2010–2011. *Smithsonian Contributions to History and Technology*, number 56, viii + 134 pages, 126 figures, 9 tables, 2012.—Rarely do scholars of postal organizations and systems meet and discuss their ideas and research with scholars of philately. In an attempt to bridge this gap, the National Postal Museum and the American Philatelic Society hosted the first Winton M. Blount Postal History symposium on 3–4 November 2006 to bring together these two research groups to discuss postal history. This publication covers the next two symposia. The 2010 theme was "Stamps and the Mail: Images, Icons and Identity." Stamps, as official government documents, can be treated as primary resources designed to convey specific political and esthetic messages. Other topics and themes for the symposium were stamp design's influence on advertising envelopes and bulk mailings, censorship of stamps as propaganda as used on letters, and the role of the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee or organizations that generate the designs. The 2011 symposium was held at the American Philatelic Center in conjunction with the United States Stamp Society's annual meeting. The United States Stamp Society is the preeminent organization devoted to the study of U.S. stamps. It is a nonprofit, volunteer-run association of collectors to promote the study of the philatelic output of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and of postage and revenue stamped paper produced by others for use in the United States and U.S. administered areas. The theme of the symposium was "How Commerce and Industry Shaped the Mails."

Cover images, from left to right: Banking and commerce issue, 1975 (from the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Collection, 1985.0482.20067); Figure 4 from Rufe, "'Live Chicks' Require First Class Treatment"; and manufacturing steel plant parcel post issue, 1913 (from the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Collection, 2005.2001.289).

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Contents

Letter from the Director

1 June 2012

It is my great pleasure to introduce the Selected Proceedings of the Postal History Symposia. The first of these symposia was named after Winton M. Blount, the first Postmaster General of the United States Postal Service. Through his generous endowment to the Smithsonian National Postal Museum (NPM), the Center for Postal Studies and the Chair-in-Research were created in his name in 2006.

The success of the Postal History Symposia was due in large part to the support of our partners: the American Philatelic Society (APS), American Philatelic Research Library (APRL), the NPM Council of Philatelists, and the NPM Museum Advisory Council.

I would like to thank all of the philatelists, scholars, and industry leaders who presented at the symposia. Their research and presentations made participation in each panel enjoyable to all.

Special thanks are owed to the symposium cochairs Thomas Lera (NPM), David Straight and Ken Martin (APS), and Tara Murray (APRL). Without their efforts, the symposia would not have been as great of a success.

If you enjoy these papers as much as I hope you will, please continue to support future postal history symposia held at the National Postal Museum or the American Philatelic Center.

Allan Kane
Director, National Postal Museum

Introduction

Postal history is the study of postal systems, how they operate, and/or the collecting of covers and associated material illustrating historical episodes of postal systems. The term is attributed to Robson Lowe, who made the first organized study of the subject in the 1930s and described philatelists as "students of science" but postal historians as "students of humanity." Postal history includes the study of postal rates, postal policy, administration, and inspection, as well as political effects on postal systems and the consequences of politics, business, and culture on these systems, basically anything to do with the collection, transportation, and delivery of mail.

The first symposium "What Is Postal History?" took place in November 2006 and was named in honor of Winton M. Blount. In 1969, Blount had become postmaster general in President Richard M. Nixon's cabinet and put an end to the patronage appointment of postmaster vacancies. In 1971, he presided over the shift of the U.S. Post Office from a cabinet department to the United States Postal Service, a nonprofit, government-owned corporation, and became its first chairman (Figure 1).

The location of the symposium has alternated between the NPM in Washington, DC, and the American Philatelic Center in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania. The six symposia convened to date were

- "What Is Postal History?" (Washington, D.C., 3–4 November 2006)
- "Further, Farther, Faster: Transportation Technology and the Mail" (Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, 21–22 October 2007)
- "When the Mail Goes to War" (Washington, D.C., 27–28 September 2008)
- "Post Office Reform" (Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, 30 October to 1 November 2009)
- "Stamps and the Mail: Imagery, Icons, and Identity" (Washington, D.C., 30 September to 1 October 2010)
- "How Commerce and Industry Shaped the Mails" (Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, 16–18 September 2011)

The theme of each symposium follows a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach discussed by various panels. There were over sixty presentations at these symposia, many of which have gone on to be published in various academic and philatelic journals. Select papers, which had not previously been published, appeared in *The Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposia: Select Papers, 2006–2009* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2010) as Smithsonian Contributions to History and Technology, No. 55. (PDF available for download at http://www.sil.si.edu/smithsoniancontributions.)

FIGURE 1. Winton M. Blount, U.S. Postmaster General from 1969 to 1972. Courtesy of the National Postal Museum Library, Smithsonian Institution Libraries.

This second volume includes thirteen outstanding papers selected from the 2010 and 2011 symposia. Of the remaining twenty-four presentations at the two symposia, many have been published in academic and philatelic journals, and others were presented as PowerPoint slideshows and no scholarly paper was submitted.

Details on all of the symposia and panels can be found on the NPM Web site (http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/symposiums/index.html) under Research/Symposiums.

Thomas Lera, NPM Winton M. Blount Research Chair
David L. Straight, APS Vice-President
Tara Murray, American Philatelic Research Library Director of Library Services

Acknowledgments

The Winton M. Blount symposium series would not be a success without the help and encouragement of many people. At the top of the list is Allen Kane, Director of the National Postal Museum (NPM), who continues to promote the importance of the symposium throughout the academic and philatelic community. Next we would like to thank the NPM Council of Philatelists and the NPM Museum Advisory Council for their assistance, as well as the staff at NPM who helped at each past symposium.

The symposia could not have happened without the help and cosponsorship of Ken Martin, Executive Director, and the staff of the American Philatelic Society and Tara Murray and the staff at the American Philatelic Research Library.

We would also like to personally thank the scholars who completed the peer reviews. Their knowledge of philately and postal operations, along with their suggestions and comments, greatly improved the papers.

Finally, we thank Ginger Strader, director, and Deborah Stultz, publications specialist, both of the Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, whose guidance, support, and review is much appreciated.

Do We Still Need a Postal System? Thoughts on a Twenty-First-Century Federal Communications Policy

David Hochfelder

In September 2011, the postmaster general, Patrick R. Donahoe, testified to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs that the U.S. Postal Service would default on its pension obligations by the end of the year unless Congress permitted massive layoffs to occur. He claimed that the root cause of the U.S. Postal Service's problems is the accelerating shift from hard copy communications to digital alternatives such as email, texting, and online bill paying services. Others argue that the real cause is a new congressional mandate that the U.S. Postal Service fund all of its future pension obligations within the next ten years.

In either case, it is clear that over the past four years mail volume declined a whopping 20%. Donahoe anticipates that this trend will accelerate in the future, noting that first-class mail volume has dropped "even more rapidly than we had previously predicted." Donahoe's proposed solution to the U.S. Postal Service's woes is to cut 220,000 career positions from its payroll and to close about 3,700 post offices.[1]

It is tempting to attribute the U.S. Postal Service's woes to technological obsolescence. At first glance, Americans today prefer to communicate through modern electronic media than through physical mail delivery. The handwritten, hand-delivered letter may ultimately take its place on the trash heap of history alongside the telegram and the familiar blue mailbox alongside the pay telephone. This process of obsolescence is inevitable in a capitalist economy based on continual technological innovation.

Yet there is more to the story. Since at least 1970, postal officials have been aware that electronic messaging would replace the hand-delivered letter. In that year, the U.S. Postal Service and Western Union launched a Mailgram service using Western Union's cables and satellites to transmit electronic letters to post offices, where they were printed out and delivered. By the mid-1970s, the U.S. Postal Service and Western Union handled over 30 million Mailgrams annually, with growth rates in the double digits. Despite a high tariff compared to letter postage, $2 per 100 words, Western Union and the U.S. Postal Service expected to handle 7 billion Mailgrams by the end of the 1980s, or about 10% of the mail volume. Postal officials predicted that by 1990, up to half of recorded communications would be transmitted electronically, and they sought to position the U.S. Postal Service to handle at least some of it.[2]

Thus, postal officials have known for forty years that this moment has been coming. Instead of the simple story of email replacing snail mail, the deeper issue is this: for the first time in American history, since the breakup of AT&T in 1984, we find ourselves without a national communications policy. This is therefore an excellent—indeed,

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Manuscript received 27 March 2012; accepted 7 May 2012.

necessary—moment to look to the past to see what guidance it can offer us for the future.

THE POSTAL MODEL OF A NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

In surveying the history of American communications between the Postal Act of 1792 and the deregulation movement of the 1970s and 1980s, there have been three models for a national communications policy. The first I call the postal model. The postal model was based on government provision of affordable and accessible communications, the idea that the government ought to operate a communications network to serve the people. For Americans in the early nineteenth century the local post office served as both an information center and a social hot spot (Figure 1). The founding generation believed that the circulation of news and correspondence was necessary for the continued existence of the American republican experiment. Thus, the cornerstone of federal communications policy for the nineteenth century and into the twentieth was the Post Office Department.[3]

In 1792 Congress passed the Postal Act, which contained two far-reaching provisions: a mechanism for the rapid expansion of the system into the trans-Appalachian West and a system of subsidies for the newspaper press. Together these provisions established the principle of universal access to information networks as a necessary condition for the fullest development of citizenship and for the economic development of the new nation. The 1792 act facilitated the growth of the postal system by placing the authority for establishing post offices and post roads with Congress rather than with the executive branch. This allowed local interests to pressure the national government for the rapid expansion of facilities and for the reduction of postage rates. Reformers during the 1830s and 1840s argued that cheap postage would both promote national unity and preserve affectionate ties in an era of increasing sectional tension and heightened

FIGURE 1. *The Rural Post Office*, 1857 (Thomas P. Rossiter, American painter, 1818–1871, oil on canvas, 49.5 × 69.9 cm), captured the central role of the postal service in nineteenth-century American life. Courtesy SuperStock/SuperStock/Getty Images.

geographic mobility. They succeeded in securing passage of the Postal Acts of 1845 and 1851, which reduced letter postage from up to 25¢ per sheet for long distances to a mere 3¢ per half ounce, a rate that would remain in place for a century. Prior to this rate reduction, the postal system was primarily a business medium; afterward, it became a social medium as well (Figure 2).

The second important provision of the Postal Act of 1792 was its favorable rate structure for the transmission of newspapers through the mail. This intended subsidy of the press facilitated a dramatic growth in the number of newspapers and subscribers between 1792 and 1840. Low postage on periodicals allowed religious, political, and reform organizations to flourish during the Jacksonian era by providing them with the means to reach a national audience. The postal law also allowed newspaper editors to exchange postage-free copies with the editors of any other newspaper. Before the rise of telegraphic news reporting in the 1840s, these exchanges were the primary means by which newspapers obtained nonlocal news. They were instrumental in disseminating political and financial information throughout the country and thus helped to build the mass political party and an integrated national economy.

At the same time, the Post Office Department sought to improve the flow of the mail. The Post Office had relied on stagecoaches, steamboats, and canal barges to move the mail in the first decades of the nineteenth century, and mail contracts were important to building up those transportation industries. The advent of the railroad in the 1830s provided another step forward in moving the mail. In 1838 Congress declared all U.S. railroads to be "post roads," allowing the Post Office to contract with them to carry the mail. By midcentury, it had become clear that railroads were to be the primary transportation network for moving the mail. After the Civil War, the Post Office moved to take advantage of the nation's expanding railroad network by starting the Railway Mail Service. Begun in 1869, this service sorted mail en route between commercial centers like New York and Chicago. During the mid-1870s, the Railway Mail Service started a "fast mail" service between New York and Chicago that cut travel times to about twenty-four hours, a dramatic savings in time. On its first trip in 1875, the fast mail carried over 33 tons of mail between New York and Chicago. By the turn of the century, over 10,000 clerks were sorting mail over some 200,000 miles of railroad line (Figure 3).

Before 1863, postage paid only for delivery of mail from post office to post office. Citizens picked up their mail or could pay an extra 2¢ fee to have their mail delivered. In 1863 Congress authorized free city delivery, requiring Americans to put street addresses on their letters for the first time. By the turn of the century, some 15,000 letter carriers provided service in nearly 800 cities. In the 1890s, the Post Office began Rural Free Delivery, a boon to the majority of the population who lived in rural areas. Not only did this liberate farmers from the necessity of coming into town to send and collect mail, but it also gave them greater access to consumer goods through vehicles like the Sears, Roebuck catalog (Figure 4).

In the second decade of the twentieth century, the Post Office inaugurated two services that placed it in competition with established businesses in the private sector: the Parcel Post Service and postal savings banks. Begun in 1913, the Parcel Post was immediately popular because it offered customers a lower-cost alternative to sending parcels through the private express companies. On the first five days of service, customers sent four million packages. In 1914 one Idaho couple even sent their four-year-old daughter to visit her grandparents via Parcel Post for 53¢, far less than the train fare.[4]

In 1911 the Post Office began operating a network of postal savings banks. Although they paid low rates of interest, postal

FIGURE 2. This cover from the 1850s was part of a popular campaign to reduce postage to 3¢ for domestic letters and to extend cheap postage to overseas mail. From Alphabetilately.com, "Trains on US Advertising Covers and Patriotic Covers."

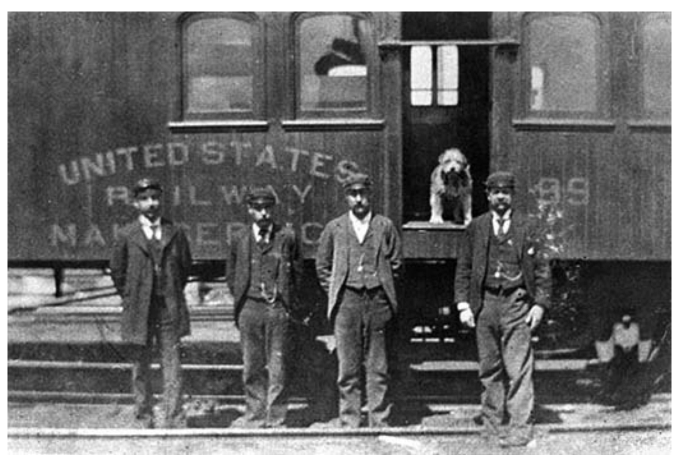

FIGURE 3. This photograph from around 1890 shows four Railway Mail Service clerks posing with the service's beloved mascot, Owney. From the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, photograph ID A.2006-47.

FIGURE 4. A Rural Free Delivery mail carrier in Greenfield, Indiana, about 1905. From the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, photograph number A.2008-21.

savings accounts were popular with recent immigrants, who distrusted commercial banks and were used to postal savings banks in their home countries. Described as a "refuge for the timid," they nevertheless succeeded in bringing several millions of dollars out of private hoards and into productive use.[5]

So by the early twentieth century, the United States had one of the best postal systems in the world. Postal officials had made every attempt in the preceding hundred years to provide cheaper, quicker, and more reliable service and to expand service to include activities like Rural Free Delivery, Parcel Post, and even postal savings banks. So the postal model for a national communications policy was based on two ideas: that a government department ought to provide excellent public service and that doing so improved the lives of citizens.

THE FREE-MARKET MODEL OF A NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

The second model for a national communications policy relies on market forces to provide consumers with the communications media they demand. The origins of the free-market model date back to Samuel Morse's first telegraph line of 1844 and lasted until roughly the second decade of the twentieth century, until, of course, its comeback in the last few decades after the 1984 breakup of AT&T. As is well known, Morse wanted to sell his patent to the federal government. Most Americans of Morse's day regarded the Post Office as the sole legitimate operator of communications networks. In fact, the federal government gave the Post Office a monopoly on letter carriage, quickly shutting down private mail companies when they appeared and prosecuting their proprietors. Thus, it made sense to Morse, and to most Americans, to have the Post Office operate the telegraph.

When Samuel Morse brought his invention to the attention of the Secretary of the Treasury in 1837, he wrote: "The mail system…is founded on the universally admitted principle, that the greater the speed with which intelligence can be transmitted from point to point, the greater is the benefit derived to the whole community." It was therefore "most natural" to him that the Post Office should operate his telegraph since it was merely "another mode of accomplishing the principal object for which the mail is established, to wit: the rapid and regular transmission of intelligence." Several years later, Morse renewed his call for postal control for another important reason, that his telegraph might become "an engine for good or evil" if left "in the hands of private individuals or associations."[6]

When Morse obtained congressional funding in 1843 to build a demonstration line between Washington and Baltimore, few questioned that the federal government ought to develop this new technology. From a constitutional perspective, it seemed that this new form of communication properly belonged within the Post Office Department's authority to "establish post roads and post offices."[7] Indeed, at the time all national governments owned and operated the major channels of communication within their borders. Only England allowed a privately owned electrical telegraph system to operate between 1839 and its nationalization in 1870. The United States would remain an anomaly among the world's nations by permitting private ownership of electrical communication.

Despite Morse's appeals, the federal government abandoned the telegraph to private investors. By 1860 most Americans had come to accept the permanent presence of a privately owned telegraph network that served two principal classes of customers, the press and businessmen. Few citizens saw the need for government control. Instead, the question of federal involvement in the industry revolved around the desirability of subsidizing projects like lines to the Pacific coast and a transatlantic cable. But the Civil War accelerated an existing trend toward consolidation in the telegraph industry. In 1866 Western Union bought out its last two major rivals. Afterward it would control at least four-fifths of the nation's telegraph traffic. Western Union's 1866 consolidation and its continued dominance of the industry alarmed Americans across the political spectrum. This consolidation coincided with the rise of an activist federal government during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Many Americans wished to see this newly energized state break up, or at least weaken, Western Union's control over the nation's electrical communication network.

The postal telegraph movement was an important political issue between the end of the Civil War and World War I. Between 1866 and the turn of the century, Congress considered over seventy bills to place the telegraph under Post Office operation. Although none passed, the postal telegraph movement enjoyed broad support, particularly after the notorious robber baron Jay Gould obtained control of Western Union in 1881. During the 1890s both the Populist Party and American Federation of Labor adopted it as key planks in their legislative agendas (Figure 5).

The final stage of the postal telegraph movement occurred during the Wilson administration. Many members of Wilson's cabinet were strong advocates of public ownership of utilities. Almost immediately after taking office, they began considering a government takeover of the telegraphs and telephones. In 1918 Postmaster General Albert Burleson obtained control of the wires, claiming wartime necessity as the reason. Yet Burleson and other administration officials admitted that they wanted government control to be permanent. By 1919 it had become clear that government operation of the wires was a disaster, and under pressure from the public and a Republican Congress, the administration restored private control. This episode ended the postal telegraph movement for good and helped to kill off support for public ownership of utilities generally.

Thus, the failure of the postal telegraph movement kept the postal model of a national communications policy strictly confined to the Post Office. A sharp divide hardened into place: the Post Office delivered the mail (along with a few other activities like the Parcel Post and postal savings banks), whereas the private sector handled every other form of communications (Figure 6).

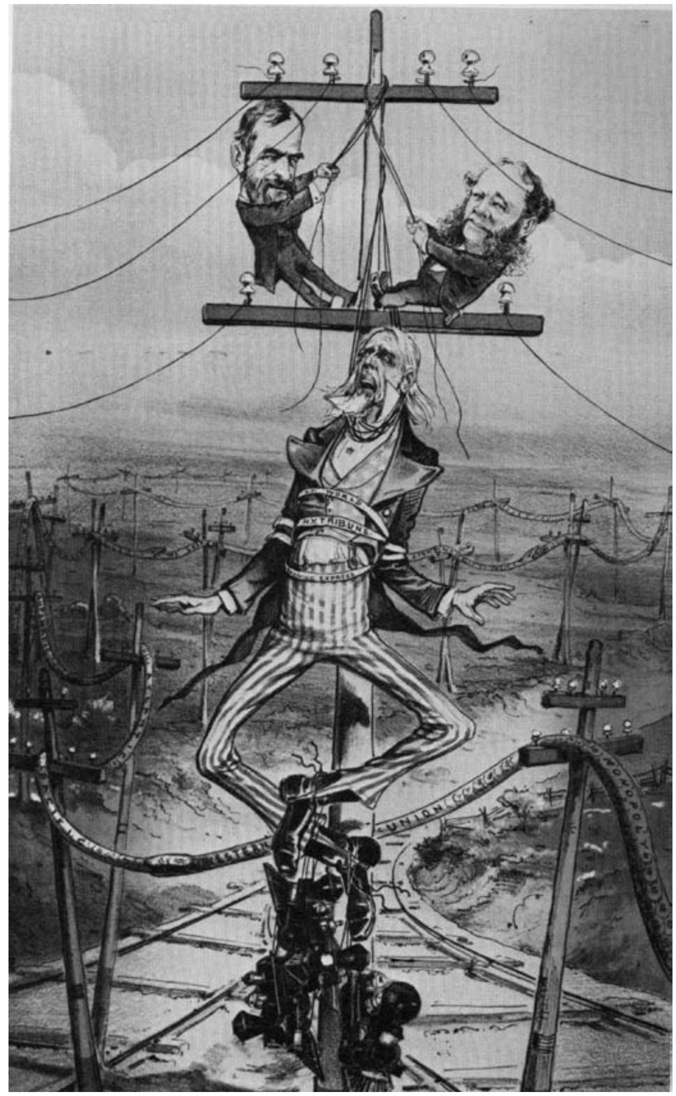

FIGURE 5. This cartoon by celebrated political cartoonist Joseph Keppler captured the antimonopoly sentiment of much of the American public after Jay Gould acquired control of Western Union in 1881. From *Puck*, February 23, 1881, 3(207). Chromolithograph, 18 × 12½ in.

THE PUBLIC-UTILITY MODEL OF A NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

However, the failure of the postal telegraph movement was not a clear victory for the free-market model of communications policy. Americans of the Progressive generation did not want unregulated monopolies handling the nation's communications. So a third model emerged around the same time that the postal telegraph movement entered its final stage. This third model I call the public-utility model. The public-utility model began in

FIGURE 6. This cartoon protesting continued government operation of the wires appeared on the cover of the employee's magazine of the Postal Telegraph Company in 1919. Courtesy National Archives, Washington, D.C.

the second decade of the twentieth century when AT&T president Theodore Vail accepted federal and state regulation of his corporation. The tacit agreement between Vail and regulators allowed AT&T to continue its dominance of the telephone market while limiting its profits to a fair rate of return and ensuring high-quality service to its customers. This regime lasted until the deregulation movement of the 1970s and 1980s and the court-ordered breakup of AT&T in 1984.

Although Vail was unable to realize his ultimate goal of a unified telephone and telegraph network under AT&T's control, he is widely regarded today as an industrial statesman who took his public obligations seriously. The high point of the public-utility model was the Communications Act of 1934. This act set up the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) with the authority to closely regulate all aspects of the nation's communications, including telegraphs and telephones, the new medium of radio broadcasting, and even the licensing of ham radio operators. Although the purpose of the FCC was to look after the public good, it sometimes resulted in a cozy relationship between regulators and the corporations they were supposed to regulate. Federal regulation sometimes stifled technological innovation and created a massive regulatory bureaucracy. But it had one advantage: it took public service as the core of national communications policy.

By the 1970s, many economists and regulators had come to believe that federal regulation in many sectors of the economy had gone too far. During the 1970s and 1980s, the federal government deregulated several industries, including interstate trucking, commercial aviation, and, of course, telecommunications. In 1984 AT&T consented to a court-ordered breakup dividing it into eight regional operating companies. The deregulation movement and the breakup of AT&T thus ended the public-utility model of national communications policy.

Since that time, the thrust of telecommunications policy has been to foster competition and technological innovation. In many ways it has succeeded. The cellphone revolution of the past 15 years is hard to imagine were AT&T still the nation's major telephone service provider. The commercialization of the Internet in the same period has also created opportunities for competition and technological innovation that few could predict in 1984.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY FOR THIS CENTURY

However, today's national communications policy is marked by passivity. The stated objective of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 is "to provide for a pro-competitive, de-regulatory national policy framework designed to accelerate rapidly private sector deployment of advanced information technologies and services to all Americans by opening all telecommunications markets to competition."[8] As we have recently seen in the cellphone business, the true effect of the 1996 act has been to facilitate mergers and reduce the number of media companies. And if broadband performance is any indication, the 1996 act has failed to provide Americans with world-class service.[9]

As I see it, the United States no longer has a national communications policy. We have instead a policy designed to benefit the large content and service providers. The central problem is that over the past several decades, we have redefined what the public interest means. The bedrock goals of communications policy for two centuries, from the Postal Act of 1792 to the deregulation movement of the 1970s and 1980s, has been to foster an informed citizenry capable of exercising republican self-government and to promote commerce and economic development. Today, however, the public interest really means nothing more than maximizing consumer choice. Federal regulators no longer regard us as citizens but as consumers.

Fredric V. Roland, president of the National Association of Letter Carriers, recently expressed optimism about the U.S. Postal Service's future, noting that "it survived the telegraph, it survived the telephone."[10] But it remains to be seen if it can survive the absence of a national communications policy. It is not my intention to give specific policy recommendations here, but I trust that providing a historical perspective on the U.S. Postal Service's present difficulties is of some value.

I conclude with a set of questions that are worth considering as we decide the future of the postal system.

First, I have indicated that I believe that we no longer have an active communications policy, but rather a passive one based on the belief that the free market will satisfy all our demands as consumers. So the most basic question to ask is whether we still need an active communications policy. Can the free market in fact satisfy the nation's communications needs, if the government would simply get out of the way? Conversely, what role ought the government play in ensuring universal access to communications networks for citizens who are unable or unwilling to adopt the latest innovations?

Second, I have stressed that both the postal and public-utility models were based on concrete and specific principles about what the public good is and how to foster it. What principles and values should we place at the core of a twenty-first-century communications policy? What is the public good today? How can a modern communications policy aid us in our roles as citizens as well as consumers?

Third, we should evaluate what other countries are doing. Some, like Germany, have almost totally privatized their postal systems. Others, like Australia, are undergoing major modernization efforts to position their postal systems to remain relevant in the digital age. So most other postal systems in the industrialized world are grappling with the same set of challenges faced by the United States. We should be receptive to adopting best ideas and practices from elsewhere.

Finally, like it or not, the future of the U.S. Postal Service will be constrained by today's political realities. We need to recognize that we face much tighter limits to action than our forebears did in eras when the Post Office Department expanded its sphere of responsibilities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Given the political and fiscal limitations today, what can we reasonably expect postal reform to look like?

NOTES

1. Steven Greenhouse, "Postal Service Is Nearing Default as Losses Mount," *New York Times*, 4 September 2011; Boston Consulting Group, "Projecting U.S. Mail Volumes to 2020," http://about.usps.com/future-postal-service/gcg-narrative.pdf (accessed 8 November 2011).

2. President's Task Force on Communications Policy, *Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1968), 42–44; House Subcommittee on Postal Personnel and Modernization of the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, *Postal Research and Development: Hearings,* 95th Cong., 2d sess., 13 and 18 April 1978.

3. For histories of the U.S. Postal Service, consult Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), and Wayne E. Fuller, *The American Mail: Enlarger of the Common Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

4. National Postal Museum, "Precious Packages—America's Parcel Post Service," http://postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibits/2b2f_parcel.html (accessed 8 November 2011).

5. "Refuge for the Timid," *Williamsport Gazette and Bulletin*, 9 July 1928, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1829&dat=19280709&id=8X89AAAAIBAJ&sjid=aSsMAAAAIBAJ&pg=1307,10527904 (accessed 8 November 2011).

6. *Telegraphs for the United States*, 25th Cong., 2d sess., 1837, H. Doc. 15. For a summary of postal operation of the telegraph, see Robert Luther Thompson, *Wiring a Continent: The History of the Telegraph Industry in the United States, 1832–1866* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1947), 20–34.

7. U.S. Constitution, art. 1, sec. 8, "Powers of Congress," line 7.

8. *Telecommunications Act of 1996*, Public Law 104-104, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 110 (1996): 56.

9. Frederic Lardinois, "Broadband Speeds Increase Around the World—But Not in the U.S.," http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/broadband_speeds_around_the_world.php (accessed 8 November 2011).

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Introduction to the 2010 Symposium

Our symposia to date have largely looked at stamps in terms of the work they perform moving the mail in various ways (transportation) and under various conditions (wartime), but what about the stamps themselves? As stamps have evolved since the 1840s, their designs, initially a secondary function, are now encoded with historical, cultural, and political messages. Stamps, as official government documents, can be treated as primary resources designed to convey specific political and aesthetic messages. Other topics and themes for the symposium were stamp design's influence on advertising envelopes and bulk mailings, censorship of stamps as propaganda as used on letters, and the role of the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee or organizations that generate the designs. Seven select papers from the 2010 symposium follow.

Hermes: Message and Messenger

Diane DeBlois, Robert Dalton Harris, and Sune Christian Pedersen

INTRODUCTION

The Greek god Hermes, whom the Romans called Mercury, was the general messenger of the gods of Olympus and, specifically, the courier for Zeus.[1] In iconography, he has three attributes: a petasus, or protective traveler's hat that sometimes is given wings; a caduceus, or herald's staff (with two snakes[2] and sometimes surmounted by wings); and talaria, or winged sandals (sometimes winged feet). The latter come specifically from classical literature: both Homer and Virgil give Hermes golden wings that he straps onto his feet.[3]

Various myths linked Hermes with safe passage (transportation, translation, and transaction), making him a "natural" icon for the postal service.[4] Moreover, the era of postage stamp design beginning in the midnineteenth century corresponded to a renewal of interest in classical art and architecture. Although Hermes as icon is often portrayed on the early postage stamps of many countries, as a special messenger he was appropriate for special services: private posts, newspaper stamps, special delivery, and airmail.

Hermes, like his Olympian complement, Hestia, was described by Homer as a deus penetralis: protecting the works of man. Both gods were deified objects: the herm was a road signpost, and Hestia means hearth. Hermes embodied safe travel; Hestia embodied a warm home. The two were rarely depicted together, but the complementarity of the roles was expressed by a variety of female companions in postal images that paired Hermes with Fortune, Liberty, and Peace. So the three attributes of Hermes, besides accommodating the postal service, also invested the imaginary community with its progressive hopes for a more global understanding (Figure 1).

THE FIRST SEALS OF THE U.S. POST OFFICE

The first seal of the U.S. Post Office Department predates the Constitution of 1789, appearing upon a postmaster commission given in 1782.[5] The image depicts Hermes holding a classic Caduceus in his left hand and a money pouch in his right and resting his left foot on a graticulated globe (Figure 2, left).[6] Although this special messenger had already thereby been enlisted on behalf of the scheduled transportation services of the postal system, the first laws of 1792 acknowledged that, whatever the monopoly of the state with respect to the carriage of letters, "it shall be lawful for any person to send letters or packets by a special messenger."[7]

The post office seal that replaced the first design again depicted Hermes in a more energetic pose, striding across a graticulated globe (labeled "Americus") with a caduceus

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FIGURE 1. Hermes the embodiment of philately (*The Empire State Philatelist* was the official publication of the National Philatelical Society, May 1886) and of the Universal Postal Union (a common design for British colonies in 1949). From the collection of Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris.

in his left hand and a money pouch in his right (Figure 2, right).[8] In adopting Hermes as icon of the fledgling republican postal system, the designers looked to his association with news. A woodcut of his figure appeared at the head of a 1735 carriers' address broadside for the Philadelphia newspaper, *The American Weekly Mercury*.[9]

By English custom, the press and the posts had enjoyed a symbiosis, continued in American policy, which sustained the convergence of the daily newspapers with the daily mails. By the early 1830s, 90% of the weight of the mails was the news.

FIGURE 2. The first two seals of the U.S. Post Office Department, shown on postmaster commissions from 1816 and 1820. From the collection of Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris.

Hermes as icon continued to sustain the news for the public sphere, as he also served the private sphere and the governmental postal service in between.

In 1792, Simeon Skillin executed a statue in wood of Hermes, commissioned by Thomas Russell to be placed above the entrance to the Boston post office. In the figure's left hand was a caduceus, and in his uplifted right hand was a letter addressed to "Thos. Russell, Esq., Merchant, Boston—per post."[10] The merchant's generosity reflects commercial reliance on the mails. And the choice of Hermes/Mercury is at once a tribute to his representing both commerce and communication.[11]

The money bag that Hermes carries as a symbol of commercial transactions was added to his iconography in the sixteenth century to emphasize the newly confident connection between trade and civility.[12] The pose of Hermes that was most copied by stamp designers was a bronze statue by Giambologna, commissioned by the Medici family of Florence.[13] Usually ascribed to 1576, the Mannerist figure was originally part of a fountain, the water spouting from the Zephyr's column of air at Hermes' feet adding to the illusion of weightlessness. The statue, now at the Bargello Museum, has a separate caduceus in the left hand but is missing what is assumed was a money pouch in the uplifted right (Figure 3). Although the U.S. Post Office Department placed a money pouch rather than a letter in Hermes' outstretched hand, this was not to be construed as an invitation to send cash through the mail; such practice was, from the beginning, discouraged, and both registry and money order services were developed to provide alternatives.[14] As Hermes had been claimed in

FIGURE 3. The pose of Giambologna's statue of Mercury; from left to right: Boyd's Dispatch 1882, Uruguay 1921 overprinted for special delivery, and Tripolitania 1933 for mail via Rome forwarded to catch the second trip of *Graf Zeppelin* to South America. From the collection of Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris.

public, private, and governmental agency at the beginning of the republic of letters in the new world and the old, so, too, did he proliferate on behalf of a succession of successive technologies and service options throughout the world.

THE FIRST APPEARANCE ON A POSTAGE STAMP

Austria was the first country to place Hermes on a postage stamp, a 1 January 1851 issue intended for the carriage of newspapers (Figure 4). As in America, this use was particularly appropriate, as the European periodic press had long used Hermes/Mercury in the title or iconography of the product. In the service of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Hermes stamp broadly delivered the news in terms of distance. But his image also persisted over time—until well after the dissolution of the empire. The 1851 Hermes head was superseded by another petasus-wearing bust facing left in 1867 (appearing in several denominations and shades) and by yet another in 1900. The fourth Hermes head series was more stylized and faced right in 1908, but the fifth in 1916 reverted to facing left. A series of military

FIGURE 4. Hermes, the bearer of news: (top) *The Mercury and New-England Palladium* published in Boston 1801, (bottom left) Austria 1851 newspaper stamp, and (bottom right) *Altonaischer Mercurius* published in Altona, Holstein, mailed to a Danish subscriber in 1836. From the collection of Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris.

newspaper stamps appeared in 1916 with a different Hermes head facing left and showing a muscular shoulder. J. F. Renner designed a large series for 1920–21, with a Hermes head facing front and including his caduceus. And the well-known poster designer Wilhelm Dachauer presented a seventh Hermes head, facing left and surmounted by a caduceus.[15] For over seventy years, Hermes was the face of news in Austria.

THE FIRST APPEARANCE ON LETTER MAIL

Just six months after Austria's first newspaper stamp, on 1 April 1851, Denmark's first postage stamp featured Hermes, but in a subtle way. The Danes already were familiar with Hermes/Mercury as an icon. The first Danish newspaper was the *Mercurius*, from 1666, and the *Altonaischer Mercurius* circulated in Denmark from 1698, by the nineteenth century with a woodcut that portrayed Hermes as a post rider, linking postal service with news delivered with safety and dispatch.

The first post office in Copenhagen, from 1624, was in the stock exchange. When that building was renovated in 1744–45, it acquired a large marble statue of Hermes, caduceus in his left arm and money pouch in his right, executed by Johan Christoph Petzold. So, for the Danes, Hermes was a daily icon of both commerce and the post.

Moreover, the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen had, in 1838, returned to Copenhagen, bringing with him hundreds of examples of his classical statues, which were exhibited in Denmark's first purpose-built museum. Chief among the works were influential images of Hermes.

As in other countries, the introduction of a postage stamp in Denmark represented at once a drastic lowering of the costs of sending a letter, an administrative way of making the handling of letters easier, and a symbolic manifestation of a nation-building process, and it was a culmination to a plan of postal reform drafted in 1841. One of engraver Martinus William Ferslew's 1849 essays for the stamp featured the head of King Frederick VII. But the monarch had, in 1848, given in to pressure from Danish national-liberals and introduced a democratic constitution, the duchies of Schleswig, Holstein, and Lauenberg having proclaimed an independent government. In November 1850, this rebel government issued their own stamp, with a design of the two German eagles, which signaled a pan-German ideology. It became an urgent matter for the Danish government to manifest sovereignty over reconquered Schleswig territory and demonstrate Danish territorial unity, and a suitable postage stamp design—playing down the monarch but asserting nationalism—was pushed to completion.

During the period of unrest, the Danish monarchy had relied heavily on Russia as an ally against Prussia. As a strongly conservative state, Russia had used its influence to ensure that the Danish state did not go too far in its democratic experiments. So the final stamp design, although it eschewed the visage of the king, included several other icons of imperial rule: the crown and the crossed sword and scepter within a laurel wreath (Figure 5). Overall, it was a conservative design borrowed, according to Anders Monrad Møller, from shilling coins in circulation since

FIGURE 5. The first stamp of Denmark: (left) a 1976 souvenir to honor the designer, Martinus William Ferslew, shows the royal crest and king's head essays of 1849 as well as the king's head and Hermes head essays of 1852; (right) the final product with its subtle reference to Hermes, as shown in a centennial reproduction, and a detail from the actual stamp. From the collection of Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris.

1841 and 1842 that, in turn, were inspired by the obverse of an 1840 coronation medal of King Christian VIII engraved from a plaster relief by Bertel Thorvaldsen.

In the four corners appear post horns, but flanking the word post are two of Hermes' caducei, something that Møller sees as a "discrete small message to the businessmen, one of the postal service's very important customer groups."[16] It also carried the multiple meanings of news, trade, money, and travel evident in an emergent modernizing society.

In 1852, Ferslew essayed a stamp for local mail with a Hermes head as the single major design element, along with a similar design that featured the democratic monarch (no crown) on a stamp that would frank foreign mail. But these designs were discarded in favor of continuing with the emblems of state power.

FIGURE 7. Greek stamp design to honor archeological evidence of ancient myths; from left to right: the Praxiteles statue of Hermes and Dionysus from 1896, the same myth with the image copied from a coin, and a Hermes head from a fourth century BCE coin of Crete. From the collection of Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris.

GREECE AND THE CLASSICS REDISCOVERED

The modern Greek state had an imported constitutional, but authoritarian, monarch in 1861[17] when its first postage stamp was issued, not with the king's head but with Hermes. The design was also an obvious import from France (Figure 6), where the stamps were first printed,[18] and the different colors of the regular issues of 5, 20, and 80 lepta stamps in green, blue, and red paralleled their French antecedents.[19] Hermes, as a Greek god, was an appropriate choice, and the first design continued until 1886, when a second Hermes head was introduced, also facing right, which lasted until 1892.

With the birth of the modern Olympics in 1896, Greek postage stamps quoted the Olympian mythos and expressed the fruits of archeology. The site of the original games at Olympia had been excavated by a team under Ernst Curtius, with backing from Germany, from 1874 to 1881. Among the treasures revealed was a fine marble statue of Hermes in the temple to Zeus, which was attributed to Praxiteles and immediately became the most popular interpretation of the god. Hermes is modeled without winged attributes, in the role of escorting the infant Dionysus safely to his mother Persephone in the underworld. Although the right arms of Hermes and Dionysus were not found, artists often filled in the appendages, sometimes even inventing a bunch of grapes dangling from Hermes' upraised arm to tease the child. When just Dionysius's disconnected right hand resting on Hermes' shoulder is included,[20] it adds to the poignancy of the grouping. In addition to a stamp with the Praxiteles Hermes, a series of 1911 featured images from ancient coins, and Hermes with Dionysus makes another appearance, as well as a Cretan Hermes with wingless petasus and Attic stylized caduceus (Figure 7). Modern Greece adopted a stylized Hermes head as its emblem and continues to feature the gods of Olympus and classical myths on postage stamps, so Hermes is rarely not on view.

FIGURE 6. The first postage stamp of Greece in 1861 was designed by French engraver Albert-Désiré Barre and was printed in Paris by Ernst Meyer, bearing a close resemblance to the 1853 issue of France. From the collection of Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris.

SPECIAL MESSENGER: SECURITY

In the 1860s, Adams Express Company used a Hermes with a protective petasus that resembled a liberty cap to promote its services in New York City, where Boyd's City Dispatch had roots back to 1830. Boyd's issued an adhesive stamp in 1878 with Hermes in a Giambologna pose (see Figure 3). The company's Hermes logo floating over the East River acquired images of the Brooklyn Bridge and the Statue of Liberty after these two architectural icons were completed. The visual implication was that the special messengers linked Manhattan with the eastern boroughs of New York.

The U.S. Post Office Department adopted Hermes' petasus for the special delivery stamp of 1908 (nicknamed The Merry Widow because the petasus resembled the stage chapeau of an operetta star of the same year).[21] Austria, Bosnia, and Herzegovina used Hermes designs for their special handling stamps of 1916 and 1917 that showed him flying flat out, accompanied by Zeus's lightning bolts. However, Italy used just the winged talaria for special delivery in 1945–51.

NEW FORMS OF TRANSPORTATION: CELERITY

Hermes appears in a flying posture to celebrate the more rapid transit of mail by steamship and railway. Belgium used the iconography particularly effectively to celebrate parcel post by railway beginning in 1946. Hermes' promise of speedy delivery also made his image popular in the advertising of the telegraph (and, in fact, of all things electrical, from light bulbs to television). But, given his wings, Hermes is most invoked for airmail (Figure 8).

FIGURE 8. Hermes, the icon of airmail; clockwise from top left: Hungary 1933, Canada 1928, the Netherlands 1929, and Costa Rica 1944. From the collection of Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris.

HERMES IN REPOSE: CERTAINTY

In the iconography of business paper (bills of lading, bank drafts, stock certificates) Hermes is often shown in repose, sitting with, or even on, packing crates on a wharf (Figure 9). He became the embodiment of an orderly economy, involved with vessels, cargo, risk, markets, and money altogether. Sometimes just his caduceus is present, leaning on a parcel. In this pose, which also appears on postage stamps, he assures that all has been done than can be done to assure the success of the transaction.

The presence of a globe in these images emphasizes the international potential of communication, commerce, and universal understanding (Figure 9). Where an otherwise blank globe is shown with the graticulations of longitude and latitude necessary for navigation, we infer at least the certainty of a fixed schedule. A single globe showing land masses signifies unity; two hemispheres are then joined by Hermes, as with an Australian stamp from 1947 (Figure 10).[22]

The classical female social counterpart to Hermes was Hestia, but he rarely appears with her in iconography. Instead, her complementarity is represented by other feminine idealizations (Figure 11). Peace (with a laurel branch) is one; the desire to link with Communication and Commerce is expressed by Hermes holding hands with the feminine deity across a globe. Fortuna (Latinized Tyche) appears with her attribute, the cornucopia or horn of plenty. She was often shown at the helm of a ship in medieval art[23] and, in the company of Hermes, adds a grace note to his messenger service.

FIGURE 9. All's well with Hermes; from left to right: at rest with the still to certify internal revenue, a vignette from a U.S. Internal Revenue case stamp 1933; at rest with the goods, Liberia 1894; and reaching for peaceful communication, Esperanto poster stamp circa 1900. From the collection of Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris.

FIGURE 10. Hermes links the hemispheres, Australia airmail 1937. From the collection of Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris.

FIGURE 11. Hermes and female complements; from left to right: France 1876, Hermes with Peace; Portugal 1920, Hermes as Commerce with Industry; French Polynesia 1892, Hermes with Fortuna at the helm. From the collection of Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris.

SUMMARY

Postage stamps incorporate elements from three symbolic registers (glyphs, numbers, and words) whose mutual intelligibility is embodied by Hermes. On behalf of the postal service, Hermes will carry any message. With a complementary female, Hestia for the home hearth, for instance, Hermes is identified with the path, and together they exemplify a social framework for the human values of that message.

NOTES

1. For mythology and iconography, see E. M. Berens, *Myths and Legends of Ancient Greece and Rome* (New York: BiblioBazaar, 2008); Percy Preston, *A Dictionary of Pictorial Subjects from Classical Literature: A Guide to Their Identification in Works of Art* (New York: Scribner, 1983); Edward Tripp, *Crowell's Handbook of Classical Mythology* (New York: Ty Crowell Co., 1970).

2. One snake is the attribute of Aesculapius and has become the icon for all things medical.

3. *The Aeneid of Virgil: Translated into English Verse*, trans. John Conington (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1867), Book 4, when Zeus sent Hermes to Carthage: "And first around his feet he ties / His golden wings, that take the Breeze / And waft him high o'er earth or seas." *The Odyssey of Homer*, trans. Alexander Pope (Philadelphia, James Crissy, 1828), Book 5: "The god who mounts the winged winds / Fast to his feet the golden pinions binds, / That high thro' fields of air his flight sustain / O'er the wide earth, and o'er the boundless main."

4. In 1984, philatelist Zaven M. Seron published *From the Winged Heels of Mercury* (Collectors' Club of San Francisco) as a general history of stamps, but without attention to iconography. He does, however, give Hermes the status of first postman, fantasizing that his winged heels were jet propelled: "with vapor trails streaming outward into Time, the portent of things-to-be" (p. xiii).

5. The earliest recorded example of the first seal is on the 30 April 1782 partly printed commission for Albany, New York, postmaster Abraham G. Lansing signed

by Eben. Hazard, "Post-Master-General of the United States of North-America" (collection of the Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York); the earliest in the authors' collection is the 1804 commission for Middletown, New York, postmaster John Grant signed by Gideon Granger. The earliest example of the second seal design in the authors' collection is an 1820 postmaster commission.

6. The size of the pouch indicates it is for coin, but it is interesting to note that the word "mail" derives from a Teutonic word for a traveler's bag and that the English postal use in print dates to 1654 as a "mail of letters," shortened to mail (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

7. The full citation is to section 14 of *An act to establish the post office, and post roads, within the United States*, approved 20 February 1792, *The Public and General Statues Passed by the Congress of the United States of America from 1789 to 1827 Inclusive,* vol.1, 216. "That if any person, other than the postmaster general or his deputies, or persons by them employed, shall take up, receive, order, dispatch, convey, carry, or deliver, any letter or letters, packet or packets, other than newspapers, for hire or reward, or shall be concerned in setting up any foot or horse post, wagon or other carriage, by or in which any letter or packet shall be carried for hire, on any established post road, or any packet, or other vessel or boat, or any conveyance whatever, whereby the revenue of the general post office may be injured, every person so offending shall forfeit, for every such offence, the sum of two hundred dollars. Provided, That it shall and may be lawful for every person to send letters or packets by special messenger." By extending the 1789 Constitution in guaranteeing individual communication rights, this section of the 1792 law operated much as the Bill of Rights would for other aspects of citizenship.

8. With a complete reorganization of the Post Office Department in 1836 came a new seal (according to the February 1923 supplement to the *Official Postal Guide*, under Postmaster General Amos Kendall, although a definite date is not known), a postrider and his mailbags on a galloping horse. Gone are the classical allusions. Even as the celerity of the mail was actually being shifted from stagecoach to railway train, the image of man and horse emphasized the potency of federal communication.

9. *A Checklist of American Newspaper Carriers' Addresses 1720–1820*, comp. Gerald D. MacDonald, Stuart C. Sherman, and Mary T. Russo (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society 2000). The compilation, based on the collection at the American Antiquarian Society, includes evidence of seven newspapers with Mercury in their title to 1820; the online catalog of the collection adds three more to 1855.

10. Richard John, *Spreading the News* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 46), quoted coverage of the statue's erection in the Massachusetts *Gazette* from 28 July 1792, originally published in the *Columbian Sentinel*.

11. Both Mercury and merchant derive from the Latin *merx* for merchandise. The name of the closest planet to the sun, Mercurius, comes from classical Latin, and its application to quicksilver, or hydrargyrum (Hg, elemental mercury), was first recorded in the late fourteenth century.

12. John Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (New York: Atheneum, 1993), 372–392.

13. As a sampling, the first appearance was on a Greek stamp of 1901, Scott 165; Uruguay 1921–28, Scott 238–249, W 31–34; Brazil 1922; Danzig Semi-Postal 1937; South West Africa 1949, Scott 109–111 (J. E. Kloetzel, W. A. Jones, M. J. Frakevicz, and C. Snee, eds., *Scott 2009 Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue: Countries of the World*, Sydney, Ohio: Scott Publishing Co./Amos Hobby Publishing Co., 2008.)

14. Registry was established in 1855 and money order in 1864.

15. For more complete descriptions and images of specific stamps, refer to the conference presentation at http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/symposium2010/Harris-Hermes-presentation.pdf. See also, William Hughes, "Classic Stamps Portray Fleet-Footed Mercury," *Scott Stamp Monthly*, May 2010, pp. 33–35, for more images.

16. Anders Monrad Møller, *Frederik den Fjerdes Kommercekollegium og Kongelige Danske Rigers Inderlig Styrke og Magt* (Copenhagen: Københavns Universitet, Institut for Økonomisk Historie, 1983).

17. Otto from Bavaria, who was dethroned in favor of a Danish import.

18. See complete details of the stamp production in *Hermes '96: Stamps of Greece 1861–1995 and Cyprus 1880–1995 and Postal History* (Athens: Philatelic Hermes Ltd., 1995). The introduction to this volume, prepared for the 100th anniversary of the modern Olympic Games, emphasizes the primacy of Hermes as an icon to the modern Greek postal system: part of a panoply of ancient symbols that have not been superseded.

19. This concurrence of colors presages the standardization of stamp denomination colors under the Universal Postal Union.

20. Crete 1908, Scott 96.

21. The so-called Mercury dimes, featuring what appears to be an image of Hermes but is actually Liberty wearing a winged cap, were introduced in 1916 and could pay the special delivery rate. See also discussion of the "Merry Widow" stamp, *American Philatelist*, November 2010, 1036.

22. For a discussion of "The Ancient Two-Sphere Universe" and its iconography, see Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957).

23. Leslie Thompson, *Fortune: All Is But Fortune* (Washington, D.C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2000).

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You Need to Get Your Head Examined: The Unchanging Portrait of Queen Victoria on Nineteenth-Century British Postage Stamps

Catherine J. Golden

Queen Victoria, the monarch who greatly expanded the British Empire, became the face of the Penny Black, giving birth to a postal empire. When Victoria was born on 24 May 1819, postage stamps did not exist. Middle- and working-class English families dreaded the postman's knock. The post was a luxury: the burden of payment fell to the receiver, and a letter could cost a working-class Briton more than a day's wage.[1] In 1837, the year Victoria took the throne, postal reformer Rowland Hill, inventor of the postage stamp, published an influential pamphlet advocating reorganization of the postal service entitled *Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability.* One of the first things Victoria did as queen of England was to appoint a Select Committee on Postage charged to look into the condition of the post with a view toward postal rate reduction. Little did she realize that her portrait would end up on a postage stamp, humorously dubbed a "Queen's Head" (Figure 1).

On 17 August 1839, Queen Victoria gave royal assent to the Postage Duties Bill. In 1840, she ushered in Uniform Penny Postage and the postage stamp, prepaid by the sender. Beginning 10 January 1840, anyone could post a prepaid letter weighing up to half an ounce anywhere in the United Kingdom for only a penny. Hill describes his idea for a stamp as "a bit of paper just large enough to bear the stamp, and covered at the back with a glutinous wash."[2] The postage stamp became official on 6 May 1840. Hill believed the public would prefer prepaid stationery and conceived of the postage stamp as an "after-thought,"[3] but the stamp was an instant success. Victorians stood in lines to buy an innovation equal to today's iPads and iPhones. Perkins, Bacon & Petch, a government printer, worked day and night to keep up with the demand. In 1860, Queen Victoria knighted the man who transformed the expensive, unwieldy UK postal service and invented the postage stamp. Other nations quickly modeled this system of prepayment: in 1843, Brazil and two Swiss cantons, Geneva and Zurich, issued stamps; the United States followed in 1847.[4]

The Queen's Head set the standard for colonial postage and changed the face of postal communication, as Thomas J. Alexander illuminates in *The Queen's Own: Stamps That Changed the World* (2004). However, the image of Queen Victoria on the first postage stamp essentially remained unchanged. Turning to semiotics, politics, and postal history, this essay poses the following questions to illuminate what the Penny Black—as index, icon, and symbol—points to and represents. What messages did the elegant neoclassical design—virtually unchanged from its adoption until Victoria's death in 1901—instill in the minds of Victoria's subjects? Since designs on stamps and coins are

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FIGURE 1. Penny Black. From the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, Accession Number 2011.2037.1.

government controlled and sanctioned, why did stamps maintain an unchanging representation of young Victoria while the coinage changed likenesses, aging her markedly? More curiously, why do portraits of an older Queen Victoria appear on stamps from, for example, the Dominion of Canada, whereas the young bust reigned on all UK stamps and some colonial stamps as the official face of nineteenth-century England? Arguably, repeated exposure to the Penny Black and the unchanging image of a young monarch played a contributing role in solidifying the power of the British Empire and Queen Victoria.

THE SEMIOTICS OF STAMP DESIGN

Stamps function on many levels. These small physical objects made up of paper, ink, and glue were created to signify prepayment and speedily move the mail. As Stuart Rose reminds us in *Royal Mail Stamps: A Survey of British Stamp Design,* the stamp foremost functions operationally by indicating country of origin and price of postage in a design that supports its "indexical" function. The famous Penny Black uses the queen's head to indicate nation; the words on the stamp, "postage" and "one penny," respectively point to the stamp's function and value. However, stamps also have a representational function: a stamp represents a country of origin to its citizens and the world and sends a political, historical, or cultural message about the country of origin across social classes and national boundaries since stamps, more than coins, are for foreign and domestic use.

David Scott applies three classes of signs defined by Charles Sanders Peirce—indices, icons, and symbols—to elucidate the semiotic function of stamps in his pioneering *European Stamp Design: A Semiotic Approach to Designing Messages* (1995): "an icon is a pictorial sign; an index, a pointer sign; a symbol, a conventional sign. Whereas the stamp functions primarily as an *indexical* sign (pointing to the country of origin), as an object it encompasses *iconic* and *symbolic* elements (pictures, letters and numbers)."[5] David Scott acknowledges the fluidity of indices, icons, and symbols, which, of relevance to the Penny Black, interact to convey a chosen message: "The great advantage of using the monarch's head as a national symbol is that it can be used both as an icon and as an index, as both a definitive and a commemorative image."[6] "To this day England has never thought it necessary to identify her stamps with more than her sovereign's portrait," notes Donald M. Reid in "The Symbolism of Postage Stamps: A Source for the Historian."[7] A legacy from primacy of issue, the sovereign, depicted as the principal stamp image or a discrete, smaller figure, foremost identifies a stamp as British. But the monarch's head is also a pictorial sign or icon, as Keith Jeffery emphasizes in "Crown, Communication and the Colonial Post: Stamps, the Monarchy and the British Empire": "From the start there was a semiotic ambiguity, with the iconic image of the monarch also conveying the practical, indexical information that the stamp was British."[8] To compound this "semiotic ambiguity," the sovereign's head is also a symbol, which stamps commemorating the stamp's own invention illustrate.[9] For example, the 1940 design that marks the centenary of the postage stamp features the head of Victoria, who ushered stamps in, alongside the head of George VI, the reigning monarch.[10]

As Jack Child recognizes in *Miniature Messages*, "The humble postage stamp, introduced in England in 1840, has evolved over the years to the point where an initially secondary function of the stamp deserves serious study, that is, the use of the postage stamps as advertisement or propaganda (domestic or international), with themes as far ranging as nationalism, history, politics, economics, art, culture, and so on."[11] Child specializes in the semiotics and politics of Latin American stamps, but his insight about "miniature messages" as domestic and international "advertisement or propaganda" applies to the "humble postage stamp, introduced in England in 1840." In "Politics, Psychology and the Postage Stamp," Harlan J. Strauss, too, introduces stamps as propaganda: these official government documents not only advertise but subliminally implant messages into the minds of users, giving an official "stamp" to aspects of the country of origin, including great leaders and causes, national symbols, and more. Strauss calls upon stimulus-response theory from psychology to explore how "postage stamps as propaganda affect a literate population":[12] repeated exposure to the words and images on a postage stamp can inform, influence, and move a literate consumer to think and act.

PUTTING THE QUEEN'S HEAD ON A STAMP

The famous Penny Black established a still dominant pattern of stamp design. How did the queen's head come to grace the first postage stamp? The answer is a bit complicated.

In Hill's day, the Department of Treasury, in conjunction with the Board of Stamps,[13] controlled the design of stamps and prepaid stationery.[14] The design emerged from a Treasury-sponsored competition, which invited "all artists, men of science and the public in general" as well as "people in any part of the civilized world"[15] to submit designs for postage stamps and prepaid stationery (which took the form of letter sheets and envelopes). The Treasury received over 2,600 colored and black-and-white designs (49 of which were for stamps) by foreign and British artists; designs ranged from practical to ornamental, simple to complex, embossed to plain, and beautiful to crude. The Treasury evaluated the designs according to the following criteria: convenience to the public, security from possible forgery, ease of checking the design, and expense of production and circulation. Although not a post office employee, Rowland Hill in 1839 received an appointment to the Department of Treasury to oversee production of the new stationery and stamps. Of the four prizes the Treasury awarded, Hill did not find any single entry suitable for stationery or stamps; nonetheless, he made use of several ideas, including William Wyon's and Benjamin Cheverton's concept of putting the sovereign's head on the stamp.[16] Cheverton (one of the prizewinners) offered a persuasive argument for using a portrait: it would be difficult to forge.[17] Hill, presumably also influenced by the time-honored practice of putting a sovereign on coins, commissioned Henry Corbould, a well-known illustrator and miniaturist, to make a drawing of Queen Victoria's profile after William Wyon's 1837 City Medal as the design on the first postage stamp.[18]

Wyon, the premier engraver and medalist of his age, created the City Medal to commemorate Queen Victoria's first visit to London in 1837. He knew Victoria's face intimately; he began drawing the princess at age thirteen. The neoclassical design gracing the Penny Black is based on Wyon's impressions of the young princess from a sitting when she was fifteen years old. Neoclassicism, a 1765 art movement, reacted to the heaviness of baroque and rococo styles and aimed to return art to the perceived purity of the classical arts of Greece and Rome. Wyon wanted his portraits of Victoria to be balanced, uncluttered, pure, even beautiful, so it is not surprising that the queen's medalist found favor with the queen. He produced other images of Victoria as she grew into womanhood and married glory, but the image of a youthful Victoria endures as the face of the Penny Black, which, in turn, became the model for all Victorian postage stamps and many colonial stamps.

THE RECEPTION OF A QUEEN'S HEAD

Stamps were an immediate sensation. In 1842, *Punch,* the Victorian Londoner's *New Yorker*, mocked the fad of stamp collecting. A "new mania," *Punch* notes, has "bitten the industriously idle ladies of England . . . ; in fact, they betray more anxiety to treasure up Queen's heads than Harry the Eighth did to get rid of them."[19] One such "industriously idle" Victorian woman, who collected Queen's Heads as fervently as Henry VIII decapitated queens, took out an advertisement in the *Times* in October 1842 asking people to "assist her in her whimsical project" of papering her boudoir with cancelled stamps. When she placed the notice, she had already received from friends 16,000 Queen's Heads (slang for stamps), but she needed more to complete her decor.[20]

Stamp collecting quickly surpassed rock and coin collecting in popularity. In *Her Majesty's Mails* (1864), William Lewins describes the furor of *timbromanie* in Birchin Lane in 1862, which cut across social classes and bridged the gender divide: "crowds nightly congregated, to the exceeding annoyance and wonder of the uninitiated—where ladies and gentlemen of all ages and all ranks, from Cabinet-ministers to crossing-sweepers, were busy, with album or portfolio in hand, buying, selling, or exchanging."[21] But not all Victorians proudly put the Queen's Head on their letters. To quote one Victorian schoolboy, licking a stamp provided the "satisfaction of kissing or rather slobbering over Her Majesty's Back."[22] An amusing rhyme entitled "Lines on the Post Office Medallion" appearing 6 June 1840 in a weekly scandal sheet called *The Town* suggests the kiss landed lower on the queen's "behind":

> 'You must kiss our fair Queen, or her pictures, that's
> clear
> Or the gummy medallion will never adhere;
> You will not kiss her hand, you will readily find
> But actually kiss little Vickey's behind.[23]

Jokes about the first postage stamp targeted other body parts, such as the queen's mouth; a ninety-one-year-old man posted a letter to a lady friend on 5 May 1840 that read, "*I send you a Queen's head, the day before it is in Penny circulation . . . what a pity they should make Victoria 'gummy' like an old woman without teeth—as I am.*"[24]

A HEADY MESSAGE IN A VERY SMALL SPACE

The Penny Post was an egalitarian measure to bring an affordable post to all social classes. With it, the queen gave up her privilege of franking: postmarks granting the queen and members of Parliament free carriage of mail. Victoria's exposure on the stamp more than compensated for the loss of her franking privilege. The Queen's Head, which Victorians saw nearly daily for over sixty years, extended the queen's agency, bringing her royal authority regularly into nearly every home in her kingdom. Since photography was not widely in use, for most of Victoria's subjects, stamps and coins were the only places where her British and Commonwealth subjects could catch a glimpse of their queen. "At no point in the Victorian age were British users of stamps to see anything else but the head of Victoria," as Asa Briggs notes; "There was, after all, only one side to the stamp, unlike the coin."[25] To push Briggs's point further, since Britain never changed the philatelic portrait of Victoria, who never ages on the stamp, at no point were Victorian users of stamps to see anything but the young head of their queen. The unwavering stamp design sent a message from the government to the general public that defined Victoria and her nation.

Although government-sanctioned coinage reflects Victoria's life stages over her sixty-four-year reign (1837–1901), stamp design does not.[26] Every time anyone received or posted a letter, the heady message gained force. Did Britain retain the youthful Queen's Head because of the queen's vanity (e.g., Victoria had an enormous appetite and worried constantly about her weight)? Did the continuity of the design reflect a conservative stamp practice dominant throughout Victoria's and Edward VII's reigns?

Not all supported the administration's decision to retain the Wyon image. *The Philatelic Record* forcefully raised in 1879 whether "'the mythic effigy' going back to the Wyon medal [could] be cast into oblivion? Surely the likeness of our Queen as she is—of the sovereign who has earned our love and esteem by over forty years of beneficent rule, of the lady whose joys and sorrows as wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, have been shared in by her faithful subjects—should have greater attractions for us than that of the untried girl but lately called to the throne."[27] Was the decision to maintain the image on the stamp (but not the coinage) thus primarily motivated by the message that Britain wished to convey not "for us" (its citizens) but to the world? Stamps, even more than coins, are denominated for broad-based acceptance nationally and internationally. Did the administration recognize that by maintaining an unwavering design, the philatelic portrait became an international symbol of Victoria's strength, confidence, and longevity, qualities located at a higher level of abstraction and influence than is a portrait on a postage stamp?[28]

Granted, stamps changed color during Victoria's reign (Figure 2). The Penny Red replaced the Penny Black in February of 1841; the red Maltese cross cancellation was not readily visible on the Penny Black, and the Post Office feared people would try to reuse stamps. The Penny Red with a black Maltese cross cancel remained in use from 1841 to 1879. The Two Pence Blue also remained in circulation for thirty-nine years. Following a provisional 1880–81 issue when surface printing replaced line engraving, the Penny Lilac came into circulation from 1881 to 1901 and became the most issued Victorian stamp. The young head in all colors of the rainbow appears on stamps in denominations as small as ½d (penny) and as large as £5. Small variations occurred in printing techniques, colors, corner lettering, and frames. However, the sovereign's portrait, through repeated exposure, became an icon of national identity and, for some Victorians, a symbol of national pride: as Frederick Philibrick and W. A. Westoby claimed in 1889, "stamps of no other country in the world save Great Britain will be able to show an unbroken line of representations of its sovereign during fifty years from their first issue."[29]

THE QUEEN WHO NEVER AGES

If we think of a design on a postage stamp as a record of history and a form of propaganda, then the postage stamp, domestically and internationally, bore the same face of England from 1840 until the dawning of the twentieth century. Queen Victoria's inauguration symbolized a movement away from the corruption, injustice, and disease long associated with the England of Victoria's predecessors, George IV and William IV, often referred to as her elderly "wicked uncles." However, Queen Victoria and her nation underwent major changes in life and politics during her long reign as the coinage highlights but the stamp hides: the young, newly crowned monarch (preserved on the stamp) became a blushing bride (she married her beloved Prince Albert on 11 February 1840), a devoted wife and mother, a proponent of family values, a grieving widow (Prince Albert died of typhoid fever on 14 December 1861), a doting grandmother, an old woman, and a demanding and increasingly reclusive, unpopular monarch.

FIGURE 2. Penny Black, Two Pence Blue, Penny Red, and Penny Lilac stamps. From the collection of Catherine J. Golden.

FIGURE 3. China Hong Kong 1896 stamp. From the collection of Catherine J. Golden.

In 1840, when Victoria debuted on the stamp, England was busy building her empire. Britain was expanding in India, fighting in China and Afghanistan, founding Wellington (New Zealand), and penetrating Africa. Was the government's decision to retain the young monarch on the stamp thus a calculated move to maintain the promise that accompanied Victoria's coronation at a time when Britain was the undisputed leader of the Industrial Revolution? Was it a strategic decision to advertise to her nation and the world an image of stability and power fueling Victoria's continually expanding empire?

We now recognize Victorian England as an age of contradictions. Major innovations in science, industry, education, and technology stand alongside dreadful mistakes, wars, and rebellions, including the First and Second Opium Wars, the Crimean War, and the Anglo-Boer War. The government righted many social abuses: the Ten Hours Bill of 1847 limited women's and children's workdays to ten hours; the 1870 Forster Act established government responsibility for education; the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 granted married women the right to hold property. Concomitantly, British colonialism—especially incursions into India and Africa—planted seeds for political and social problems that plagued Britain well into the twentieth century. To recall stimulus-response theory, all the while the Victorians faced disease, poverty, war, colonial uprisings, or discontent in their enormous imperial holdings, the British government insured that Victoria's domestic subjects across the social classes saw and used postage stamps with an unwavering design that came to symbolize, among other things, grace, authority, and even invincibility. The real Queen Victoria changed over time and aged ungracefully. In the fashion of Dorian Gray's own infamous portrait, the queen's silhouette on the postage stamp intentionally remained fresh and youthful and maintained a public, international face of the queen unblemished by pain, struggle, trouble, or time.[30]

THE QUEEN'S FACE TRANSCENDS ENGLAND: COLONIAL POSTAGE

Queen-Empress Victoria became the face on postage stamps of nearly every British imperial possession.[31] In regard to format, iconic context, and textual message, the design on the Penny Black conclusively set the standard for colonial postage (and stamps to this day).[32] Since Victoria's colonial subjects intensively used these stamps for their daily correspondence, colonial stamps illustrate what Strauss describes as a "subliminal effect that makes the postage stamp one of the more ubiquitous forms of political propaganda."[33] Colonial postage stamps bearing Victoria's face advertise a vast imperial network that extended to India, Africa, New Zealand, Australia, the West Indies, and Asia.

If we view Victorian colonial stamps as propaganda, we might assume that the unquestionable reproductions of British iconography on colonial stamps instilled in users a sense of loyalty to the crown or impressed upon them Britain's unshakeable leadership, perhaps subliminally influencing their thoughts and actions. Some colonial stamps seem to do just that. The queen's portrait on an 1896 postage stamp of Hong Kong (Figure 3), which became a Crown Colony in 1842 as an outcome of Britain's First Opium War with China,[34] closely resembles the portrait on the Penny Black. Framing the young head are English words (Hong Kong and the postage price) and Chinese characters, showing a blending of cultures. This stamp offers a miniature message about colonial loyalty proclaimed to Victoria's Hong Kong subjects and the world.

Some colonial stamps advertise the mother country's preeminence on a vast imperial stage. Postage stamps of Uganda, a British protectorate from 1894 to 1962, show a melding of imperial and colonial imagery that stereotypes Africa as "other" (Figure 4). Stereotypical symbols of this East African nation

FIGURE 4. Uganda Protectorate 1898 issue. From the collection of Catherine J. Golden.

join with the "civilized" mother country on an 1898 stamp, acknowledging Britain's power and sovereignty: two regal lions and spears flank a shield bearing the portrait of an older Queen Victoria; in a variation of this design, elephants take the place of the lions and spears.[35] In both versions, lush foliage magnifies the tropical climate of this East African Crown Colony. The lion has fierce and regal connotations, but the spear, jungle, and elephant emphasize the wildness of the Uganda Protectorate while the portrait of Victoria elevates the stabilizing influence of Britain, the civilized mother country. The change in postage stamps that occurred in the 1960s as soon as European colonies in Africa gained their independence reinforces how the portraits of Victoria and successive British royals became repugnant imperial icons: new icons on stamps, such as African leaders or plant and animal life, "stamped" out the old order and celebrated independence.[36]

Some colonial stamps glorify the mother country and Britain's imperial network by depicting her holdings rather than her visage. Following the July 1898 Imperial Conference on postal rates held in London, Canada was among the British dominions and possessions that agreed to a uniform rate and gently ushered in imperial postage. The resulting 1898 Canadian Christmas stamp (the first Christmas stamp) celebrates the beginnings of imperial penny postage (Figure 5) and demonstrates how stamps could become a means openly to proclaim a message, in this case to call attention to Canada's adoption of the imperial postage rate, which other regions in the British Empire could implement with the queen's approval. Hill's Penny Post plan concentrated on the "formal" British Empire; the penny rate took fifty-eight years to go into effect for her colonial possessions. This stamp, designed by Postmaster General (later Sir) William Mulock (a Canadian politician and cabinet member), shows a world map with British colonial holdings colored in bright red. The stamp text emphasizes Britain's size and stature; "we hold a vaster empire than has been" comes from an ode entitled "A Song of Empire" that Welsh poet Lewis Morris composed in 1887 to mark Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. From this example, Reid observes, "Whether one views modern history through the lenses of the White Man's Burden, modernization theory, or the model of a capitalist-dominated world market, the connection between the spread of the 'postage-stamp revolution' and English imperialism is clear."[37] Mulock does put Canada at the center of the British Empire. Nonetheless, how symbolically different is this 1898 Canadian stamp from the much-ridiculed, unambiguously imperial 1840 stationery that William Mulready designed of Britannia sending winged messengers on a glorious postal outreach to all four corners of the globe to celebrate Uniform Penny Postage?[38]

FIGURE 5. Canada 1898 Christmas imperial penny postage issue. From the collection of Catherine J. Golden.

The history of Canadian stamp design bears revisiting. In 1851, the colony of Canada printed stamps of a beaver surmounted with a royal VR cipher (3d), Prince Albert (6d), and a young Victoria (12d). When the Dominion of Canada came into existence in 1867, it issued a stamp with a young head of Victoria based on an engraving by Charles Henry Jeens.[39] However, two stamps issued in the 1890s when Canada increasingly asserted its independence from Britain show less flattering portraits of an older Victoria wearing her small crown and veil (Figure 6). The 1897 Jubilee stamp (the first Canadian commemorative) celebrating sixty years of Victoria's reign and thirty years of Canada's dominion features a young head based on two portraits the queen chose personally, one by Alexander Chalon in 1838 and another by Heinrich Von Angeli in 1862, alongside an older, less invincible looking Victoria modeled after an 1887 photograph by Alexander Bassano. The stamp also includes acanthus leaves, traditionally associated with Victorian England and the queen herself. That same year, the Maple Leaf issue came out, featuring the older head based on a portrait photo by W. and D. Downey and surrounded by Parliament-inspired maple leaves, an enduring symbol of Canada.[40]

Might a desire for autonomy from British imperialism's "heady" power and the long delay in empire-wide penny postage, which colonies long sought (they felt financially burdened in communicating with the mother country), have caused a resentment that led to aging Queen Victoria on postage stamps? Keith Jeffery in "Crown, Communication and the Colonial Post" cautions against "a simplistic analysis which on the one hand equates a slavish reproduction of royal or British iconography with colonial loyalty and, on the other, local images with separatism."[41] The politics of stamp design is not simple, but we cannot ignore that colonial stamps designed by local British colonial administrators (e.g., the Maple Leaf issue) point to an assertion of identity and an independence of spirit. It may be less significant that 1890s Canadian stamps reject British iconography to show an aging Victoria than that they show a side to Victoria that distinguishes Canada from Britain. Not surprisingly, in 1965, Canada redesigned her flag and adopted a large, stylized red maple leaf to replace the Union Jack.[42]

FIGURE 6. The 1897 Dominion of Canadian stamps. From the collection of Catherine J. Golden.

FINAL NOTE: WHY EXAMINE THE QUEEN'S HEAD?

Examined from the perspective of stimulus-response theory, Victoria's enduring silhouette on the stamp—if only through repeated exposure—provided continuity and comfort during an age of rapid change in industry, education, communications, transportation, and gender roles. French historian Élie Halévy was fascinated that Victorian stamp design did not change; the youthful Queen Victoria remained the official face of Britain, even if she aged on some colonial stamps like Canada, Uganda, and India.[43] In remaining young on all domestic and some colonial stamps until her death in 1901, Queen Victoria became to her people and the world a symbol of power and longevity even as the sun began to set on the British Empire.

Might the design's continuity be more significant than the enduring youth of the Queen's Head? Queen Victoria symbolizes what today we call Victorian values—moral propriety, domesticity, and family affection—as well as empire, power, and morality. The term Victorian, which came into use in the 1850s following the Great Exhibition of 1851,[44] still applies to long multiplot novels, gracious homes with double parlors, manners, morals, and an illustrious age of imperial expansion. The Penny Black solidified a still reigning pattern for stamp design. More importantly, even the Victorians recognized that the virtually unchanging design was a "'mythic effigy' going back to the Wyon medal."[45] Something as deceptively simple as a postage stamp came to play a pivotal role in the national myth making both of Britain's longest reigning monarch and her empire.

NOTES

1. Postal charges grew high in England because the British Treasury viewed the post office as a revenue-generating office, not simply as a method of fee recovery for services provided. The Treasury raised postal rates, for example, to offset the inflationary pressure of the Napoleonic Wars. Different from the way mail operates today, payment fell to the receiver, not the sender; in addition, prepayment was a social slur on the recipient. One had to be financially solvent to receive a letter. If the recipient could not afford to pay for a letter, it was returned to sender.

2. Rowland Hill, *Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability,* 2nd ed. (London: Charles Knight, 1837), 45. Hill goes on to note the stamp was something "the bringer might, by applying a little moisture, attach to the back of the letter" (45). He is assuming continuation of the common practice of folding a letter and sealing it to make its own cover; however, after 1840, envelope use rose in popularity since a letter in an envelope weighing up to half an ounce could be posted for a penny.

3. A. G. Rigo de Righi, *The Story of the Penny Black and Its Contemporaries* (London: National Postal Museum, 1980), 5.

4. Zurich issued the 6 Rappen and 4 Rappen on 1 March 1843; Geneva released the Double Geneva on 1 October 1843. The canton of Basel issued the Basel Dove on 1 July 1845. Brazil produced the Bull's Eye stamp on 1 August 1843, and on 1 July 1847, the United States issued 5¢ and 10¢ stamps featuring, respectively, Benjamin Franklin on a red-brown stamp and George Washington on a black stamp.

5. David Scott, *European Stamp Design: A Semiotic Approach to Designing Messages* (London: Academy Editions, 1995), 7.

6. Scott, *European Stamp Design*, 18.

7. Donald M. Reid, "The Symbolism of Postage Stamps: A Source for the Historian," *Journal of Contemporary History,* 19, no. 2 (1984): 228.

8. Keith Jeffery, "Crown, Communication and the Colonial Post: Stamps, the Monarchy, and the British Empire," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 34, no. 1 (March 2006): 49. The portraits of six monarchs have appeared on British definitive stamps since 1840.

9. Scott, *European Stamp Design,* and Jack Child call upon Charles Sanders Peirce's typology of semiotics. Child also helpfully defines the terms index, icon, and symbol in *Miniature Messages: The Semiotics and Politics of Latin American Postage Stamps* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008), 15. Both stress how in stamp design, to quote Scott, "the two systems—iconic and symbolic—interact to reinforce the desired message" (14).

10. Whereas definitive (or ordinary) stamps present iconic messages that are not time sensitive, commemorative stamps celebrate historical or cultural landmarks. A similar pairing of the heads of Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II appears on a 1990 stamp commemorating the 150th anniversary of the postage stamp.

11. Child, *Miniature Messages,* 3.

12. Harlan J. Strauss, "Politics, Psychology and the Postage Stamp," *The Congress Book,* 1975:158.

13. The Board of Stamps originated in 1694. The term stamps refers not to postage stamps but to duties on a range of items including vellum, newspapers, advertisements, and many commodities.

14. In 1884 in response to complaints about the designs issued by the Board of Inland Revenue (which subsumed the Board of Stamps), the government set up a committee to oversee stamp design.

15. Asa Briggs, *Victorian Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 338.

16. Some postal historians state Cheverton wanted the sovereign on the stamp, although others suggest he wanted a portrait. His design no longer exists, but as Douglas Muir notes, a relative of Cheverton's named Eliza Cooper found a die that shows the head of a young woman, which is possibly Queen Victoria; see Douglas N. Muir, *Postal Reform and The Penny Black* (London: National Postal Museum, 1990), 88. Briggs states in *Victorian Things* (339) that Cheverton wished the design to be based on Wyon's head of the queen.

17. Cheverton also suggested that if stamps were printed on watermarked security paper, there would be an even greater protection against forgery.

18. Ironically, Wyon submitted a design to use the sovereign's head. As Rigo de Righi notes in *Story of the Penny Black* (11), "It is hand-drawn in ink, but though it is nearer to the issued stamp than any other submitted, it somehow failed to win Wyon an award."

19. Quoted in Briggs, *Victorian Things,* 350.

20. Quoted in Briggs, *Victorian Things,* 351.

21. William Lewins, *Her Majesty's Mails: A History of the Post Office and an Industrial Account of Its Present Condition*, 2nd ed. (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, 1865), 313.

22. Quoted in L. N. Williams and M. Williams, *The Postage Stamp: Its History and Recognition* (London: Penguin, 1956), 19.

23. Quoted in Muir, *Postal Reform,* 180.

24. Quoted in Rigo de Righi, *Story of the Penny Black,* 40.

25. Briggs, *Victorian Things,* 339.

26. The Young Head coins (in circulation from 1838 to 1887 and designed by Wyon) show Victoria as she looked at her coronation at just eighteen. Copper pennies minted in 1860, which vary this image to show the queen's hair coiled into a bun, present her as a devoted wife and mother of nine children. Wyon also designed a Gothic portrait of Victoria in 1848–49 when Britain considered switching to a decimal coinage. Coins minted on the occasion of Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 (in circulation 1887–93) show an older Victoria wearing a small crown and a veil over the back of her head. The final "Widow's Weeds" head issued in 1893 (in circulation from 1893 to 1901) shows Victoria more as her subjects came to know her: an elderly widow, dressed in perpetual mourning for her beloved husband and consort, Prince Albert, who died in 1861.

27. *The Philatelic Record* argued this point in its foundation year, 1879, which also marked the death of Hill. See Briggs, *Victorian Things,* 355.

28. Here I am indebted to the ideas of Rudolf Arnheim and his discussion of Holbein's portrait of Henry VIII in *Visual Thinking,* which Strauss references in "Politics, Psychology and the Postage Stamp," 160.

29. Quoted in Briggs, *Victorian Things,* 355.

30. I elaborate this point in *Posting It: The Victorian Revolution in Letter Writing* (Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 2009), 106–107, where I extend the comparison between Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and the Penny Black. Keith Jeffery makes this reference in passing in "Crown, Communication and the Colonial Post" (50), but I was not aware of his reference when I made this connection and developed it.

31. Jeffery in "Crown, Communication and the Colonial Post" (50) notes Victoria never appeared on stamps of British Guinea (issued from 1850) or the Cape of Good Hope (issued from 1853).

32. See Scott, *European Stamp Design,* 8, where he suggests that the Penny Black also set the pattern for the current British definitive stamp with the Arnold Machin portrait bust of Queen Elizabeth II in regard to format, iconic content, and textual message.

33. Strauss, "Politics, Psychology and the Postage Stamp," 157.

34. Although China gave Hong Kong to Britain in "perpetuity," in 1997, it was returned to mainland China and assumed the status of a special administrative region.

35. This portrait resembles the Bassano-inspired head on the Canadian stamp.

36. For discussion of 1960s Ghana postage, for example, see Child, *Miniature Messages,* 19.

37. Reid, "The Symbolism of Postage Stamps," 227.

38. For a discussion of the Mulready envelope design and its reception, I refer the reader to my book *Posting It*, 89–101.

39. Beginning in 1851, the provinces of Canada, cooperating with the administration of the General Post Office in London, began to issue stamps, but each province issued a different stamp.

40. The maple leaves were initially in all four corners, but the design changed because of Universal Postal Union regulations. For more information on these stamp designs, I recommend Winthrop S. Boggs, *The Postage Stamps and Postal History of Canada*, (Lawrence, Mass.: Quartermain Publications, 1974), 317, 321.

41. See Jeffery, "Crown, Communication and the Colonial Post," 51.

42. Beginning in 1868, the Canadian flag included a small Union Jack and a quartered shield to signal Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. The coat of arms of Canada replaced the shield in 1921, though this ensign was modified again in 1957. The 1965 maple leaf flag remains the current flag.

43. See Briggs, *Victorian Things,* 339.

44. The first world's fair, this London exhibition of culture and industry, a crowning achievement of Victoria's reign, attracted over six million visitors who came to the Crystal Palace to see over 13,000 exhibits from Britain and countries across the globe.

45. *The Philatelic Record*, quoted in Briggs, *Victorian Things*, 355.

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Debating Identity and Origins with Early Twentieth-Century American Commemoratives

Sheila A. Brennan

Patriotic commemorations flowered following World War I in the United States, as did campaigns for securing limited-issue federal postage stamps. Beginning in 1920 with the Pilgrim Tercentenary issue, commemorative stamp subjects were moving away from solely advertising world's fairs as the U.S. Post Office Department (USPOD) celebrated battles, anniversaries, and individuals that were part of greater cultural trends that sought to define Americanness in post–World War I America. Because of the accessibility of American commemoratives, both in size and through imagery, these stamps served to reinforce and naturalize an exceptionalist and triumphalist vision of the American past that obscured the complicated legacies of conquest and inequality.

This paper will examine imagery from a few commemorative stamps from the interwar years and the circumstances of their printing that celebrated regional anniversaries held in Plymouth Rock, Mayport, and Minneapolis, as well as stamps honoring Polish military heroes Casimir Pulaski and Theodore Kosciuszko. Conversations revolving around these stamps, in correspondence or in the public media, demonstrate how the USPOD became a powerful institution that legitimized and distributed historical narratives and one that allowed ordinary citizens to engage with its government. Knowing of the postal service's power to circulate interpretations of the American past to millions of people, some citizens sought commemoratives as part of grander strategies fighting for social and political equality while others wanted stamps to perpetuate a romanticized view of colonial America. These debates over commemorative subjects reflected contemporary struggles over immigration restrictions, constructions of race, and definitions of citizenship in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s.

PILGRIMS AND ORIGINS

During the interwar years, attempts to craft the unique history of America's origins, particularly in nostalgic ways, were displayed through regional anniversaries that wove local events and people into official national narratives. Some of those stories were showcased on commemorative stamps.[1] For the Pilgrim Tercentennial celebration in 1920, poems and speeches glorified the legacy of the Massachusetts Pilgrims as nation builders and model immigrants. Plymouth was proclaimed to be the "corner stone of the Nation," and Vice President Thomas Marshall touted the achievements of the "pilgrim fathers" who "prepared the way" for "the birth of a new and mighty world." He used

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FIGURE 1. Pilgrim Tercentenary, 1¢, 1920. From the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Collection, Accession Number 1980.2493.6627.

FIGURE 2. Pilgrim Tercentenary, 2¢, 1920. From the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Collection, Accession Number 1980.2493.6629.

FIGURE 3. Pilgrim Tercentenary, 5¢, 1920. From the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Collection, Accession Number 1980.2493.6633.

the opportunity to argue for immigration restrictions, advocating that immigrants needed to follow the example set by the Pilgrims and commit to staying in United States rather than merely coming to work and returning home. According to Marshall, the Pilgrims came to America "to worship God and to make homes, determined never to return to Europe."[2] Politicians and patriotic-hereditary groups used a perceived legacy of the Plymouth Pilgrims in the early twentieth century not only to assert the primacy of Plymouth as America's birth place but also to speak to local and national concerns over immigration and labor.

This legacy was represented in the Pilgrim Tercentenary stamp series (Figure 1). Interestingly, the USPOD seemed so convinced that the world associated the story of the Pilgrims' landing at Plymouth as quintessentially American that none of the three postage stamps printed in the series contained the identifying words "U.S. Postage," which all other stamps prior and since carried. Even the U.S. Mint's commemorative anniversary coin imprinted the words "United States of America" on the front of the half-dollar coin.[3]

Mayflowers, fittingly, flanked each stamp's scene, and like the Columbians, the Pilgrim Tercentenary series formed a short narrative. The story began on the 1¢ stamp with the *Mayflower* appearing to sail west across the ocean on its journey, with the ship pointing to the left, with no land in sight—origin or destination. Similar to the Columbians, the landing occurs in the 2¢ stamp (Figure 2), which was the most commonly used because it was the standard rate of first-class postage from 1883 to 1932.[4]

This stamp's engraving makes the landing look harsh, unexpected, and jolting for the party at Plymouth Rock. Although this image suggests that struggles lie ahead for the settlers, the rock is what grounded the travelers and is the object that grounded those celebrating the anniversary in the past. Plymouth was the ceremonial ground in 1920 and provided the physical connection to the past events. The journey's symbolic end revealed itself in the 5¢, where the Mayflower Compact was signed, indicating political agreement, permanence, and divine right and blessing of their settlement as the central figure pointed toward the light illuminating the signing (Figure 3). On the basis of a painting by Edwin White, the signing image illustrates families migrating together even though only men signed the document.[5]

The scene emphasizes that a community comprised of family units crafted the Mayflower Compact and pledged to work together. New England preservationists and genealogists argued that the Pilgrims were the true first Americans because family units arrived together to form a permanent settlement, unlike the commercially minded immigrants to Jamestown. By representing this scene, the tercentennial committee reiterated their argument and wanted all Americans to distinguish Plymouth as the birthplace of the America.

Placing Plymouth Rock at the center of the national American narrative was attacked by historians and angered heritage and preservation groups who desperately wanted to pull the Pilgrims down from their pedestal to broaden the story of European settlement in the New World. For many years, Virginians and New Englanders argued over where the American story truly began, Plymouth or Jamestown; a debate imbued with strong regional pride left over from the Civil War.[6]

In celebrating the founding of New York in 1924, the Huguenot-Walloon New Netherland Commission petitioned for a commemorative stamp series as part of their mission to share the story of their ancestors with the entire United States. The commission wrote that the Walloons were pilgrims too and their story was "wonderful and romantic, and all Americans should know it." Apparently the commission understood what they were up against in trying to educate Americans about their history because a few collectors wrote to the postmaster general puzzled by the printing of that series and inquired about the significance of those events. One collector begged for a short bibliography because "all of the histories I have at hand seem to be a bit deficient in matters relating to the events these stamps commemorate."[7]

Collectors and citizens occasionally questioned the standard of "national significance" when they did not recognize subjects depicted on stamps. U.S. Post Office Department officials justified this choice by writing that the Huguenot-Walloon anniversary was "of more than ordinary interest particularly in those sections of the country where these colonists originally settled" (Figures 4 and 5), criteria that may have justified other commemorative choices in during the 1920s.[8] In the case of these issues, the series contained no readily identifiable images and none were labeled. The *Nieu Nederland* sailed in 1624 east toward America in the 1¢ issue, and families landed in what became New York in the 2¢. The last stamp in the series is even more cryptic, with

FIGURE 4. Huguenot-Walloon Tercentenary, 1¢, 1924. From the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Collection, Accession Number 1980.2493.2359.

FIGURE 5. Huguenot-Walloon Tercentenary, 2¢, 1924. From the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Collection, Accession Number 1980.2493.2361.

FIGURE 6. Huguenot-Walloon Tercentenary, 5¢, 1924. From the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Collection, Accession Number 1980.2493.2363.

an unidentified monument facing a rising sun with palm trees and plants surrounding it that are not similar to the landscape pictured in the 2¢ settlement stamp.

The 5¢ denomination actually represents a stone monument erected by Jean Ribault, who explored the area near Mayport, Florida, in the 1560s to establish a refuge colony for French Huguenots (Figure 6). Before returning to France to pick up passengers for the trip back to Florida, Ribault erected a stone column festooned with the French king's coat of arms to claim Florida in the name of France. As part of the Huguenot-Walloon anniversary in 1924, the Florida Daughters of the American Revolution chapters financed the building of a similarly shaped monument to honor Ribault and the "first landing of Protestants on American soil."[9]

The Huguenot-Walloon Tercentenary Committee very specifically wanted the memorial commemorating Jean Ribaud's settlement to be pictured on a stamp to challenge the idea that the Pilgrims of Plymouth were the first and only Protestants to sail to America in search of religious freedom who helped to build a nation. Celebrating white settlers' Protestant beliefs on stamps may have been yet another way that native-born Protestants clung to an idealized and fictional vision of a harmonious and homogenous American past. This vision saw immigrant radicals, Jews, and Catholics as threats and foreign to mainstream American culture. Battles over immigration, public education, and prohibition, for example, often divided the population along religious lines.[10] Defining the United States as a Christian Protestant nation helped those remembering these early settlements to deal with an uncomfortably heterogeneous population of the 1920s. Ancestors of Huguenots and Walloons desired stamps to commemorate their contributions to early America stemming from regional, religious, and ethnic-racial pride as they staked their ground in New York City as the region's original immigrants. By earning a series of stamps, the federal government appeared to endorse this interpretation.

The Norse-American Centenary stamp series provides another example of how the government endorsed a narrative of ethnic pride proposed by a regional commemorative committee. Similar to the Huguenot-Walloon celebration, this was a regional anniversary with an organizing committee that petitioned for a commemorative as one piece of a larger festival honoring first waves of immigrants. A congressional joint resolution commended Norwegian immigrants who contributed to the "moral and material welfare of our Nation" and were credited with settling the "great Midwest," rather than piling into cities like contemporary immigrants.[11] Imagery and narratives presented by the centennial committee sought to unite Norwegians in America to a heroic past, one that could be traced to Vikings such as Leif Erikson, whose arrival in the New World predated Columbus and the Pilgrims. The committee balanced asserting their differences as Norwegians while also claiming their right to be a part of the dominant official narrative of the American past.[12]

Again, this series of stamps emphasized immigration and a journey across the Atlantic that asserted that all of these groups were early immigrants and distinguished their stories of migration from those of new immigrants arriving in the United States in the early twentieth century (Figures 7 and 8). The 2¢, *Restaurationen,* shows the ship carrying the first Norwegian immigrants, sailing west without land in site toward the United States in 1825. The second stamp does not represent the landing, but rather, the 5¢ issue featured an engraving of a Viking ship built for the Columbian Exposition. That ship sailed from Norway to Chicago to remind fairgoers and stamp consumers in the 1920s that Norwegian explorers had visited America long before Columbus, the English-Dutch Pilgrims, the Huguenots, or the Walloons. This particular image pointed the ship's bow toward the east, or toward the homeland, yet on the stamp itself the Viking ship sails from a banner or shield of Norway toward one of the United States. The Norse-American Viking ship is flying colors similar to an American flag.

FIGURE 7. Norse-American Centennial, 2¢, 1925. From the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Collection, Accession Number 1980.2493.2370.

FIGURE 8. Norse-American Centennial, 5¢, 1925. From the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Collection, Accession Number 1980.2493.2372.

These stamps were in high demand from collectors because of the design and intensity of the ink colors, and collectors asked the USPOD to reprint these issues. Postal officials regretted that they had to treat all commemoratives consistently and could not reprint this series alone because they would hear protests from other groups claiming the Norwegians received preferential treatment.[13] In this case, the USPOD understood that the subject matter represented on the stamp held great meaning for petitioners—past and future—and citizens. Postal officials were careful to balance the sensitivities of commemorative scenes chosen with interests of some collectors who focused more on the attractiveness and particulars of stamps' designs. Regional anniversary committees took advantage of the opportunities available from the USPOD's commemorative stamp program to legitimize their interpretation of the past and to insure that the founding stories of their ancestors were included in the broader story of America's origins.

The timing of these commemorations spoke directly to the contemporary fights over immigration. Legislation in 1921 and 1924 established eugenically minded quotas developed by Congress to shape the racial biology of future American citizens. The Johnson-Reed Act (1924) drastically reduced the number of immigrating Poles, Greeks, Italians, and Russians entering the United States and completely eliminated immigration from Asia.[14] It was not coincidental that these regional anniversary stamps also reinforced the idea that the United States was founded by white Protestant western Europeans and that the future national racial and ethnic salad bowl should aspire to achieve that ideal from the past.

HEROES FROM POLAND

Soon after Johnson-Reed, Polish Americans and immigrants petitioned the USPOD to honor two Polish Revolutionary War heroes on stamps as part of a larger strategy to portray Polish Americans as good Americans with ancestral ties to the birth of the United States as a nation. Efforts began in the early twentieth century to recognize the contributions of Count Casimir Pulaski and General Thaddeus Kosciuszko with statues and postage memorials. In 1910, monuments honoring both men were dedicated in Washington, Pulaski's financed by Congress and Kosciuszko's donated to "the people" by the Polish American Alliance.[15]

Pulaski was a Polish nobleman who volunteered to fight for the colonies and has been called the Father of the American Cavalry. He fought and died at the Battle of Savannah in 1779, and the city honored him as a local hero. To further extend Pulaski's reputation as a national hero, the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution spearheaded a stamp campaign in 1929. Honoring Pulaski as a war hero was not in question when President Herbert Hoover declared 11 October 1929 as Pulaski Day, yet no stamp came.[16] Hoover and Congress acknowledged Pulaski as a national hero, but earning a commemorative stamp proved more difficult.

Surprisingly, strong rebukes came from a Polish newspaper the following year that may have influenced the government's decision to print a Pulaski commemorative. The paper accused U.S. postal authorities of using a double standard when choosing whom to honor on stamps, using the headline "Polish Proposition Refused—Germans Favored." According to this paper's editor, the USPOD honored a German Revolutionary War hero, Baron Frederic Wilhelm von Steuben, on a stamp but refused to reciprocate for a Polish Pulaski.[17] French newspaper editors even decried the choice of a von Steuben stamp. They did not seek a Pulaski stamp, but rather sought recognition for French military officers who fought for independence, such as Lafayette and Rochambeau. Missing from the correspondence file were panicky or angry letters from government officials strongly urging the postmaster general announce a Pulaski stamp quickly.[18] The world noticed when a government printed new stamps, making choosing and issuing commemorative stamps a challenging cultural and political task for postal officials. A few months later, nearly fifteen months after the Savannah anniversary celebration, a Pulaski issue was announced.

Even noncollecting Americans noticed new stamps and questioned the reasoning behind postal decisions. Present in the files was an angry letter from an American who asked why the USPOD honored Pulaski with a stamp and did not chose an American soldier. She spoke of her fears surrounding immigration held by many fellow citizens. Mrs. M. A. Van Wagner criticized Polish immigrants for coming to the United States only to "get employment here and take our American dollars back to Poland" while others remained unemployed (presumably she meant native-born citizens) in the early years of the Great Depression. For Van Wagner, the Pulaski stamp signified another way that America had been "forgnised," similar to the gangs of foreigners who were responsible for importing "poison" liquor during Prohibition.[19] Her letter stands alone in the Pulaski file as one of protest, but her emotional reaction to this stamp reflects real sentiments felt by some Americans in the interwar period not only toward eastern European immigrants but also in the power she felt stamps possessed in representing, or perhaps misrepresenting in this case, an official narrative of the United States. Stamps may have been small, but their images were powerful.

Concurrent to the Pulaski stamp campaign, petitions arrived at the USPOD seeking a stamp to honor another Polish Revolutionary War hero, Thaddeus Kosciuszko. At the time of his death in 1817, Poles and Americans mourned his legacy as a war hero and his commitment to fighting for liberty worldwide. His legacy continued on in the form of monuments and celebrations dedicated in his honor.[20] Among those commemorative efforts was one to immortalize his legacy on a postage stamp that would reach across the United States and abroad to his homeland, Poland. The Kosciuszko Foundation first petitioned the postmaster general in 1926, by way of New York Senator Royal S. Copeland, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the general's "coming" to the colonies.[21]

After those attempts failed, queries were reshaped, and the foundation asked for a stamp that would instead honor the 150th anniversary of his "naturalization as an American citizen."[22] From 1931 to 1933, hundreds of endorsement letters arrived in the office of the postmaster general supporting this stamp, amounting to a greater volume than the support for Pulaski's stamp just a few years earlier. Seven years after the first requests, Postmaster Farley fittingly chose to announce the Kosciuszko issue on Polish Day at the Century of Progress World's Fair in Chicago. Farley claimed that he was "happy to convey (his) highest regard for the American citizens of Polish extraction" and declared that Kosciuszko's name would be "forever perpetuated in the hearts of American people."[23]

Citizenship was a key element in pitching the stamp, which then was reflected in the announcements printed in newspapers. Kosciuszko's "admission to American citizenship" and the "privilege of becoming a citizen" were celebrated alongside his military service. Much like Farley, who paid homage to Polish citizens, other reactions to the issue emphasized that the general's legacy on a stamp "honors not only the man himself, but his countrymen who have come by the hundreds of thousands to the country he helped to establish as a land of liberty for all men."[24] Whether Kosciuszko actually became an American citizen was not questioned at the time, but the stamp offered a strong symbolic gesture and honor for all people with Polish heritage as bestowed upon them by the government. They were nation builders, too.

Choosing to honor Kosciuszko's "naturalization" proves to be a curious claim made by the foundation. There appears to be no documentary evidence to support the claim that he became an American citizen, even though he was held in high regard and called a friend by George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and other Revolutionary War era notable figures. After the war, Kosciuszko haggled with the new Congress, like other soldiers, to be paid back wages for his service in the Continental Army. He earned membership in the Society of the Cincinnati, which was limited to military officers who served during the Revolution. Kosciuszko returned to his native Poland to fight, unsuccessfully, against Russian occupation and oppression. On a trip back to the United States, Kosciuszko hoped to lobby support for Polish independence from American and French governments but found himself politically opposed to John Adams's anti-France policies. In light of the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, Thomas Jefferson urged Kosciuszko to leave the country to avoid imprisonment. If Kosciuszko had been naturalized, he would not have needed to flee the country. According to Congressional records in 1976, Representative John H. Dent tried to rectify that by submitting a resolution to confer citizenship upon Kosciuszko, perhaps in the spirit of the bicentennial celebrations.[25] Kosciuszko's actual status was less important than the way that Polish American cultural groups constructed his historical identity to be an American citizen. These groups believed there was a lot at stake by representing Kosciuszko as a citizen as well as a Revolutionary War military hero. Polish immigrants and Polish Americans were conflicted, much like the immigrants and citizens of Norwegian descent discussed earlier, about how best to balance their cultural and political identities as Poles and as Americans. These groups sought legitimacy to their interpretations of the past through representation on commemorative stamps.

Whereas the Norse-American Centennial Committee chose ships to represent their immigration stories, the Polish American groups chose portraits to represent Pulaski and Kosciuszko in very different ways. Pulaski visually is associated with Poland, with his portrait flanked by the modern flags of Poland and the United States. Generally, other commemoratives did not print the U.S. flag. Pulaski's portrait appears in the center, where he casts his glance to his left, to the side where the Polish flag appears from behind his portrait. In contrast, the Kosciuszko stamp did not feature either flag (Figure 9). Perhaps because the stamp commemorated the 150th anniversary of his "naturalization" as an American citizen, flags were not necessary for indicating his nation of origin; Kosciusko was American, Pulaski was Polish. The stamp design selected depicts Kosciuszko wearing his uniform and standing, which actually is a reproduction of a full-bodied statue that sits in Lafayette Park across from the White House in Washington. Rejected designs represent Kosciuszko as a citizen, not as a soldier.[26] In the chosen design, he appears larger than life as he looks down upon the stamp reader from his pedestal. Like many other Revolutionary War officers represented on stamps, he is standing, not on horseback, and, with sword drawn, appears ready to lead a battle. Pulaski, who was a royal count, looks out from his portrait wearing a dress military uniform. Oddly, he is not on horseback, although he is credited as founding the American cavalry. No identifying language tells a stamp consumer that Pulaski died at the Battle of Savannah. And unless one read the newspaper announcements discussing the stamp, the average American probably did not understand that the dates printed on the Kosciuszko, 1783–1933, celebrated his fictional naturalization.

Obtaining these commemoratives were great achievements for the fraternal and Polish heritage organizations to express ethnic pride, but they also used the stamps as another way to claim their status as racially white. Their members experienced discrimination and understood that Poles and other eastern European immigrants were defined as racially different from old stock immigrants hailing from western Europe, even as cultural and legal definitions of whiteness were changing in the United States. Celebrating Kosciuszko's naturalization suggests that it was important for the Polish National Alliance, Polish Roman Catholic Union, and other organizations to tie their heritage with American citizenship. Since only a "free white person" was eligible for naturalization, Kosciuszko qualified as white. Poles were inching their way out of a racially in-between status in the early twentieth century, a position also faced by other immigrants. The difference was that these organizations could flaunt on federal stamps the accomplishments of two Polish military men who volunteered (and died, in Pulaski's case) for the American cause during the Revolutionary War—the origin of the republic. Polish American groups received help from the USPOD in proving themselves as being fit for American citizenship since their ancestors helped to found the country. The legal and cultural murkiness of racial classification in the early twentieth century made it more imperative for first- and second-generation immigrants to be able to stake their claim to whiteness, and in the case of Polish immigrants, earning two stamps helped.

We can see through these stamp subjects from the 1920s and early 1930s that civic and cultural groups believed that the USPOD influenced the public's understanding of the American past through producing and circulating historical narratives. These groups, and many others whose petitions were rejected, desired federal recognition of their interpretation of segments of American history afforded by representation on a commemorative postage stamp.

FIGURE 9. (left) General Pulaski, 2¢, 1931. (right) Kosciuszko, 5¢, 1933. From the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Collection, Accession Number s1980.2493.2503, and 1980.2493.2590.

NOTES

1. John E. Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13–20, 169–185.

2. Charles A. Merrill, "Urges Revival of Pilgrims' Faith," *Boston Daily Globe*, 22 December 1920; "Urges Bar on Aliens," *Washington Post*, 20 February 1920. All historical newspaper references are from ProQuest Historical Newspapers, http://www.proquest.com/en-US/catalogs/databases/detail/pq-hist-news.shtml.

3. Roger Brody, "Pilgrim Tercentenary Issue," http://arago.si.edu/flash/?s1=5|sq=Pilgrim Tercentenary Issue|sf=0. To view an image of the commemorative coin, see http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pilgrim_tercentenary_half_dollar_commemorative_obverse.jpg.

4. U.S. Postal Service, "Rates for Domestic Letters, 1863–2011," http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/domestic-letter-rates-1863-2011.htm.

5. The 5¢ Signing of the Compact stamp is a miniature engraving based on an Edwin White painting from 1858. William Bradford may have been the main figure in this painting since he is pictured on the U.S. Mint's half-dollar commemorative coin also issued for this anniversary. This international journey ends with a 5¢ stamp, which was the standard surface rate for overseas letters.

6. "Jamestown and Plymouth," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (April 1909): 305–311.

7. The following sources came from the Huguenot-Walloon Tercentenary stamp design files Stamp Design Files, National Postal Museum (hereafter cited as Design Files),Scott 614–616: Huguenot-Walloon New Netherland Commission, *Huguenot-Walloon New Netherland Commission, 1624–1924, Program* (New York, 1924); Ruth Hawes to Post Office Department, 25 August 1924; J. D. Riker to Post-Master General of the United States, 18 June 1924; Lois D. Williams to Post Office Department, 21 July 1924.

8. Irwin Glover to James R. Fraser, 9 January 1925; Gisle Bothne to Postmaster General Harry S. New, 10 December 1924; Carl G. O. Hansen to Mr. Harry S. New, 10 December 1924; all in Design Files, Scott #620–621.

9. Roger Brody, "Huguenot-Walloon Tercentenary Issue," in Arago: People, Postage and the Post, National Postal Museum, http://www.arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&mode=1&tid=2033829&. For plaque text, see photo of the monument Shannon McCann, "Brown on White" on Flickr Photo Sharing, http://www.flickr.com/photos/whenlostin/2743408241/in/photostream/.

10. Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); Douglas J. Slawson, *The Department of Education Battle, 1918–1932: Public Schools, Catholic Schools, and the Social Order* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White, The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

11. Representative Ole J. Kvale, (Minn.) *Joint Resolution Authorizing Stamps to Commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Landing of the First Norse Immigrants*, HJ 270, 1924.*Congressional Record* 65 (26 May 1924): 9581.

12. April Schultz, "'The Pride of the Race Had Been Touched': The 1925 Norse-American Immigration Centennial and Ethnic Identity," *The Journal of American History* 77, no. 4 (March 1991): 1265–1295.

13. Norse-American Centenary stamp Design Files, Stamp #621.

14. Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 91–117.

15. "Monuments of Two Polish Heroes to be Unveiled in Washington May 12," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 11 May 1910; "Nation to Honor Polish Patriots," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 9 May 1910. For stamps that were eventually approved, such as those honoring Thaddeus Kosciuszko, see rejection letters for why petitions were denied for specific years in the Design Files, Scott #734.

16. "Savannah Exalts Pulaski's Memory," *New York Times*, 6 October 1929; Telamon Culyer, "Sesqui-Centennial of Georgia's First Clash of Armies," *Atlanta Constitution*, 6 October 1929; "Notable Fete Is Planned to Honor Pulaski," *Washington Post*, 6 October 1929. Bernice E. Smith to Congressman Charles G. Edwards, 5 April 1929; Charles G. Edwards to Honorable Walter F. Brown, 6 April 1929; American Consul Central to Honorable Secretary of State, 23 September 1930, from Design Files, Scott #690.

17. Bernice E. Smith to Congressman Charles G. Edwards, 5 April 1929; Charles G. Edwards to Honorable Walter F. Brown, 6 April 1929; American Consul Central to Honorable Secretary of State, 23 September 1930, Design Files, Scott #690.

18. Design Files, Scott #690.

19. M. A. Van Wagner to Postmaster General, 2 January 1931, Design Files, Scott #690.

20. Gary B. Nash, *Friends of Liberty: Thomas Jefferson, Tadeusz Kos'ciuszko, and Agrippa Hull: A Tale of Three Patriots, Two Revolutions, and a Tragic Betrayal of Freedom in the New Nation* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 207–213.

21. Senator Royal S. Copeland to Postmaster General Harry S. New, 29 April 1926, Design Files, Scott #734.

22. Senator David Walsh (Mass.), "Stamp in Honor of Brig. Gen. Thaddeus Kosciusko," *Congressional Record* 75 (16 February 1932): 4016.

23. Copeland to New, 29 April 1926; Senator James Couzens (Mich.), S.J. Res. 248 "Authorizing the Issuance of a Special Postage Stamp in Honor of Brig. Gen. Thaddeus Kosciuszko." Information Office, Post Office Department, press release, 22 July 1933. *Congressional Record* 74 (6 February 1931): 4121. The design file is filled with letters of support coming from individuals, politicians, businessmen, and fraternal organizations.

24. "Stamp to Honor Kosciusko," *New York Times*, 23 July 1933; Richard McPCabeen, "The Stamp Collector," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 13 August 1933; "The Stamp Album," *Washington Post*, 20 August 1933; Editorial, "Honoring Kosciusko," *Hartford Courant*, 27 July 1933.

25. Regarding the stamp, I found some correspondence from 1986 in the design file that asked the curator of the National Postal Museum where to find documentary evidence of Kosciuszko's naturalization. The curator said there was no documentary evidence and attached a letter written in 1953 to the Director of the Public Library of Newark stating that there was no official "naturalization, but that through his deeds and actions he became an 'American'." See also Representative John H. Dent (Pa.), "To Confer U.S. Citizenship Upon Thaddeus Kosciusko," H.J. Res.771, *Congressional Record* 122 (21 January 1976): 544.

26. Max Johl, *The United States Commemorative Stamps of the Twentieth Century* (New York: H. L. Lindquist, 1947), 1:267–270.

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The Trans-Mississippi Exposition Commemorative Stamp Issue and National Identity at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Tessa Sabol

World's fairs, for as long as they have been held, have captured the interest of national and international audiences. Robert Rydell, a world's fair scholar, posits that these expositions were intended to "win popular support for national imperial policies"[1] and "carry forward into the cultural realm the political efforts to reconstruct the United States after the Civil War."[2] After the depression of 1893, a national synthesis was important to establish. Realizing that progress and industrialization were hardening class lines[3] and regional lines, fair organizers sought to unify the population through these annual events with the Trans-Mississippi Exposition in Omaha, Nebraska.

The commemorative stamp issue for the 1898 Trans-Mississippi Exposition in Omaha, Nebraska, was an ideal tool for this purpose. By circulating these stamps internationally, the federal government was able to shape a new national confidence and invoke nostalgia regarding its formation and identity, taking into account the disparate feelings of eastern and western citizens regarding the newly expanded country. The imagery in these stamps catered to the needs and concerns of both geographic regions, endorsing a combination of western nostalgia and the reality of progress to reassure the nation, creating a sense of national pride in its characteristics. Though the stamps were part of the propaganda for the fair, they can stand alone and emphasize the nostalgia of the nation's internal imperialism at a time when there was nowhere left to expand beyond U.S. borders.

INTRODUCTION

In 1898, with the country settled from ocean to ocean and the frontier declared closed, the nation struggled to unify its multiple identities. Just five years before, Frederick Jackson Turner, a historian, delivered his Frontier Thesis. The qualities needed for the frontier were strength, acuteness, inquisitiveness, restlessness, and dominant individualism, according to Turner.[4] There were certain archetypes that helped to solidify a Western mythology and the national idea of the Western frontier, all stemming from the Frontier Thesis. The West itself was appealing for the qualities that it embodied, such as opportunity and a future outside of the "old" East that was fully populated and small in comparison to the vast expanse of the West;[5] however, not all of Turner's notions of the West were glorious. He acknowledged that those venturing Westward must be ready to face hardships that could result in deprivation, labor, and death. It became popular to depict the "dignity in defeat" in order to demonstrate an unflinching sort of self-sacrifice.[6] But

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by the end of the century, Turner declared that, "four centuries from the discovery of America . . . the frontier is gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history."[7] Anxiety over the end of the frontier led to the construction of national mythologies and nostalgia in the late nineteenth century.[8]

In the 1860s, the country had been divided internally by the Civil War, and by 1898, the reunification of North and South was still tenuous. Racial and sectional divisions were very apparent by the country's centennial and persisted through1898.[9] The West, in contrast, was a region larger than the North and South combined and ill defined. Relations between East and West were politically strained. Because the West as a region was so new at this time, it was more like a colony of the East, dependent upon the federal government economically, breeding resentment on both sides.[10]

Edward Rosewater, owner of the newspaper *The Omaha Bee*, took on the challenge of exposition development as head of its department of publicity.[11] Rosewater had connections with the Post Office Department and had the idea of having a commemorative issue for this fair to "give to the project the prestige of government recognition and support."[12] The use of a commemorative series of postages stamps to accomplish a unified national nostalgia in 1898 was risky because of the precedent set at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. A sixteen-stamp series was created for that exposition, and those stamps were largely a failure in the collector community because the entire series cost $16.34, which was almost two-weeks' pay for an average citizen.[13] The 1898 series was only $3.80, still expensive, but far more affordable. With newspapers becoming major industries in small towns across the vast country by 1898,[14] news of these stamps was spread faster and therefore built the anticipation for these stamps.[15] Boston and Chicago post offices even sold out of the series.[16] A fairly broad set of criteria for the stamp selection was outlined by the Third Assistant Postmaster General's Office in late 1897;[17] however, because of the limited amount of time given to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to create these stamps, preexisting images were selected. These postage stamps largely ignored the immigrant and African populations and therefore largely appealed to white American majority.

I have divided the nine stamps (designed by Raymond Ostrander Smith and engraved by G. F. C. Smillie and Marcus Baldwin) into three categories: Native American relations in the United States, Western industry, and U.S. westward expansion. The stamps visually lend themselves to this division, and historically, they were also three charged topics around the turn of the century.

NATIVE AMERICAN RELATIONS

By 1898, most Native American populations had been moved onto reservations, and the last few Native American uprisings were coming to a close. The nation had turned to the project of subjugation, assimilation, and education of the Native American population. The three stamps focusing on Native Americans (Figure 1) visually demonstrate education of or protection from Native American populations while also reminding Americans of their savage majesty. The popularity of visual depictions of the Old West helped to culturally elevate these three stamp images for Western audiences, and the appeal of romanticized Wild West shows in the East combined to create three Native American–themed stamps.

"Marquette on the Mississippi" is based upon an 1867 painting by William Lamprecht entitled *Father Marquette and the Indians* (Figure 2). Marquette was a Jesuit priest sent from France to Canada in 1666 as part of an expedition party that sailed down the Mississippi River to the Arkansas River in 1673. This image shows Marquette preaching to a group of seated Native Americans on the bank of the river. Marquette gestures upward during his sermon. He is centrally located in the image and disconnected from many of the Native Americans by the boat and river itself. The only Native American standing is gesturing toward Marquette, possibly imitating him as he teaches the gospel, so that he may then go to the rest of his tribe and preach the ideals of Christianity. The Native American holds a peace

FIGURE 1. The 1¢ "Marquette on the Mississippi," 4¢ "Indian Hunting Buffalo," and 8¢ "Troops Guarding Train," 1898. Courtesy of the Smithsonian National Postal Museum (1980.2493.1785, 1789, and 1793).

FIGURE 2. Wilhelm Lamprecht (1838–1906), *Père Marquette and the Indians*, oil on canvas, 1869. Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University, Gift of Reverend Stanislaus L. Lalumière. Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Marquette University Library (00.3).

pipe, emphasizing the overall positive nature of their interaction. The other Native Americans in the image look up at him, almost like young children ready to learn. Though most stamps in this series deal with East–West relations, this stamp focuses on the North–South relationship.

Subjugation through the education of Native Americans was seen by the greater public as being of critical importance to make them completely American. With foreign immigrants, freed slaves, and Native American populations, the value of education and literacy was seen not only as necessary for enlightenment but also as having national and democratic importance.[18] Education was seen as salvation for Native Americans around the time of the fair.[19] This informs the image of Marquette providing salvation and education to Native Americans. Easterners and Westerners both could understand this image as Native Americans willing to turn their backs on savagery and assimilate into a unified American national identity, despite the fact that in reality they were not seen as truly American in 1898. As the 1¢ postage stamp, this image was used to pay the domestic letter rate on the flag patriotic cover used during the Spanish American War.[20]

In addition to being seen as naïve pupils, Native Americans were seen as wild, as depicted in “Indian Hunting Buffalo,”

FIGURE 3. Seth Eastman (1808–1875), *Buffalo Chase*, 1854, print. Courtesy of the Nicollet County Historical Society, St. Peter, Minnesota (umn10277).

based on *Buffalo Chase* by Seth Eastman (Figure 3). The design of the postage stamp eliminates any environmental context from the scene. The Native American is solitary and thus not as threatening to Americans as an entire tribe riding with weapons. Despite the fact that this is a hunting scene, it is surprisingly nonviolent. The emphasis is more on the majestic appearance of both animal and Native American as wild and free. The landscape in the design seems to echo the speed at which this Native American rider pursues the buffalo.

This postage stamp addresses the national nostalgia for westward expansion by recalling a more inquisitive time, marked by a fascination with Native Americans, when ethnologists travelled to immerse themselves in their savage culture for research. This stamp illustrates the first discoveries of the West, the beginning of what would expand the country tenfold. It comes at a time when buffalo were all but extinct and most Native American people were contained on reservations, quite the opposite of what we see here. Visual art depicting Western subjects had changed greatly in both method and popularity by 1898, and the notion of the Western myth was in full swing, perpetuated by the huge success of Wild West shows and dime novels.[21] By the end of the century, Western painting style had shifted from ethnography to depictions of action and excitement, drawing the viewer in. *Harper's Weekly* out of New York and other mass media publications craved those thrilling images, thus giving them national distribution and visibility.[22]

This postage stamp reflects this style shift by making the viewer a secret onlooker observing hunting practices, giving the scene a sense of movement, action, and drama. Yet no actual violence is depicted here, alleviating any worry that this image might be too unseemly. Additionally, the opinion of the time was that a Native American chief should not play a featured role on a U.S. stamp. Therefore, the anonymous warrior was used.[23] This image appealed to Easterners nostalgically looking toward the past, when the Native American could nobly hunt and roam the frontier, as they read their dime novels and attended Wild West shows. It appealed to Westerners as an escape from the former violence they dealt with during settlement of the frontier. Overall, it was a unified national vision of the excitement of the frontier and the Native American as formerly noble, a fascinating aspect of the past.

FIGURE 4. Frederic Remington (1861–1909), *Protecting A Wagon Train,* print. Courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, Denver, Colorado (Remington MMS WH1691).

The final stamp in this series of Native American imagery, “Troops Guarding Train,” is based upon Eastern artist Frederic Remington’s drawing entitled *Protecting a Wagon Train* (Figure 4), depicting the threat rather than either the educability or the nobility of the savage. The design references Native Americans but excludes their physical presence in the image in favor of showing the might of the U.S. military, a paternal presence, protecting its westward-bound citizens. Native Americans, in this image, are an inferred threat. In the far right lower corner of the stamp, a soldier kneels down, aiming his shotgun, indicating that there is a potential attack on the horizon. Of course, in reality, the threat of attacks on migrants was minimal, and most deaths on the road to the West were disease related.[24] The Frontier Thesis and the Western myth appear in “Troops Guarding Train,” where the federal government is placing itself as protector of this frontier ideal and protector of those brave Americans willing to risk everything, including their lives, to move West. The military is the guardian of innovation, tenacity, individualism, and ultimately the spread of democracy. Visually, the federal creators distributing this image are placing the government within such a beloved context, linking it to popularity when the country was divided in its support.

WESTERN INDUSTRY

The next three stamps (Figure 5) depict scenes of Western industry, both a popular attraction at the Trans-Mississippi fair and a conflicted area of history. There was deep bitterness between the rich East and struggling West.[25] Because the Western economy often depended on capital from other regions, they were wary of being dependent.[26] The farming experiment labeled the prairie states as a place for failure.[27] Whereas the idea of the rugged individual was held high on a pedestal in the romantic notion of the West, in reality, that individualist usually ended up as a poor laborer.[28] Like farming, mining was wrought with greed,

FIGURE 5. The 2¢ "Farming in the West," 50¢ "Western Mining Prospector," $1 "Western Cattle in Storm," 1898. Courtesy of the Smithsonian National Postal Museum (1980.2493.1787, 1798, and 2000).

corruption, and unrest, even after the gold rush. Most Easterners who traveled West to make their fortune in gold, especially those after 1849, left empty-handed.[29] Greed also abounded in the cattle industry. As early as the 1880s, cattle barons in a hurry to get rich quick grabbed enormous amounts of grasslands for grazing but could not maintain their herds. This ultimately led to the collapse of the cattle industry in the West. Despite this, the cattle industry rebounded and was one of the most successful industries of the West by 1898.

The three postage stamps depicting Western industry mask these conflicts to unite the nation around innovation, flattering the West's abilities to overcome adversity while omitting the unpleasant nature of the failure of these industries in the first place. Each of these industries featured prominently at the Trans-Mississippi fair, yet again lending an air of sophistication and legitimacy to the West.

The 2¢ "Farming in the West" stamp is the only one in the series that is based on a photograph, which depicts the Amenia and Sharon Land Co. in North Dakota (Figure 6). As there are several identifiable individuals in the postage stamp it is the first in history to show living Americans.[30] Originally, this image was intended to be used on the $2 stamp, the highest denomination of the issue. It was changed to the 2¢ stamp at the last moment by the Post Office Department because the 2¢, as the first-class letter rate, was the most widely used postage stamp, and it was determined that this subject matter would be of particular interest to citizens.[31]

This image is the essence of the Frontier Thesis and the freedom that the United States guaranteed. The farmer in the image, Evan A. Nybakken, was an immigrant from Norway who helped to develop the West.[32] This image shows great success despite the frequent reality of farming failure in the West. The line of plows and farmers is almost infinite, as is the amount of farm land that the company owns. The most modern and sophisticated farming equipment is featured front and center to showcase the innovation that came out of necessity in such a harsh environment, just

FIGURE 6. John R. Hamlin (1833–1903), *Plowing on the Amenia and Sharon Land Company, Amenia, N.D.*, gelatin silver print, 1888–1889. Courtesy of Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo (5.5.1).

like the fair itself. Visually, the "Farming in the West" postage stamp is both encouraging to Easterners, who, given the visual increased propaganda encouraging emigration, would likely not be aware of the grave hardship and disappointments of Western farming, and flattering to Westerners for their inventiveness and perseverance over a seemingly impossible task. Thus, interest in Western investment would continue in the East, and having received recognition on the domestic-rate stamp, Westerners would be encouraged to continue innovating. Though not necessarily an important detail to Easterners, who were already living in overcrowded cities with foreign immigrants, it showcases that frontier spirit that settled the West.

By featuring actual living farmers, thus giving them a small amount of notoriety, the stamp adds another level of adulation to the Western cause. The Amenia and Sharon Land Co. even bought up large quantities of this stamp to use on company mailers. It generated such good advertising that other companies approached them to find out how to have a stamp of their businesses,[33] demonstrating that this stamp was a huge point of Western pride.

Contemporary praise transitions to sentimental recollection with "Western Mining Prospector." It is the second of three stamps in this issue based on a drawing by Remington, this one from *The Gold Bug*. The image is of a prospector, two donkeys, and a dog. Thousands of Americans flocked to the West in search of gold beginning in 1848, yet here the prospector is alone in the wide landscape. There is also no visual evidence here of the large majority of individuals who ventured West to get rich and failed. The image is open-ended, full of that tension and anticipation that both Remington and Western mythical frontier art glorified.

There is no sense of family; rather, the emphasis is on the individual. The image shows that Americans, no matter what age, are filled with a sense of power encouraged by the frontier myth. This stamp illustrates the essence of the imagination that overtook Easterners travelling West.[34] It shows the West as a land of opportunity and potential wealth, although not directly acknowledging the sacrifices that Easterners made when they traveled out in search of gold. As the 50¢ stamp, it did not necessarily see as much circulation as the smaller denominations but was used frequently on registered covers to foreign countries.[35] It both exaggerates and omits aspects of the gold rush to appeal to the broader national audience.

Exaggeration also plays an important role in "Western Cattle in Storm," designed from a painting entitled *The Vanguard* by John MacWhirter. Interestingly, the artist and the subject of the original painting are not American, but Scottish, in origin.[36] The large black bull boldly leads the rest of the herd through the harsh weather to safety. The image is highly atmospheric, creating extreme drama. It is impossible to see the landscape even feet behind the herd, yet they push forward, mirroring Western settlers' perseverance. Visually, this stamp creates drama and action that the Eastern and Western consumers of art desired. There are no fallen cattle here. They are rock solid in the face of extreme weather and steadfast through hardship, just as the industry itself was after its collapse from unforeseen conditions and overambitious growth. The potential in the image appeals to that frontier myth so popularly perpetuated in the East with its high drama and action. All three stamps depicting Western industry mask failures and promote exaggerated nostalgia that East and West could find appealing.

WESTWARD EMIGRATION AND INTERNAL IMPERIALISM

The "end of the frontier" had been declared,[37] causing anxiety over the perceived loss of the Western myth. At the time the postage stamps were created, the government was on the brink of the becoming a major world power looking toward international imperialism. Yet with the next three postage stamps, the federal government wanted to remind the nation of the internal struggles it faced while forming the United States (Figure 7). These stamps show the progress of westward expansion, from the conquering of the Rocky Mountains to the great emigration to the emergence

FIGURE 7. The $2 "Mississippi River Bridge," 10¢ "Hardships of Emigration," and 5¢ "Fremont on Rocky Mountains," 1898. Courtesy of the Smithsonian National Postal Museum (1980.2493.2003, 1795, and 1791).

FIGURE 8. An 1896 Republican National Convention admission ticket, engraving on paper, circa 1896. Courtesy of the Cornell University Political Americana Collection, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Libraries, Ithaca, New York (2214.PM0053).

of "civilized oases" by the 1890s, which were "ready to show off [their] accomplishments to the world."[38] These stamps minimize the volatile political history of East and West and conjure a unified vision of national sacrifice for greater progress.

The idea of bridging Eastern and Western regions together is manifest in "Mississippi River Bridge," taken from the admission ticket design for the Republican National Convention held in St. Louis in 1896 (Figure 8). It is an impressive show of transportation progress and of literally "bridging" the East and West. From this bird's-eye view looking westward, the modern St. Louis skyline displayed behind the bridge seems to promise prosperity. The viewer is standing on the Eastern bank of the Mississippi River, looking westward toward a future. Importantly, the Eastern bank is hardly visible in this image, placing all of the emphasis on the opposite bank, where the city meets the horizon. Not only that, it suggests a certain sophistication that the West hoped to establish at the Trans-Mississippi fair, a way to prove to the East that the West was a place of refinement as well as hard work.[39] Yet, by this time, St. Louis was considered "middle West," lacking the ruggedness commonly associated with the far West.

The Post Office Department and Rosewater made a very calculated decision to favor the Western cause by changing this image from the 2¢ denomination it originally carried to the $2 one. Their reasoning was based on a rivalry of sorts between St. Louis and Omaha.[40] Rosewater did not want St. Louis (at this time considered more Eastern than Western) to be on the most circulated stamp of the series. Rosewater claimed that it would "not have served the interests of the northeast community to have a St. Louis landmark on the stamp";[41] however, he would rather promote a more Western image of farming than one specific location of an untrustworthy big city.

If we look at this image through the lens of its source material, it seems to associate the Eastern Republican Party with Western urban advancement. The 1896 Republican National Convention was during candidate William McKinley's run for the White House. The opposing Populist Party candidate was William Jennings Bryan. According to the Populists, Eastern investors and capitalists were conspiring to rob the West (particularly the farmers) of the fruits of their labor.[42] Ultimately, McKinley succeeded in gaining the presidency over the Western Populist Party and was faced with uniting the entire expanded country behind him. This image flatters the West with the depiction of Western city sophistication, and it expands the refined East westward visually.

Quite the opposite of that promising image of expansion, "Hardships of Emigration" depicts a family emigrating West, facing the hardship of one of their horses collapsing from exhaustion. They appear to be completely isolated and alone in the expansive landscape. No wagon train (like that in "Troops Guarding Train") or civilization can be seen. This stamp, above all the others in the issue, is the most emotional. The loss of a horse could spell disaster for a family traveling West. Not only did it limit their transportation to their destination, but they would also have lost a valuable asset once they arrived. Depictions of families and adventurers in the process of traveling West via covered wagons were certainly popular during the nineteenth century. This postage stamp is another romantic, highly dramatized image to appeal to the West and recognition of what those who found success in the West had to endure to get there. At the time, Eastern citizens were struggling with overcrowded cities and the emergence of slums full of foreign immigrants and newly freed slaves from the south.[43] Poverty and crime abounded,[44] so the wide expanses of the West must have been appealing, especially in light of the picturesque visual depictions of Western art of the time. This image pays homage to those Easterners who risked everything in search of a better, simpler life.

Where "Hardships of Emigration" leaves the viewer uncertain, "Fremont on the Rocky Mountains" features a triumphant explorer, John Charles Fremont, on the highest peak of the Rocky Mountains in 1842, just before planting an American Flag firmly in the ground. As the 5¢ international-rate postage stamp, this image is what would travel all throughout Europe on mail from America. It seems appropriate, as this stamp shows the only instance of an overt national symbol. The figure of Fremont is monumental, raised higher than the clouds, only upstaged by the flag he is holding. Beyond the figure of Fremont, there seems to be no one, as though he is the first to have laid eyes on the magnificent scene. This image truly reflects the triumphant, characteristics of Turner's Frontier Thesis as it depicts Fremont, an Easterner, successfully conquering the Rocky Mountains. Because of the foreign interest in the American West, the Post Office Department officials wanted Fremont on a stamp in this series. "A picture of Fremont precariously standing on top of a mountain would convey and captivate the essence of America's westward expansion."[45] Because this was probably the most widely used of all the stamps in this series because of its foreign rate,[46] that very strong message of U.S. imperialism (albeit internal here) was widely communicated.

However, there is more Western myth than reality in this image. The purpose of his mission was to survey the location of the South Pass, but that was not terribly triumphant or dramatic. Historian Geoffrey Ward believes that this dramatic unfurling of the flag on what was believed to be the highest peak of the Rocky Mountains was just something "to add luster to his reputation as an explorer."[47] Therefore, Fremont's personal account of planting that flag into the mountain, true as it was, was only acted out to perpetuate that great conquering Western ideal of manifest destiny. This stamp affectionately recalls the East conquering the West, an ultimate visualization of the Frontier Thesis.

CONCLUSION

The messages embedded in these nine postage stamps would not have been so widely consumed without the platform of the world's fair and the advancement of both the postal system and the development of advertising. The rapid rate of national expansion across the continent created a need to speedily disseminate both written and visual media for vast audiences. This new, more rapid communication across the country amplified and perpetuated the Western myth.[48] Railroad expansion and wide circulation of newspapers closed the time gap between an event's occurrence and its distribution to the greater public.[49] This closing circulation gap also affected postage stamps, making them both functional and a viable form of propaganda. In fact, they passed through over 70,000 post offices. Their commemorative nature brought them to the attention of the philatelic community, the members of which were outspoken about the stamps before and after their issuance.[50] These elements came together to form a successful national advertising campaign, which spread the visual language of both the nostalgic Western myth and the reality of progress. By making them a commemorative issue and associating them with the collection of memorabilia, along with the popularity of stamp collecting in general, the stamps enjoyed a higher circulation.[51]

Values of American innovation, triumph, ruggedness, democracy and independence are encompassed in the 1898 Trans-Mississippi Exposition postage stamp commemorative issue. While glossing over the more unpleasant aspects of westward expansion and advancement, as was the trend of visual depictions of the West at the time, the federal government created a series of images that appeal to the Eastern vision of the triumphant Western frontier myth as well as to the Western viewer by showcasing the progress of Western innovation. The combinations of images show a great deal about how the government was attempting to unite the country and reaffirm that although the frontier was no more, the characteristics the frontier created were still fundamental to America as a cohesive nation.

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Stalin on Stamps: Design, Propaganda, Politics

Alexander Kolchinsky

INTRODUCTION

Joseph Stalin, the dictator of the Soviet Union from 1929 to 1953, has been a central figure in the history of twentieth century. Thousands of books and articles explore his private and public life. However, very little, if any, substantive research has been published on Stalin and Stalinist propaganda on stamps, and what is available suffers from limited competence in philately.[1] In this article, I will examine Stalin's image on stamps and its relation to contemporaneous political circumstances. I will discuss the design, political meaning, and importance of these stamps for domestic and international propaganda.

CONSOLIDATION OF STALIN'S POWER: 1929–1934

Our understanding of Stalin has changed dramatically over the last 15 years. This change has been brought about by the wealth of new archival material and extensive research. It used to be commonplace to think of Stalin as an unremarkable, two-dimensional figure, who reached unprecedented power almost by accident. This concept has been replaced by another one, that of a complex, shrewd, industrious politician, a man with many talents and criminal mind.

Stalin was born Iosif Dzhugashvili officially on 21 December 1879 in the small Georgian town of Gori.[2] By 1899, he became a faithful follower of Lenin and began his activity as an underground radical activist, organizing boycotts, arsons, extortions, strikes, and robberies, as well as printing and distributing Marxist literature. In 1917, Stalin supported the Bolshevik coup and became a member of the first Soviet cabinet. In 1922, Lenin appointed him Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party. Before Lenin died in January 1924, he prepared his political Testament, in which he strongly advised the party to remove Stalin from power. Against Lenin's will, his Testament was read to party representatives only after his demise, and its discussion was essentially suppressed. As the result, Lenin's recommendation was ignored, and Stalin continued his political ascent.

In 1929, Stalin turned 50. By that date, he had defeated his enemies and rivals within the party, and the official newspaper, *Pravda,* in its feature editorial proclaimed a new official slogan: "Stalin is the Lenin of today." Since Lenin had been deified even before his death, this formula did the same for Stalin.

However, not everybody was happy about Stalin's leadership, and during the 17th Congress of the Bolshevik party in January 1934, Stalin received fewer votes for his candidacy as a member of Central Committee than his closest party comrade and popular leader Kirov, who received the most. The results of the elections had to be rigged to give

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Stalin enough votes. According to most historians, this was a major step in further consolidation of his dictatorship.

These were the circumstances when the first Soviet stamp depicting Stalin appeared as the high value of the set "Ten years without Lenin." This happened in November 1934, nine months after the actual commemorative date. The design of the stamp included a visual representation of the formula "Stalin is the Lenin of today" (Figure 1A).

The designers chose the rather rare artistic device of double profile.[3] The most difficult problem was the combination of a live person—Stalin—with the deceased Lenin, and here it has been done quite aptly. Stalin looks fully alive, whereas Lenin is depicted as a bust in marble. Apparently, the only earlier design representing this formula as a double profile had been published in *Pravda* in 1933, and in that case Lenin looked rather ghostly (Figure 1B). Over the next few years, the double-profile Lenin–Stalin became a staple of Soviet propaganda, and one could argue that its execution on the stamp of 1934 became exemplary for artists who used other media.

FIGURE 1. (A) First Soviet stamp with Stalin (1934). From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky. (B) An early double-profile Lenin–Stalin (from *Pravda*, 30 July 1933).

The incorporation of Stalin in the set dedicated to Lenin reflected his monopoly of power. This monopoly was further strengthened by the events that happened within a month after the appearance of the stamp: the assassination of Kirov and the beginning of an all-out campaign of terror. This is a good illustration of how propaganda stamps as historic documents can not only reflect past events but also serve as indications of the future.

The international aspect of Soviet propaganda on stamps has been underestimated.[4] In particular, neither the whole 1934 set nor the first Stalin stamp was ever analyzed from this angle. Meanwhile, the authors of the stamp obviously targeted international audiences as much as domestic ones. The amount of writing was kept to a minimum, whereas the profiles of Lenin and Stalin were already well known throughout the world. In the background, there were people marching with huge banners. This powerful picture was emphasized by a crimson red color with light orange background, creating a clear association with fire. The artfully fading background added a theatrical quality to the design.

The thirty kopeck stamp could be used as postage on international correspondence, as it paid the rates for foreign airmail postcards and for letters to central Europe. It served primarily philatelic markets since only 50,000 copies were issued, the lowest print run for Soviet commemoratives stamps of that period, and copies on covers are rare.

STALIN VERSUS HITLER

The design elements of the first Stalin stamp of 1934 display a striking similarity to the first appearance of Hitler on an official German postal card issued in 1934, where he is shown in a double profile with Hindenburg (Figure 2).[5] The image conveyed the same ideas of legitimacy and continuance of power, although in this case Hitler's profile was behind Hindenburg's since the latter remained the nominal head of the state. The left part of the postcard showed a massive demonstration with torches celebrating the ascent of the Nazis to power. Some visual elements of the picture were also similar to the 1934 Stalin stamp: a large, menacing crowd carrying banners that symbolized the Communist and Nazi ideologies and a corresponding color scheme of red and orange with a connotation of revolutionary fire. However, it seems that Soviet designers achieved a more impressive integration of design elements.

The first appearance of Hitler on German stamps, his birthday souvenir sheet of 1937 (Figure 3), was rather bland in its design. The impact of this sheet was limited to those who were already under the spell of Hitler's personality: contrary to other propaganda stamps of the Third Reich, it did not include any Nazi symbols. The motto said "Wer ein Volk retten will kann nur heroisch denken" ("He who wants to save his people must think heroically"). Although today it sounds rather general, at

FIGURE 2. First appearance of Hitler on German postal stationary (1934). From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

FIGURE 3. First appearance of Hitler on stamps (1937). From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

the time of the issue it served a very specific purpose of justification of the annexation of Austria.[6] After 1937, Hitler's birthday was commemorated by issuing semi-postal stamps every year until 1944. Besides, he was depicted on several other stamps, including the main definitive set of 1941–1944.[7] Ironically, the worse Germany's situation was in the war, the more ornate these stamps became, going from plain portraits in 1937 to a full set of Nazi symbols surrounding Hitler in 1944. In general, the excessive use of the dictator's likeness on stamps while the country was losing the war seems to be a major failure of the Nazi propaganda machine and a sign of Hitler's disconnect with reality.

SOVIET UNION, 1934–1941

Stalin's attitude toward his own cult of personality was much more shrewd and farsighted, although hypocritical and driven by political considerations. From time to time he protested the overuse of his name, but these protests remained on paper only.[8] All kinds of institutions, thousands of streets, towns, cities, and even the highest mountain in the USSR were named after the Great Leader, and it was hard to find a place without a monument to Stalin.

It is unclear how the decisions to issue particular Soviet stamps were made before 1965, when a special decree created a public committee in charge of the new issues.[9] In any event, there is evidence that all visual representations of Stalin and members of politburo in the media were tightly controlled at the highest level of power, often using oral directives only.[10] Those responsible for the design of Soviet stamps always realized that propaganda on stamps could reach larger international audience than probably any other media and were mindful not to overdo it.

This is one of the reasons why Stalin never appeared on Soviet definitive stamps. Another reason was that, paradoxically enough, from 1934 and up to the beginning of the war, Stalin was not the head of the USSR in any official capacity, but just one of the technically equal secretaries of the Central Committee (first there were four of them, then three, then five, and so on). Thus, there was no formal justification to put him on definitive stamps. In addition, the Soviet government from the very beginning wanted to distance itself from the image of monarchic Imperial Russia, and Soviet definitives portrayed generic workers, peasants, and soldiers as well as the deceased Lenin. The first live person depicted on Soviet commemorative stamps was the writer Maxim Gorkii in 1932; then a group of aviators appeared on a set of ten stamps in January 1935. Finally, the nominal head of the Soviet Union, President Kalinin, appeared on stamps on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday in November of the same year. This was in line with the practice of other European republics, which had been issuing stamps with portraits of their formal heads of states since the 1920s.

Of course, in the ideologically charged atmosphere of the 1930s, some commemorative stamps incorporated Stalin's image, although they were not dedicated to him personally. One such instance was the eighty kopeck stamp from the set "Twenty Years of the Red Army" of 1938 (Figure 4). The stamp reproduced the painting *Stalin Greets the First Cavalry Army* by M. Avilov (1933) and thus illustrated a major falsification of the history of the Red Army, according to which it was created by Stalin, whereas in fact it was founded by Trotsky. This falsification had been initiated in 1929 by Voroshilov's article in *Pravda*.[11] The set was issued after the execution of two-thirds of the top officers of the Red Army during the Great Terror, so anyone who knew the true history was either dead or afraid to say a word.

FIGURE 4. Stamp from the set "Twenty Years of the Red Army" (1938). "Stalin Greets the First Cavalry Army." From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

The third prewar stamp that indirectly featured Stalin was included in the set "All-Union Agricultural Exhibition" (1940; Figure 5A). The monument to Stalin by S. D. Merkurov, one of the largest of its kind at 30 m, stood in front of one of the major pavilions. It is interesting to compare the composition of the stamp intended for both domestic and international propaganda with the composition of a contemporaneous postcard showing the same subject (Figure 5B). On the stamp, the monument is shifted aside, and the pavilion, symbolizing Soviet economic success, is placed at the center of the composition. On the postcard, on the contrary, the monument is at the center and dominates the composition—a visual cue to ascribe the economic success to the wise leadership of one man.[12] Actually, the pavilion occupies about as much space as the tractor in the foreground, which further emphasizes the primacy of the monument. Postcards circulated mostly within the country and therefore were directed at a domestic audience.

In addition to stamps whose design had easily recognizable images of Stalin, his likeness or his name is inconspicuously present on many more issues. These could be defined as "cryptic appearances." They played only a marginal role in propaganda, but rather reflected the realities of everyday life in the Soviet Union. One example of such a cryptic appearance was a 1938 stamp from the set dedicated to the twentieth anniversary of Komsomol. Young members of the Komsomol held books with the names of Lenin and Stalin on their covers, which one can see

FIGURE 5. Stalin monument at the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition (A) on a stamp (1940) and (B) on a postcard published in 1940 in Leningrad. From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

with proper magnification. But we can safely assume that Soviet people did not need a magnifying glass to find out what books Soviet youths were supposed to read. Such cryptic appearances became especially common after the war.

THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR

A few days after the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, Stalin became the military dictator not only de facto, as he had been before, but also de jure. The country was in a critical situation, and beginning from July all planned stamp issues were evidently cancelled. Instead, only two more stamps were produced in 1941. The first—"Be a Hero!"—appealed to the most basic national values, showing a mother sending her son to the battle. The second showed a group of volunteers and a long, virtually unreadable, slogan: "In response to the appeal of the great leader of the peoples comrade Stalin, the sons of Soviet motherland join volunteer militia." During the initial period of the war, when the Red Army suffered disastrous defeats, Soviet propaganda avoided the association of Stalin's personal image and official policies with the losses. Especially revealing in this respect was the 1942 year set. Only twenty stamps were issued, as compared with sixty in a typical prewar year. Not one of these stamps displayed any signs of official ideology. The stamps showed mostly heroes of the war, battle scenes, and workers of the rear. Even the official symbol of the USSR, the sickle and hammer, was displayed on one stamp only. Moreover, one could rarely find Stalin's name, portrait, or profile on any of the innumerable propaganda postcards and letter sheets issued before January 1943.[13]

Judging by this rather radical change of official symbolism, the leadership of the country realized that the communist ideology and even Stalin's personal popularity did not provide good enough initiatives to fight. The commander in chief appeared on Soviet stamps only when the immediate mortal danger for the Soviet Union had passed. For the first time during the war Stalin was depicted on stamps together with Lenin in the set commemorating twenty-five years of the Bolshevik revolution (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6. Stamps from the set "25 Years of October Revolution" (January 1943). From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

FIGURE 7. Medals (A) To the Partisan of the Great Patriotic War (1945) and (B) For the Victory over Germany in the Great Patriotic War and For Outstanding Work Effort during the Great Patriotic War (1946); (C) thirty-fifth anniversary of the October Revolution (1952). From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

The set was issued two months after the actual celebration, in January of 1943.

One of these stamps showed the workers of the military industry; another, which paid the most common letter postage, included portraits of Lenin and Stalin, Moscow Kremlin towers as the embodiment of the national unity, and rays shining from behind the Kremlin, symbolizing the bright communist future. By that moment, Soviet victory at Stalingrad determined the outcome of the war, and Soviet ideology refocused on building Communism: only four stamps in the set of eight were related to the ongoing war; others could be categorized as general communist propaganda.

In 1944, the set "Ten Years without Lenin" from 1934 was reissued with new dates and two new values, one of them being another Lenin–Stalin stamp (similar to Figure 1A) in different colors. Now these two stamps were the lowest and the highest values of the issue. The set was probably intended primarily for international philatelic market because it could have been nicely arranged on an album page and the new high value of three rubles was way too high for any standard rate.

In January 1945, the Lenin–Stalin profile appeared on the stamp depicting a medal awarded to Soviet partisans (Figure 7A). It was the first of several stamps that showed Stalin indirectly on various medals and awards. The original design of this particular medal was commissioned for the award "Twenty-Five Years of Soviet Army," which has never been issued, so the design was reused. This explains why the double profile appeared first on a medal of relatively lesser importance.

After the Partisan medal, Stalin's profile was put on the most common medals awarded to all who fought in the war and on a similar one for those who worked in the rear, both inscribed with the words "Our cause is just, we have won" (Figure 7B). The victory was achieved at the cost of about twenty-seven million lives and enormous heroism and suffering of the Soviet people, but it was appropriated by a single man. We now know that none of a dozen essays of the victory medals submitted by major Soviet artists portrayed Stalin.[14] These projects showed foot soldiers, pilots, tank men, nurses, and other rank and file heroes of the war. It was definitely Stalin's personal decision to put his profile on the medals instead.

Stalin as the sole representative figure of Soviet victory was probably the most persistent myth created by Soviet propaganda. After the war, it was readily accepted by other Stalinist regimes and communist parties elsewhere. To some extent, it was propagated through philately.

In the next few years Stalin appeared on other medals, which were also depicted on stamps. Moreover, designers of Soviet stamps began portraying Stalin as if cast in bronze even when the images were not related to any existing awards. Thus, almost identical stamps commemorating anniversaries of the revolution in 1951 and 1952 imitated sculpted bas-reliefs of Stalin and Lenin (Figure 7C). These designs conveyed a sense of lasting, if not eternal, power. It is noteworthy that Lenin, the founder of Soviet state, never appeared on stamps without Stalin in such a visual context. Lenin usually looked like a kind and caring person, a civilian intellectual rather than a military commander—"the most human of men."[15]

THE AFTERMATH OF THE WAR AND STALIN'S SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

As noted by many historians and contemporaries, after the war, ideological pressure in general and Stalin's cult of personality in particular increased substantially. Nevertheless, it seems that Stalin kept tight control over the use of his images. One striking example is his absence from stamps dedicated to the thirtieth anniversary of the October Revolution. A recently

FIGURE 8. (A) Unissued essays "30 Years of October Revolution." From Liapin, *Catalog of Postal Stamps of Russia (1856–1991)*; and (B) issued stamps (1947). From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

FIGURE 9. (A) Parade of physical culture (1946) and (B) Labor Day (1947). From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

published catalog reproduces essays of these stamps with Stalin portrayed on each of them (Figure 8).[16] The set actually issued did not have Stalin. The most probable reason for his absence was the catastrophic famine in the USSR, which killed up to 1.5 million people in 1946–1947 and was caused to a large extent by government policies, in particular massive expropriation and export of grain. Stalin did not want to be associated with this tragedy, all the more because some stamps of the set displayed the slogan "USSR is the country of advanced agriculture" and showed a field with abundant harvest. It has to be stressed that the decision to change the design could only have been made by Stalin personally; nobody else would have dared to do it. This strongly suggests that at least in some cases Stalin was personally involved in the decisions concerning stamp design.

Another approach of Soviet stamp designers to create a visual concept of Stalin's leadership and popularity was a display of a large group of demonstrators carrying Stalin's portraits. Such stamps were issued in July 1946 and June 1947 to commemorate a parade of physical culture and Labor Day, respectively (Figure 9). On both issues, the artists succeeded in conveying the feeling of youth, energy, dynamism and popular admiration. At that time, the composition seemed to be unique for Soviet propaganda: no other totalitarian regime of the era came up with a similar idea. It only appeared 20 years later, in 1966, on a stamp of People's Republic of China (PRC) glorifying Mao Zedong. Ironically, his portrait was also carried by the activists of physical culture.

In December of 1949, Stalin officially turned 70. To celebrate his birthday, Soviet postal authorities issued a well-known souvenir sheet of four stamps (Figure 10). This is, strictly speaking, the only Soviet issue dedicated to Stalin personally during his lifetime. The first stamp of the sheet showed a hut in Gori, Georgia, where Stalin was born to the family of a poor cobbler. The second stamp reproduced a drawing by Evgeny Kibrik,

FIGURE 10. Souvenir sheet "70 Years of Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin" issued in January 1950. Only the central part of the sheet is shown. From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

Lenin Arrives in Smolnyi during the Night of 24 October (1947). The Bolshevik coup occurred on 25 October 1917, and the headquarters of the uprising were located in the Smolnyi Institute in Petrograd. The picture was fictional, both in general composition and in details.[17] Most importantly, the actual leader of the Bolshevik coup was Trotsky. This falsification was exploited by Stalinist propaganda in other countries as well, and its goal was to establish the direct continuity of Marxist leadership from Lenin to Stalin at the exclusion of everybody else. The third stamp was based on a photograph of Stalin visiting a gravely ill Lenin, and it was used to prove their closeness. Finally, the fourth stamp showed Stalin in his office in full military uniform as the victorious generalissimo (portrait by B. Karpov).

The design of the souvenir sheet was supposed to induce a warm feeling of personal loyalty to the Great Leader. It presented a brief narrative of Stalin's life, and unlike most Soviet stamps of the period, it lacked any symbols of the Soviet state, the hammer and sickle, a star, or the Kremlin towers. By that time, Stalin's image itself had acquired a strong symbolic function: the follower of Lenin and the leader of world Marxist movement, the victor in World War II, and the national symbol of the USSR.

Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Romania commemorated Stalin's anniversary on stamps as well. Especially interesting was the appearance of Stalin on stamps of the Port Arthur and Darien area of China, which was still occupied by the Red Army but had an independent postal administration. Although the People's Republic was proclaimed by Mao Zedong on 1 October 1949, Port Arthur and Darien did not issue any stamps with Mao. Instead, a stamp with a double profile of Lenin and Stalin appeared in November to mark the thirty-second anniversary of the Russian Revolution, and then a set of two stamps in December commemorated Stalin's birthday in December of the same year. It was a strong demonstration of the pro-Soviet politics of local leaders.[18]

Yugoslavia never put Stalin on its stamps. By 1949, its dictator, Tito, had already had a major confrontation with Stalin, and its relations with the USSR were extremely hostile. It is not clear why Poland failed to commemorate Stalin's anniversary, although he did appear on Polish stamps both before and after 1949.

FROM 1949 TO STALIN'S DEATH AND DENUNCIATION

At approximately the same time, the end of 1949, Soviet propaganda began the so-called world peace campaign, which was promoted in part through philately. "The struggle for peace" was carried out as an initiative coming directly from Stalin, and this notion dominated the campaign. It is no wonder that Stalin was represented on peace stamps, either as a portrait on a wall or as the author of a slogan or a quotation. Thus, on one of these stamps there is a quote from an interview with Stalin in *Pravda*: "Peace will be preserved and consolidated if the peoples will take the cause of preserving peace into their own hands and defend it to the end."[19] This rather tautological quote immediately became the staple of the international peace campaign and was endlessly cited in propaganda materials. Other communist countries issued their own peace campaign stamps, and some artists proved to be more ingenious than their Soviet colleagues. For example, a dove of peace was added to the well-known portrait of Stalin on a Bulgarian stamp (Figure 11).

FIGURE 11. (A) Peace campaign stamp issued by Bulgaria in 1949. From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky. (B) The original painting by Alexander Gerasimov. *Portrait of I. V. Stalin.* 1939. Oil on canvas, 137 × 112 cm.

From an ideological point of view, an important stamp was issued in the USSR in 1950 to commemorate Labor Day. This was the first image of the foursome of communist saints, Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, on a Soviet stamp. Although this arrangement was probably first introduced on a Soviet poster in 1939 and was later used on stamps of Poland in 1948, its appearance on a stamp of the USSR had a special ideological meaning. The composition emphasized the direct continuity of the world Marxist leadership from Marx through Engels and Lenin to Stalin. Back in 1939, the USSR had only one Marxist satellite, Mongolia, and its leading role in the movement was self-evident. By 1950, the victorious USSR promoted or established communist regimes in a dozen new countries, including the giant China, and one of them, Yugoslavia, had already deviated from Stalin's "general line." At that point, Soviet control should have been enforced by a strong propaganda message personified by Stalin as the follower of his communist predecessors.

The commemoration of certain events on stamps or, on the contrary, the disregard of certain events of significant ideological importance not only reflects the undercurrents in politics but in some cases anticipates coming changes. This is particularly true in the case of totalitarian regimes. One of the most remarkable examples of this phenomenon was the fact that the Soviet Union did not issue any mourning stamps upon Stalin's death on 5 March 1953. When Lenin died in 1924, mourning stamps were designed, printed, and made available throughout the country within five days. When Soviet president Kalinin died in 1946, the mourning stamp was issued just two days later. Nothing of this sort happened after Stalin's death. The reason for that was that Stalin did not appoint his successor, and the struggle for power among the members of the politburo had already begun at his deathbed. The direction of the country was not clear, and since there were virtually no Soviet stamps free of ideology at that time, the confusion was reflected in the number of new issues: there were 48 new Soviet stamps in 1952, only 28 in 1953, the year of Stalin's death, and 55 in 1954. Meanwhile, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland did issue mourning stamps immediately after Stalin's death, and Hungary even added a souvenir sheet.

An astute political observer could not miss a set of two stamps issued in the USSR in November–December of 1953. The set commemorated 50 years since the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, during which the Bolshevik faction emerged as a separate movement. Stalin was nowhere to be found on those stamps. His conspicuous absence from such an ideologically important issue forestalled the emerging changes in the official attitude toward Stalin's legacy.

In March 1954, the Soviet Union issued a stamp to commemorate one year since Stalin's death (Figure 12A). He was depicted in the military uniform that he wore after 1943, when the shoulder straps were introduced in the Red Army uniform, to emphasize his role in the victory. The design of a monochrome dark brown stamp was rather reserved. The next Soviet set of two stamps with Stalin was issued in December of 1954 to commemorate seventy-five years since his birth (Figure 12B). Here he was shown in civil clothes at the age of about 40–45. The message could be interpreted as follows: the most important period of Stalin's career was in the 1920s, when he was one of the Bolshevik leaders. There is a remarkable difference between the designs of these two Soviet issues and the East German stamp commemorating one year since Stalin's death (Figure 12C). Here three colors and a much more aggrandizing style were used, in line with the East German Stalinist political course. At about the same time, the last Soviet stamp with a strong Stalinist ideological message was issued in commemoration of the October Revolution (Figure 12D). Here Stalin appeared within the group of the four Marxist saints for the second time. Arguably, at least some members of the Soviet political elite sponsored this issue still considering Stalin as the true follower of the Marx–Lenin line.

The last Soviet stamp featuring Stalin was included in another set celebrating the October Revolution in 1955. The stamp reproduced a painting by Dmitry Nalbandian, *Power—to the Soviets, Peace—to the Peoples* (1950).[20] In this complex composition, Stalin is standing behind Lenin in a group of Bolshevik leaders and is not very prominent. Thus, Stalin disappeared from Soviet stamps well before February 1956, when Khrushchev disclosed the so-called violation of socialist legality by Stalin and started the process of partial de-Stalinization of the USSR. This provides further support to the argument that ideological messages of postal stamps often precede important political developments.

STALINIST COUNTRIES AND STALIN'S LEGACY

The leadership of most communist countries was sensitive enough to these changes, and Stalin disappeared from the stamps of the corresponding countries (with the exception of the People's Republic of China and Albania) even earlier, in 1953–54. One rarely noticed exception was East Germany, where Secretary General of the Social-Democratic Party Walter Ulbricht remained an unrepentant Stalinist until his death in 1973. It was

FIGURE 12. Soviet and East German stamps with Stalin from 1954. (A) USSR, one year since Stalin's death; (B) USSR, seventy-fifth anniversary of Stalin's birth; (C) German Democratic Republic, one year since Stalin's death; (D) USSR, thirty-seven years since the October Revolution. From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

FIGURE 13. Last East German stamps with Stalin. (A) Stalinallee definitive (1953), (B) propaganda forgery based on A, and (C) Stalin at the Potsdam Conference, issued in 1970. From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

no coincidence that in 1953 East Germany was the only country that issued a definitive stamp with Stalin's name on it (Figure 13A). This stamp showed Stalinallee, an exemplary socialist urban development project in Berlin. It paid the basic domestic letter rate, was reengraved and reprinted many times, and was demonetized only in December of 1962. The picture on the stamp shows the side of the street opposite the monument to Stalin: even for the East German regime it would be too much to put the head of another state on definitive stamps. The design of the Stalinallee stamp was used by underground anticommunist groups to create propaganda forgeries in which the name of the country was stated as "Undeutsche Undemokratische Republik" and the street was named after the popular uprising on 17 June 1953 (Figure 13B). After the unification of Germany, this name was assigned to another street in central Berlin. Finally, Stalin appeared on one more East German stamp commemorating twenty-five years since the Potsdam Conference as late as 1970 (Figure 13C), the only such occurrence in European communist countries after 1956.

With the relaxation of ideological constraints after Stalin's death, people began using stamps with his image to create postal arrangements expressing their political views. For instance, in June 1956 a Mr. Anastassov from Bulgaria combined three different stamps, two with Stalin and one with pigs, to pay the correct postage to Turkey and to show his attitude toward the late Stalin (Figure 14A). Such audacity would have been severely punished just a couple of years earlier. However, most postal items of this sort were produced by hard-core Stalinists, who found themselves excluded from the ideological mainstream. For instance, in 1960 a Stalin sympathizer from Leningradskaya oblast' sent an old postcard with a monument to Stalin and paid registered postage with an old Stalin and a newer Lenin stamp, emphasizing the continuity of Soviet leadership (Figure 14B). Because of

FIGURE 14. Use of stamps with Stalin's portraits for political expression. (A) Cover sent from Bulgaria to Turkey and (B) domestic Soviet postcard. From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

the monetary reform in the USSR introduced on 1 January 1961, it was the last opportunity to use Stalin stamps for postage. The sender had enough courage to create this composition but not to sign his name legibly.

Meanwhile, two countries, the People's Republic of China and Albania, remained strongholds of Stalinism long after 1956, resulting in an ever deepening disagreement with the USSR. The timing and meaning of Stalin's images on their stamps were always closely associated with political developments.

In the People's Republic of China, the first stamp with Stalin was issued in 1950, about one year after the proclamation of the People's Republic. Mao travelled to Moscow to attend Stalin's jubilee and negotiate a Sino-Soviet treaty. The resulting treaty was commemorated in a set issued almost a year later (Figure 15A). Although other communist dictators were shown on stamps together with Stalin, here the closeness of Stalin and Mao is emphasized by their handshake. The close personal relationship between the leaders was illustrated once again (posthumously for Stalin) on a stamp commemorating five years of the treaty and based on the painting *The Great Friendship* by D. Nalbandian (1950; Figure 15B).

Another Chinese set with Stalin was dedicated to the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Russian Revolution (1953; Figure 16A). The first stamp reproduced the well-known painting *Lenin Declares Soviet Rule* by Vladimir Serov (1947), in which a young Stalin stands right behind Lenin. This was a complete fiction, and after 1956 the artist produced a new painting without Stalin. The green stamp shows Stalin and Mao strolling in the Kremlin. It seems to be an original design suspiciously similar to a prewar portrait of Stalin strolling with Voroshilov. The third stamp reproduces the central part of a mass-produced Soviet poster, "Under the leadership of the great Stalin—Forward to communism!" The last stamp depicts Stalin's granite statue near the entrance to the Volga-Don canal. At 36 m, it was one of the tallest in the world. The most interesting feature of this set is that out of four stamps, only the first one is related to the revolution and shows its leader, Lenin. This reflects a major shift in Soviet ideology that was not explicitly spelled out by Soviet propaganda: after World War II, Stalin gradually replaced Lenin as the main figure in the hierarchy of the greatest communists. The set was issued a full year after the actual anniversary, after Stalin's death, and reiterated the strict adherence to Stalinist ideology.

The primacy of Stalin over Lenin was even more evident in another Chinese stamp issued in 1954 (Figure 16B). Here Lenin is shown in a submissive position listening to an overbearing Stalin. This sculpture was unveiled in 1949 in Moscow to great

FIGURE 15. Stalin and Mao on stamps of the People's Republic of China (A) in 1950 and (B) in 1955. From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

FIGURE 16. Stalin on stamps of the People's Republic of China in (A) 1953 and (B) 1954. From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

critical acclaim,[21] but the general ideological tendency it manifested was hardly noticed at that time outside the Soviet Union.

After 1956, Stalin was often placed on stamps of the People's Republic of China to express dissent or even a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union. Thus, the foursome of Marxist saints appeared on Chinese stamps in 1964 on the minor occasion of Labor Day (Figure 17A). The relationships between the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union at that time were rapidly deteriorating. The main points of contention were Mao's thesis denying any possibility of peaceful coexistence with capitalist countries and the inevitability of a new world war and his personal animosity toward Khrushchev. Soviet communists openly accused the leadership of the People's Republic of China of deviation from orthodox Marxism–Leninism. As the result, almost all relations were broken, and Chinese authorities used the first convenient occasion to display their faithfulness to the cause of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin.

Albania also used Stalin's image on stamps to express its opposition to Soviet politics. Such was the purpose of the stamp commemorating twenty years since the Battle of Stalingrad (Figure 17B). The communist dictator of Albania, Enver Hoxha, sided with the People's Republic of China in its conflict with the Soviet Union. By 1963, even diplomatic relations between Albania and the USSR were broken, and Hoxha's regime used a relatively obscure date to demonstrate its disagreement with Soviet leadership. However, Albania nominally remained a member of the Warsaw Pact. Therefore, even more interesting was the issuing of a set of four stamps commemorating an unusual date—Stalin's ninetieth birthday—in 1969. After the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 by the armies of the Warsaw Pact, Albania withdrew from the pact to avoid occupation for its own deviation from the Soviet general line, although its direction was an exact opposite to Czechoslovakia's. The set displayed the determination of Albanian leaders to continue on their own path.

Interestingly, Stalin was never depicted on stamps of North Korea. Even its nominal ideological father Karl Marx appeared only four times and Lenin only seven times in sixty years, with the last Lenin stamp issued forty years ago. These statistics, together with ideological content of other stamps of North Korea, strongly support the notion that North Korea is not, and never has been, a true communist state, but rather a nationalistic dictatorship.[22]

FIGURE 17. Use of Stalin's image by (A) the People's Republic of China (1964) and (B) Albania (1963) as a symbol of dissent with the USSR. From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

EUROPEAN VIEW: 2000

As to the Western European countries, only one stamp was ever issued with Stalin on it. It was included in a large Belgian set commemorating significant events and personalities of the twentieth century. The artist created a visual representation of Stalin's role in the history of the twentieth century as viewed from Brussels, the capital of the European Union (Figure 18). The design consists of two layers. In the background, there is a photograph of the "big three" during the Yalta Conference of 1945, when the leaders of Western Europe essentially surrendered Eastern Europe to Soviet domination and political differences between the major Allies made the cold war inevitable. The foreground is a contour map of Europe with bold red dots showing the border that would divide Europe for the following forty-five years and representing a visual metaphor for the iron curtain. Although the overall design looks somewhat busy, it presents a historic fact and its consequences in a compelling way.

CONCLUSION

The use of Stalin's image and name on stamps provides valuable insights into the history of the world Marxist movement, especially its Stalinist version. These stamps were often targeted at

FIGURE 18. The "big three" during the Yalta Conference (1945), Belgium, 1999. From the collection of Alexander Kolchinsky.

international audiences, reflected major political events, and in many cases elucidated hidden political developments. Over time, Stalin's philatelic image went through several stages of development. First an iconic symbol of the Soviet leadership, after World War II it became the central symbol of Soviet victory. Later, his image was used to promote the worldwide communist movement and to support the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and in China.

Current public polls in Russia indicate that Stalin is again considered by many respondents as the most successful national leader. This myth encompasses nationalism and nostalgia for social order and lost status of a superpower. Today's Russian political leadership seems to distance itself from this view. Notably, in 2010, Stalin did not appear on any Russian stamps commemorating seventy-five years of victory. Let us hope that this omission was not accidental.

Acknowledgment

I express my deep gratitude to Alexander Pantsov (Capital University, Columbus, Ohio) for a critical reading of the manuscript.

NOTES

1. Evgeny Dobrenko, "The Cultural Topography of the Stalin Era," in *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space,* ed. Evgeny Dobrenko, and Eric Naiman (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 2003), 163–182.

2. In fact, he was born on 6 December 1878, but in the early 1920s, he falsified his date of birth. Simon S. Montefiore, *Young Stalin* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 23 and references therein.

3. The set was designed by Naum Borov, Grigorii Zamskoi (also Zamskii), and Iulii Ganf. Zamskoi worked as a designer and artist on posters and Soviet exhibits abroad and as interior decorator of the Moscow subway (the latter with Borov). After the war, he specialized in anti-Western caricatures in the genre of black propaganda.

4. Dobrenko, "Cultural Topography," 163–182.

5. Michel catalog of German covers and postcards, no. P250. See also Albert L. Moore, *Postal Propaganda of the Third Reich* (Atglen, Pa: Schiffer Military History, 2003), 50–55.

6. Frederick Lauritzen, "Propaganda Art in the Postage Stamps of the Third Reich," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts,* 10 (Autumn 1988): 62–79.

7. The abundance of Hitler's portraits on stamps might have been driven in part by his personal greed: he received royalties for every reproduction of his likeness on stamps. Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970), 87.

8. For instance, in 1925 Stalin protested against the renaming of the city of Tsaritsyn to Stalingrad: "I found out that Tsaritsyn is going to be renamed Stalingrad . . . I did not and do not insist on renaming Tsaritsyn to Stalingrad . . . I strive neither for glory, nor for tribute, and don't want do create a wrong impression." Stalin to B. P. Sheboldaev, the secretary of Tsaritsyn regional party organization, 25 January 1925, in *Kommersant-Vlast'*, no. 4 (858), 1 February 2010, http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=1311514 (accessed 3 November 2010). Despite the protest, the city was renamed. In another case, Stalin wrote in response to a plan to publish a collection of stories from his childhood for children: "I am decisively opposed to the publication of 'Stories of Stalin's Childhood'. The author has been misled by . . . sycophants . . . Most important is that the book has a tendency to inculcate in the consciousness of Soviet children (and people in general) a cult of personalities, great leaders and infallible heroes. That is dangerous and harmful. The theory of the 'heroes' and the 'mob' is not a Bolshevik theory but an SR [social-revolutionaries] one . . . This little book will assist the SRs. Every such book will contribute to the SRs and will harm our general Bolshevik cause. I advise you to burn the book. I. Stalin. 16.11.1938." Quoted in David Branderberger, "Stalin as Symbol," in *Stalin: A New History*, ed. Sarah Davies and James A. Harris (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 249–270.

9. Decree of the Ministry of Communications of the USSR, No. 733 of 4 October 1965 "On the improvement of production and marketing of postal stamps."

10. Ian Plamper, *Alkhimiia vlasti: Kul't Stalina v izobrazitel'nom uskustve [The alchemy of power: Cult of Stalin in visual arts]* (Moscow: NLO, 2010), 204–205.

11. Kliment E. Voroshilov, "Stalin i Krasnaia Armiia" [Stalin and the Red Army], *Pravda*, 23 December 1929.

12. The monument had to be demolished at the beginning of World War II as it was a perfect landmark for German pilots; see *Vesti*, 16 June, 2009. http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=293874&m=1 (accessed 7 June 2012).

13. See, for instance, Albert Pflüger, *Vorwärtz zum Sieg! Illustrierte sowjetische Feldpost des zweiten Weltkrieges,* (Frankfurt, Germany: Philatelistische Arbeitsgemeinschaft Russland/UdSSR, v. 1, 2007; v. 2, 2009; v. 3, 2011).

14. Academy of Russian Symbolism, "Mars." http://www.simvolika.org/mars_035.htm (accessed 7 June 2012).

15. "Vladimir Ilyich Lenin," in *Mayakovsky*, trans. and ed. by Herbert Marshall, New York: Hill and Wang, 1965, p. 249.

16. Victor A. Liapin, *Catalog of Postal Stamps of Russia (1856–1991)* (Moscow: V. I. Balabanov, 2008), 284.

17. In particular, Lenin was virtually unrecognizable because he was still a fugitive and wore a wig, whereas Stalin donned a leather jacket and a cap; Montefiore, *Young Stalin*, 341.

18. The head of Darien organization of the Communist party, Gao Gang, was loyal to Stalin and critical of Mao, provided his services as an informer on Mao, and in 1949 even proposed to join the USSR as the seventeenth republic. Several years later, these political mistakes led to Gao Gang's arrest and death. Dieter Heinzig, *The Soviet Union and Communist China, 1945–1950: The Arduous Road to the Alliance* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 215; Alexander Pantsov, *Mao Zedong* (Moscow: Molodaya Gvadiia, 2007), 535.

19. Stalin's interview with newspaper *Pravda*. *Pravda*, 17 February 1951.

20. Curiously, this picture is an almost exact symmetrical copy of the same subject painted in 1947 by Vladimir Serov and reproduced on several Soviet stamps (Robert F. Minkus, "Retouching History," *Rossica Journal,* 113/114 (1990): 83).

21. The sculpture *V. I. Lenin and I. V. Stalin in Gorki* by V. Pinchuk and R. Taurit. See David King, *The Comissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1997), 84, 87.

22. Brian R. Meyers, "North Korea's Race Problem," *Foreign Policy*, no. 178 (March/April 2010): 1.

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Bearing Philatelic Witness: Victims of Stalinism on Stamps

Robin Gates Elliott

INTRODUCTION

The topic of this paper is the changes in stamp design that took place in Eastern Europe and the successor states to the Soviet Union following the collapse of Communism and the USSR. Specifically, the purpose is to examine one subset of the stamps issued over the last two decades: those commemorating victims of Stalinism. The designs are divided into two categories: explicit design and implicit design. Explicit design leaves no doubt as to who is being commemorated and why. Implicit design makes clear who is being commemorated but offers few clues as to why. The events commemorated on these stamps as well as the designs themselves bear witness to the changes that have taken place in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union during the past twenty years, specifically, the break with the Communist past.

Postage stamps have come a long way since the Penny Black and the Two Penny Blue made their debut in Great Britain in 1840. Since then, governments have realized that stamps could serve additional purposes, above and beyond their primary function of paying to send an item through the mail.[1] One such purpose is propaganda. Stamps can be an effective medium for propaganda for several reasons. First, since postal services are a government function, governments have complete control over stamp design: a government can, quite literally, send any kind of message it wants on its postage stamps. Second, the vast majority of stamps are relatively inexpensive, which makes them easy to obtain. Therefore, third, they are ubiquitous. They travel throughout their country of origin and to foreign countries as well, as postage or to stamp collectors.[2]

Although governments have always been aware that postage stamp design could transmit explicit and implicit messages, the first European countries to truly appreciate and systematically utilize the propaganda potential of postage stamps were the major dictatorships of the 1930s: Mussolini's Italy, the Third Reich, and the Soviet Union. Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin all ruled through a combination of persuasion and coercion. One form of persuasion was propaganda, and one medium for propaganda was the postage stamp.[3]

When World War II ended, the Red Army occupied most of Eastern Europe, which was recognized as a Soviet "sphere of influence." Within five years the predictions that Churchill made in his Iron Curtain speech had come true: Communist parties took power throughout Eastern Europe and speedily dispatched the political opposition. Then, on orders of and with assistance from the Kremlin, they began to turn their countries into carbon copies of the Soviet Union. They did so through a combination of persuasion and coercion. As in the Soviet Union, one form of persuasion was propaganda, and propaganda extended to postage stamp design.

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As a result, the stamps of the People's Democracies of Eastern Europe have several themes in common. One is the history of the country's Communist Party. The People's Democracies issued stamps to commemorate the founding of the Communist Party, the founder of the Communist Party, other milestones in the party's history, such as the first issue of the party newspaper and the organization of the party's youth group, and the heroes and martyrs of the Communist resistance movements during World War II. A second theme is the goals and achievements of the five-year economic plans, frequently represented by stamp designs depicting heavy industry. In addition, stamps appeared that paid homage to Lenin, Stalin, local Communist Party leaders, and Soviet cosmonauts, plus the occasional commemorative of the Paris Commune.

But what came next philatelically, after the Soviet Union itself and Communist hegemony in Eastern Europe landed in the proverbial "dustbin of history"? What did the countries of Eastern Europe and the successor states to the Soviet Union choose to put on their stamps—once they had the choice? Obviously, an analysis of more than two decades' worth of stamp design in approximately thirty countries (including the successor states to Yugoslavia) would be a vast undertaking. The subject of this paper, therefore, is one subset of stamp designs: stamps that commemorate the victims of Stalinism. Tragically, that, too, is a broad theme, so the stamps presented constitute a representative sample rather than a comprehensive survey.

The stamps are divided into two groups according to their design: explicit and implicit. Explicit design leaves no doubt about what it commemorates and why. The examples of explicit design are stamps that commemorate the victims of the Ukrainian famine of 1932–33; the Polish prisoners of war (POWs) executed in the USSR in the spring of 1940, known as Katyn (the location of the first mass grave discovered); the Lithuanians deported from the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic in June of 1941; and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.[4] Implicit design is not so obvious. The stamps are standard commemoratives: a picture of the deceased plus his name and dates. It is clear whom the stamp commemorates, but the design contains few, if any, clues as to why. The examples of implicit design commemorate three church leaders on the centenary of their birth: Cardinal Joseph Slipyj (Ukraine), Cardinal Jozsef Mindszenty (Hungary), and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (Poland).[5]

EXPLICIT DESIGN: UKRAINIAN FAMINE

During the First Five-Year Plan in the USSR (1929–34), Stalin completed his control over the Soviet economy, including the agricultural sector. Every region of the country was obligated to sell a specified amount of its annual grain crop to the government at the government's price. What was unique about the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1932 was that its grain quota was deliberately set so high that fulfilling it would lead to starvation in the countryside. Ukrainian Party officials explained this to the Kremlin and argued for a reduction, but to no avail. The grain quota was enforced rigorously, and famine ensued.

When the grain was gone, peasants slaughtered whatever farm animals had not already starved. Then they ate cats and dogs, then rats, mice, birds, earthworms, and insects. To make matters worse, the government failed to provide any kind of famine relief. Peasants were even forbidden to go to cities and towns in search of food; instead, local officials were specifically instructed to prevent them from leaving their villages. A conservative estimate of the resulting death toll is five million.[6] Currently, estimates range from seven to as high as ten million.[7]

The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic became an independent country upon the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Two years later, on the sixtieth anniversary of the famine (1993), Ukraine issued a stamp in memory of the victims (Figure 1A). The stamp design pictures a memorial to the famine victims in Kiev, the Symbol of Sorrow, and the release of the stamp coincided with the unveiling of the memorial. The memorial is in the shape of a Cossack cross, with the figures of a Madonna and child superimposed on it.[8] The inscription on the stamp reads "Sixtieth Anniversary of Mass Murder by Starvation [*Holodomor*] in Ukraine."

Holodomor is a Ukrainian compound word: *holod* means hunger or famine and *mor* is the first part of the word for mass murder (translated here as mass murder by starvation). Ukrainians regard the famine of 1932–33 as deliberate and avoidable and therefore as mass murder by starvation: *holodomor* is the term they use to refer to it. The term shows up more clearly on a commemorative issued ten years later (2003) to coincide with observances of the seventieth anniversary of the famine (Figure 1B).[9]

Once again, the stamp design shows a Cossack cross. In the middle of the cross is the figure of a famine victim. Lest there be

FIGURE 1. (A) Ukrainian famine sixtieth anniversary and (B) Ukrainian famine seventieth anniversary. From the collection of Robin Gates Elliott.

any doubt that the victim is Ukrainian, little colored dots at the victim's throat suggest traditional Ukrainian folk embroidery on a peasant blouse. The word *holodomor* appears in bold black lettering, and the dates of the famine years are in bright red. To the left of the cross are a few stalks of grain, symbolizing what the famine was all about.[10]

KATYN

World War II began on 1 September 1939, when the Wehrmacht invaded Poland. On 17 September the Red Army, in accordance with the terms of the Hitler–Stalin Pact concluded the previous month, invaded Poland from the east. Even though a formal declaration of war was lacking, about 40,000 Poles were taken captive by the Red Army; 15,000 of them, the majority of whom were members of the officer corps of the Polish Army, were deported to POW camps in the USSR: Kozelsk, Ostashków, and Starobelsk. In accordance with Red Cross protocols, a limited amount of correspondence was allowed between the POWs and their families. In March of 1940 the correspondence stopped: letters no longer arrived from the POWs, and mail sent to them was returned, marked "addressee unknown." Inquiries were made, but to no avail.

In June of 1941, regardless of the Hitler–Stalin Pact, Hitler invaded the USSR. Two years later German soldiers discovered a mass grave containing several thousand corpses in the Katyn forest, located near the city of Smolensk in western Russia. The victims were Polish Army officers (subsequently determined to be the POWs from the Kozelsk prison camp), identifiable by their uniforms and artifacts in the grave. Each had been executed with a bullet to the back of the head. Radio Berlin announced the discovery and blamed the deaths on Stalin. The USSR denied the accusation and blamed the deaths on the Germans. It is said that losers do not write history, so the Soviet version prevailed—in spite of forensic evidence from the bodies and the grave site indicative of Soviet responsibility—and became the party line: for decades Katyn was a Nazi war crime.[11]

The change came in 1990. Poland was in the process of transitioning from a Communist government to a non-Communist one, and Gorbachev had come to power in the USSR and instituted the policy of *glasnost*. That spring he admitted that Stalin and the NKVD (Soviet secret police), not the Germans, were responsible for the deaths of the missing Polish POWs (referred to simply as Katyn).[12] A few months later, Poland issued a stamp commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Katyn. The design was a simple cross with "Katyn 1940" inscribed on it (Figure 2A).

The news triggered an emotional explosion in Poland: the official lies about what the Poles had always suspected were over. The surviving relatives of the murdered POWs formed an organization, the Society of Katyn Families. Their advisor was a prelate, Monsignor Zdzisław Peszkowski, who, while serving in the Polish Army in the fall of 1939, had been captured by the Red Army and imprisoned at the Kozelsk POW camp along with the families' loved ones. For whatever reason, his life had been

FIGURE 2. (A) Katyn fiftieth anniversary and (B) International Year of Katyn. From the collection of Robin Gates Elliott.

spared; when the prisoners were transported to their death, he was simply moved to another POW camp. The Society of Katyn Families had several purposes: to publicize the truth about Katyn at home and abroad, after so many years of official lies and complicit silence; to create a proper military cemetery at the Katyn grave site (nothing could bring their loved ones back, but at least they could receive a proper burial); and to erect a memorial in Warsaw honoring those who had died "in the East." [13]

In December of 1993 Polish President Lech Walesa designated 1995, the fifty-fifth anniversary of Katyn, as the International Year of Katyn; in his proclamation he reiterated the goals of the Society of Katyn Families.[14] In 1995 Poland issued a second commemorative (Figure 2B). The inscription reads "International Year of Katyn." The design is an artifact from the Katyn grave site, a button from a Polish army officer's uniform, identifiable by the eagle, the emblem of the Polish state, lying on the ground in the dirt.

Poland subsequently issued a pair of commemoratives memorializing the victims of Katyn in 1999. The designs of both stamps are reproductions of icons. The first, a Madonna and child, is inscribed "Our Lady of Victories: Kozelsk"; Kozelsk was the POW camp where those buried at Katyn were held before their execution (Figure 3A). The second is inscribed "Our Lady of Katyn" (Figure 3B).[15] The design, intentionally or by chance, is evocative of a passage from the Prayer of the Katyn Families: "Our Lady of Katyn, Mother of Mercy and Reconciliation, Into Thy hands we commend all those murdered in the East. With steadfast belief in the communion of saints we pray . . . that Thou willst embrace them and entrust them to Thy Son."[16]

In 2000 Poland issued an additional pair of commemoratives.[17] The inscription on both stamps reads "the 60th Anniversary of the Crime of Katyn." By then the goals of the Society of Katyn Families had been realized. Volumes of documents from both Polish and Soviet archives regarding Katyn had been published, including a communication from the Kremlin to the NKVD specifically ordering the execution of the Polish POWs.[18] A proper military cemetery at the mass grave in the Katyn forest was officially opened on 28 July 2000, with the participation of the Premier of Poland, Jerzy Buzek, and the Deputy Premier of the Russian Federation, Viktor B. Khristenko.[19] The first commemorative

FIGURE 3. (A) Our Lady of Victories: Kozelsk and (B) Our Lady of Katyn. From the collection of Robin Gates Elliott.

FIGURE 4. (A) Monsignor Peszkowski at the Katyn grave site. (B) Pope Paul II at the memorial in Warsaw. From the collection of Robin Gates Elliott.

portrays Monsignor Peszkowski standing in front of a gigantic wooden cross at the Katyn grave site (Figure 4A).[20] The second depicts Pope John Paul II during a visit to Poland kneeling in prayer at the memorial in Warsaw that commemorates "those who died and were murdered in the East" (Figure 4B). People's Poland had erected numerous memorials to victims of Nazi atrocities, but few, if any, to commemorate the victims of Stalinism.

DEPORTATIONS FROM LITHUANIA

In June of 1940, in accordance with the Hitler–Stalin Pact, the Red Army invaded and occupied the three Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which were subsequently annexed to the Soviet Union as constituent republics. A year later the NKVD deported numerous Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians. The procedure was similar in all three republics: a knock at the door in the middle of the night, a limited amount of time to pack a few essentials, and a long journey to an unknown destination in a packed cattle car. Families were separated: men were deported north and east to Soviet labor camps, and women and children were deported east to northern Kazakhstan. The numbers of the deported could have been far higher than they actually were because Hitler invaded the Soviet Union one week after the deportations began.[21]

Fifty years later the Baltic republics declared their independence, and Lithuania issued a set of three triangular stamps commemorating the events of June 1941. All three are inscribed with the dates 1941–1991. The first stamp commemorates the deportations (Figure 5A). The design is a candle surrounded by either a circle of barbed wire, symbolizing imprisonment, or a crown of thorns, symbolizing suffering.[22] The stamp includes the date the deportations began, 14 June. The second stamp commemorates the Nazi invasion (Figure 5B). Lithuanians welcomed the Germans as liberators, hoping that their independence would be restored. An independent Lithuania, however, was not part of Hitler's plan for his Thousand-Year Reich.[23] The stamp design is the Sacred Heart pierced by seven swords and includes the date of the invasion, 22 June.[24]

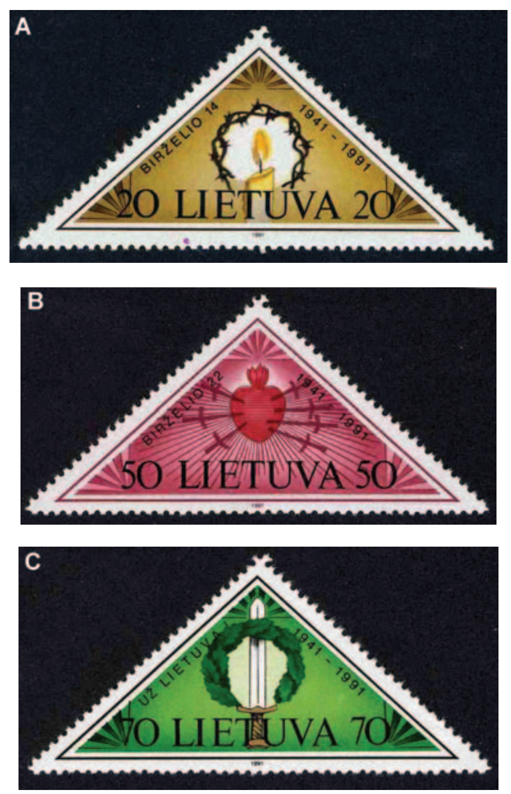

FIGURE 5. (A) Deportations of Lithuanians, (B) Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, and (C) the Lithuanian resistance movement. From the collection of Robin Gates Elliott.

The third stamp honors the Lithuanian resistance movement, the Forest Brotherhood, which began when the Red Army invaded and lasted well into the mid-1950s (Figure 5C). It survived as long as it did because of the severity of Soviet repression following the reconquest of Lithuania in 1944. Lithuanians joined the resistance movement because they felt that they had nothing to lose, even though the average life expectancy of a member was only two years.[25] The stamp design is a sword surrounded by a wreath of green foliage. The inscription reads simply "For Lithuania."[26]

Subsequently, Lithuania issued three additional stamps commemorating the deportations. The designs on all three are Lithuanian folk art. The first, released on 14 June 1995, pictures a Pieta with a sword piercing the chest of the Virgin Mary. The inscription reads "Day of Mourning and Hope," probably referring to nationwide observances of the anniversary of the deportations.[27] A series of two commemoratives appeared a year later, the fifty-fifth anniversary of the deportations. The inscriptions are identical, "June 14, Day of Mourning and Hope" (again, probably a reference to nationwide observances), and the designs are reproductions of wooden folk art carvings. The design on the first stamp is a "Man of Sorrows" (head of Christ), symbolizing mourning; the design on the second is an angel, symbolizing hope.[28]

THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

The decade following World War II was a difficult one for Hungary. Hungary had been an ally of the Third Reich, and Hungarian soldiers had participated in the invasion of the Soviet Union. As a result, Stalin regarded Hungary as an enemy combatant, and the Red Army acted accordingly, pillaging and raping its way across Hungary en route to Berlin.

Following the war, the Soviet Union expropriated massive amounts of Hungarian property as war reparations. Expropriation extended to entire factories, which were taken apart and shipped, complete with their contents, east. Joint Hungarian-Soviet companies were established to exploit Hungary's natural resources for the benefit of the Soviet Union. By 1950 Stalin's handpicked government of Hungarian Communists had taken power and eliminated the political opposition. To consolidate its power and terrorize the population into submission, it carried out numerous purge trials. Thousands were arrested by the Hungarian Secret Police (AVO) and tried on trumped-up charges, found guilty, and imprisoned or executed. By October of 1956, when the Hungarian Revolution erupted, three generalizations could be made about Hungarians: they resented the Russians, they resented Hungary's Communist government, and they resented the Hungarian Secret Police.[29]

Three decades later, Hungary regained its de facto independence with a non-Communist government in 1989. In 1991 it commemorated the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution with an overprint of a previously existing postage stamp. The overprinted stamp was released on 22 October, the day before the anniversary of the beginning of the revolution; 23 October had become a national holiday in 1989. The overprint is two concentric circles that resemble a postmark, and the inscription reads simply "In Memory of the Revolution, 1956–1991."[30]

To commemorate the fortieth anniversary in 1996, Hungary issued a series of five stamps, four regular stamps plus a souvenir sheet, that tell the story of the revolution. The designs of all five stamps utilize reproductions of photographs and newspapers from the period, so the color scheme is overwhelmingly black, white, and tan.[31] The only additional colors are the Hungarian flag, a red, white, and green tricolor that appears somewhere on each of the stamps. In addition, the first four of the five stamps include the dates 1956–1996.

The revolution began on 23 October 1956 with massive student demonstrations in Budapest, pictured on the first stamp in the series.[32] The second stamp shows demonstrators carrying a Hungarian flag with a hole in the middle. The postwar Hungarian flag had a Soviet-style coat of arms in the center: a hammer and cycle surrounded by stalks of wheat, topped with a star.[33] As one of the initial acts of protest, demonstrators cut out the postwar coat of arms, symbolic of so much that was resented, from the Hungarian flag. The Hungarian flag with a hole in the middle became a symbol of the revolution.[34]

One of the demonstrations took place at a massive statue of Stalin, a "gift" from the Soviet Union, which the demonstrators attacked and tried to pull down. When the vandalism was reported to the Budapest police, the police chief replied that he and his men were not paid enough to protect a statue of Stalin. Initially, it appeared that Hungarians were not going to open fire on Hungarians, except for the secret police, attempting to disperse a demonstration at the local radio station, which did. Several demonstrators were killed, and several more were injured.[35]

If the demonstrators were going to be attacked, they were determined to fight back, and they rapidly obtained weapons from all over Budapest: police stations, military installations, and the local secret arms factory (disguised as the United Lamp Factory on Csepel Island in the Danube). When tanks from Soviet military garrisons (Soviet troops were stationed in several of the Eastern European countries, including Hungary, following World War II) arrived the next day to "restore order," they encountered an unexpectedly effective guerilla-style resistance mounted by the demonstrators. The third stamp in the series shows two armed demonstrators.[36] The fourth pictures Imre Nagy, who became prime minister during the revolution, addressing the nation over the radio.[37]

The final item in the series, a souvenir sheet containing one stamp, includes elements from the previous four stamps and summarizes the story of the revolution (Figure 6). The design includes a crowd of demonstrators (top), an armed demonstrator (lower right foreground), the Hungarian flag with a hole in the middle (red, white, and green, diagonal across the souvenir sheet), newspapers published during the revolution (lower left foreground), and the revolutionary government (eleven men in the lower half, with Imre Nagy in the center). In addition, the

FIGURE 6. The Hungarian Revolution. From the collection of Robin Gates Elliott.

design includes the traditional Hungarian coat of arms, located in the lower right corner.

The revolution did not last. After several days of vacillation in the Kremlin, Khrushchev ordered a massive invasion of Hungary. Soviet troops stationed in Hungary (who refused to engage in further military action without the necessary reinforcements) were augmented with troops from the USSR plus Soviet troops stationed in neighboring Eastern European countries. At least one member of the government managed to escape and fled to Austria; the rest were arrested. Several, including Imre Nagy, were sentenced to death; the others received prison sentences.[38] The Latin inscription at the top left of the souvenir sheet, "Gloria Victis" (white lettering against the black background), alludes to the fate of the revolution: "Glory to the Vanquished."

IMPLICIT DESIGN: PATRIARCH CARDINAL JOSYF SLIPYJ, 1892–1984

In September of 1939, the Red Army invaded and occupied the eastern half of Poland, an ethnically diverse area. The southern section, heavily Ukrainian, was annexed to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The Ukrainians in the annexed territory were overwhelmingly Uniate (also known as Eastern Rite Catholicism), a combination of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy dating from the Union of Brest in 1596 (an attempt to reunite the two branches of Christianity). Uniates followed

FIGURE 7. Cardinal Josyf Slipyj. From the collection of Robin Gates Elliott.

Eastern Orthodox doctrines and practices but recognized the authority of the Roman Catholic Pope.

Stalin feared that the Uniates could be an obstacle to the smooth integration of the annexed territory, so in 1945 he ordered the arrest of the Uniate hierarchy and priests, the Union of Brest was declared invalid, and the Uniates were placed under the authority of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (which Stalin had well under control). The Uniate hierarchy, including the patriarch, Josyf Slipyj, was deported to the gulag. Eighteen years later, the patriarch was the only member of the hierarchy still alive. He was released in 1963, at least in part due to the intercession of Pope John XXIII and President Kennedy, and was deported to Rome.[39]

Independent Ukraine issued a single stamp commemorating the centennial of his birth in 1993 (Figure 7). The stamp design includes his portrait, his name and titles, and his dates. The only reference to his persecution is a small circle in the upper left corner. It symbolizes the Crown of Thorns, a reference to his suffering and, by extension, that of the imprisoned hierarchy and priests, as well as the persecution of the Uniates under Stalin.[40]

CARDINAL JOZSEF MINDSZENTY, 1892–1975

Cardinal Mindszenty became primate of the Catholic Church in Hungary in October of 1945; in December of 1948 he was arrested in the purges that took place in the late 1940s. Tortured, and possibly drugged, he confessed to the trumped-up charges leveled against him and was sentenced to life in prison. At the time of the Hungarian Revolution he was living under house arrest near Budapest. During the revolution he was officially rehabilitated by Prime Minister Nagy, and he returned to his residence in Budapest. When the Red Army invaded, he fled and sought asylum in the American embassy, where he remained

FIGURE 8. Cardinal Jozsef Mindszenty. From the collection of Robin Gates Elliott.

for the next 15 years. In 1971 he was granted safe passage to Western Europe and settled in Austria, where he died in 1975.[41]

Hungary honored the centenary of his birth with a single commemorative stamp, issued in 1992 (Figure 8). A reproduction of a portrait of Mindszenty, painted by Bela Schmidt in 1977, is in the foreground, with a drawing of the interior of the cathedral at Esztergom in the background. The significance of the cathedral is twofold. First, Esztergom is preeminent in Hungarian Catholicism. As primate of Hungary, Cardinal Mindszenty was also Archbishop of Esztergom. Second, Cardinal Mindszenty is buried there. In 1991 his remains were returned to Hungary and interred in the crypt of archbishops in the cathedral.[42]

CARDINAL STEFAN WYSZYŃSKI, 1901–1981

Cardinal Wyszyński was appointed primate of the Catholic Church in Poland in 1948. Arrested in 1953, he spent time under house arrest in various Polish religious establishments. Upon his release in 1956, he was allowed to return to his position as primate and spent the rest of his life making as much space for the Church in Polish society as possible under difficult conditions and defending the Church against party and state.

Poland issued a single commemorative marking the centenary of Wyszyński's birth in 2001. The stamp design consists of a photograph of the cardinal and a reproduction of his signature against a Polish landscape. It includes an inscription, which reads "Primate of the Millennium, 1901–1981." The millennium referred to is not the millennium of 2000 but the millennium of Polish Christianity, 1966. Party and state did their best to drain the millennium of its religious significance by co-opting it, claiming that it represented the millennium of the Polish state. Poland did not even issue a stamp commemorating the millennium of Christianity (that was left to the Vatican and the United States), but it did issue a series of four red and gold stamps to commemorate the millennium of the Polish state.[43] To the extent that the millennium of Polish Christianity was remembered and observed in Poland, it was due to the efforts of Cardinal Wyszyński.

CONCLUSIONS

What can we conclude from these stamps that honor the victims of Stalinism? What, if any, is their message? They signify the break with the Communist past. Between 1989 and 1991 Communist rule ended in the Iron Curtain countries of Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union itself collapsed and disintegrated into its component parts. Otherwise, the stamps would not—could not—have been issued. The momentous political changes that took place during those three years—from Constituent Republic to independent country and from dictatorial Communist Party rule to a multiparty system based on democratic principles—triggered countless subsequent changes, and the stamp designs reflect some of those additional changes as well.[44]

One break with the Communist past was the rewriting of history after decades of manipulation to fit the party line: the Ukrainian famine was *not* simply the unfortunate result of collectivization plus bad weather, Katyn was *not* a Nazi war crime, the Lithuanians deported were *not* "enemies of the people," the Hungarian Revolution was *not* a fascist counterrevolution, and Cardinal Mindszenty was *not* an agent of either the United States or the Vatican. Not only had the party line manipulated history, it had dictated that the national tragedies mentioned above, since they officially did not exist, could neither be publicly recognized nor properly mourned.

A second break with the Communist past occurred as the calendar began to change in accordance with the history books. Long-delayed national observances began to take place, complete with commemorative stamps. Thus, the stamps were not issued in a vacuum; they appeared in the context of national and local events that preceded, coincided with, and followed them.

Such events include the public observances of tragic anniversaries, memorials to famine victims in Kiev and to the Poles who had died "in the East" in Warsaw, military cemeteries at the grave sites of the Polish POWs executed in the USSR and the publication of official documents about their fate, an NKVD museum in Lithuania and a *holodomor* museum in Ukraine, and the reburial with honor of Imre Nagy's remains. The first set of Lithuanian stamps commemorating the deportations, for example, was issued on 14 June for the fiftieth anniversary, even before Lithuania was legally an independent country (Lithuania had unilaterally declared its independence before the Soviet Union collapsed).

A third break with the Communist past is a cultural one, the increased presence of religion in society. Religion had been at best tolerated, at worst suppressed, in the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies. The resurgence of religion is reflected in stamp design. Some stamps directly honor church leaders who had suffered for their faith. Others contain religious imagery: depictions of Christ, the Madonna, angels, crosses, and crowns of thorns. Several of the stamp designs are reproductions of actual works of art, some of which were created specifically in memory of victims of Stalinism.

For decades party and state had sought to indoctrinate citizens with the party line, employing a combination of persuasion and coercion. One form of persuasion was propaganda, and propaganda extended even to stamp design. In contrast, what these stamps signify is, for however brief a moment, government united in solidarity with the nation and expressing it through bearing philatelic witness to the victims of Stalinism.

NOTES

1. See Jack Child, *Miniature Messages: The Semiotics and Politics of Latin American Postage Stamps* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008); Donald M. Reid, "The Symbolism of Postage Stamps: A Source for the Historian," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19, no. 2 (April 1984): 223–249; David Scott, *European Stamp Design: A Semiotic Approach to Designing Messages* (London: Academy Editions, 1995).

2. Montgomery Mulford, "Postage Stamps as Propaganda," *Mechanix Illustrated*, October 1938:86, 135; Daniel A. Piazza, "Perforated Propaganda," (lecture, Smithsonian National Postal Museum, 18 September 2009); Carlos Stoetzer, *Postage Stamps as Propaganda* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1953).

3. See, for example, Alf Harper, *Philately of the Third Reich: Postage and Propaganda* (Raleigh, N.C.: Album, 1998); Jeremy Busch, "Early Soviet Iconography," *Rossica: The Journal of the Rossica Society of Russian Philately*, no. 152 (Spring 2009): 20–25; Albert L. Moore, *Postal Propaganda of the Third Reich* (Atglen, Pa.: Schiffer Military History, 2003); William Moskoff and Carol Gayle, "Soviet Propaganda during World War II: The Use of Postal Material to Rally the Nation," *Rossica: The Journal of the Rossica Society of Russian Philately*, no. 152 (Spring 2009): 28–33; Mulford, "Postage Stamps as Propaganda," 135; Piazza, "Perforated Propaganda"; Stoetzer, *Postage Stamps as Propaganda*.

4. The *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*, issued annually, is the standard reference book for postage stamps in the United States. American practice is to identify individual postage stamps by their Scott numbers. The Scott numbers for the first group of stamps are Ukraine, Scott 188, 526; Poland, Scott 2975, 3323, 3444–3445, 3557–3558; Lithuania, Scott 393–395, 517, 547–548; and Hungary, Scott 3320, 3549–3553.

5. Ukraine, Scott 166; Hungary, Scott 3342; and Poland, Scott 3598.

6. The authoritative study of the Ukrainian famine in English is Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

7. "The Great Hunger in Ukraine, 1932–33," *Trident-Visnyk*, 32, no. 115 (January–February 2003): 3.

8. George D. Fedyk and Ingert J. Kuzych, *Handbook of Modern Ukrainian Philately: A Catalog of Stamps, Stationery, and Cancellations, 1991–2000* (Springfield, Va.: Ukrainian Philatelic Resources, 2002), 25; "New Issues," *Trident-Visnyk*, 12, no. 58–59 (September–December 1993): 105.

9. "The Great Hunger in Ukraine, 1932–33," *Trident-Visnyk*, 32, no. 115 (January–February 2003): 3; "A Philatelic Trip to Kiev," *Trident-Visnyk*, 32, no. 121 (December 2003): 136.

10. "Holodomor Stamp," *Trident-Visnyk*, 32, no. 120 (October–November 2003): 130; "A Philatelic Trip to Kiev," 136.

11. The authoritative works on Katyn in English are Anna M. Cienciala, Natalia S. Lebedeva, and Wojciech Materski, eds., *Katyn: A Crime without Punishment* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007); J. K. Zawodny, *Death in the Forest: The Story of the Katyn Forest Massacre* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1962).

12. Cienciala et al., *Katyn*, xv.

13. Ks. Zdzisław Peszkowski, *Pamięć Golgoty Wschodu* [Remembering the Golgotha of the East] (Warsaw: Wyd. "Soli Deo," 1995).

14. Peszkowski, *Pamięć Golgoty Wschodu*, 7–8.

15. Bogdan Michalak, "Polish Report," *The Coros Chronicle*, 305 (June 1999): 89; "Gabriel's Trumpet," *The Coros Chronicle*, no. 309 (February 2000): 15.

16. Peszkowski, *Pamięć Golgoty Wschodu*, back cover.

17. "John Paul II: All 2000, part II," *The Coros Chronicle*, no. 317 (June 2001): 84.

18. Cienciala et al., *Katyn: A Crime without Punishment,* is an anthology of some of those documents. Included also are documents given to Polish President Lech Walesa by Russian President Boris Yeltsin in 1992 that identify the grave sites of the POWs from the other two prison camps, Ostashków and Starobelsk.

19. Cienciala et al., *Katyn*, 258.

20. Tragically, the 95 passengers on the Polish plane that crashed on its approach to Smolensk in April 2010 were en route to Katyn, to the site pictured on the stamp, to observe the seventieth anniversary. There were no survivors. Among the victims were numerous members of the Polish government, including Polish President Lech Kaczynski and his wife and five members of the Society of Katyn Families. In 2010 Poland issued a souvenir sheet commemorating the seventieth anniversary of Katyn (Scott 3978). The design on the stamp is a combination of the designs on the first two commemoratives (1990 and 1995): several buttons from the grave site arranged in the form of a cross. "Scott New Issues Update," *Scott Stamp Monthly*, 28, no. 11 (November 2010), 66.

21. Romuald J. Misiunas and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence, 1940–1990* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1993), 15–30, 39–43. As a note of Shakespearian comic relief in an otherwise tragic situation, subsequently a list of categories of people to be deported surfaced in Lithuania. It included "all those with personal foreign ties" and specifically mentions philatelists (Misiunas and Taagepera, *The Baltic States*. 41).

22. Descriptions in the literature vary. See *Filatelistų Draugijos Lietuva Biuletenis* ["*Lithuania" Philatelic Society Bulletin*], 1:212 (1992), back cover; Andrew Kapochunas, "Postage Stamps of the Independent Republic of Lithuania, Part II," *Bulletin of the Lithuanian Philatelic Society of New York*, no. 160 (June 1991): 9089; *Scott 2010 Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue*, 4:590; Ricardas Vainora, "Lithuanian Correspondent," *The Coros Chronicle*, no. 264 (August 1992): 113.

23. Misiunas and Taagepera, *The Baltic States*, 46, 48.

24. Kapochunas, "Postage Stamps," 9089; Vainora, "Lithuanian Correspondent," 113. According to Vainora, the design is a biblical reference, the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 2, verse 35: "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also."

25. Misiunas and Taagepera, *The Baltic States*, 43–44, 46, 66, 73, 83–84, 88–91, 93.

26. See references in footnote 22.

27. Andrew Kapochunas, "New Postage Stamps of Lithuania—Part XII," *Bulletin of the Lithuanian Philatelic Society of New York*, no. 174 (December 1995): 9365; John D. Schmidt, "The Blessed Virgin and Philatelic Sacred Art, part III," *The Coros Chronicle*, no. 309 (February 2000): 11.

28. "Anniversary of Grief and of Hope," *The Coros Chronicle*, no. 288 (August 1996): 80; Andrew Kapochunas, "New Postage Stamps of Lithuania—Part XV," *Joint Bulletin of the Lithuanian Philatelic Society of New York and the Toronto Lithuanian Philatelic Society*, no. 176 (June 1996): 9408; Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Path to Independence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 27.

29. Csaba L. Kohalmi, "The 1956 Hungarian Freedom Fight in Philately," *The News of Hungarian Philately*, 27, no. 4 (October–December 1996): 3; Victor Sebestyen, *Twelve Days: The Story of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 7–103.

30. "1991 New Issues," *The News of Hungarian Philately*, 23, no. 1 (January–March 1992): 21.

31. "1996 New Issues," *The News of Hungarian Philately*, 28, no. 1 (January–March 1997): 29–30.

32. Sebestyen, *Twelve Days*, 102.

33. The postwar flag is pictured on a series of Hungarian stamps, Scott 856–858.

34. Kohalmi, "The 1956 Hungarian Freedom," 9–10; Sebestyen, *Twelve Days*, 111, 304. For the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution in 2006, Hungary issued one commemorative. It pictures a Hungarian flag with a hole in the center (Hungary, Scott 4005).

35. Sebestyen, *Twelve Days*, 118, 122.

36. Sebestyen, *Twelve Days*, 123, 126–127; Kohalmi, "The 1956 Hungarian Freedom," 7.

37. Sebestyen, *Twelve Days*, 125.

38. Sebestyen, *Twelve Days*, 216–217, 268, 292.

39. Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow*, 210, 212–213; "Dr. Smyk in Ukraine," *The Coros Chronicle*, no. 277 (October 1994): 111; Fedyk and Kuzych, *Handbook of Modern Ukrainian Philately*, 24; Hansjakob Stehle, *Eastern Politics of the Vatican, 1917–1979* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1981), 231, 246–247, 306, 308–309, 366–367; "What's New," *The Coros Chronicle*, no. 272 (December 1993): 147–148.

40. "New Issues," *Trident-Visnyk*, 12, no. 55 (March–April 1993): 28.

41. Kohalmi, "The 1956 Hungarian Freedom," 22; Sebestyen, *Twelve Days*, 34–36, 204, 266; Augustine H. Serafini, "The Prisoners," *The Coros Chronicle*, no. 262 (April 1992): 40; Stehle, *Eastern Politics*, 269–270.

42. *The Coros Chronicle*, no. 262 (April 1992), front cover; "Hungarian Postal Stationery Features Religion," *The Coros Chronicle*, no. 262 (April 1992): 59–60; Kohalmi, "The 1956 Hungarian Freedom," 22–23; Serafini, The Prisoners," 40.

43. Poland, Scott 1423–1426; United States, Scott 1313; Vatican, Scott 433–438.

44. Postage stamp design serves some of the same purposes in marking the break with Communism as the reburial of corpses. See Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 1–53.

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Postage Stamp Images as Cultural Markers

Jack Trammell

Sociologists often make use of so-called cultural artifacts to better understand a given culture and its comparative context. Moreover, they often focus on the ordinary objects of everyday life, rather than the exotic or the extreme, so as to gain insight into the experiences of the average person at a given point in time and then to eventually paint a more vivid picture of the larger patterns of ordinary existence within the overall culture. Postage stamps and the visual representations they spawn qualify as unique cultural artifacts that give myriad insights into our contemporary culture and the broader Western experience. In fact, stamps and images of stamps are arguably more useful than many other cultural artifacts in clarifying who we are and what we value as a collective group.

Perhaps ironically, it is the seemingly most ordinary of artifacts that often reveal the most about a culture and a people, and so it is with postage stamps and the myriad imagery they spawn in popular culture. In the literal sense, they are no more than small pieces of ordinary paper that are often cancelled and thrown away without a care (not by philatelists, of course). From a sociological perspective, however, stamps and stamp imagery are extraordinary social objects that reveal much about industrialism, modernism, consumerism, group behavior, Western history (and sometimes hegemony), and the near universal human striving to remain in touch with people physically removed from our immediate presence (Figure 1).

The story of the postage stamp is the modern story of humans—a story involving industrialization, mass communication, and globalization. Stamps, and perhaps even more so stamp imagery, serve quite readily as revealing Western cultural markers, telling us much about the people we have become and the cultures that we live in. They are arguably much more useful than many other cultural artifacts that might alternatively be examined, in part because they are so ubiquitous and recognized around the world, but also because they are much less presupposing than other universal objects like automobiles or televisions. They hint at Western obsessions with identifying, categorizing, and labeling that define much of our recent history and the phenomenon of modernism.[1]

They also reveal a modern interpretation of egalitarianism most typified in the American experience, as most earlier postal systems dating back to ancient times were limited to the rich, the privileged, or the enthroned; they were not accessible to the masses; they were dependent on labor-intensive and very expensive processes; they did not have access to mechanization or mass transportation; and they were primarily aimed at supporting the state, rather than giving individuals access to personal communication across great distances. Postage stamps and the modern postal system remain more accessible than any previous iteration. They represent the modernist desire to bring order, progress, and convenience to the entire world. Coupled with accessibility, they literally represent the opposite of primitivism.

In more practical terms, stamps are miniature displays of what we prioritize, what we debate over, and what we value, even revealing much about what is arguably human

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FIGURE 1. Stamp imagery is utilized in advertising to show connectivity and accessibility or the "ordinariness" of a product or service that represents an absolute acceptance of convenience in our lives. Photo by the author.

nature. Philatelists are usually aware of this on some level, although personal pleasure and individual interests often obscure the real significance. In point of fact, stamps have become so much a part of our culture (and Western culture in general) that they now hold status similar to other ubiquitous phenomena, like Coca Cola, McDonald's, or the American flag (objects representing American culture that are instantly recognized from villages in Africa to the streets of Tokyo, Japan). Yet few stop to think what they really symbolize.[2]

Stamp imagery has crept into diverse venues: a trip to the home improvement store reveals that stamp wallpaper is available. Many stationery items at the office supply store have stylized or modified artwork representing stamps and stamp cancels, essentially signaling to the user and viewer their purpose for communication and ordinariness. In their nineteenth century prime, stamps were part of a modern wonder: a hand written letter delivered thousands of miles to another recipient, costing only pennies, and arriving within a matter of days. (It still might be argued that this is a wonder in 2010.) In the twenty-first century, stamps and stamp imagery are ubiquitous and synonymous with modern life.

Stamps and stamp imagery continue to represent ordinariness and an absolute acceptance of convenience in our lives. Even Styrofoam cups at convenience stores can be found with generic stamps and cancellations on them, signaling that getting a cup of coffee as you move about your business is as commonplace as a stamp carrying a message in a letter (or now, one supposes, as sending an email). We are shocked and dismayed on the rare occasion when a letter is actually "lost" in the mail (Figure 2).

Because the industrial age was fostered in part by business tycoons, stamps often portray the tools of the new industrial epoch: trains, automobiles, planes, industrial machines, factories, superhighways, warships, and iconic (often giant) architecture. The famous inverted Jenny airmail stamp appears on everything decorative from lamp shades to drink coasters and even computer wallpaper. They can even be found on men's silk ties. It is ironic, indeed, that America's most famous stamp is in fact an error, a plane accidentally printed upside down, perhaps mocking on some level the so-called perfection of mass production and progress, the individual crying out to be recognized as unique in a mass of manufactured sameness (Figure 3).[3]

Stamps are also stars in media venues. A recent *Indiana Jones* video game featured postcards with stamps and cancellations representing every exotic setting Indy traveled to in the game. In fact, many Lucas films, including *Indiana Jones*, make blatant use of stamp props. If you account for more subtle uses (which the philatelist in the audience usually catches), hundreds of movies portray the "ordinary" use of stamps as part of daily life. PBS, another American media mainstay, recently aired a documentary on stamps entitled *American Stamps* that explained some of the ubiquity of stamps. In that documentary, it is made clear that stamps are American superstars: "Postage stamps carry the messages most important to us: our declarations of love, our job applications, and congratulations to our friends and family. In depicting and honoring their subjects, stamps play a significant role in memorializing national icons and showcasing important features of our culture and history."[4]

Stamp collecting has, rightly or wrongly, come to be seen as a nerdy pastime or the playground for those with leisure time, often bespectacled millionaires, stereotypes that stamp collectors occasionally play into inadvertently with their own enthusiasm for the hobby. It probably reinforces the notion to see that doctors, pharmacists, chemists, physicists, writers, artists, historians, and lawyers and other potential "nerds" all have topical collecting groups they endorse or support and in many cases even have publications about themselves on stamps. The message is clear—if *they* are on stamps, then the overall message must be widely accepted as important.[5]

The magnifying glass, a timeless symbol of the hobby, is itself a marker that implies patience, studiousness, and attention to detail. The hallmark tool of fictional detective Sherlock Holmes, a character plucked right out of the positivist revolution, this symbol of the hobby is also a broader symbol of enlightenment. Under the glass, mysteries are revealed and another layer of meaning uncovered. Of course, the magnifier is also necessary to see the tiny errors and imperfections that make some philatelic rarities unique or compelling, those outliers that defy Warhol-like repetition.

The modern era may be broadly defined as occurring from 1750 to 1950, but in terms of speed and impact, the greatest changes to human existence arguably occurred between 1850 and 1950. This so-called modern era, concurrent with the golden

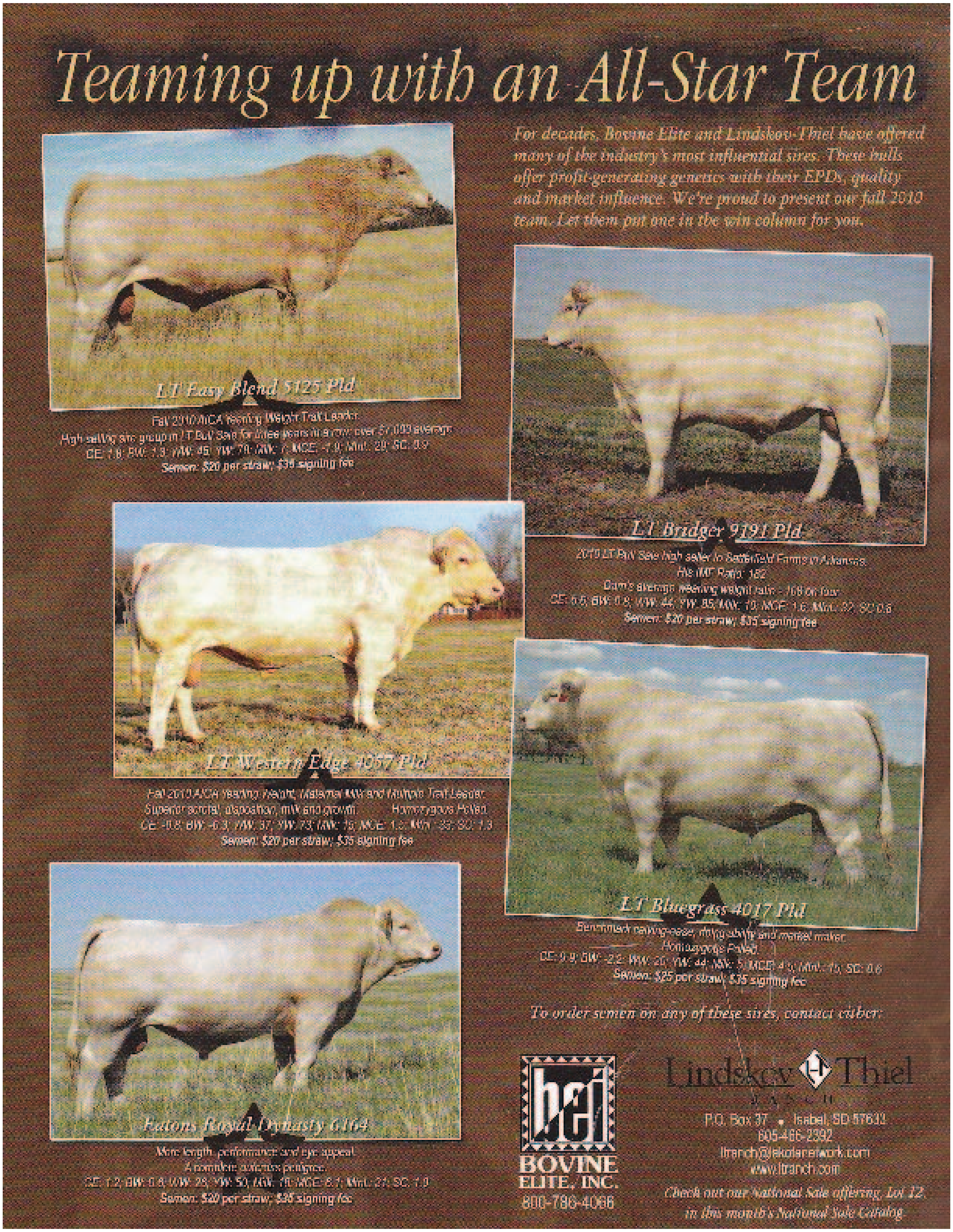

FIGURE 2. Can you spot the stamp? The message is dependability, uniformity, and delivery. Photo by the author.

FIGURE 3. The Eiffel Tower, a symbol of man's ability to express artistic ideals on an industrial scale, is also accompanied by a stamp. Photo by the author.

FIGURE 4. French stamps and stamp imagery are often found on mail-order catalogs, emphasizing the beauty and convenience of mail-order products and demonstrating connectedness with a global culture. Photo by the author.

age of the postage stamp, brought with it a strong compulsion to organize, to order, and to conquer, in which stamps played a prominent role. The royal visage of King George, to cite an obvious example, has accompanied letters out of the most remote areas of Africa, the cold war competition has flown on stamps with Soviet rockets and satellites on them, and the slogans of revolutionaries have been engraved in marble on stamps quoting everyone from Ben Franklin to Karl Marx. Stamps are openly representative of that order, efficiency, and global economy that we now take almost for granted.

Of course, stamps do not just remember the revolutionary; they can be revolutionary too. The newly struggling Soviet authorities attempted to bring order out of the Communist Revolution by using postage stamps and the attendant imagery on them. Stamps of Cuba in the last fifty years portray a stubborn and persistent ideology of revolution. Stamps are, in fact, propaganda items. The Nazis made very deliberate use of stamps and national socialist imagery during the Second World War era.[6]

Stamps have been world travelers almost from the beginning. Particularly in an era before global satellite television, phones, and Internet, they were a primary means of spreading cultural information to new places. According to communications professor Xin-An Lu, "stamps travel and thus may have a dynamic geographic salience."[7] In laymen's terms, this means that the images and references on stamps change (and educate) the viewer who sees them. Thus, stamps carry their respective cultures literally everywhere around the world. They are like small advertisements or posters that, instead of being stapled to the telephone pole on the street corner, pass from one region or country to another in waves, disseminating subtle and not so subtle information about the sender and the country of origin (Figure 4).

Stamps are also diplomats. Very often, pen pals begin their correspondence by carefully choosing the stamps they send each other on their letters. Sometimes, pen pals begin stamp collecting as a result of such exchanges. Many countries issue stamps with English and native language phrases side by side, thus spreading greater knowledge of language as well. Perhaps less so now with the Internet, in previous eras stamps were often a young person's first initiation to another culture (before they even opened the letter).

Stamps and stamp collecting are used in literature and in Hollywood as a mechanism to portray a character as fastidious, cerebral, or organized and methodical. Laurence Block, a popular author and stamp collector who now appears in *Linn's Stamp News* regularly, has used this technique to develop some of his characters. In the music world, John Lennon made reference to stamp collecting while taking a break from recording a version of "A Hard Day's Night" (and no one called him nerdy). According to National Postal Museum assistant curator Daniel

Piazza, President Franklin D. Roosevelt intentionally used postal designs and stamps as a means of subtly addressing Americans and his political opponents about his agenda (and this would be perfectly in keeping with other efforts Roosevelt made to steer public opinion in certain directions).[8]

Taken as a whole, stamps must be seen as unique artifacts of our modern era (though they have predecessors such as tax stamps, postal markings, etc.). "Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night, stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds," Herodotus originally said. When computerized postage or e-mail or other changes threaten to change the way mail is delivered, collectors should not be too nervous about the fate of philately. Stamps are literally stamped into our popular culture and will not be going away any time soon. In fact, many e-mail software programs show an animated icon of an envelope with a stamp on it when you send an e-mail.

Postage stamps are subtle reminders that we are all (in the West at least) products of a modernist paradigm that takes for granted convenience, speed of communication, and an egalitarian right to freedom of speech and communicative connection. These assumed rights are relatively new concepts in the grand scheme of history, unique to the modern era, and, like postage stamps, subject to the possibilities of an uncertain future. As such, postage stamps are not only collectible but also memorable and significant cultural artifacts that provide a constant reminder of the privileges we enjoy.

NOTES

1. R. Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness* (London: Routledge, 2003).

2. Kristi S. Evans, "The Argument of Images: Historical Representation in Solidarity Underground Postage, 1981–1987," *American Ethnologist,* 19, no. 4 (1992): 749–767; Peter Jones, "Posting the Future: British Stamp Design and the 'White Heat' of a Technological Revolution," *Journal of Design History,* 17, no. 2 (2004): 163–176; M. P. Moffatt and S. G. Rich, "Postage Stamps, Past and Present, as Avenues of Learning," *Journal of Educational Sociology,* 24, no. 2 (1950): 110–119.

3. John Walton, "Theory and Research on Industrialization," *Annual Review of Sociology,* 13 (1987): 89–108.

4. Nori-zso Tolson and Terry Green, *American Stamps,* video documentary (San Franciso: twenty2products, 2008).

5. M. T. Koenig, "Nursing in Stamps," *The American Journal of Nursing,* 41, no. 3 (1941): 254–260; R. A. Jones, "Heroes of the Nation? The Celebration of Scientists on the Postage Stamps of Great Britain, France and West Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History,* 36, no. 3 (2001): 403–422; "Black Academics Honored with Postage Stamps," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education,* 18 (1997): 78.

6. P. Raento and S. D. Brunn, "Visualizing Finland: Postage Stamps as Political Messengers," *Geografiska Annaler,* 87, no. 2 (2005): 145–163; Jack Child, "The Politics and Semiotics of the Smallest Icons of Popular Culture: Latin American Postage Stamps," *Latin American Research Review,* 40, no. 1 (2005): 108–137; Frederick Lauritzen, "Propaganda Art in the Postage Stamps of the Third Reich," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts,* 10 (1988): 62–79.

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8. Cheryl Ganz, Daniel Piazza, and M. T. Sheahan, eds., *Delivering Hope: FDR and Stamps of the Great Depression* (Washington, D.C.: National Postal Museum, 2009). Published in conjunction with the exhibition "Delivering Hope: FDR and Stamps of the Great Depression" shown at the National Postal Museum, Washington, D.C.

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Introduction to the 2011 Symposium

The Smithsonian National Postal Museum, American Philatelic Research Library (APRL), and the American Philatelic Society jointly sponsor the symposia, which have been held annually since 2006. The format of the 2011 symposium was similar to past symposia held at the American Philatelic Center in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, with the paper presentations distributed across two days, allowing ample time between sessions for viewing the 150 frames of invited stamp and postal history exhibits, purchasing stamps, covers, and ephemera from the philatelic dealers, researching in the APRL, and conversing with fellow attendees. Five select papers from the 2011 symposium on "How Commerce and Industry Shaped the Mails" follow.

David Hochfelder's keynote address, "Do We Still Need a Postal System? Thoughts on a Twenty-First-Century Federal Communications Policy" (see pp. 1–7), was presented at the symposium banquet on Saturday evening where the United States Stamp Society (USSS), a symposium cosponsor for 2011, celebrated their eighty-fifth anniversary. The USSS is a nonprofit, volunteer-run association of collectors that promotes the study of the philatelic output of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and postage- and revenue-stamped paper produced by others for use in the United States and U.S. administered areas. Once concerned exclusively with the production of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the USSS has expanded its field of study to include all United States issues, both classic and modern, regardless of printer.

Rural Americans, Postcards, and the Fiscal Transformation of the Post Office Department, 1909–1911

Daniel Gifford

> The post office deficit is "a scandal and a public disgrace," ensuring "postal reform [is] bound to come" with a glaring need "to abolish inefficiency and introduce still further modern business methods."[1]

Although the above collection of quotes describes a situation that we might find very familiar today, it is actually a narrative that played out across countless newspapers and magazines in 1909 and 1910. When the Post Office Department closed the books on the fiscal year ending 30 June 1909, a deficit of more than $17 million was reported. At the time, it was the largest deficit ever recorded by the department, and investigations, recriminations, and proposed solutions began almost immediately. Two years later, when the fiscal year ended on 30 June 1911, the Post Office announced that the deficit had been entirely wiped clean, and it could now report a surplus of just over $200,000.[2]

Although the numbers were documented in official annual reports, each of these announcements was met with some skepticism and revisionism from various interests, both at the time and since. Some claimed there was no deficit, much less a record-breaking one, in 1909; others claimed there was no surplus and that the math was just a game of smoke and mirrors. As is so often the case, the truth probably lies somewhere in the middle. However, in this particular instance it can be argued that the actual numbers are less relevant than recognizing an important overarching fact: in the course of twenty-four months some sort of significant transformation occurred.

That significant transformation of the Post Office Department, whatever the actual numbers, is made all the more interesting when placed in a historical context. It occurred with notable synchronicity to the peak of the postcard-sending craze of the early twentieth century, a popular phenomenon deeply connected to the business of the post office. This historical coincidence is notable in part because it was almost entirely overlooked or ignored by the department and its attending commentators at the time. But the evidence reveals even more than a simple oversight. By teasing out the connections between three distinct elements—the Post Office Department's fortunes, the postcard craze of the early twentieth century, and the Rural Free Delivery (RFD) system—it is possible to revise our understanding of this particular episode in postal history. Such a revision illustrates both a historically significant confluence of people and events and the importance of looking at history from the bottom up.

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From the very beginning in 1909 when the $17 million shortfall was announced, Postmaster General Frank Hitchcock kept the blame on two specific causes: "Recent investigations have shown that the two great sources of loss to the postal revenues are second-class mail matter and rural delivery. The loss on second-class mail matter has been increasing for many years until it now amounts to more than $64,000,000. The loss from rural delivery, a service begun hardly a dozen years ago, and of unprecedented growth, reaches nearly $28,000,000."[3] Critics on both sides quickly began sparring over the question of second-class mail and America's prodigious consumption of magazines and periodicals, but few demonstrated an inclination to attack the Rural Free Delivery. As the *Independent* suggested in language that was exemplary of the discussion: "The deficit is credited to the rural free delivery and the carrying of second class mail matter at ruinous rates, but there is no sign of a reduction in the rural free delivery service, which is so greatly appreciated."[4]

The conventional wisdom surrounding the Rural Free Delivery (Figure 1) was that it helped boost revenue through patterns that flowed from city to countryside. Testifying before a 1908 House subcommittee, Postmaster General George Meyer pointed out, "it seems that the rural delivery, while not strictly self-sustaining, does add largely to the receipts. In other words, the correspondence comes from the centers to the people in the rural deliveries, and that is credited to the large post-offices."[5] The topic came up again in a post office–specific appropriation hearing. First Assistant Postmaster General Granfield told his subcommittee that rural routes had much more incoming mail than outgoing, suggesting that a postmaster with rural-delivery routes "will handle four or five times as much mail" than his peers without such routes.[6]

This was, perhaps, a fairly common-sense assumption, that mail would flow out from concentrations of people to more sparsely populated areas. In fact, specific analysis in the 1909

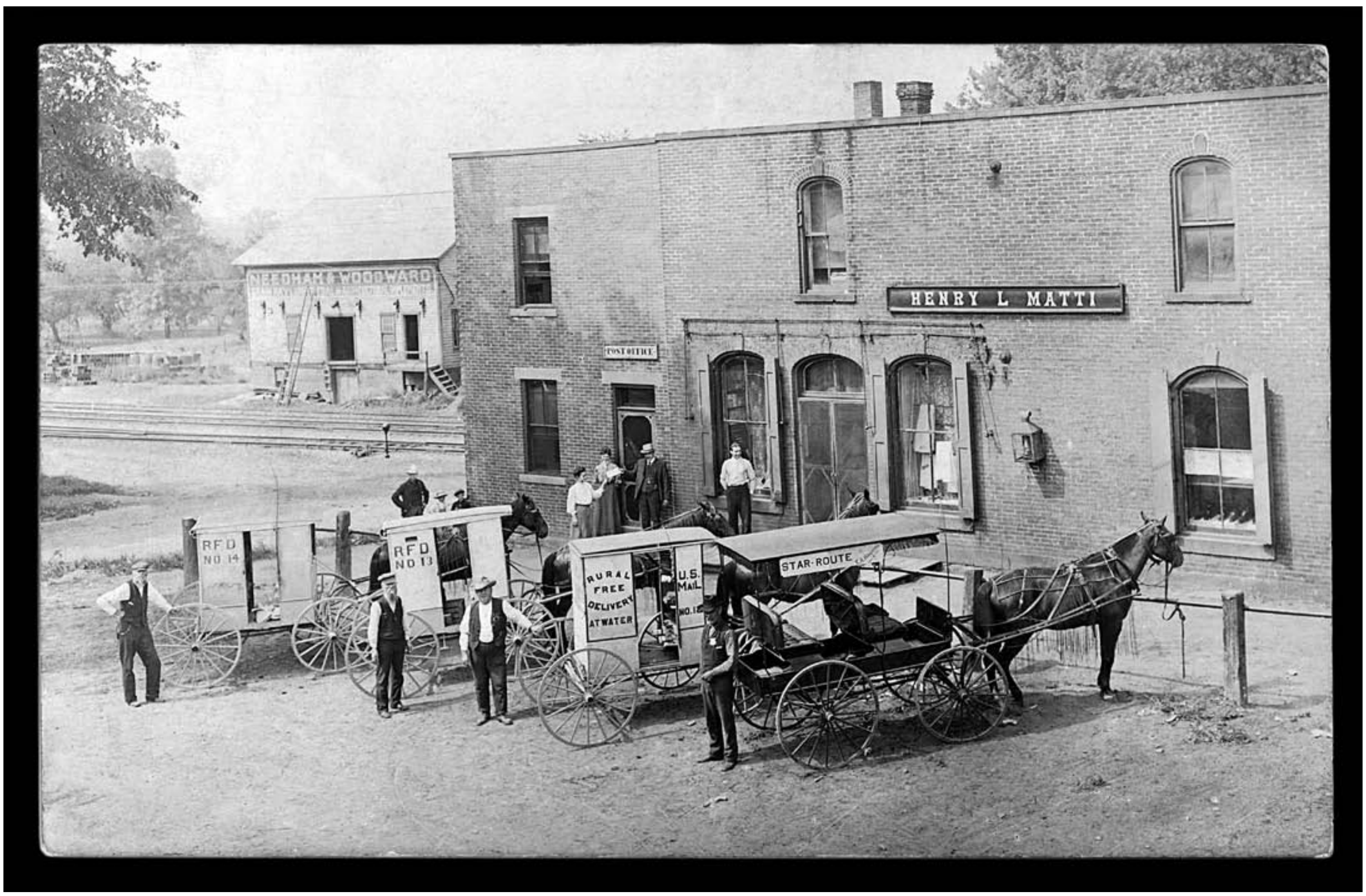


FIGURE 1. Amateur photograph postcard of Atwater, a coal mining town in Portage County, Ohio. This scene emphasized its postal connections: situated right by the railroad line of the Pennsylvania Company, it had three Rural Free Delivery routes and one Star Route. The people at the post office door were posed handing off a registered package envelope. Several copies of this postcard image have survived, indicating that some local entrepreneur reproduced it, perhaps for sale at Henry L. Matti's store. From the collection of Richard D. Sheaff.

annual report seemed to demonstrate exactly that. Looking at the increase of mail, both collected and delivered along Rural Free Delivery routes between 1905 and 1909, the report showed an increase in every category of mail delivered along those routes. And that increase in the mail delivered always exceeded the increase of the amount of mail collected along those same rural delivery routes in every category of mail except for one. The exception to the rule was postcards. Between 1905 and 1909 there was a 410% increase of postcards delivered to rural routes. But there was an 846% increase in the number of cards collected along those same routes, more than double the increase of those delivered. It is worth reemphasizing that of the six categories of mail, it was the only one that showed a larger jump in collected than delivered.[7]

Postcards were a huge national phenomenon in the early twentieth century. Post Office figures for the year ending 30 June 1908 cite more than 667 million postcards mailed in this country (Figure 2).[8] On the basis of 1910 census numbers, that would be seven postcards a year for every man, woman, and child in the nation, and that does not even count postcards collected in albums and boxes and never mailed. Further, postcards extended far beyond pictures of courthouses, public squares, and hotels.

These so-called view cards were joined by countless greeting cards for every possible occasion, including all major holidays (Figure 3). Bjarne Rogan of the University of Oslo, in looking at all types of postcards on a global scale (indeed, the fad stretched beyond the United States to Canada, Great Britain, the European continent, and parts of Asia and South America), suggests that "roughly estimated, between 200 and 300 billion postcards were produced and sold" during the golden age of the phenomenon.[9]

However, new research into postcard distribution patterns here in the United States suggests that postcard use skewed in favor of rural and small-town Americans. A survey of 2,000 postcards in "To You and Your Kin: Holiday Images from

FIGURE 2. Published photograph postcard of Healdsburg, California. Large printing companies such as M. Rieder of Los Angeles canvassed small towns to find both a potential market for selling postcards and a local publisher, such as Mervyn D. Silberstein in Healdsburg, willing to front the costs. Silberstein, who until 1909 owned a photographic supply store in Healdsburg, was also the photographer of this and a wide range of other postcards. From the collection of Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris.

FIGURE 3. Amateur photograph postcard of Buffalo, Wyoming. The image was taken by Mrs. Kennedy, one of many sent to her daughter Helen at St. Mary's Academy in Notre Dame, Illinois. The camera was probably a Kodak No. 3A Brownie, the least expensive of the models available in 1910 at $12. The size 122 film could be developed on postcard stock by mail or locally by entrepreneurs at home or in shops such as pharmacies. This widely available camera greatly increased the number of postcards emerging from small towns. From the collection of Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris.

America's Postcard Phenomenon, 1907–1910" helps to illustrate these trends.[10] In this survey, the addresses on the backs of early twentieth century postcards were compared to census records. A tabulation of the demographic information from these records (seen in Figure 4) suggests that 69% of recipients were from communities of less than 10,000 individuals (the first three columns of Figure 4 show rural populations, i.e., less than 2,500, 2,500–4,999, and 5,000–9,999). Had that figure been proportional to national demographics it would have been closer to 64%. Looking at communities of less than 10,000 is significant because this formed the Post Office Department's population-based threshold for free city delivery. Only communities of 10,000 or greater were guaranteed free delivery service.

Again, one might assume that this reflected a flow into rural areas from urban centers; however, it is important to remember postcard collection along rural routes increased eightfold as the postcard fad grew. A variety of period articles, quite often in passing or casual references, strengthens the case that postcards were the exception to the from-city-to-country rule. An article on the flow of mail into and out from New York City is a representative example: "Uncle Sam never before reaped as rich a harvest as the result of the post card fad during this Easter season. Out of town trains have carried here 40 per cent more than the average amount of mail, and have taken back [i.e. from the periphery to the center] *even a larger percentage of increase*."[11] Even stronger evidence comes from one exasperated postcard dealer in Waterloo, Iowa, who wrote, "We have tried for a long time to drum it into the heads of the producers of post cards that a majority of the business is done in country towns."[12]

As this rural connection to postcard use thus becomes more defined,[13] the question still looms as to how postcard use—rural, small town, or otherwise—could affect Post Office Department deficits and surpluses (Figure 5). Part of the answer lies in the fact that the twenty-four months that defined the fiscal

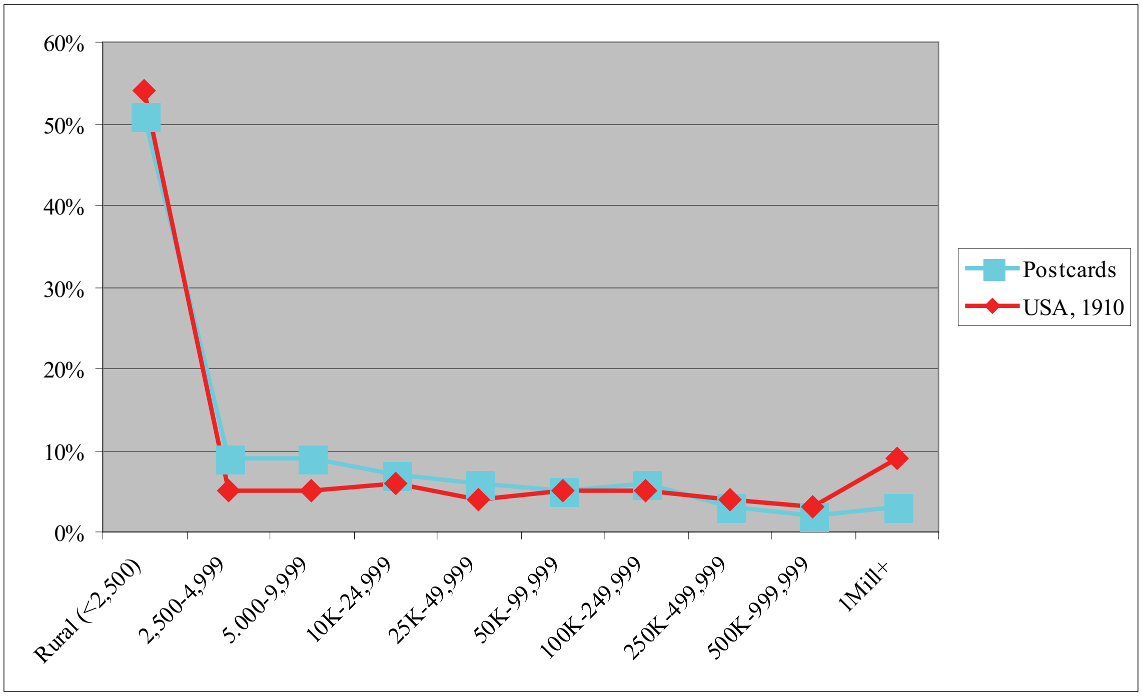


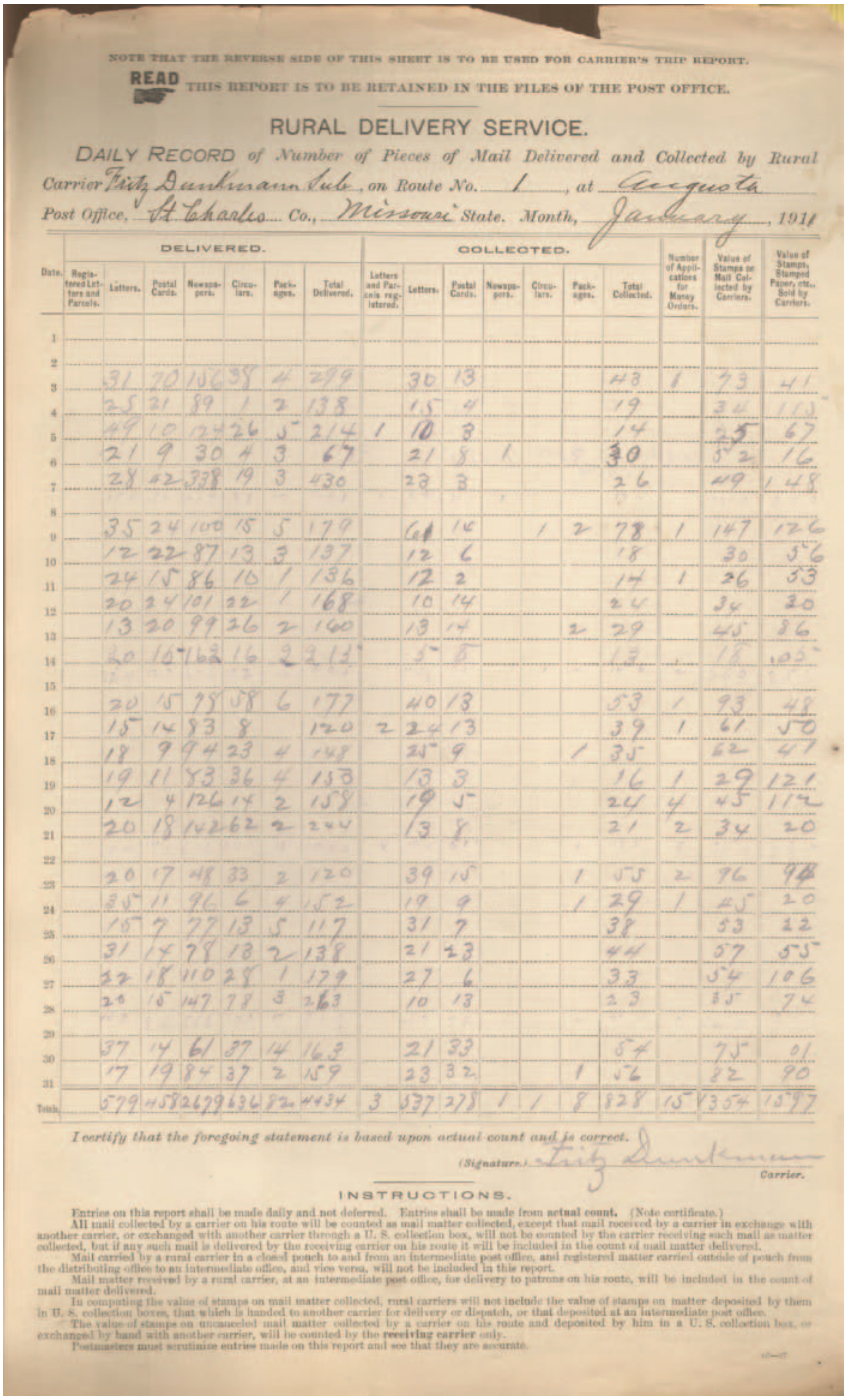
FIGURE 4. Results of the 2,000-postcard survey versus the 1910 census, population.

transformation of the Post Office Department included half of 1909 and all of 1910. This also corresponds to the peak of the postcard phenomenon as illustrated by additional analysis of the aforementioned 2,000-card survey. Postmarks from those cards show the peak occurring in either 1909 or 1910.[14] Post office statistics likewise show the peak in sales of 1¢ stamps, the postage needed for mailing a postcard, occurring in the fiscal year that included half of 1910 and the beginning of 1911.[15]

One can thus begin to see the contours of this historical coincidence. The overlay of the fiscal turnaround of the Post Office Department did not just match the postcard fad generally. The timing of the transformation between 1909 and 1911 corresponded to the actual peak—the commercial apex—of one of the greatest postal-based phenomena of the twentieth century. But it is worth explicitly asking if there is anything more substantial than that. Can any true cause and effect between the two be related when post office reports and records are surprisingly mute on the topic? Popular columnist Frederic Haskin certainly thought so and walked his readers through the mathematics: "It requires an average of 120 post cards to weigh a pound, and thus the Post Office Department receives $1.20 a pound for carrying post cards, as against an average of transportation of 9 or 10 cents a pound. The post card business is very profitable to the Post Office."[16]

The Post Office found itself in fiscal trouble in 1909 and was out of it by 1911, the same spread of months that a national craze boosted the very profitability of processing, transporting, and delivering the mail. If Post Office Department documents from any number of departments (finance, stamps, or even the postmaster general himself) failed to note this rather obvious coincidence, there was one lone voice whose official record hinted at the possibility. And this voice belonged to Fourth Assistant Postmaster General Peter De Graw, the man in charge of nothing less than the Rural Free Delivery. Writing his annual report for the fiscal year ending 30 June 1909, the very same one in which the dreaded deficit was announced, De Graw concluded that the Rural Free Delivery routes had seen a 96% increase in the amount of mail handled, an increase that could be attributed "especially to letters and postal cards, the latter due to the enormous use of souvenir and picture postcards."[17]

Paired with the other evidence, there is much significance that can be drawn from this passage. Of all the postal officials who *could* discuss postcards as one of the most significant postal phenomenon of the day, it was the man most intimately involved with rural users' patterns of mail who chose to do so. It is also worth pausing to consider the irony of this 1909 annual report. On the one hand, it announced a record deficit and suggested that the cause of that deficit rested (at least partially) within the Rural Free Delivery System. And yet, on the other hand, one finds the man in charge of that very same "excessive" system noting that "the enormous use of" postcards was, in fact, nearly doubling the amount of mail within that system. As Frederic Haskin pointed out, such a doubling of mail by postcards in particular must have represented some sort of profit-boosting center for the very Post Office Department that seemed to be struggling.



NOTE THAT THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS SHEET IS TO BE USED FOR CARRIER'S TRIP REPORT.

READ THIS REPORT IS TO BE RETAINED IN THE FILES OF THE POST OFFICE.

RURAL DELIVERY SERVICE.

DAILY RECORD *of Number of Pieces of Mail Delivered and Collected by Rural Carrier* Fritz Dunkmann Sub, *on Route No.* 1, *at* Augusta *Post Office,* St Charles *Co.,* Missouri *State. Month,* January, *1911*

Date.	Delivered: Registered Letters and Parcels.	Delivered: Letters.	Delivered: Postal Cards.	Delivered: Newspapers.	Delivered: Circulars.	Delivered: Packages.	Total Delivered.	Collected: Letters and Parcels registered.	Collected: Letters.	Collected: Postal Cards.	Collected: Newspapers.	Collected: Circulars.	Collected: Packages.	Total Collected.	Number of Applications for Money Orders.	Value of Stamps on Mail Collected by Carriers.	Value of Stamps, Stamped Paper, etc., Sold by Carriers.
1																	
2																	
3		31	20	156	38	4	299		30	13				43	1	73	41
4		25	21	89	1	2	138		15	4				19		34	113
5		49	10	124	26	5	214	1	10	3				14		25	67
6		21	9	30	4	3	67		21	8	1			30		52	16
7		28	42	338	19	3	430		23	3				26		49	148
8																	
9		35	24	100	15	5	179		64	16		1	2	78	1	147	126
10		12	22	87	13	3	137		12	6				18		30	56
11		24	15	86	10	1	136		12	2				14	1	26	53
12		20	24	101	22	1	168		10	14				24		34	30
13		13	20	99	26	2	160		13	14			2	29		45	86
14		20	16	162	16	2	213		5	8				13		18	105
15																	
16		20	15	78	58	6	177		40	13				53	1	93	48
17		15	14	83	8		120	2	24	13				39	1	61	50
18		18	9	94	23	4	148		25	9			1	35		62	47
19		19	11	83	36	4	153		13	3				16	1	29	121
20		12	4	126	14	2	158		19	5				24	4	45	112
21		20	18	142	62	2	244		13	8				21	2	34	20
22																	
23		20	17	48	33	2	120		39	15			1	55	2	96	98
24		35	11	96	6	4	152		19	9			1	29	1	45	20
25		15	7	77	13	5	117		31	7				38		53	22
26		31	14	78	13	2	138		21	23				44		57	55
27		22	18	110	28	1	179		27	6				33		54	106
28		20	15	147	78	3	263		10	13				23		35	74
29																	
30		37	14	61	37	14	163		21	33				54		75	01
31		17	19	84	37	2	159		23	32			1	56		82	90
Totals.		579	458	2679	636	82	4434	3	537	278	1	1	8	828	15	1354	1597

I certify that the foregoing statement is based upon actual count and is correct.

(Signature.) Fritz Dunkmann

Carrier.

INSTRUCTIONS.

Entries on this report shall be made daily and not deferred. Entries shall be made from **actual count.** (Note certificate.)

All mail collected by a carrier on his route will be counted as mail matter collected, except that mail received by a carrier in exchange with another carrier, or exchanged with another carrier through a U. S. collection box, will not be counted by the carrier receiving such mail as matter collected, but if any such mail is delivered by the receiving carrier on his route it will be included in the count of mail matter delivered.

Mail carried by a rural carrier in a closed pouch to and from an intermediate post office, and registered matter carried outside of pouch from the distributing office to an intermediate office, and vice versa, will not be included in this report.

Mail matter received by a rural carrier, at an intermediate post office, for delivery to patrons on his route, will be included in the count of mail matter delivered.

In computing the value of stamps on mail matter collected, rural carriers will not include the value of stamps on matter deposited by them in U. S. collection boxes, that which is handed to another carrier for delivery or dispatch, or that deposited at an intermediate post office.

The value of stamps on uncanceled mail matter collected by a carrier on his route and deposited by him in a U. S. collection box, or exchanged by hand with another carrier, will be counted by the **receiving carrier** only.

Postmasters must scrutinize entries made on this report and see that they are accurate.

FIGURE 5. U.S. Post Office Department form 5502, the daily record of substitute Rural Delivery Service carrier Fritz Dunkmann on Rural Route 1, Augusta, St. Charles County, Missouri, for January 1911. Records for the first five months of 1911 show that 2,738 postcards were delivered on the route and 1,761 postcards were collected (versus 3,126 letters delivered and 2,767 collected). Easter was on 16 April in 1911, and 881 postcards were delivered in April versus 373 in May and 447 in March, holiday cards being especially popular. From the collection of David L. Straight.

By April 1910, ten months after the fiscal year when De Graw credited postcards as raising the bulk of the RFD, the fourth assistant postmaster general was able to bask in the glow of good news. In a speech to a gathering of postmasters in Florida, De Graw made an announcement that is worth quoting at length:

> The enormous cut in the so-called postal deficit during the last quarter of the year 1909, as shown by the report of the Auditor just issued, developed a most healthy surplus as well as breaking all records for the largest three months of business in the history of the postal service. These results following the harsh and unfounded criticisms which have recently been hurled at the Post Office Department and its personnel by persons endeavoring to divert attention from certain facts in connection with the service and to create an impression that rural delivery is the principle source of expense to the Department, are, to say the least, proof of the soundness of the old adage: "He who laughs last laughs best."[18]

It is interesting to note that De Graw does not make any suggestion of what might account for those "largest three months of business" within the postal service or the Rural Free Delivery specifically, which was, after all, under his purview. Indeed, cost-cutting measures and organizational consolidation were the most often cited reasons for the turnaround. But those very same months were the ones that the *Boston Globe* had noted (again, somewhat casually): "The Christmas increase in the volume of mail is fully as great *and in many instances greater, in the rural districts* than in the city." It was within this same article that it had reported, just a few paragraphs earlier, that "now that the Christmas sentiment is conveyed by the picture postcard the holiday avalanche of these souvenirs is most decidedly a force to be reckoned with. Millions upon millions of these cards are transmitted every December" (Figure 6).[19]

The evidential links are there: during the months that postcards reached their zenith of popularity, the Post Office went from deficits to surpluses, all while contemporaries noted the huge flow of mail, and profit-boosting postcards in particular, into and out from rural America. However, none of these links suggest that postcards single-handedly saved the Post Office Department. Rather, their purpose is to increase—perhaps even complicate—our understanding of the narrative by introducing an important agent of historical change that De Graw conspicuously omitted in his 1910 remarks: the actual users of the Rural Free Delivery. It is the flow of "millions upon millions" of postcards sent by real people, "greater in the rural districts than in the city," that deserves at least some of the credit for the fiscal transformation of the Post Office Department between 1909 and 1911.

Even though the Rural Free Delivery was blamed as a source of record Post Office Department deficits, most Americans were willing to bestow a certain paternalistic largess upon their country cousins. As one period source put it, "The rural public is isolated, lonely, and wishes the social pleasures of printed matter, pictures and the like frequently renewed. Each postal-card arrival is a surprise, a little mystery, a change from routine."[20] And if the RFD was never truly in danger (even as the Post Office Department searched for answers to their deficit dilemma), then perhaps it is also possible to dismiss the role of the "rural public" in helping facilitate a fiscal turnaround, just as they were dismissed in 1910 and 1911 from the narratives that described that turnaround.

FIGURE 6. Christmas postcards like this one were what the *Boston Globe* described as "a force to be reckoned with." The trope of Santa in an entirely rural setting was dominant during the fad. In this image, he is so isolated he needs a megaphone to convey his Christmas wishes. A great many holiday greeting postcards were published in Germany for the American market in the first two decades of the twentieth century. From the collection of Dan Gifford.

Still, nothing was a given in those months of financial transformation. Fourth Assistant Postmaster General Peter De Graw himself acknowledged "harsh and unfounded criticisms" when behind closed doors and among friends in Florida. Commentators in periodicals such as *Life* and *Banker's Magazine* hinted at discontent by pointing out that "cities are taxed to build country roads and to pay for rural delivery" and gently mocking those who "contend that the post office is a great educational agency, and no one should object if its expenditures are greater than its income."[21] What has been lost in this dominant narrative of urban benevolence is that it was the rural public who ultimately silenced such critics by actually helping to erase the offending deficit through their patterns of postcard use. It was rural and country town Americans who, through their embrace of a popular fad, built a lifeline to a struggling Post Office Department. It was a lifeline built one postcard at a time.

NOTES

1. Quotes, in order of placement, are from "Secular News," *Christian Observer*, 12 January 1910, 23; "Postal Department Bitterly Attacked," *New York Times*, 30 November 1910, 20; "Post Office Reform," *Outlook*, 5 February 1910, 285.

2. *Post Office Department Annual Reports for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1909* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1910); *Post Office Department Annual Reports, 1911* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1912); Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris, "Geographic Distributions of the Postal Economy: U.S. in 1900," *Postal History Journal,* No. 142 (February 2009): 27–38

3. "Report of the Postmaster General, December 1, 1909," in *Post Office Department Annual Reports, 1909* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1910), 6

4. "Postal Affairs," *The Independent . . . Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature, and the Arts,* 67, 2 September 1909, 497–498.

5. *Hearings Before Subcommittee of House Committee on Appropriations, Consisting of Messrs. Bingham, Gillett, Brick, Livingston, and Burleson, in Charge of the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Appropriation Bill for 1909* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1908), 407.

6. Committee on Post Office and Post Roads, United States Congress, *Post Office Appropriation Bill, 1910* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1908), 29.

7. "1909 Report of the Postmaster-General; Fourth Assistant—Rural Delivery," in *Post Office Department Annual Reports, 1909,* 352. It should be noted that in terms of sheer numeric volume of cards, those delivered still outstripped those collected; however, unlike other categories of mail such as periodicals and packages, this does not necessarily indicate patterns that flowed from city to country. In fact, postcards fostered connections between networks of community and kin that likely kept postcards circulating in tightly confined circles of rural and small-town America.

8. Dorothy B. Ryan, *Picture Postcards in the United States, 1893–1918* (New York: C. N. Potter, 1982), 22.

9. Bjarne Rogan, "An Entangled Object: The Picture Postcard as Souvenir and Collectible, Exchange and Ritual Communication," *Cultural Analysis,* 4 (2005): 1.

10. The survey pulled from a national random sample of postcards made possible by monitoring eBay auctions of postcards and comparing scans of mailed postcard backs (i.e., recipients and their addresses) to relevant census records. The remarkably consistent results were tabulated across four surveys of 500 and then aggregated in a final total of 2,000. For complete information on how the survey was constructed and executed as well as additional findings (beyond rural and small audiences, other emergent demographics include northern populations, white women, and Anglo-Saxon and Germanic heritages), see Daniel Gifford, "To You and Your Kin: Holiday Images from America's Postcard Phenomenon, 1907–1910," (Ph.D. diss., George Mason University, Fairfax, Va.), especially chapter 1, "We Gather Together: Finding Audiences within the American Postcard Fad."

11. "Easter Post Card Craze Swamps Gotham Offices," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 April 1908, 6. Emphasis added.

12. "Says Best End of the Business Comes from Small Country Merchants," *Novelty News*, December 1911, 100.

13. Still more evidence is available. For example, many period commentators noted the shift from postcard use to telephone use. Such interchangeability was possible in part because the audiences were so similar: early telephone adoption was also primarily a rural phenomenon. See Claude S. Fischer, *America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1992); Gifford, "To You and Your Kin," 175–177.

14. Gifford, "To You and Your Kin," 45–46.

15. See "Division of Stamps" section of *Annual Reports*, 1909–1913.

16. Frederic Haskin, "Post Cards," *Washington Post*, 22 June 1910, 5.

17. "1909 Report of the Postmaster-General; Fourth Assistant—Rural Delivery," 351–352.

18. Address of Assistant Postmaster General DeGraw to postmasters of Florida at Ocala, 13 April 1910. Division of Rural Mail, entry 184, no. 6, box 1, National Archives and Records Administration, 2.

19. "Handling the Christmas Mails," *Boston Daily Globe*, 19 December 1909, SM3. Emphasis added.

20. Arthur H. Gleason, "The Investors' Viewpoint," *The American Review of Reviews*, October 1912, 470.

21. "How Cities Help the Country," *Life*, 1 December 1910, 981; "Comment," *Banker's Magazine*, October 1909, 504.

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Order No. 10: Post Office Protection of the Express Cartel

David L. Straight

When magazine publisher and bank president E. G. Lewis sought to revolutionize American mail-order commerce by offering free postal checking, the postmaster general accused him of mail fraud. Lewis was denied the right to receive mail, forcing his bank into receivership. The express cartel, which had blocked any post office improvements that threatened their monopoly, was also opposed to Lewis's bank. By closing the bank, postal officials favored the express companies, their competition, over an entrepreneur who was generating postal revenue.

On 6 July 1905 Postmaster General George B. Cortelyou signed his tenth administrative order of the new fiscal year, "It having been made to appear to the Postmaster General, upon evidence satisfactory to him, that the People's United States Bank, its Officers and Agents as such, and E. G. Lewis at Saint Louis, Missouri are engaged in conducting a scheme or device for obtaining money through the mails by means of false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises." He instructed the St. Louis postmaster to "return all letters, whether registered or not, and other mail matter which shall arrive at your office directed to said parties to the postmasters at the offices at which they were originally mailed, to be delivered to the senders thereof, with the word 'Fraudulent' plainly written or stamped upon the outside of such letters or matter."[1] The fraud order took effect upon being issued, meaning that Lewis and the bank immediately stopped receiving their mail (Figure 1).This decision by the postmaster general presumed guilt until innocence could be proven. For the People's Bank, or any business dependent upon the mails, such a loss of service was fatal.

Lewis was primarily a publisher of women's magazines (Figure 2). Postmaster General Cortelyou also intended to revoke the second-class mailing permits for his magazines on the same day he issued the fraud order. The loss of favorable postage rates would make publication of the magazines unprofitable. Postal Inspector Robert M. Fulton, heading the investigation of the People's Bank, linked the two businesses in a telegram to the Post Office Department, "Situation quite acute on account of its importance and because Woman's Magazine now receiving second-class privileges largely by sufferance of department is, and has been, the vehicle for promotion of bank and for Lewis schemes. I suggest concerted action part of Assistant Attorney and Third Assistant."[2] It was the responsibility of the assistant attorney general for the Post Office to recommend fraud orders to the postmaster general; the third assistant postmaster general was responsible for issuing or revoking second-class mailing permits. Internal strife within the Post Office Department delayed revocation of the second-class permits until March 1907. This delay of twenty months in suppressing *The Woman's Magazine* provided Lewis with a national platform from which to fight back against the Post Office and draw attention to the injustice of the attacks on his business enterprises. Fraud orders, to protect the public from unscrupulous

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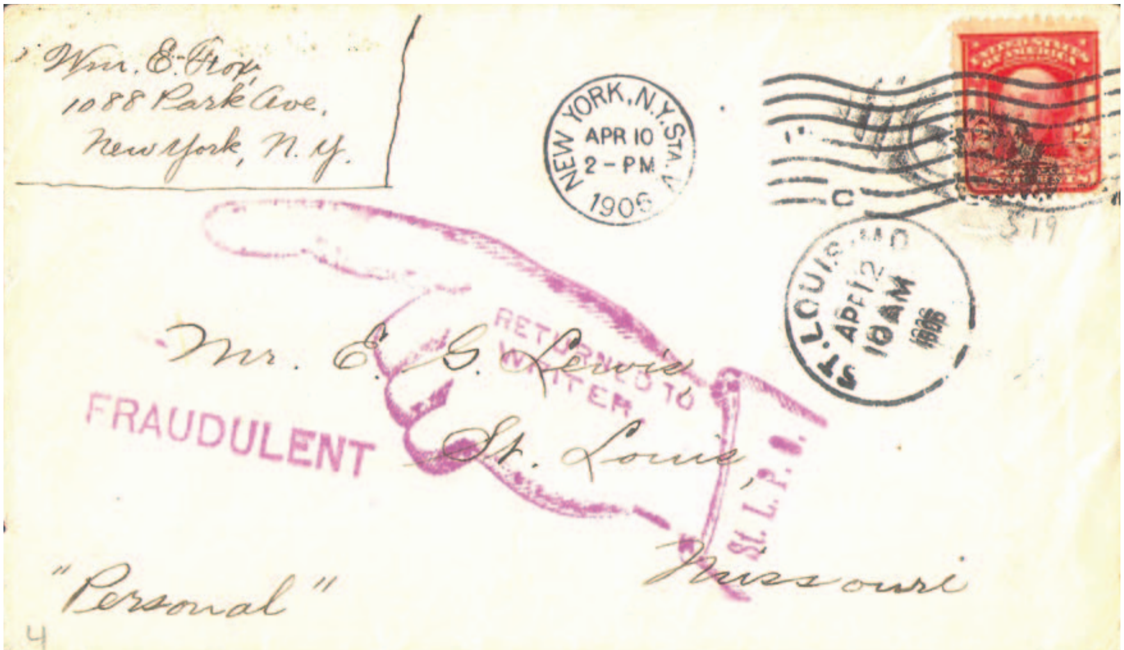

FIGURE 1. A 1906 letter addressed to E. G. Lewis returned to the sender, as instructed by the postmaster general, rather than delivered to him. From the collection of David L. Straight.

FIGURE 2. By 1904, Lewis was mailing 1.5 million copies of *The Woman's Magazine* each month. Courtesy of the Archives of the University City Public Library, University City, Missouri.

use of the mails, and classification decisions as to the suitability of publications for favorable second-class rates were routine administrative actions undertaken a few hundred times each year in the early twentieth century. However, no fraud order or mail classification decision of that era was rendered with such defamatory publicity, resulted in widespread public and press speculation about political intrigue, generated books and articles by the participants, or received such lengthy congressional scrutiny. Cortelyou's two-year tenure as postmaster general was defined by his relentless pursuit of the Lewis case.[3]

George Bruce Cortelyou (Figure 3) was descendent from an old New York Dutch family. He worked as a stenographer and court reporter before going into government service, first as a clerk in the Post Office Inspector's Office for New York in 1889. In making his hiring recommendation, Inspector William D. Wheeler noted that Cortelyou was "a staunch Republican."[4] Two years later, he transferred to Washington as the private secretary to the fourth assistant postmaster general. Cortelyou advanced rapidly. After completing a bachelor of law degree at Georgetown University in 1895, he was appointed President

FIGURE 3. An engraved die proof of George Bruce Cortelyou (1862–1940), postmaster general, 1905–1907. Courtesy of the U.S. Postal Service.

FIGURE 4. Edwin Gardner Lewis (1869–1950), publisher of *Woman's Magazine* and president of the People's United States Bank. Courtesy of the Archives of the University City Public Library, University City, Missouri.

Cleveland's chief clerk. The next year Cortelyou earned a master of law degree at George Washington University. With the change of administration, Cleveland recommended him to President McKinley as a private secretary. Following McKinley's assassination, Theodore Roosevelt made Cortelyou his chief of staff, where he transformed the White House staff into a more professional organization. After serving as the first secretary of commerce and labor, Cortelyou became chairman of the Republican National Committee to secure Roosevelt's election in 1904.[5] Following the election, Cortelyou began the precedent of the chairman of the national committee becoming the postmaster general. While in that job, he continued his political activities, recommending "strong Republicans" for federal appointments. He did not resign from the national committee until January 1907.[6]

In publishing, Edward Gardner Lewis (Figure 4), the son of an Episcopal rector, found a line of work that suited his promotional talents. He had dropped out of Trinity College to go on the road selling watches, patent medicine, and insecticide. Having suffered a business failure, he arrived in St. Louis in 1899 with no money. Always the promoter, he talked a local bank into loaning him $5000 to purchase a small magazine, *The Winner*, which he renamed *The Woman's Magazine*. He added the companion, *Woman's Farm Journal*, in 1901. By lowering the subscription price to only 10¢ per year, which more than covered the cost of postage, and the advertising rates to a uniform $6 per line per issue, Lewis profited from high-volume circulation and strong advertising revenue. By 1904, he published one of the highest-circulation American women's magazines, mailing a million and a half copies a month from his printing plant in University City, Missouri, the town he founded on the edge of St. Louis. Although he aspired to emulate the *Ladies Home Journal*, his magazine was among many dime-a-year publications during the early twentieth century. Each monthly issue of *The Woman's Magazine* contained short stories, melodramatic romances, practical articles for homemakers, and pithy sayings. Lewis's own "Heart to Heart Talks with the Editor" served as the pulpit for his reform ideas, including women's suffrage, education reform, and postal banking. The last would be his undoing.[7]

That Lewis, a populist magazine publisher, would venture into the seemingly unrelated field of banking reflects the lack of financial services available to his mostly rural *Woman's Magazine* and *Woman's Farm Journal* subscribers. This problem was not unique to his readers. Data compiled in 1909 show one bank in America for each 5.4 post offices (each one representing a town). Although the average post office served an area of 50 square miles, each bank served 270 square miles. Since these statistics do not reflect the concentration of banks in urban areas, most rural areas actually had far less than one bank for each 5.4 post offices or towns.[8] Even for those with access to a bank, the lack of a national clearinghouse made checks mailed out of town unwelcome or accepted only subject to large collection fees that paid an express company to transfer cash or gold from one bank to another. Although the Post Office had introduced money orders in 1863, by 1904, the year the People's Bank was chartered, they were available at fewer than half of the post offices in the country.[9] The Post Office did not provide a secure, convenient means for many Americans, especially rural households, to transmit money when purchasing products from the mail-order houses that advertised in magazines. The other payment option, in towns having an agent, was the express companies, who specialized in transporting gold and currency. For Lewis, the People's Bank was simply a means to serve his readers while increasing business for his advertisers, who in turn would boost the profitability of his magazines.

By 1905, there was already a long history of legislative attempts to remedy this banking shortage through emulation of the postal banking services offered in most European countries. The first postmaster general to recommend postal savings in the United States was John A. J. Creswell in 1871.[10] Eighty bills were introduced in Congress, with the first in 1873, before postal savings legislation was finally enacted in 1910.[11] There were 1,319 savings banks in the United States in 1906, compared with 65,600 towns large enough to have a post office. Seventy percent of the savings banks were concentrated in just four states, whereas 24 states had no savings banks at all.[12] The Post Office was keenly aware that although postal money orders paid no interest and cost the depositor a small fee to purchase, they were being used as form of savings. The Emporia, Kansas, postmaster reported a record number of uncashed money orders subject to payment at his office: "we attribute this to the purposely holding of the orders by the payees, thus make us a place of deposit."[13] For the year ending 1 March 1908, the Post Office reported 127,623 money orders, totaling $8,054,894 sold for savings purposes at first- and second-class post offices.[14] Those large post offices in towns more likely to have banks represented less than 3% of the total. With the growth of mail-order business during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the lack of a means to transmit money easily through the mail became a growing concern. In 1902, Postmaster General Henry C. Payne observed that a large proportion of the population was "not able to buy money orders or bank drafts without great inconvenience. It is not unreasonable to expect from the Government that it will provide an easy, convenient, and safe method to transmit small sums." Noting the rapid growth of rural free delivery, "the use of postal checks would go far to provide the relief so urgently demanded, as it would conveniently serve those sections of the country not heretofore covered by or adjacent to money-order offices or the banks of the country."[15] C. W. Post, the inventor of Grape Nuts cereal, observed these difficulties first hand. He had given testimony to Congress in favor of postal checking and in 1905 wrote to Postmaster General Cortelyou, "the average, so far as we have been able to compute, from examination and investigation of commercial mail, shows that only about one letter in twenty, that contains some form of small remittance, contains a postal money order. The remaining 19 letters contain loose silver, paper money, or stamps, liable to be abstracted, or checks on small inland banks, subject, of course, to collection charges to be paid by the recipient. All of this inconvenience creates a serious obstacle to the transaction of business, so far as it relates to small sums."[16]

Had Lewis merely used his editorial columns to call for postal banking services, he would have joined a long parade of postmasters general, editors, postal reformers, businessmen, and rural grass roots organizations whose voices had been largely ignored by Congress. Instead, he took the innovative step of organizing a postal bank (Figure 5).

Lewis negotiated with five major banks, strategically located in New York, Chicago, New Orleans, Seattle, and San Francisco, to accept and clear checks drawn on his bank, for up to $10, without service charges. These checks, freely accepted anywhere in the country without a service charge, were the most revolutionary feature of the People's United States Bank.[17] In 1904, through lectures during the St. Louis World's Fair and in his *Woman's Magazine* editorials Lewis actively promoted his bank.

His readers immediately began mailing currency and gold coins (Figure 6) for both deposit accounts and shares of stock. By the time the bank opened in March 1905, more than $1 million had been received (Figure 7).

Was the People's United States Bank a fraudulent scheme, as charged by the postmaster general? Evidence gathered by the postal inspectors in their fraud investigations normally resides in the Fraud Order Case Files at the National Archives. The file box for 1905 held a neat row of numbered, gray legal jackets, folded in fourths and standing on edge under a layer of dust.[18] Most jackets contained the postmaster general's fraud order, a statement from the U.S. attorney handling the case, and the original evidence gathered in the investigation, such as patent medicine ads, lottery tickets, or fake gold watches. For the Lewis case (Fraud Order Jacket No. 2277), the original file contents from 1905 had been replaced with pages 130–148 cut from "Relief of the Lewis Publishing Company" published in 1911 by the House Committee on Claims, wrapped in a sheet of typewriter paper. These pages reprint a 26 June 1905 memorandum from Russell P. Goodwin, assistant attorney general for the Post Office Department, recommending the fraud order against Lewis and the People's Bank. Goodwin quotes extensively from numerous

FIGURE 5. Checks, freely accepted anywhere in the country without a service charge, were the most revolutionary feature of the People's United States Bank. Courtesy of the Archives of the University City Public Library, University City, Missouri.

FIGURE 6. Gold coins, wrapped in newspaper and a flannel shirt and tied with a pair of suspenders, mailed to the People's Bank. Courtesy of the Archives of the University City Public Library, University City, Missouri.

Lewis publications; reports by Inspectors Fulton, Stice, and Sullivan; and Lewis' statements during his 16–17 June 1905 hearing before Goodwin. The picture of Lewis that emerges is of a dreamer or promoter, not overly attentive to administrative details. The several Lewis business enterprises are entwined and all suffer from chaotic bookkeeping. As none of the investigators' original reports or transcripts of the hearing have survived, there is no means to evaluate Goodwin's interpretation of his sources. The loss or destruction of the original documents in the Lewis case and this substitution probably occurred shortly after the congressional committee investigated the Post Office Department's handling of the Lewis case, long before the files were transferred to the National Archives.

Sources outside the Post Office Department strongly support a conclusion that the People's Bank, although not well managed, was not a fraudulent enterprise. On 12 June 1905, the Missouri secretary of state, John E. Swanger, wrote to Postal Inspector Fulton that the board of directors of the People's Bank had been reorganized with his approval, stock certificates were being issued, and irregularities were being corrected. Of the \$2.5 million in capital, all but \$100,000 had been paid, and the deadline required by law was not until November.[19] The state bank examiners believed that the People's Bank was solvent and operating within the banking laws of the state of Missouri. When the fraud order prevented the People's Bank from communicating with their account holders, they were forced into receivership. With funds available in the bank, the state-appointed receiver paid the depositors 100% of the money in their accounts and stockholders received back 85% of their investments.[20] Finally, when Lewis was tried for mail fraud in the U.S. District Court in St. Louis in May 1908, Judge Riner directed a not guilty verdict and wrote in his judge's memorandum, "after carefully reviewing the evidence the court is of opinion that the evidence of the good faith of the defendant is overwhelming, and that the charge of a fraudulent purpose in devising and carrying this scheme into effect is not

$100 DOLLARS

PEOPLES UNITED STATES BANK

CAPITAL $2,500,000.

St. Louis, Mo. JUL 6 1905 190

This Certifies that Mary E. Hodgdon Hyde Park Mass

has deposited in the Peoples United States Bank the sum of One Hundred Dollars

payable Ten years after date, on return of this

PROFIT SHARING CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSIT

properly assigned. This certificate is entitled to share in the profits as provided in the rule or regulation endorsed on the reverse side and made a part hereof. This certificate ceases at its maturity to share in the profits, and is payable on demand after that time with interest from said maturity at the rate of one per cent per annum until paid.

This Certificate is transferable only in person or by attorney upon the books of this bank.

PAID SEP 2 1905

BANKING OFFICE: WOMAN'S MAGAZINE BUILDING, UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS. ST. LOUIS COUNTY, MISSOURI.

No. 736

CASHIER. PRESIDENT.

FIGURE 7. A certificate for $100 worth of stock in the People's United States Bank. Courtesy of the Archives of the University City Public Library, University City, Missouri.

sustained."[21] The next day the *Cleveland News* opined, "The verdict has corroborated everything that was said about Lewis in a book recently published by Edwin C. Madden . . . that Lewis was the innocent victim of persecution instigated by express companies upon whose money order business Lewis' bank had encroached."[22]

If the People's Bank was not a fraudulent enterprise, was the prosecution of Lewis an honest mistake by overzealous public officials? Perhaps, as Lewis had a prior record of questionable business practices. Four times between 1899 and 1901, *The Winner* magazine was investigated as to the legitimacy of its subscribers. When the magazine reorganized as *The Woman's Magazine*, a temporary mailing permit was granted, and there was no further investigation until 1905.[23] In 1903, James N. Tyner, the assistant attorney general for the Post Office, and Harrison J. Barrett, his assistant from 1897 until the end of 1900 and a relative of his wife, were indicted for conspiracy to defraud. When Barrett left the Post Office, he entered private law practice, including representing clients at Post Office hearings. Rather than recommending fraud orders to the postmaster general, the pair was "extorting large amounts of money from these fraudulent institutions under the guise of fees for legal services in preventing the issue of fraud orders against them." One of those firms, the Progressive Watch Company, owned by Lewis, was accused of offering watches for 10¢ in an "endless chain" scheme. Also, while he had worked for the Post Office, Barrett had accepted a gold watch from Lewis for the "kind and courteous treatment he had received at the hands of Barrett in disposing of the case."[24] In 1903, the Post Office investigated the World's Fair Contest Company, a Lewis scheme in which contestants purchased opportunities to guess the total attendance at the St. Louis World's Fair for 25¢ each. The prize for the most accurate guess was $25,000, with prizes totaling $85,000 to be awarded. In response to the investigation, the attorney general ruled that guessing contests were not lotteries and were lawful in the mails. As the fair was near to closing, on 28 November 1904 Attorney General W. H. Moody reversed the opinions of his predecessors, ruling that guessing contests were the same as lotteries and were therefore barred from the use of the mails under the fraud statutes. The World's Fair Contest Company awarded the prizes and concluded with a profit.[25] All of these cases were well known to the postal inspectors in St. Louis.

Alternatively, was the prosecution of Lewis a conspiracy as charged in books written by two participants? Lewis's own

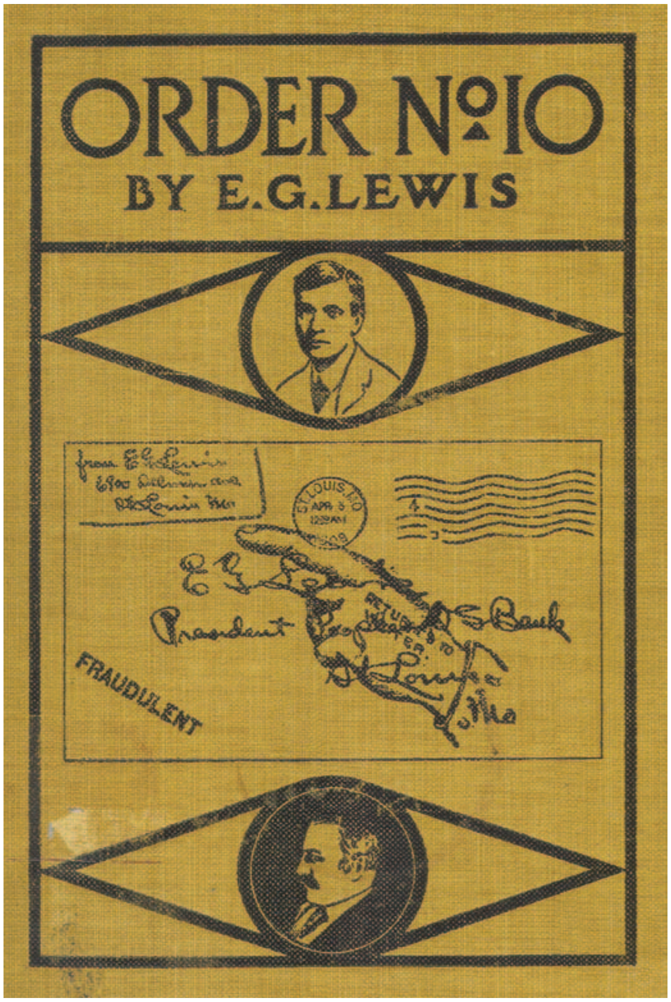

FIGURE 8. E. G. Lewis told his version of the events in *Order Number Ten*; Postmaster General Cortelyou is at the bottom of the cover. From the collection of David L. Straight.

book, *Order Number Ten*, certainly could not be considered an objective source (Figure 8).[26]

The second, *The U.S. Government's Shame*, by former Third Assistant Postmaster General Edwin C. Madden is a bit more complicated to assess.[27] Mail classification, specifically whether a magazine qualifies for mailing at the greatly reduced second-class rates, was one of the duties of the third assistant. Cortelyou and the postal inspectors sought to revoke the second-class mailing permits for the Lewis magazines, effectively barring them from the mails, at the same time the fraud order was signed. Madden refused to sign such an order, arguing that Lewis had not violated the second-class mail regulations and furthermore that a fraud order against a publisher for another business did not automatically disqualify their magazine from second-class mail rates. Their disagreement continued until Cortelyou forced Madden to resign and then signed the order revoking the second-class mailing permits himself, just before he became Secretary of the Treasury. Although Madden may not be objective about Cortelyou, his former boss, the book asks the important question, who benefited from the destruction of the People's Bank?

Madden makes thinly veiled references to the role of the express companies in the attack on the People's Bank. Express companies played a vital role in America financial affairs from the destruction of the Second Bank of the United States in the 1830s until the creation of the Federal Reserve Banks in 1913. They moved gold and currency to balance accounts and complete financial transactions. The Postal Act of 1845, by declaring a postal monopoly on letter mail, barred the express companies from carrying letters. At the same time, the Post Office agreed not to compete with them for the transportation of packages or the secure delivery of gold, currency, and valuables. Following the Civil War, the five largest express companies organized an express cartel that not only set rates and stifled competition but also manipulated Congress to prevent the passage of legislation allowing the Post Office to compete with them by offering postal banking or parcel post services.[28] The express companies had blocked postal savings and parcel post legislation for over three decades.

In 1905, the key to their legislative defense was one of their own, the powerful New York Republican Senator Thomas Collier Platt (Figure 9). Born in Owego, New York, in 1833, Platt combined politics and business at an early age. He rose rapidly after allying himself with Roscoe Conkling in 1870. Platt became a director of the United States Express Company in 1879 and their president the following year; he held that post until his death in 1910. During that time, he served two terms, 1897–1909, in the U.S. Senate. Senator Platt was the New York Republican power broker. An 1899 letter to Governor Theodore Roosevelt, instructing him to veto a certain piece of legislation in the state assembly, reveals Platt's strong bias, "The Republican party now stands and must stand for the next few years as the only barrier between the business interests of this country and a deluge of ruinous Populism."[29] When Roosevelt consistently declined to follow advice, Platt had him sidelined as the vice-presidential candidate on the Republican ticket in 1900. In the letter quoted earlier, C. W. Post reports that the forces opposed to postal banking legislation "include the express companies, headed by Senator T. C. Platt, of New York, President of the United States Express Company." He continues, "We have met heretofore serious opposition by Senator Platt's appointee, Ellis H. Roberts, Treasurer of the United States." Although no documentary evidence has been found in the Platt Papers at the Yale University Library or the Cortelyou Papers at the Library of Congress, I believe, as Madden did, that Senator Platt could easily have asked the postmaster general to look into the Lewis matter for him.

It was not actually necessary for the Post Office to prove mail fraud in order to discredit Lewis. Loss of mail delivery along with the defamatory publicity accompanying the fraud order were sufficient to destroy the People's Bank long before

FIGURE 9. Thomas Collier Platt (1833–1910), president of the United States Express Company, 1880–1910, and U.S. Senator from New York, 1897–1909. From *History of the Express Business* by Alexander L. Stimson (New York: Baker and Godwin, 1881).

any fraud case would come to trial. The afternoon that Lewis received his summons to appear at the Post Office Department in Washington to answer charges against him and the bank, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* broke the story under the headline "State Officers Investigate $2,500,000 Mail Order Bank of Edward G. Lewis; Postal Inspectors Ask Fraud Order." Nearly two pages of the newspaper were devoted to stories about Lewis and the bank.[30] One story suggested that Lewis had an ulterior motive in establishing the bank, "The inspectors say in their reports that some of the other companies organized by Lewis are in debt; hence, the necessity of organizing a bank, in order to have ready cash from which to supply the needs of these companies."[31] Curtis A. Betts, the *Post-Dispatch* reporter who broke the story, testified under oath that Postal Inspector W. T. Sullivan had leaked the confidential report of the Lewis investigation to him and that it had been set in type at the *Post-Dispatch* for over a week, waiting for the appropriate time to run. When Betts visited Sullivan in the his office in May 1905, the inspector held up the copy of the report on the Lewis investigation for Betts to see, placed it in a half-closed desk drawer, and left the room saying, "Excuse me, I have to go out into the other room a moment." Under questioning, Betts explained, "If I had not thought that Col. Sullivan intended me to get that report—by his actions and everything that happened there that day—I would not have taken the report."[32] Responding to the national press attention surrounding Lewis and the People's Bank, the Post Office Department published two pamphlets in 1905 defending the People's Bank fraud order and one in 1907 defending its *Woman's Magazine* decision.[33] No other fraud orders or second-class permit decisions were the subjects of published government documents before the cases were brought to trial.

Although the People's Bank met an urgent national need, was not fraudulent, and did not compete with any postal service, it challenged the long-standing relationship between the Post Office, the private express companies, and Congress. If the People's Bank succeeded in establishing a national checking system without service charges, the express companies stood to lose two important sources of revenue: fees from the sale of express money orders and the fees from clearing checks for banks. The People's Bank was competing in a business arena that had been the exclusive province of the express companies for six decades. The People's Bank, or any mail-order business that generated a volume of letters, would have produced revenue for the Post Office. The express companies, on the other hand, were competitors, who sought to keep a lucrative business away from the Post Office. In their destruction of the People's Bank, the Post Office Department appears to have placed political considerations for a senator and the protection of his industry from a rival business above its own revenue stream. Self-serving business interests that controlled Congress not only prevented the Post Office from providing banking and parcel services common in other industrialized nations but also manipulated the Post Office into attacking Lewis and People's United States Bank. Within six decades, the Post Office had moved from not competing with the private express companies in 1845 to suppressing a business that threatened express company profits in 1905.

Not content to leave matters entirely in the hands of the Post Office Department, the express cartel sacrificed its own revenue to embargo the People's Bank. In 1912, Sidney Morse, writing in *The Siege of University City: The Dreyfus Case of America*, reported that after the Post Office fraud order had been issued, the express companies, although in no way required to do so, instructed their agents to refuse to accept packages or sell money orders addressed to Lewis or the People's Bank.[34]

In March 1913, after publishing more than 10,000 pages of testimony regarding all aspects of the life and business ventures of E. G. Lewis and the Post Office conduct toward them, the House Committee on Expenditures in the Post Office Department

FIGURE 10. The five-story octagonal building that appears on the People's Bank checks and stock certificates was the offices of the Lewis Publishing Company. Today it is the city hall for University City, Missouri. From the collection of David L. Straight.

concluded, "The Government has been ill-served in this whole matter."[35] They further concluded that Lewis did not commit fraud, only that he was "imaginative" and that the Post Office should cease all investigation of Lewis and his business ventures. They recommended that the power to determine whether a publisher was entitled to a second-class permit mail should be better safeguarded and that persons charged with mail fraud might know the charges against them and have access to the postal inspector's reports.[36] Impoverished but unbroken, E. G. Lewis salvaged a little cash from his property in University City and moved to Atascadero, California, in 1914 with a scheme to establish a new town. In 1928, he was convicted of mail fraud and sentenced to five years in a federal penitentiary (Figure 10).

However, University City, Missouri, continues to thrive and uses the Lewis Publishing Building as its city hall. After becoming secretary of the treasury, George B. Cortelyou published an article defending his actions without naming Lewis specifically: "Over 2,400 fraud orders have been issued by the Department, but in less than thirty cases has the propriety of the order been challenged, and in none has the Court held that it was erroneous or unwarranted."[37] In a letter to a critic after Lewis was found not guilty of mail fraud, he wrote, "I had nothing whatever to do with any indictments secured against Mr. Lewis. My sole relation to the case was in issuing the fraud order against the bank, which I believed at the time was justified, and have seen no reason to change my opinion."[38] When Roosevelt's term ended, Cortelyou retired from government service to become president of the Consolidated Gas Company of New York. Senator Thomas C. Platt declined to stand for reelection in 1908, retired from the Senate in 1909, and died in 1910. Without his Senate protection, the Post Office encroached on the express business. Postal savings began in 1911 and Parcel Post in 1913. The Federal Reserve Banks created a national clearinghouse for checks, eliminating the need for express companies to move cash and gold to clear checks and balance accounts. Mailing checks became the most common form of payment in America until the advent of electronic payment services.

NOTES

1. The original "Order No. 10" is bound into *Miscellaneous Orders of the Postmaster General*, page 640, in the United States Postal Service Library. The document is reproduced in Sidney Morse, *The Siege of University City: The Dreyfus Case of America* (St. Louis, Mo.: University City Publishing Company, 1912), 450–451

2. Robert M. Fulton to Chief Post Office Inspector, telegram, 31 May 1905, reproduced in *Hearings before the Committee on Expenditures in the Post Office Department House of Representatives on House Resolution 109 to Investigate the Post Office Department*, part 12, 12 July 1911 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1911), 811.

3. Although it is difficult to separate the two actions, this paper will focus primarily on the People's Bank and the fraud order. The second-class mailing permit was covered in David L. Straight, "E. G. Lewis, Edwin C. Madden, and the Destruction of The Woman's Magazine" (paper presented at the Missouri Conference on History, Kansas City, Mo., April 2011).

4. William D. Wheeler to E. G. Rathbone, chief post office inspector, 12 October 1889, George B. Cortelyou file at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri.

5. *Biographical Directory of the United States Executive Branch, 1774–1971,* ed. Robert Sobel. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1971), 67–68; Daniel Y. Meschter, "The Postmasters General of the United States: XLII. George Bruce Cortelyou, 1905–1907," *La Posta*, no. 237 (July 2009): 28–30.

6. Dorothy Ganfield Fowler, *The Cabinet Politician: The Postmaster General, 1829–1909* (New York: Columbia University, 1943), 287.

7. Susan Waugh McDonald provides a good analysis of *Woman's Magazine* in "Edward Gardner Lewis: Entrepreneur, Publisher, American of the Gilded Age," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society,* 35 (April 1979): 154–163.

8. Edwin W. Kemmerer, *Postal Savings: An Historical and Critical Study of the Postal Savings Bank System of the United States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1917), 10–11.

9. For the fiscal year ending 30 June 1904, *Postal Statistics of the United States, 1789–1911* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1911) shows 71,131 post offices, with only 35,094 providing money order service.

10. *Annual Report of the Postmaster General* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1871), XXVIII.

11. *Postal Savings Depositories,* 61st Cong., 2d sess., 1910, S. Rep. 125, Appendix G, 63–66, lists all of the bills introduced.

12. *To Establish Postal Savings Depositories,* 60th Cong., 1st sess., S. Rep. 525, 1908, 146.

13. *Postal Savings Depositories*, 60.

14. *Postal Savings Depositories*, 93.

15. *Annual Report of the Postmaster General* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1902), 19.

16. C. W. Post to Postmaster General Cortelyou, 5 December 1905, George B. Cortelyou Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

17. "The Certified Check System," The *People's United States Bank Reporter,* 1, no. 2 (April 1905): 13.

18. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 28, Post Office Department, Entry 50, "Fraud Order Case Files." The Lewis case is box 26, Jacket 2277.

19. John E. Swanger to Robert M. Fulton, 12 June 1905, reproduced in Hearings before the Committee on Expenditures, 750–751.

20. Frederick Essen, receiver, People's United States Bank, to Alexander Del Mar, 5 February 1906, reproduced in Alexander Del Mar, *Report on the People's United States Bank of St. Louis* (St. Louis, Mo., 1906).

21. *United States vs. E. G. Lewis, No. 5315 Judge's Memorandum*, box 39, George B. Cortelyou Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

22. "Dangerous Authority," *Cleveland News*, 18 May 1908, box 39, George B. Cortelyou Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

23. James J. Britt, "The Lewis Publishing Company v. the Post Office Department," in *Hearings before the Committee on Expenditures*, 9745–9747.

24. Joseph L. Bristow, *Report of the 4th Assistant Postmaster General in Matter of Investigation of Post Office Department* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1903), 36–37, 66–67.

25. Britt, "The Lewis Publishing Company," 9752–9753.

26. Edward Gardner Lewis, *Order Number Ten: Being Cursory Comments on Some of the Effects of the Great American Fraud Order* (St. Louis, Mo.: University City Publishing, 1911).

27. Edwin C. Madden, *The U.S. Government's Shame: The Story of the Great Lewis Case* (Detroit, Mich.: National Book, 1908).

28. Peter Z. Grossman, "Contract and Conflict: A Study of the Express Cartel" (Ph.D. thesis, Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, Mo., 1992).

29. Senator Platt to Governor Theodore Roosevelt, 6 May 1899, Thomas C. Platt Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

30. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* "State Officers Investigate $2,500,000 Mail Order Bank of Edward G. Lewis; Postal Inspectors Ask Fraud Order," 31 May 1905:1, 4.

31. Curtis A. Betts, "Details of Report Asking Fraud Order," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* 31 May 1905:4.

32. Testimony of Curtis A. Betts, in *Hearings before the Committee on Expenditures*, part 44, 4377–4380.

33. These were *Opinion of Smith McPherson, Judge of Circuit Court, Eastern District of Missouri, in case of People's United States Bank v. Henry J. Gilson, Henry P. Wyman, and Frank Wyman no. 5192, in Equity* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1905) and *Memorandum of Postmaster-General, as Embodied in Statement to Press, July 9, 1905, in Relation to Issuance of Fraud Order, July 6, 1905, Against People's United States Bank and E. G. Lewis of St. Louis, Mo.* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1905), both of which were reprinted in 1907, and *Statement in Matter of Withdrawal of 2d-class Mailing Privilege from Woman's Magazine and Woman's Farm Journal Issued by Lewis Publishing Company of St. Louis, Mo.* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1907).

34. Sidney Morse, *The Siege of University City: The Dreyfus Case of America* (St. Louis, Mo.: University City Publishing, 1912), 522–524.

35. *Report on the Lewis Publishing Co. and Various Lewis Enterprises by the Committee on Expenditures in the Post Office Department House of Representatives under H. Res. 109 to Investigate the Post Office Department*, 62nd Cong., 3d sess., H. Rep. 1601, parts 1–2, 1913, 3.

36. *Report on the Lewis Publishing Co.*, 4–7.

37. George B. Cortelyou, "Frauds in the Mail: Fraud Orders and Their Purposes," *The North American Review,* 184 (19 April 1907): 815.

38. George B. Cortelyou to G. B. Hische, 23 May 1908, box 39, George B. Cortelyou Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

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Postmarking Records, Cancellations, and Postmaster Pay

Erick Lee Erickson

Fourth-class post offices were required to keep a record of the impressions of their postmarks. This paper analyzes postmark records from three fourth-class offices of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, paying special attention to loose-leaf sheets recovered from an archaeological investigation of an abandoned post office building in eastern Colorado. These sheets contain a unique and significant record of the value of stamps cancelled at the post office from 1941 to 1945. This paper analyzes these records in the context of the celerity and certainty of mail service and the role that cancellations played in determining postmaster pay.

The U.S. Congress instructed the Post Office to let contracts for carrying the mail in the Star Route Act of 1845. Contracts were to be awarded to the lowest bidder who could guarantee satisfactory performance and provide rapid and secure service. The words "certainty, celerity and security" were so often repeated in bidding forms for these routes that a symbolic abbreviation of three stars or asterisks was used in their stead. Assistant Postmaster General Daniel Roper wrote of this in 1917, "The bids, which were considered as offering such guarantee were indicated by three stars to symbolize 'celerity,' 'certainty' and 'security'. In this way, the routes came to be known as star routes."[1] The stars symbolized the commitment of the Post Office Department to industrial age commerce. "Celerity," from the Latin *celaritas* for swift or quick, connoted rapidity, swiftness, and speed. Business thrives on speed. An economy grows only as fast as money can change hands. "Certainty" and "security" are necessary for an efficient system of transferable property rights. Businesses needed to contract through the mail. The stars encapsulated the department's operational philosophy that shaped the postal service.

Making time an input in the production process was fundamental to the quest for celerity, certainty, and security. As the railroad business had led the way in the development of time zones in the 1840s,[2] the Post Office demarked the business day in terms of the times of arrival and dispatch of mail. Recording the time at which the mail would leave an office fixed the starting point of a letter's timeline. The record of that fix was the dated postmark that was stamped on its cover. In the twentieth century, postmarking stamps also included killer bars to cancel postage stamps. With postmarks in place, celerity could be measured, certainty could be verified, and security could be enforced.

Some small offices dispatched mail two or more times a day, as carriers came in from and left for different distribution offices and railway mail stations. Most of the small, fourth-class post offices, whose postmasters, by definition, earned less than $1,000 in a year, received mail in and sent mail out only once a day. Nonetheless, the time of the dispatch of mail was so important to a system committed to commerce that every office was required to keep a record of the impressions of their postmarking stamps. "As a check on

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the correctness and legibility of the postmarking, the postal regulations require the postmaster to make an impression of the postmark on an office record every time any change is made in the die."[3] These records of postmarking impressions were to be kept on file at the office to be made available to authorities in the case of an inspection. The regulations insisted that "a record of postmarks showing every change made in the postmarking stamps shall be kept in chronological order in suitable record books or on loose leaf sheets supplied by postmasters. Immediately following a dispatch the postmarking stamp shall be changed to show the time of the next dispatch."[4]

The Post Office Department instituted this practice to reduce errors and discourage outright fraud. In particular, it wanted to prevent the practice of backstamping, applying a previous date to outgoing or incoming mail. The practice was prohibited "whether for the purpose of fraud or deception or to conceal delay or detention of mail matter."[5] An offence could result in the dismissal of the postmaster. Postmarking records would not, of course, prevent backstamping by unscrupulous postmasters, but these records revealed much about a postmaster's business practice. They gave inspectors an objective tool to use in their quest for celerity and certainty. Bad or incomplete records betrayed sloppiness and could ignite an inspector's suspicions. Besides providing insulation from such suspicion, good postmarking records could help honest postmasters resist pressure from nefarious customers. They were physical proof that the department took certainty, celerity, and security seriously and had adopted procedures to enforce its rules.

At the turn of the twentieth century, star route carriers delivered mail to and collected mail from over 70,000 offices of the fourth class. These offices compiled records of postmark impressions for each business day for over a century, but because they were repetitive and unremarkable, very few examples have survived. A record book of postmark impressions from the Milford, Iowa, office covering the business days between 15 July 1909 and 20 March 1912 is archived at the American Philatelic Research Library.[6] Impressions of postmarks for the days between 14 February 1891 and 15 July 1898 have been found in an outdated, incomplete account book from the Trego, Maryland, post office.[7] And over 1,000 loose-leaf pages of postmark impressions representing parts of four decades from the 1920s through the 1950s have been recovered from an archaeological dig at the site of an abandoned post office building in Fondis, Colorado.[8] Other examples may be found in private collections, but there has been no systematic study of such records. Figure 1 displays the Milford record book and a sample of the loose-leaf records from Fondis. These artifacts provide a unique view of postal business in what historian Wayne Fuller has called the "old system" of rural mail that predated and in isolated places continued concurrent with Rural Free Delivery until the system was reorganized in the1970s.[9]

The Milford, Iowa, record book contains seventy-nine pages of impressions generally arranged in ten rows of six circular date stamps, with each row representing one day of postal business. Two postmarks were in use at Milford; one of them was for dispatching mail that simply bore the name of the office on the top of the dial above the month, date, time, and year plugs in the center of the dial. The name of the state appears at the bottom of the dial. The other stamp had both city and state on the top of the dial and the abbreviation REC'D on the bottom beneath the month, date, time, and year plugs. This was clearly used to mark incoming mail. Mail was dispatched from Milford at least twice each day, probably in the morning and evening. Mail that arrived at the office or that was posted in the morning was stamped with the time set to 6:00 AM in the center of the dial. After the morning mail went out, the time plugs were changed to read 11:00 AM on both stamps. Once the afternoon mail went out, the time plugs were set to the end of the business day, 6:00 PM. Thus, each row of six stamp impressions represents one day of business, with impressions of two stamps for each of the three units of time.

Figure 2 displays a detail from the pages of the Milford postmark record book. The year plug on the receiving postmark has been inserted in such a way as to leave a blurred impression. Though this error must have been obvious to the postmaster, the year plug remained blurred through the first five months of 1911. Also, although the year stamp was changed to 1911 from 1910 on the first business day of 1911, the year was set back to 1910 on the posting stamp for the rest of the days in the first week of the new year. These and other errors, only one corrected with a hand strike from a pen, display a caviler attitude on the part of the postmaster to the accuracy of his postmarking stamps. Almost 20% of the postmarks in the Milford record book are in error. The same is true of the Trego postmark records, which were kept in the unused pages of an old "Millers"-style account book. The Trego records display many upside-down numbers and incorrectly set date, time, and month plugs. Furthermore, the marks from many days when the office was in operation are missing. The error rate in the Trego book is about 10%. The abundance of errors in these records support the contention of Richard Helbock that "unlike stamp collecting, where an inverted design causes great excitement, inverted dates, or portions of dates, are rather common in postmarks."[10]

The loose-leaf postmarking records recovered from an archaeological investigation of the trash from a building that once housed the Fondis, Colorado, post office are very different in this regard.[11] Only three errors have been detected in over 3,366 postmarks impressed on 1,122 sheets of paper, and the postmaster corrected one of these errors (an incorrect date) by hand. This accuracy is surely due to the diligence and care of the postmaster, but it may also owe much to the way these sheets were used. Besides simply impressing stamps on these sheets, the postmaster used them to record the actual times of the arrival and departure of mail, the identity of the carrier, business conditions, and a running tally of the value of stamps cancelled by the office each day. They were not just an artifact to be stored and produced in the case of inspection; they were a vital accounting tool to be used in the preparation of quarterly reports.

FIGURE 1. Postmarking records. (left) Milford, Iowa, record book. Source: Milford (Iowa) Post Office Documents, American Philatelic Research Library, Bellefonte, Pa. (right) Fondis, Colorado, loose-leaf records. From the collection of Erick Lee Erickson.

Fondis was a small, rural "post office town" founded in 1897 to serve homesteading dairy farmers. In 1920, 348 people resided in 78 households. Its population fell to 280 people in 58 households in 1940. This depopulation continued until the post office was closed in 1954. The building in which it was housed was abandoned in 1969 and has remained unoccupied ever since. Looters and vandals have removed all personal effects and furnishings, but the paper trash left behind was preserved by the arid climate of the high plains of eastern Colorado. This trash contained a wide collection of postal documents and forms, including money order receipts, registered mail tags, official correspondence, and loose-leaf postmarking records. Twenty-eight sheets have been recovered from the years 1920 and 1921 and five from 1931. Twenty-one sheets survive from 1953 and 1954. But fully 1,068 sheets have been recovered from the years 1941 through 1945.

The postmaster at Fondis during the decades in which the forms in Figure 3 were produced was Charles Newton Tripp. His tenure was from 1916 through 1934. His postmarking records evolved over time to accommodate changes in the mail carrier's route. Those from the 1920s contain one outgoing mail postmark, impressed in the top left corner in black ink. This circular date stamp includes the time designation, AM, at its center. The contract granted for carrying the mail at that time specified that the carrier should leave from Fondis at 7:00 AM and arrive in the town of Elbert by 11:30, a distance of 15 miles. The return trip was scheduled out of Elbert at 1:40 PM to arrive back in Fondis by 5:40.[12] These times were sufficient to admit travel by horse over poorly maintained dirt roads. Since the carrier was not likely to return until after business hours, there was no need to reset the postmarking stamp during the day; hence, only one

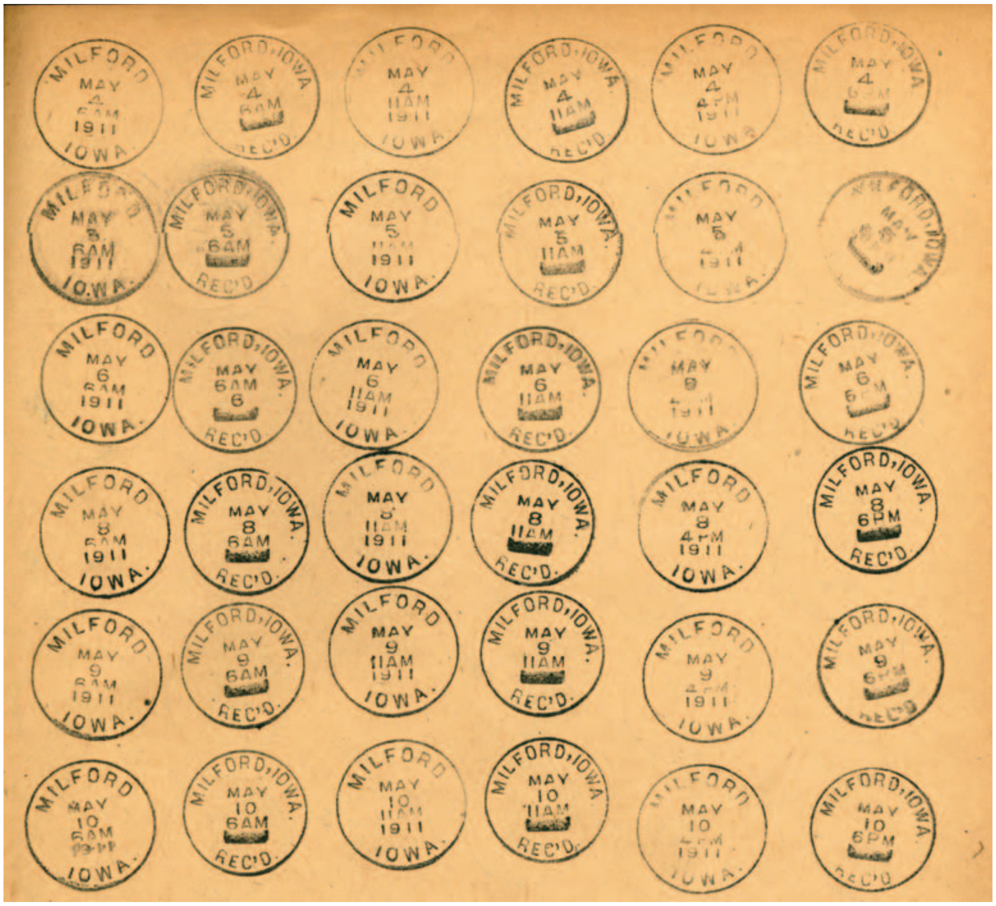

FIGURE 2. Detail of the Milford postmark records. Source: Milford (Iowa) Post Office Documents, American Philatelic Research Library, Bellefonte, Pa.

primary postmark was impressed on the sheet. All mail postmarked on that day was dispatched to Elbert the next morning. The office's money order business postmark is impressed in the top right corner in red ink, and the stamp that was used to date received mail is recorded in the bottom center of the sheet, also in red ink. These sheets include three columns of handwritten numbers, one beneath each stamp impression.

Only six sheets have been recovered from the 1930s, but they show significant differences from those of the 1920s. The primary postmarking stamp has been changed. Its font is different, and the spacing is wider between letters. These sheets contain two postmarks. The stamp impressed on the top left registers the hour of 9 AM and that on the right 11 AM. The department had changed the terms of the delivery contract to specify that mail was to be carried by automobile when "road and weather permitted." Also, the pattern of carriage now accommodated railroad timetables. The carrier was to leave from Elbert daily after the mail train arrived from Denver at about 10:45 AM and arrive in Fondis in 1.25 hours, where he would drop off the mail to that office and pick up any from it, leaving within a half hour after arriving. Mail that arrived at the Fondis post office before the daily dispatch to Elbert bore the 9 AM postmark. Mail that came in after the carrier left was cancelled with the 11 AM stamp and was dispatched on the next business day. On these sheets, the money order business mark is impressed in red in the top center beneath the postmarks, and a red date stamp followed by the designation REC, which was used to stamp received mail, is fixed at the lower center of each sheet. Like those from the 1920s, the sheets from the 1930s include three sets of handwritten numbers, one beneath each cancel and one at the lower right. The numbers beneath each postmark may denote the value of stamps cancelled with each mark. The pair of numbers recorded on the bottom left side of the sheet must represent the actual arrival and departure times of the carrier. In the example shown in Figure 3, the carrier arrived at 9:29 AM and departed at 9:54 AM. Charles Newton Tripp kept a check on the celerity and certainty of the carrier. These records would be useful to him in making up reports on the performance of star route contractors.

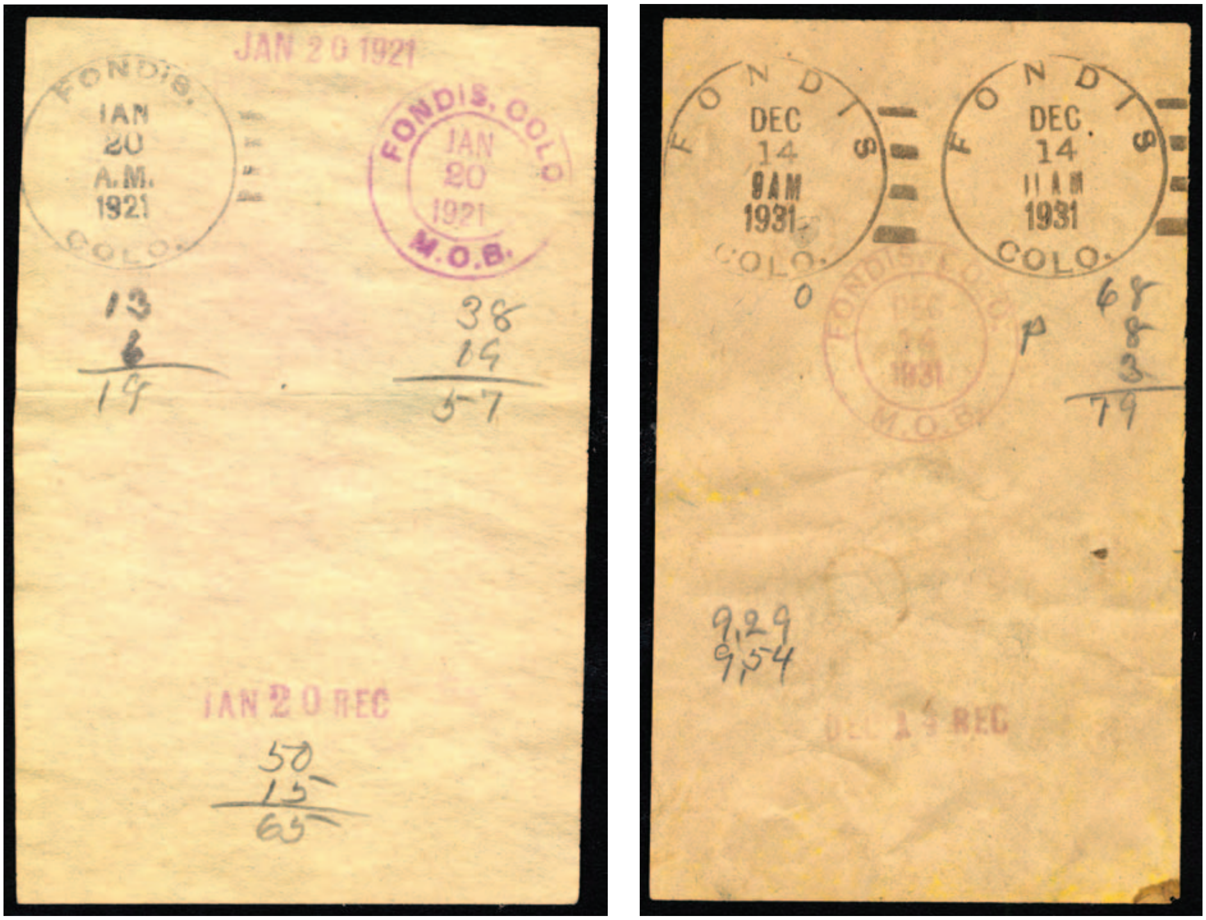

FIGURE 3. Fondis, Colorado, postmarking records from the 1920s and 1930s. From the collection of Erick Lee Erickson.

This is confirmed by the large number of sheets recovered from the 1940s. They are separate pages of paper 8 cm wide and 11 cm high (3⅛ in by 4¼ in.). They show no traces of gum along their edges. They were never bound but may have been stored in envelopes or boxes. The paper quality resembles newsprint. It is thin, brown, and has yellowed with age. One thousand and sixty-eight daily postmarking sheets from the years between 1941 and 1945 have been recovered from the Fondis post office building. No sheets have been found from the first six months of 1941. Sheets are also missing for the entire months of November 1942, March 1943, and October 1943. It may be that the records of these months were removed, disposed, or lost. In the fifty-one months represented in this collection, there were 1,324 potential business days. This means that 77% of the records produced over this period of time have been recovered and analyzed. See Figure 4.

These records were produced by a different postmaster, Newton's sister, Mary Tripp, who operated the office from 1934 until 1954. Her loose-leaf impressions, though, are similar to those her brother kept in the 1930s. However, a big change had occurred in the manner in which the office was served. The mail contract for this period specified that the carrier was to "leave Elbert on receipt of mail from train at 9:45 but not later than 11:30" and "arrive at Fondis in 1¼ hours."[13] The Colorado and Southern Railroad, which served Elbert, had changed their schedule from the last star route contract. Now, mail would be expected in Fondis at about 11:00 AM. An imprint of the postmark with the type slugs on the device set to the current day and the time of dispatch set to 10:00 AM is stamped in the top left corner of each form. Another black ink impression of the postmark with the same date but with the time set to 11:00 AM is stamped on the top right corner. These sheets also contain an impression of the money order cancellation stamp of the office, set to the current date and pressed in red ink onto the middle of the form, below the stamp cancellation impressions. This imprint is made in red ink. This stamp has the month and day (but not a time-of-day mark) in its center and the specification "Fondis. Colo. M.O.B." (money order business) on the dial. This impression has also been found on money order receipts that have been recovered from the trash in the building. A red day, date, and

FIGURE 4. Fondis, Colorado, postmarking records from the 1940s. From the collection of Erick Lee Erickson.

year stamp used for received mail is pressed on the lower center of each sheet. There are instances in which this stamp's date or month was initially impressed in error and was later corrected by hand. Several sheets have multiple identical rubber stamp marks.

In the lower right-hand corner of the obverse side of each sheet are two time notations, one listed above the other. The first time represents the actual time of the arrival of the daily mail from the post office at Elbert, Colorado. The second time is the actual time at which the carrier left Fondis to return to Elbert. The average of the actual arrival time over 1,068 days is 11:30 AM. The carrier's departure occurs, on average, 13 minutes later. Occasionally, other notes are added to these sheets near the register of actual arrival and dispatch times. These include initials or names of the mail carrier. Four carriers are identified in the recovered forms: J. H. Ehlers, Paul E., Mrs. J. H., and H. A. Eichoff. The last name, H. A. Eichoff, appears only once in December 1945. Although no names were recorded in 1941 and only a few were recorded in 1942, by 1944 and 1945, all sheets identified the mail carrier.

A few sheets betray some uncertainty about the identity of the carrier. One records "Mr. or Mrs. J. H." Another adds a question mark behind the name, "Mrs. J. H.?". It may be the case that, on occasion, the carrier just dropped the mail bag off on the porch and sped away without meeting the postmaster, leaving her to guess his or her identity. Whatever the case, these records show an impersonal relationship between this postmaster and mail carrier.

Sometimes notes about road conditions, weather, and holidays are written on the forms, but these are infrequent. Only 100 such notes have been found in over 1,000 forms. Nonetheless, they provide compelling proof that the time registers are indeed mail arrival and departure times. When notes of conditions that would likely delay mail delivery are included, the time entries are much later than average. On days when road conditions impeded the delivery of mail, the first time recorded on the forms averages one hour and eleven minutes later than the time recorded under normal conditions. On days when conditions were so bad that the mail could not get through, there is no time entry at all. Conclusive proof that these numbers record the actual time of mail arrival and departure is provided by a unique postmark record sheet shown in Figure 5.

The form shown in Figure 5 contains typical arrival and departure times, 11:29 and 11:35 in the morning. But, the note "no sack" is added and another pair of times is reported beneath the original register. When letter carrier J. H. Ehlers arrived at 11:29 AM, he discovered that he had left the Elbert post office

FIGURE 5. An error in mail delivery. From the collection of Erick Lee Erickson.

without the sack of mail destined for Fondis. He must have returned to Elbert, retrieved the misplaced sack, and took it with him back to Fondis. This would have been a one-hour round trip. The second pair of times recorded (12:23 and 12:39 PM) are one hour later than the first. This is the only form in the collection that shows two sets of time, and it is the only one to indicate an error in mail delivery. It verifies the assumption that these numbers are the actual times of mail delivery and departure. It also testifies to the celerity and certainty of rural mail service.

One of the most remarkable features of these postmarking record sheets is the columns of handwritten numbers that appear beneath each postmark impression. These sheets provided a convenient and obvious place for a postmaster to record daily business data. One of the most important bits of data to the postmaster was the value of stamps that she cancelled and admitted to the mail because her salary depended on cancellations. Postmasters of the fourth class were not admitted to the civil service and received no paycheck. Instead, the Post Office Department allowed them to keep a part of the money they earned from the sale of those stamps. The amount they were allowed to keep depended on the amount of stamps they cancelled at their office and increased at a diminishing rate. Postmasters submitted quarterly reports of their cancellations and, in the 1920s, could keep all of the first $80 of stamps that they cancelled plus 60% of the next $100, 50% of the $200 beyond that, and 40% of anything above $380 of cancellations. This pay scale was capped at a maximum salary of $250 a quarter, but most postmasters earned far less. Only small offices that cancelled less than $80 worth of stamps in a quarter kept all of their cancellations. A postmaster that cancelled $175, for example, could only keep $137 of that in pay. A fourth-class office had to cancel about $364 of stamps in a quarter before its postmaster could top out at a maximum pay of $250. Beyond that, the office would be reclassified, and postmaster pay would fall under the civil service system and remain divorced from business activity.

This declining pay scale assured that the fourth-class office system would be sustainable. Beyond $80 a quarter, the department got a cut of cancellations, but even at low rates of business, the postmaster could not earn more than he or she contributed to the mail. As long as postmasters at small offices were content with meager incomes from postal business, the office could continue to operate without contributing to postal deficits. So, many fourth-class offices were operated by merchants in their stores primarily as a way to attract customers. Those that relied on the office for their sole source of income became increasingly disgruntled. They complained that the amount of mail they cancelled represented only a small amount of the work they did in the course of their business, the bulk of which was taken up in handling incoming mail. The National League of District Postmasters commissioned a study in the 1920s that concluded the ratio of incoming to outgoing mail at fourth-class offices was nine to one.[14] Postmasters also complained that the star route carriers who served their offices were paid more and worked less. Ellen Ramsey, the postmaster from Botna, Iowa, complained in 1928 that "to be paid in the present almost prehistoric fashion seems to me, is a hard slap at the business ability of those who fix the manner and content of our compensation."[15]

Congress responded in 1932 by relaxing the salary scale so that postmasters of the fourth class enjoyed salaries greater than the amount of stamps they cancelled. "On the first $75 or less per quarter the postmaster shall be allowed 160 per centum on the amount; on the next $100 or less per quarter, 85 per centum; and on all the balance, 75 per centum."[16] Under this generous scale, a postmaster that cancelled $175 would earn about $205, and it now took less business activity to maximize postmaster salary and trigger reclassification. A postmaster that cancelled $269 of stamps would now earn $275, the maximum allowed per quarter under this scale. "This high [initial] percentage of commissions . . . was fixed by Congress because these offices are largely distributing offices for incoming mail. The postmaster receives compensation on stamps cancelled on mail dispatched, but nothing on mail received for delivery."[17] Unfortunately for postmasters, this generous scale was simultaneously reduced by the Revenue Act of 1932 (which increased postage on first-class mail) to apply to only 85% of a postmaster's cancellations.[18] With one hand, Congress granted postmasters what they wanted. With the other, Congress took some of it away. Under this amended scale, a postmaster who cancelled $175 would earn $175. Postmasters who cancelled less than $175 would enjoy a subsidy; those who cancelled more would contribute part of their cancellations to the department (see Figure 6). The result was described by Representative Cochran of Missouri as "a very complicated system which nobody thoroughly understands. The system causes a great many honest errors in accounting."[19]

Postal accounting was not only complicated, it was also inadequate throughout the first half of the twentieth century. A contemporary economics textbook observed in 1939 that "the United States Post Office does not have a system of cost accounting such as is considered essential in any up-to-date private enterprise."[20] The Post Office Department was more concerned with the flow of mail than the flow of cash. Department officials consistently resisted efforts to adopt modern methods. As late as 1950, Postmaster General Jesse Donaldson ridiculed a congressional claim that the incentive and productivity features of modern accounting could potentially save the department more than $25 million. "If we threw all our books and records into the river and maintained no accounts at all, it would be most optimistic to think that we could save in excess of 25 million. It does not cost us that much now to perform all our accounting functions."[21] One reason why accounting costs were low was that the department outsourced its fourth-class accounting to the Treasury Department and the General Accounting Office of the U.S. Congress.

The Treasury printed and issued stamps and collected all the revenue from their sale. When a fourth class office was opened, the Department issued it a "fixed credit" of stamps. Postmasters were required to maintain this inventory by buying stamps directly from the Treasury to replace what they sold. They accounted for their stamp stock in their quarterly reports, but they did not remit revenue from stamp sales to the Post Office Department. Postmasters reported as "revenue" only the income the office earned from sales of money orders, stamped cards and envelopes, wastepaper, and twine, and box rents. Only "surplus" revenues in excess of the postmaster's quarterly salary allowance were remitted to the General Accounting Office and only then if the surplus exceeded fifty dollars. If an office had less revenue during a quarter than its commission from stamp cancellations, the Post Office Department issued a warrant check to the postmaster to cover the difference.

This system balanced stamp sales with stamp revenue at the Treasury, but left the Post Office Department to balance non-stamp revenue with postmaster pay. To do this, the Department required postmasters to keep separate accounts or estimates of stamp cancellations. Fortunately, the difference between stamp sales and stamp cancellations was not likely to be very large at most rural offices. Some patrons might buy stamps at one office and mail them at another. Some might buy stamps and use them to pay fees or buy merchandise, never entering them in the mail. "In the ordinary course of business, the sales at fourth class offices should usually exceed the cancellations from 10 to 15 percent."[22] With the margin of error so small, the Post Office Department allowed postmasters the option to either keep an actual account of the amount of stamps they cancelled or to prepare instead a "report made up from the amount of stamps sold."[23] This approximation, which Postmaster General Arthur Summerfield later called "stamp accounting,"[24] was a cheap, simple, and efficient system, but it could be abused. An unscrupulous postmaster could profit by ordering more stamps than his or her office could use and profit by selling the excess at a discount while inflating the reports of cancellations to hide the deception. It was also possible to artificially increase cancellations so as to increase compensation. The department admitted that excessive cancellations could be due to "the mailing of large quantities of matter, probably circulars, sent in bulk by express or other conveyance from another place with the purpose of giving the postmaster the benefit of commissions authorized by law."[25]

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Post Office Department considered "the fraudulent practices resorted to by many postmasters at fourth-class offices to unduly increase their compensation have become a great evil; they are growing and spreading, and unless effectually checked they will result in serious losses to the postal revenue."[26] As a check against such malfeasance, the department authorized its postal inspectors to investigate postmasters suspected of "having made false returns of the cancellation of postage stamps."[27] Inspectors were to surreptitiously count outgoing cancellations for one month and then compare their actual count with the record kept by the postmaster. The inspector was instructed to "ascertain by careful inquiry whether the record of cancellations kept in the post office is the result of an actual count or whether it has been made up

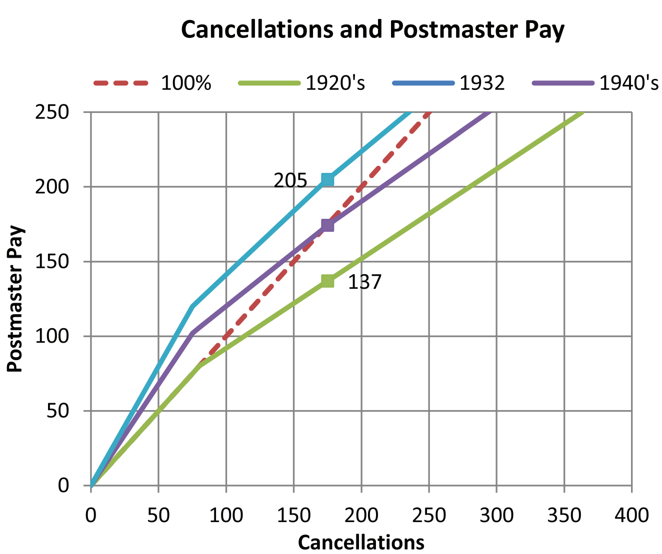

FIGURE 6. Cancellations and postmaster pay.

from the amount of stamps sold."[28] In 1936, the department had about 5,000 complaints against postmasters of the fourth class for alleged padding.[29]

The threat of inspection created an incentive for fourth-class postmasters to keep actual records of the stamps that they cancelled on file at their offices. Still, the department did not require that they keep an actual count until the 1940s, and it never required them to submit those records to its central or district offices. Postmasters merely had to keep them on file at the office and could dispose of them after three years. Those postmasters who did keep an actual tally would only submit monthly sums of their cancellations in quarterly reports. Short of an inspector's audit, there would be no way to tell if those sums represented actual accounts or estimates based on stamp sales. Also, the quarterly reports that were submitted to the department have since been destroyed. The department periodically removed microscale business records from the National Archives and disposed of them, saving only a few years' worth of data compiled from the quarterly reports of individual offices. Modern researchers can only find data on "receipts" of individual fourth-class offices for the years 1923–24 and 1943–48. Receipts included stamp sales, box rentals, and sales of twine and paper. Neither the National Archives nor the National Postal Museum Library of the Smithsonian has an actual record of stamp cancellations in its collection. Historical archeology has been criticized as "an expensive way to find out what we already know,"[30] but detailed cancellation records can now only be found through historical archaeology.

In a letter to the editor of the *Postmasters Advocate* in 1929, Postmaster S. C. Watkins advised his colleagues that "the same pad or book in which to take the daily impressions of the postmarking stamp may be used for recording the cancellations of outgoing matter."[31] Newton Tripp may have initiated this practice on his own and passed the system on to his sister, Mary, with whom he lived, but regardless of how she came to the practice, she obviously recorded her cancellations on these postmarking records. Figure 7 displays a representative sheet from the Fondis records.

None of the recovered forms contains a key to the nature of these numbers. Although they are in decimal units and are consistent with dollar values, no dollar or cent sign is recorded next to any number on any sheet. This supports the interpretation of the numbers as records of cancelled postage. Cancellations were not revenue to the office. They were, instead, a measure

FIGURE 7. Cancellations tallied on Fondis, Colorado, postmarking record sheets: (left) obverse and (right) reverse. From the collection of Erick Lee Erickson.

of the office's marginal product, the contribution of that office to the stream of U.S. mail. It is therefore not surprising to find no indication of currency value. These numbers account for the postmaster's outgo, not her income.

Beneath the postmarks, starting on either side of the money order stamp and running in columns down each side of the sheet, are series of numbers recorded by hand, usually in pencil. The numbers in the two columns are usually whole numbers, but occasionally a decimal point is introduced. When more than one entry is listed in the column beneath the 10 AM mark on the left-hand side of the form, a sum is struck below the entries. This sum is repeated as the last entry before the addition strike bar in the column beneath the 11 AM mark on the right-hand side. A sum total is recorded at the bottom of the right column that represents the total of all stamps cancelled on that day.

On the top of the reverse side of each sheet is another tally of three numbers. The first is the total value of transactions in this month preceding the date of the sheet; the second is the sum total of postage sold on that day, which is the total from the bottom of the right-hand column on the front side. The third number, beneath a strike mark, is the sum of the two numbers above and represents a running total of monthly postage cancelled by the Fondis post office to that date.

Whole numbers are usually entered on the front of these forms, but the running total on the back always includes decimal points. It appears that transactions are typically entered in pennies on the front but are routinely converted to units of one hundred on the reverse. One half of a cent values are often recorded. A document discovered in the trash left behind in the old building verifies that domestic postage rates on second-class mail of books, catalogs, seeds, cuttings, bulbs, roots, scions, and plants was 1½¢ for every two ounces.[32] Newton Tripp operated a mail-order business in dahlia bulbs throughout the 1930s and 1940s, so these indications could have been records of his mailings.[33] Or they could represent 1½¢ third-class mailings of holiday greeting cards sent with no messages in unsealed envelopes. In either case, the appearance of half cent transactions strongly suggests that the tallies on these forms include records of cancelled postage.

"No mail" is occasionally written beneath a postmark on these sheets. Usually, a handwritten note is included to describe inclement weather or bad road conditions. Sometimes, this notation is made beneath both postmarks on a sheet. On these occasions, there is no daily total of business activity and the previous day's total is repeated on the back of the form. On days when the carrier was stopped by bad weather, there are no reports of the arrival and departure times. No mail does not mean no business, for on several no-mail days, cancellations are recorded beneath one or more postmarks, usually the 11 AM mark. On holidays, the notation "No mail Holiday" is recorded beneath the 10 AM mark. It is a testimony to the certainty of mail service that the Fondis post office was open for business on holidays because cancellations are often recorded on holidays even though no mail was delivered or dispatched. In another instance, "no mail Holiday" is written beneath the 10 AM postmark, and "no mail roads blown full" is below the 11 AM mark. No cancellations were recorded on that day. Even though the office remained open for business, the bad storm could have kept patrons away.

One sheet from 18 February 1944 has the word "papers" written before the first entry beneath the 11 AM postmark. Another has "parcel" before the first number. A receipt from the Christmas season mailing rush of 1943 has the notations "air-pkg" and "pkg" attached to the first two entries beneath the 10 AM postmark. Only a dozen sheets with "p," "pp," and "pkg" notes have been recovered. These notes support the case that the numbers represent the value of postage cancelled, for they delineate the type of mail posted, packages and parcel post. The numbers next to the notes must be the value of the stamps cancelled on the packages because they are not avoirdupois units and thus cannot represent the weight of the parcels.

The postmark record sheets recovered from the 1950s differ from those of all the earlier decades in one significant way. They contain no handwritten numbers or notes (Figure 8). Congress changed the rules of postmaster pay in 1945. Acting on a long-standing demand from postmasters, it altered the pay scale so that compensation depended on office revenues instead of cancellations.[34] By the 1950s, cancellations no longer mattered to fourth-class postmasters. The lack of any notes on forms from the 1950s proves that notes from the 1940s are records

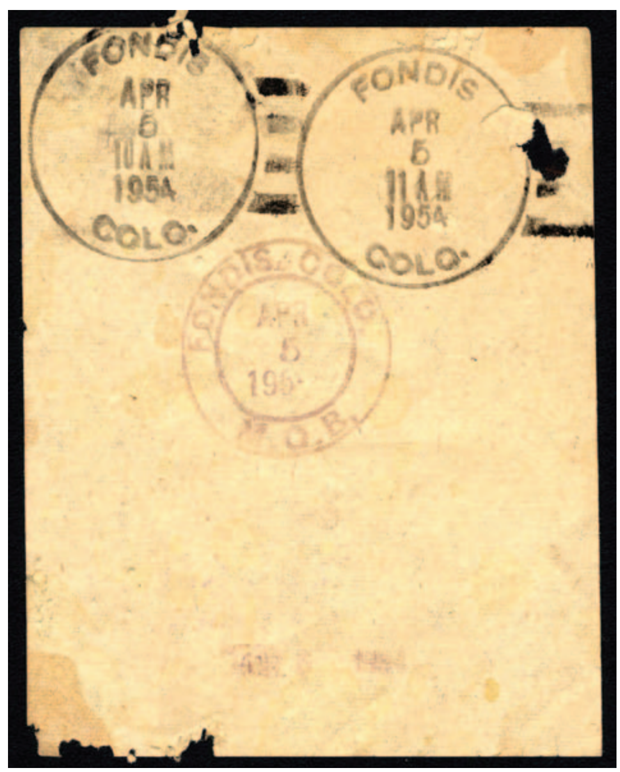

FIGURE 8. Fondis, Colorado, postmark records from the 1950s. From the collection of Erick Lee Erickson.

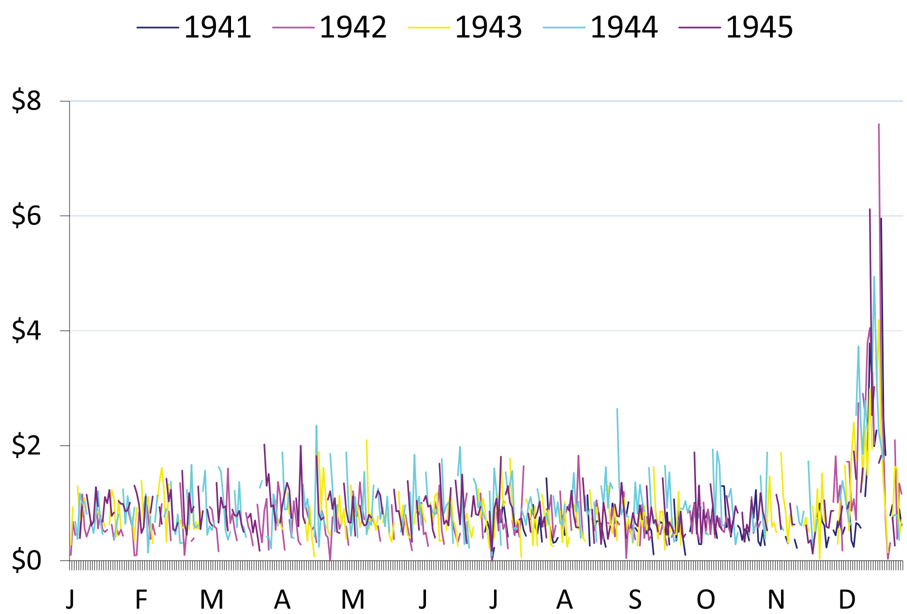

FIGURE 9. The daily volume of stamps cancelled at Fondis, Colorado.

of cancellations. Mary Trip still had to maintain postmarking records in the 1950s, but no longer needed to record her cancellations.

The daily value of the stamps cancelled by Mary Tripp for the years 1941–45, as gleaned from her Fondis postmark records, are displayed in Figure 9. The average amount of stamps she cancelled during these years amounted to about 88¢ per day. There is a clear peak in postal activity in December of each year from Christmas card and gift mailing, when the daily volume of mail more than doubled. Cancellations during December averaged $1.71 per day, whereas they averaged only about 78¢ per day for the rest of the year. Figure 9 displays these comparisons.

On the basis of these data, total cancellations during this period can be estimated to be about $267 per year.[35] Although this business activity was modest, it was very consistent. Outside of Christmastime, there was little variation in daily cancellations, as illustrated in Figure 9 and the standard deviations reported in Table 1. Note that during the first eleven months of the year, the standard deviation in daily cancellations was less than one-half of the average. Business was remarkably predictable.

The Post Office Department did not retain records of fourth-class postal accounts. Archivist Arthur Hecht inventoried the postal material deposited in the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in 1959 and reported that "the relatively small volume of extant records . . . is accounted for by the fact that the Post Office department has taken advantage of an act of 1881 . . . and later acts, which provide for the disposition of useless papers. . . . The tendency has been to retain records in

TABLE 1. Christmas cancellations verses the rest of the year.

Season	Average daily cancellation	Standard deviation
All	0.879	0.634
December	1.712	1.337
January–November	0.777	0.375

summary form and dispose of detailed records regarding individual offices."[36] In the case of the accounts of fourth-class post offices, even the summary records are incomplete. As a result, we have no official records of cancellations or postmaster pay to compare with those recovered from the archaeological dig at Fondis. The NARA does possess a postmasters salary record that reports receipts by quarter for the Fondis post office for 1943, 1944, and 1945, even though it does not define what is included as receipts. When the recovered cancellations are compared to NARA records, as in Table 2, it is clear that what the Post Office Department recorded as receipts falls far short of what Mary Tripp recorded as cancellations. Because she kept a running total of cancellations on the reverse of each sheet, it is possible to construct fairly accurate quarterly totals.

The NARA data on "receipts" record income from the sales of money orders and money order fees, sales of stamped paper,

TABLE 2. Actual cancellations, estimated postmaster pay, and reported receipts at Fondis, Colorado. NARA, National Archives and Records Administration.

Fiscal year	Quarter	End month of quarter	Cancellations from postmark records	Commission on 85% of cancels at 1940 scale	Receipts from NARA records
1941	1	September 1941	$45.78	$62.26	
1941	2	December 1941	$65.61	$89.23	
1941	3	March 1942	$46.04	$62.61	
1941	4	June 1942	$51.94	$70.63	
1942	1	September 1942	$52.52	$71.42	
1942	2	December 1942	$68.81	$93.57	
1942	3	March 1943	$44.05	$59.91	$34.08
1942	4	June 1943	$59.75	$81.25	
1943	1	September 1943	$56.68	$77.08	$34.65
1943	2	December 1943	$62.81	$85.42	$52.86
1943	3	March 1944	$61.63	$83.82	$36.00
1943	4	June 1944	$72.03	$97.96	$35.00
1944	1	September 1944	$74.97	$101.95	$48.00
1944	2	December 1944	$77.77	$105.76	$65.00
1944	3	March 1945	$68.76	$93.51	$32.00
1944	4	July 1945	$65.13	$88.58	$36.00
1945	1	September 1945	$58.81	$79.98	$34.00
1945	2	December 1945	$67.03	$91.15	$59.00

waste paper, and twine, and box rents. Cash books from a contemporary fourth class office in Colorado reveal that the primary source of receipts for an office of this size would have been the revenue generated from money order sales.[37] Receipts do not include income from stamp sales. As discussed previously, fourth class offices purchased stamps with cash directly from the U.S. Treasury. It is striking to note that this fourth class post office earned considerably less revenue in the form of official receipts than the commission its postmaster was paid, which was based on the value of the stamps that she cancelled. This means that the Department had to supplement Mary's salary with warrant checks drawn on the Treasury every quarter in the early 1940s. Table 3 distills the data recovered from the Fondis cancellation records and the NARA data on receipts and compensation from Table 2 into comparable fiscal years.

TABLE 3. Data from Table 2 distilled to comparable fiscal years.

Fiscal year	Cancellations	Commission Commission	Receipts
1943	$253.15	$344.28	$158.51
1944	$286.62	$389.90	$181.00

The fourth-class post office at Fondis operated at a loss to the Department during the 1940s. Of course, fourth-class post offices were not expected to generate profits. Nor, for that matter, did Congress require mail delivery to cover its costs. It provided mail as a service to the nation. The Post Office Department operated at a deficit in almost every year of its existence, except during times of war when the military covered the cost of transporting the mail.[38] Congress had decided to subsidize the mail in order to diffuse knowledge, create a bond of union, and serve local constituents. By the time of World War II, it had become clear to politicians that "the people first wanted service from their Post Office and afterward a balanced postal budget, if possible."[39] In calendar year 1945, the total deficit of the Post Office Department was $24 million. The Fondis Office contributed from $100 to $200 to that deficit, depending on whether we account for the marginal product or marginal revenue of the office. Mary Tripp earned about $100 more that the value of mail she entered into the system and about $200 more than she sold in stamps and services. Add to that the salary of Paul Ehlers, the star route carrier who supplied the office with mail on a $660 per year contract, and the annual deficit to operate this office could have been on the order of $800 (about $15 per household) in the early 1940s.

The Fondis postmarking records provide a unique insight into the certainty and celerity of service provided by a fourth-class post office in the early twentieth century. Even though business was slight, it was constant. Barely a day went by when patrons did not post some letters or packages. There is only one day on record for which the post office was open and no stamps were cancelled. On every other receipt, even those for holidays and days on which the mail could not be delivered, there are recorded cancellations. On 17 July 1943, for example, only one sale of 6¢ (perhaps two first-class letter stamps) was made all day. Even though the earnings of this post office were meager, it provided consistent and prompt daily service to its patrons. Furthermore, these cancellations underestimate total activity at the office because it is likely that people came to check their mail even when they had nothing to post. Mary Trip lived at the beck and call of her patrons.

The need to provide certainty and celerity shaped post office business practices. These practices produced documents that describe the business life of postmasters like Mary Tripp. Her postmarking records gave her physical proof of her commitment to duty. The cancellations she wrote on the records document her contribution to postal output, and the actual delivery and dispatch times that she recorded on these records provided her with a check against the celerity of the mail carrier. This was probably the most important function of the documents to Mary Tripp, for the vast majority of miscellaneous notes she added to her postmarking records dealt with the performance of the mail carrier. One personal letter recovered from the trash of her office reveals that she took special pride in the celerity and certainty of her service and held that of mail carriers in contempt. She complained to a relative who was also a fourth-class postmaster of what she thought was unfair treatment by the department and closed her letter with an ironic reference to her loose-leaf postmarking records. "Jesse drove extra mileage without extra pay, then when returned to regular, tried deducting pay for same mileage, also he carried long while, months, I believe, before getting check. At another time, Denver carriers' time changed twice from contract. My scraps of paper, huh?"[40]

NOTES

1. Daniel C. Roper, *The United States Post Office* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1917), 98.
2. John Steele Gordon, *An Empire of Wealth: The Epic History of American Economic Power* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 235.
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"Live Chicks" Require First Class Treatment: The U.S. Special Handling Service

Robert G. Rufe

The Special Handling service was introduced in 1925 and flourished through the middle of the twentieth century, according fourth-class mail—parcels generally in excess of 4 oz. and up to 70 lb.—the speed and urgency of first-class mail service.

SPECIAL HANDLING: FORERUNNER OF PRIORITY MAIL

One of the most popular and well-recognized services of the U.S. Postal Service today is Priority Mail, which moves parcels by air or surface, whichever is faster for the distance covered. Although Special Handling has never been viewed as a forerunner to Priority Mail in the philatelic community, its importance to commerce and industry during its heyday, 1925–68, was significant.

Not long after the advent of Parcel Post in 1913, farmers began shipping day-old chicks and queen bees, among other "lives" (the Post Office's term for live animals), through the mails. At first, there was little effort given to moving these parcels with any greater urgency than normally accorded Parcel Post, and such goods languished with the "time and space available" protocol normally given this less-than-first-class mail category. Over time, however, shippers and customers alike learned to petition mail clerks and carriers to give live chicks special treatment, moving them with the first class mail and thereby improving their prospects for survival at final destination. Call them opportunists if you will, but since the Post Office Department realized they were providing this "first-class" service anyway, they asked why not codify the service as "Special Handling" and charge a fee for this special treatment? And so the Special Handling service was born in 1925. When introduced, it provided the first means by which shippers of time-sensitive merchandise could specify expedited movement from the Post Office.

The Postal Service Act, approved on 28 February 1925, provided for a Special Handling stamp denominated at 25¢ (Figure 1) "for use on fourth class mail matter, which would secure for such mail the expeditious handling accorded to mail matter of the first class." Now that this service was specifically required by the Post Office, all baby chicks (Figure 2) and queen bees (Figure 3) would have a good prospect of surviving their adventure in the mail stream.

Baby alligators (Figure 4) would be added to the regulation in July 1925. For a 25¢ flat fee, regardless of distance, parcels up to 70 lb. would be moved with the first-class mail from the post office of dispatch to the post office of destination. Parcel Post was distance and weight based, but Special Handling was not, at least when it was introduced. This new service was further promoted in 1928 with the introduction of significantly reduced fees for three new weight categories for Special Handling within the overall

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FIGURE 1. The Special Handling service was introduced in 1925 with a 25¢ denomination stamp, which provided flat-rate service anywhere in the United States. From the collection of Robert G. Rufe.

FIGURE 2. Mailing label glued on cardboard, 13 May 1935, from Zeeland, Michigan, to Middletown, New York, for day-old chicks, the living merchandise for which the Special Handling service was established. These lives were expedited and moved with the first-class mail. From the collection of Robert G. Rufe.

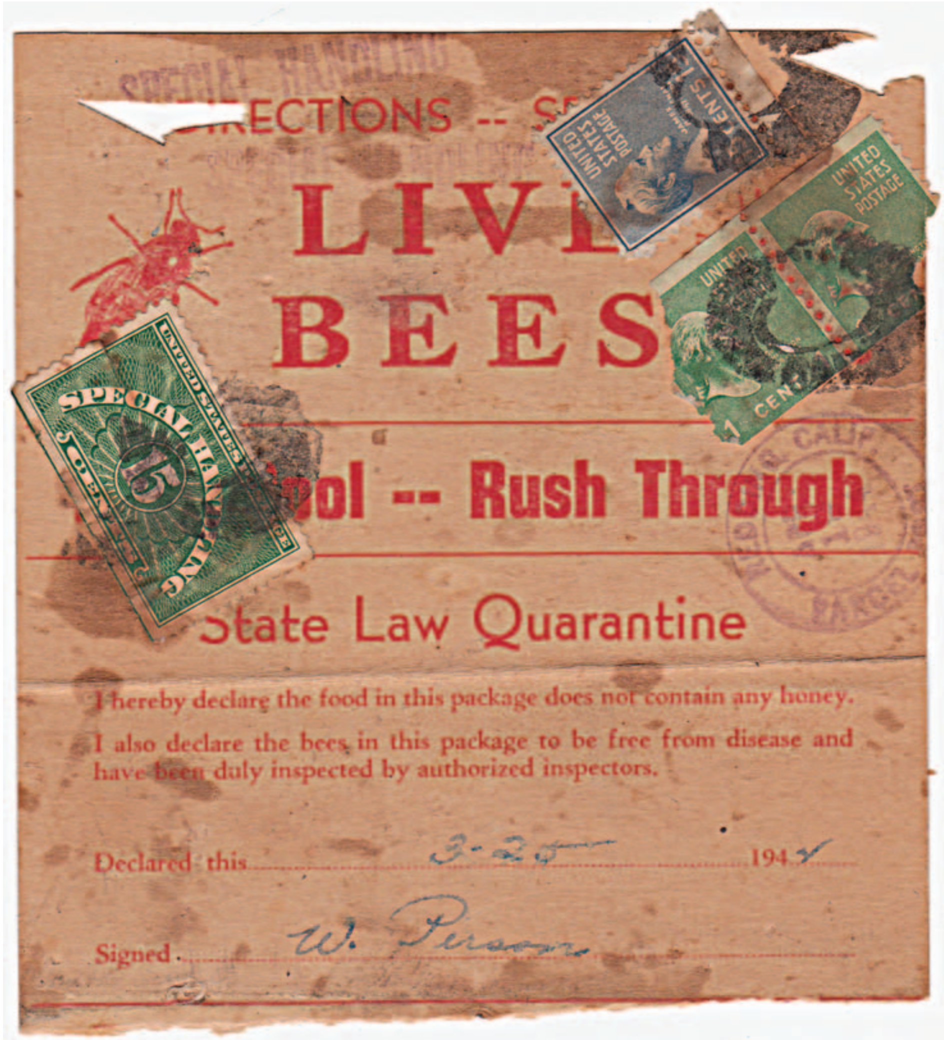

FIGURE 3. Quarantine declaration card with address and handling information, 25 March 1944, to Redding, California (town of origin illegible), for live bees, the second category earmarked for expediting by Special Handling. The card is signed by the quarantine inspector. The 15¢ fee covered contents from 2 to 10 lb. From the collection of Robert G. Rufe.

weight limitations for fourth-class matter (Figure 5): 10¢ up to 2 lb., 15¢ from 2 to 10 lb., and 20¢ from 10 lb. to 70 lb., the maximum weight allowed for Parcel Post.

SPECIAL HANDLING VERSUS SPECIAL DELIVERY

Special Handling was not Special Delivery and vice versa. In the broadest sense, Special Delivery accorded immediate dispatch and delivery of all mail matter, regardless of class, upon arrival at the destination post office. Special Handling accorded first-class treatment of Parcel Post matter between the post offices of receipt and delivery. For Parcel Post matter the primary difference in practicality was that Special Handling assured the expeditious movement of packages between post offices, whereas Special Delivery provided for immediate delivery upon arrival at the post office of the addressee.

Special Delivery could be, and often was, added to Special Handling parcels. The April 1925 Supplement of the Postal Guide was very clear: "Add the Special Handling (25¢) to the Special Delivery (10¢, 15¢, or 20¢) and one has the very best service possible for any article of parcel post"[1] (Figure 6).

As part of the 1928 rate changes and all subsequent rate changes, Special Handling service was included as part of Special Delivery, but always at a higher cost. Conversely, Special Handling has never been accorded Special Delivery service from the destination post office, except that the "Special Handling fee

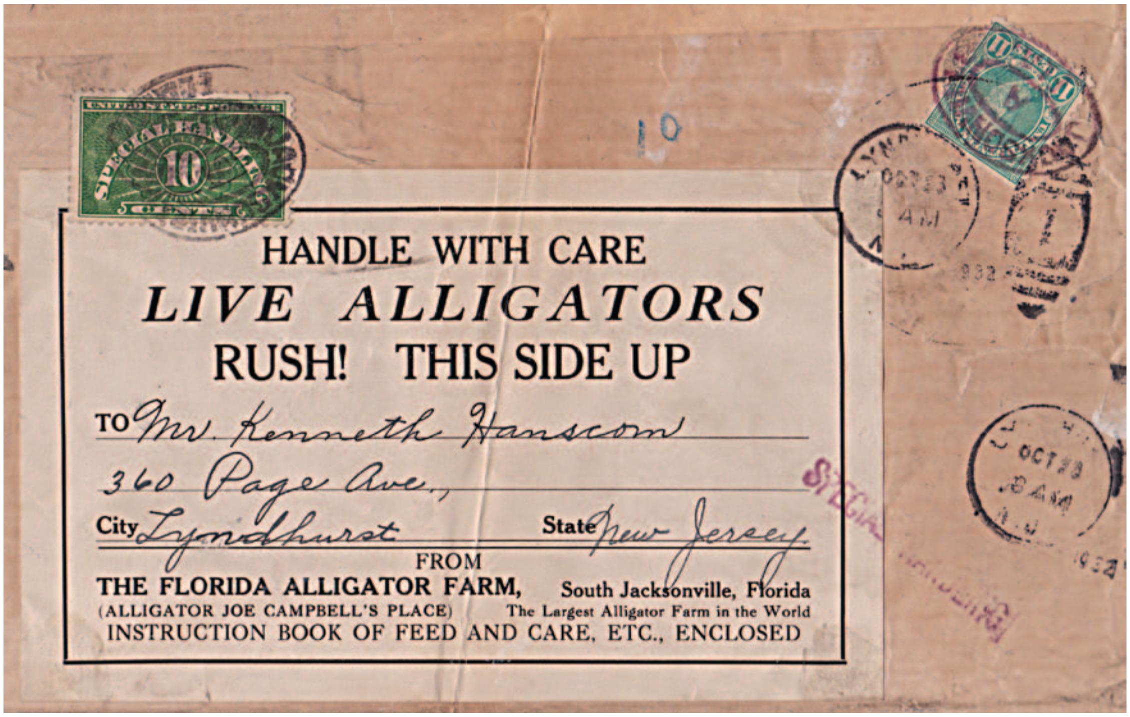

FIGURE 4. Mailing label glued on wrapper remnant, 23 October 1932, from South Jacksonville, Florida, to Lyndhurst, New Jersey, for shipment of baby alligators, the third category of lives that were specifically identified as requiring Special Handling service. From the collection of Robert G. Rufe.

FIGURE 5. Fees were reduced in July 1928 to promote Special Handling services. The top rate was reduced from 25¢ to 20¢ for parcels from 10 to 70 lb. The other new fees were 10¢ for less than 2 lb. and 15¢ from 2 to 10 lb. Special Handling fees were based on parcel weight, not distance shipped. From the collection of Robert G. Rufe.

should assure the most expeditious handling possible."[2] This meant that Special Handling parcels would be delivered with the next scheduled first-class delivery, but not immediately, as Special Delivery required.

POPULARITY AND PRACTICALITY OF SPECIAL HANDLING

Although the service was developed for lives, numerous businesses and individuals outside agribusiness found this new mailing category perfectly suited to applications in their mailings. A few examples have been verified by the mailing wrappers that have survived these applications. The printing industry moved both printing plates and finished print jobs with Special Handling to meet press run and issue deadlines (Figure 7). Nonprofits, libraries, churches, and service organizations, including, for example, AA, shipped time-sensitive movie film and slides with Special Handling to assure arrival by publication or meeting schedule requirements (Figure 8). On a strictly personal level, college students and some military personnel were kept in clean clothes and tasty snacks by the movement and return of laundry

FIGURE 6. Mailing tag, 14 October 1926, from Minneapolis, Minnesota, to Buffalo, New York, assured the fastest delivery possible for a parcel: Special Handling to move between post offices with the first-class mail and Special Delivery to provide immediate delivery from the post office of the addressee. From the collection of Robert G. Rufe.

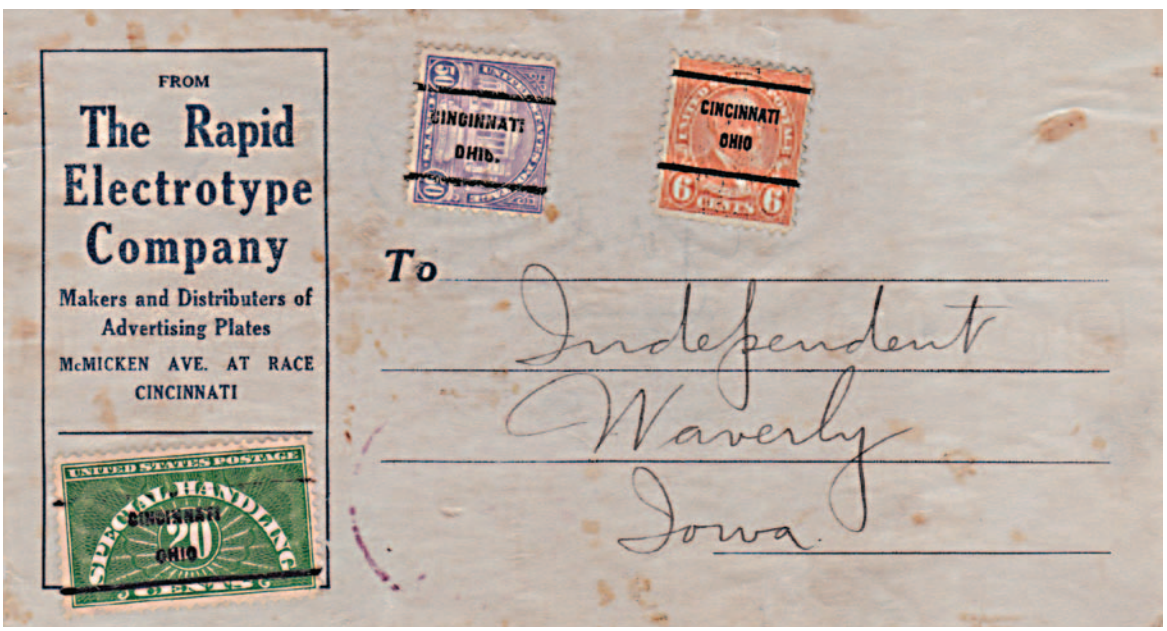

FIGURE 7. Mailing label, June 1931, from Cincinnati, Ohio, to Waverly, Iowa, for an expedited shipment of printing plates for advertising to the Waverly *Independent* newspaper. The 20¢ Special Handling stamp covered from 10 to 70 lb. for any distance shipped. From the collection of Robert G. Rufe.

cases between dorm or barracks and home with the speed provided by Special Handling (Figure 9).

Special Handling had both its supporters and detractors, but proponents and opponents alike took sides relative to the stamps and not to the service. Service-designated stamps were introduced in 1925 and updated in 1928 to reflect the new reduced rates. In fact, the 10¢, 15¢, and 20¢ stamps remained available until withdrawn in 1959, fully 31 years later, and arguably, they hold the record for the longest-running, regularly available postage stamps in U.S. history. Almost simultaneously,

FIGURE 8. Preprinted address mailing card, dated 25 April 1944, Philadelphia intracity for a 5 lb. parcel to a Philadelphia photography laboratory. From the collection of Robert G. Rufe.

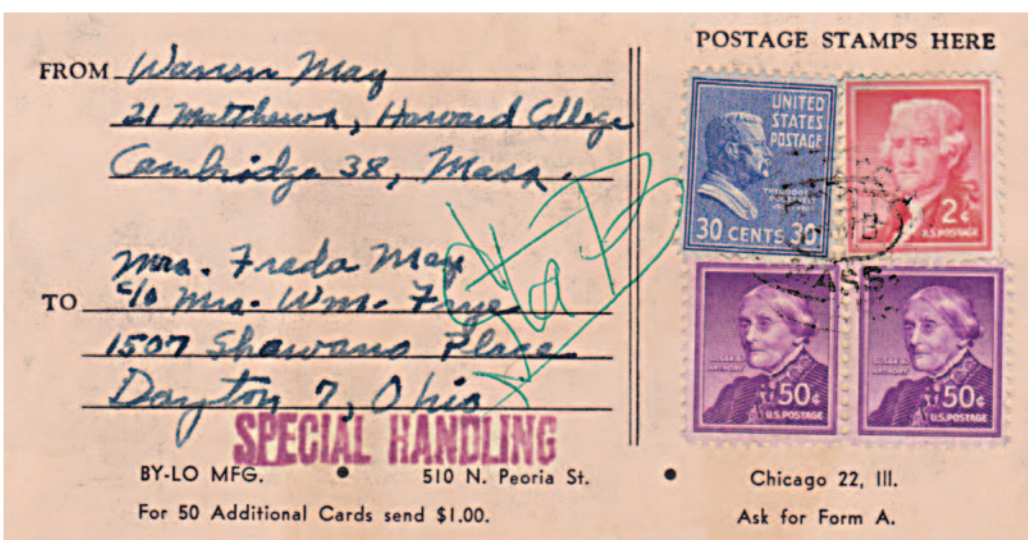

FIGURE 9. Address insert card, 22 October 1955, from Dayton, Ohio, to Cambridge, Massachusetts, placed in a reusable laundry case for a Harvard University student to have his weekly laundry done at home and returned with the speed of first-class mail. From the collection of Robert G. Rufe.

FIGURE 10. Author’s rendition of what a postal inspector’s proposed design for a distinctive triangular Special Handling stamp in 1928 might look like.

Special Handling rates were unchanged from 1928 to 1949, and only raised 5¢ in each weight category until their next advance in 1957. Opponents of the distinctive stamps claimed everyone knew that day-old chicks required special handling to survive and that dedicated stamps were unnecessary, regular stamps would suffice. Representing the other side of the argument, one postal inspector claimed this service was so critical that even more distinctive stamps were essential; he proposed the first triangular stamp design in U.S. postal history (Figure 10).

Suffice it to say, the public generally has never understood Special Handling or the advantages of using the service. First Assistant Postmaster General John H. Bartlett, in the January 1928 *Postmasters’ Advocate*, recommended increased advertising for the service, pointing out that “Ordinary parcel post not having the special handling stamp thereon, and therefore not entitled to the special handling service, is . . . necessarily slower and less careful than the special-handling service . . . [wherein] a bundle is specially handled from beginning to end. It is not put into storage cars with other parcel post, but travels in the railway postal cars where men are employed.” And further, “The Department has recommended the consolidation of these two stamps, but that has not yet been enacted into law.”[3] Had Special Handling and Special Delivery services been consolidated, the result would have provided a means for parcels to move from the post office of origin to the addressee at the same speed as a first-class letter.

TRANSITION TO PRIORITY MAIL

The value of Special Handling itself has never been questioned, and its benefits have been acknowledged ever since its introduction; however, the service never really caught on with the general public. From 1925 to 2005, revenues grew from $0.7 million to $10.3 million, relatively insignificant in terms of overall U.S. Postal Service operations. To put this into perspective, total package services revenue in 2010 was $1.5 billion.

In the presence of competitive services, Special Handling revenue fell in 1948 when Air Parcel Post was introduced (Figure 11) and again in 1968 when Priority Mail and Parcel Airlift services were introduced (Figure 12). Air Parcel Post allowed the shipper to specify parcel movement by air but carried a higher-priced rate structure than Special Handling; however, Special Handling also required shipment via air if it were deemed faster than surface movement.

Priority Mail incorporated the best of both Air Parcel Post and Special Handling services, moving parcels with the speed and efficiency of first-class mail and incorporating both the weight and distance factors associated with Parcel Post, but at a lower cost than Special Handling. Shippers of lives still used Special Handling but transitioned to Priority Mail over time as they found clerks willing to accept their time-sensitive parcels—live chicks, game birds, bees, and bait, for example—at the lower rates of Priority Mail. Today there are but a few shippers of lives who specify the Special Handling option, perhaps a result of tradition and confidence in the service.

CURRENT REGULATIONS

As of this writing, Special Handling still exists, although it would seem to be obsolete in the presence of Priority Mail and Express Mail services. It is unclear from extensive interviews with U.S. Postal Service (USPS) personnel exactly what service is provided for the fee charged, but the regulations are so brief as to allow the complete statement of what the current Domestic Mail Manual, section 503, part 13.0, says:

> The Special Handling Fee is in addition to postage and other fees, per piece.
>
> The applicable special handling fee must be paid in addition to postage for each addressed piece for which special handling service is desired. Except for official mail, the special handling fee must be paid at the time of mailing. For official mail, the special handling fee is collected under established reimbursement procedures.
>
> Special handling service provides preferential handling, but not preferential delivery, to the extent practicable in dispatch and transportation. The service does not itself insure the article against loss or damage. Special handling service is mandatory for material that requires extra care in handling, transportation, and delivery.
>
> Special handling service is available only for First-Class Mail, Priority Mail (excluding Critical Mail), Package Services, and Parcel Select pieces.
>
> The following extra services may be combined with special handling if the applicable standards for the services are met and the additional service fees are paid: COD, Delivery Confirmation, Insurance, PAL (for Package Services only), Return receipt for merchandise, and Signature Confirmation.

FIGURE 11. Air Parcel Post service was introduced on 1 September 1948 at rates substantially higher than Special Handling. This is one of four covers prepared by Henry Hammelman to commemorate this new service. From the collection of Robert G. Rufe.

FIGURE 12. A new Parcel Airlift service was introduced for shipments up to 30 lb. to overseas military post offices. This had little impact on Special Handling revenues since very little international mail employed the Special Handling option. From the collection of Robert G. Rufe.

[Regarding] Bees and Poultry, unless sent at the First-Class Mail or Priority Mail prices, special handling is required for parcels containing honeybees or baby poultry.

The marking "Special Handling" must appear prominently above the address and to the right of the return address on each piece for which special handling service is requested.

The Parcel Select nonmachinable surcharge is not charged on parcels sent with special handling.[4]

FIGURE 13. Since 1928, distinctive yellow baggage tags have been used to alert postal workers that Special Handling parcels were enclosed, which required shipping with the first-class mail. From the collection of Robert G. Rufe.

Accordingly, even the specific regulations written for Special Handling support the use of Priority Mail for honeybees and baby poultry, and the lower rate structure for Priority Mail seems to favor Priority Mail over Special Handling. First class is also supported, but with a 13 oz. weight limitation, this class of mail service is not really applicable for chicks and bees.

Historically, Special Handling pieces were the last parcels loaded into a given shipping container or vehicle and the first offloaded upon arrival at each destination. Mail sacks containing Special Handling matter had their own special yellow tags for high visibility (Figure 13). The fee for this special treatment was, and is, in addition to the basic postage for any class of service and is not included in any class of service; further, Special Handling is specifically excluded from the new Critical Mail category, a reduced-cost commercial subset of Priority Mail.

SPECIAL HANDLING AND INSURED MAIL FORMS

Another ambiguity regarding the intention of the U.S. Postal Service regarding Special Handling becomes evident upon examination of the current domestic insured mail receipt forms, both the black version for $200 and under (PS Form 3813) and the blue form for over $200 (PS Form 3813-P; Figure 14). Both forms provide check boxes for declaration to postal clerks as to whether parcel contents are fragile, liquid, perishable, or hazardous. The form indicates that items so marked are to be segregated from other parcels, but postal clerks differ as to whether

FIGURE 14. U.S. Postal Service Form 3813-P, May 2007, offering postal patrons the opportunity to purchase Special Handling service (enlarged in inset). There is the perception, if not the implied guarantee, that special care and attention will be given to parcels so designated. From the collection of Robert G. Rufe.

this occurs in reality. Further, these are seemingly rhetorical questions—what difference does it make if one or all four boxes are checked? The questions appear on the receipt portion of the form, which is taken by the customer and is not even attached to the parcel. These same forms also provide the expected lines for declaring the amount of insurance to be purchased and the fee for the coverage.

There is another line on these forms, however, that is virtually unknown to postal clerks and the public and is never explored, much less requested or utilized. This line provides the option to specify Special Handling, available for first-class mail, Priority Mail (excluding Critical Mail), package services, and Parcel Select pieces, as cited in the *Domestic Mail Manual*. One could argue that Special Handling was intended to be required whenever one of the four boxes was checked: fragile, liquid, perishable, or hazardous. This is not nor has it ever been the case.

The ambiguity of Special Handling in the presence of the availability of Priority Mail is most evident in interviews with USPS personnel. At the local level, window clerks, postmasters, and carriers for the most part are not aware of the existence of Special Handling. At the national level, USPS personnel acknowledge its existence as a special service, primarily as a reporting category, and verify its justified continuation because of reported stable revenues of approximately $10 million per year. These same cooperative interviewees admit they have no idea what mail matter receives such service. One employee recalled hearing of custom-made canisters containing funerary ashes being shipped with Special Handling, "but that was many years ago."[5]

CONCLUSION

Given today's classes of mail and service options, Special Handling seems at best redundant and at worst obsolete. Even though the role of Special Handling in today's postal system is questionable and its future uncertain, the importance of the Special Handling service is significant in the context of this year's symposium theme: "How Commerce and Industry Shaped the Mails." Initially it provided an upgrade to the Parcel Post system of 1913; for a small fee it allowed time-sensitive parcels or delicate lives to move with the speed of first-class mail.

Special Handling was the Post Office Department's first response to industry's demand for expediting Parcel Post matter. As the earliest service of the postal system to satisfy this need, Special Handling should be recognized as the forerunner of, initially, Air Parcel Post and, ultimately, today's Priority Mail.

NOTES

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4. United States Postal Service, "Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service," *Domestic Mail Manual,* Chapter 500: Additional Services, Section 503: Extra Services, Paragraph 13.0: Special Handling. Latest revision May 7, 2012. http://pe.usps.com/text/dmm300/503.htm#1064255 (accessed 6 June 2012).

5. Audrey Meloni, Business Systems Analyst, USPS, in a discussion with the author, August 14, 2009, Washington, D.C.

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United States Parcel Post System: Postage Due Stamps and Proofs

Harry K. Charles Jr.

More than 30 years after the adoption of a Parcel Post System by the Universal Postal Union, the U.S. Parcel Post System was created in 1912 (operations to begin 1 January 1913) to address the growing need to send larger items (packages, parcels, and even farm produce) with the speed and safety of the U.S. mails. Although approved by an act of Congress on 24 August 1912, the Post Office Department was concerned about the profitability of the system and thus issued a special set of twelve stamps (Scott Q1–Q12) to postmasters.[1] These stamps would allow strict accounting of Parcel Post System revenues since only these stamps could be used to mail Parcel Post packages. In addition to the special stamps necessary to pay for parcel shipment, the Post Office Department issued five denominations (1¢, 2¢, 5¢, 10¢, and 25¢ values) of Parcel Post Postage Due stamps (Scott JQ1–Q5). These Parcel Post Postage Due stamps could initially only be used on insufficiently paid Parcel Post mail. Since the Parcel Post rates were based on weight, distance, and to some extent package size, most mailers had to take their packages to a post office to be weighed and the correct postage applied; thus, the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps were not needed. Only in the rare case of a Parcel Post package being placed in a drop box with insufficient postage (and no return address) would Parcel Post Postage Due stamps be needed. In fact, used Parcel Post Postage Due stamps on short-paid package wrappers are extremely rare.

This paper presents a brief history of the events leading up to the implementation of a Parcel Post System by the United States. The special stamps used by the Parcel Post System are described. Emphasis is placed on the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps, especially their essays and proofs. The unique photomodel essay, for the 25¢ value, is described as well as various proof printings. A set of large die proofs (Scott JQ1P1–JQ5P1) are illustrated. This set was prepared for and given to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The paper also illustrates the rare Panama-Pacific small die proofs; in addition, it questions the existence of other small die proofs despite their catalog listing. Example covers with Parcel Post Postage Due stamps are shown to help describe their use in the postal system. Later uses of the Parcel Post Postage Due stamp design by both the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and at least one foreign government are also discussed.

Parcel Post is defined as the delivery of packages (parcels) by the mail service. An international Parcel Post System was established by the Congress of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in 1878. In 1882, Great Britain implemented a parcel post system that included domestic, foreign, and colonial services. Many other countries rapidly followed suit and established their own parcel post systems. The U.S. Post Office Department (POD) immediately recognized and delivered Parcel Post packages of foreign origin, but they refused to establish a domestic service. The POD reasons for refusal are varied and range from the weight and volume of parcels that would have to be carried by the

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"letter" carriers to the poor road and bridge infrastructure that existed in many parts of the country (postal wagons could not easily be used). Also, parcel or package delivery was the province of the express companies, which were either owned or backed by the railroads or had special fee arrangements with the railroads. Hence, the proposition of the government being in the parcel delivery business was directly opposed by the railroads. The railroads had significant influence with Congress; thus, early attempts to establish a parcel post system were defeated.

In the late 1800s, more than half the citizens of the United States lived on farms or in other rural settings. There was no rural mail delivery; thus, farmers and other country dwellers had to pick up their mail and newspapers at the nearest post office. This often meant a trip of many miles duration, and sometimes it took a full day or more to make the round trip. Mail pickup was delayed by days, weeks, or even months until the post office trip could be coupled with the "trip to town" for supplies, food, and/or equipment. Wealthier rural individuals often paid private express companies for mail and merchandise delivery. Many express companies refused to serve rural areas because the distances and lack of customers were detractors from profitability.

Through farm organizations such as the National Grange, Farmers' Alliance, and others, rural residents were able to lobby Congress for free home delivery of mail, just as it was being provided to city dwellers.[2] In fact, city dwellers had the benefits of free mail delivery since 1863. So important was the National Grange to the growth of our nation (and its mails) that the grange was honored on its 100th anniversary with a postage stamp (Scott 1323, issued in 1967). Rural Free Delivery (RFD) was finally approved by Congress in 1896.[3] Soon thereafter the advertisements (mail-order catalogs) describing goods and products available from around the country (and the world) began to reach the rural residents' mailboxes on a regular basis. This exposure to a seemingly unlimited stream of products increased the demand for the delivery of packages (parcel post) in addition to letters, newspapers, and magazines. The adoption of Parcel Post legislation was not only strongly supported by the mail-order houses but also the National Grange and the Farmers Union.[4] Parcel Post legislation was opposed by the express companies and the railroads, which heretofore had a monopoly on package delivery.[5] It was also opposed by rural merchants fearing that people would shop elsewhere by mail. Despite the opposition, the Parcel Post System was approved by an act of Congress on 24 August 1912 to take effect 1 January 1913.[6] Further ensuring the future success of the Parcel Post System was the adoption of the collect on delivery (COD) concept. The COD provisions of postal law went into effect on 1 July 1913.

Despite passage by Congress and the positive projections by lobbyist and the mail-order merchandisers, the POD was worried about the financial viability of this new service and wanted strict accountability. This concern over the economics of the Parcel Post System, caused the POD to issue special stamps for use on Parcel Post mail only.[7] The Parcel Post stamps (twelve in number, Scott Q1–Q12) and the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps (five in number, Scott JQ1–JQ5) were issued for use on 1 January 1913. Since the stamps were sent to post offices beginning on 27 November 1912, early uses on fourth-class mail are possible. The Parcel Post stamps are all carmine or carmine rose in color, and the values of the twelve stamps range from 1¢ to $1.00. The designs illustrate items associated with mail transport as well as the strength of America's industrial and agricultural might. Examples illustrating mail transportation, American industry, and agriculture are shown in Figure 1. The values and designs for the twelve Parcel Post stamps are given in Table 1. The airplane shown on the 20¢ value (Figure 1) is the first time an airplane was used as a vignette on a postage stamp (anywhere in the world).

FIGURE 1. Examples of Parcel Post stamps. (top left) The 4¢ (Scott Q4) illustrates a rural mail carrier with his horse and mail wagon, and (top right) the 20¢ (Scott Q8) features a Wright Flyer airplane carrying the mail. This was the first time an airplane was used as a postage stamp vignette anywhere in the world. (bottom left) The 25¢ stamp (Scott Q9) pays tribute to American manufacturing (illustrating a steel mill and railway cars). (bottom right) The 75¢ stamp (Scott Q11) illustrates grain harvesting on a farm. From the collection of Harry K. Charles Jr.

An example of Parcel Post stamps being used on a registered letter to pay both postage (2¢, first-class rate) and the registration fee (10¢) is shown in Figure 2. The use of Parcel Post stamps to pay both postcard rates and regular letter rates was common after 1 July 1913, the end date of the exclusive period.

Dark green Parcel Post Postage Due stamps (1¢ to 25¢ in value) are shown in Figure 3. To ensure strict accountability, both sets of these stamps (Parcel Post and Parcel Post Postage Due) could only be used on Parcel Post packages and other fourth-class mail. The Parcel Post System was a resounding success. In the first week over six million packages were handled. During the first year of operation an average of forty million packages a month were being delivered. Thus, after 1 July 1913,

TABLE 1. Values and design subjects for the twelve Parcel Post stamps.

Scott No.	Value	Vignette
Q1	1¢	Post Office Clerk
Q2	2¢	City Carrier
Q3	3¢	Railway Postal Clerk
Q4	4¢	Rural Carrier
Q5	5¢	Mail Train
Q6	10¢	Steamship & Mail Tender
Q7	15¢	Automobile Service
Q8	20¢	Aeroplane Carrying Mail
Q9	25¢	Manufacturing
Q10	50¢	Dairying
Q11	75¢	Harvesting
Q12	$1.00	Fruit Growing

regular issue postage stamps were allowed to be used on Parcel Post items, and in turn (to use up supplies), Parcel Post stamps were allowed to be used on regular mail. Similarly, the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps could then be used in place of regular Postage Due stamps, again to use up considerable inventory and provide a needed additional Postage Due stamp value (25¢). The period between 1 January and 30 June 1913, when the Parcel Post and Parcel Post Postage Due stamps could only be used on Parcel Post mail, was known as the "exclusive use period."[8] Also, during this exclusive use period the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps were practically useless. As already mentioned, most parcel senders took their packages directly to the post office to be sure the correct postage was applied, and only rarely was a package dropped off with insufficient postage that required the use of Parcel Post Postage Due stamps. Only in the rare case of a Parcel Post package being placed in a drop box with insufficient postage (and no return address) would Parcel Post Postage Due stamps be needed. In fact, used Parcel Post Postage Due stamps on short-paid package wrappers are extremely rare.

In spite of their intended original purpose (accountability for the Parcel Post System), they were almost instantly disliked by the stamp sales clerks. Because the stamps were made all the same color, at the insistence of Postmaster General Hitchcock,[9] it became evident that the post office employees were making an increasing number of natural errors due to the single color of the series. This was especially true with the 1¢ and $1.00 value stamps in the series, where the clerks actually had to read the words to distinguish the value because both had the same style of 1, as shown in the enlargements in Figure 4. Clerks who went by stamp color in a normal series of regular issue stamps now had to slow down their sales to actually read the word values. The

FIGURE 2. Parcel Post stamps (2¢, Scott Q2, and 10¢, Scott Q6) used to pay both postage and the registration fee. The stamps are both plate number singles. From the collection of Harry K. Charles Jr.

FIGURE 3. Parcel Post Postage Due stamps (Scott JQ1–JQ5, 1¢ to 25¢, respectively). From the collection of Harry K. Charles Jr.

FIGURE 4. Comparison of the 1s on the 1¢ and $1.00 stamps. The value circles on both stamps are identical as shown in the circle enlargements below the stamps. From the collection of Harry K. Charles Jr.

Parcel Post stamps had other problems that contributed to their dislike: the stamp size was large (they did not fit conveniently into stamp drawer slots, and more importantly, the stamps were too big to fit in multiples on small parcels and parcel tags), the odd number of stamps to the sheet (45 instead of 50 or 100) made the end of day accounting more difficult, and there were seventeen extra stamps to handle.

Another problem associated with the single color issue was that red (or carmine) was universally recognized as the color for first-class letters (2¢ at the time of Parcel Post stamp introduction), so many 1¢ Parcel Post stamps were used illegally on sealed letters. Because of the stamps' red color, these letters evaded detection by the operators of the mechanized cancelling machines employed in large cities.

In an effort to assist the stamp sales clerks, an inscription of the stamp value in words (plain capital letters) was added to the sheet margin of the plates. The adding of value inscriptions on existing plates was begun on 27 January 1913. As the plates were pulled from the vaults for printing, the value inscription would be added to the plate before it was put to press. New plates made after 27 January 1913 had the value inscription included. The last plate from the vault to have the value inscription added was plate 6262 for the $1.00 stamp. The value inscription was added on 24 March 1913. The last printing of $1.00 stamps from plate 6262 was done on 26 March 1913, so margin blocks with the value inscription from this plate are relatively rare. The 50¢ value stamp was printed for the most part with value-inscribed plates. The 50¢ plate 6274 was printed without the value imprint for a three-day period from 10 to 13 December 1912. Thus, it is possible to find 50¢ margin blocks from plate 6274 both with and without the value inscription imprint. Unlike the $1.00 value, it is the plain 50¢ margin blocks (without inscription) that are relatively rare. Only the 3¢ stamps were printed exclusively with value-imprint-inscribed plates. An example of a 3¢ plate block with the "THREE" in the margin is shown in Figure 5. For all the other stamp values, margin blocks readily exist, both with and without imprints. Figure 5 also illustrates a margin imprint value for the 5¢ stamp (Scott Q5) featuring a mail train. Wiley presents detailed information on which plates had the value imprint and when the imprint was added.[10]

The Parcel Post Postage Due stamps as illustrated in Figure 3 all have a common design distinguished by the value displayed on the central circular tablet and surrounding circular band. The design measures 22.4 mm × 33.9 mm and was printed with dark green ink on white, single-line watermarked paper by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP). These stamps were design by Clair. A. Houston and engraved by the team of engravers listed in Table 2. They were printed in sheets of 180 subjects (subsequently divided into panes of 45) and are perforation 12. Plate numbers and other aspects of printing for these stamps are given in Table 3. The plate layout for the 180-subject sheet has been shown by Charles.[11] Since the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps were green, contained a prominent value in a circle at the center, and were not sold to the public (just like other Postage Due stamps), they did not suffer from the general dislike stemming from a confusion in value. Despite the fact that they still had the stamp size and sheet configuration issues plaguing the other Parcel Post stamps, they actually became quite useful to the postal clerks, especially the 25¢ value which was not present in the

FIGURE 5. (left) An example of a 3¢ Parcel Post bottom plate block of six (Scott Q3, "Railway Postal Clerk") illustrating both the plate number and the "THREE" imprint. (right) A 5¢ imprint margin single (Scott. Q5, "Mail Train"). From the collection of Harry K. Charles Jr.

TABLE 2. Die and engraving information for the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps. N/A indicates not applicable.

Scott No.	Value	Die No.	Die started	Die hardened	Designer	Engraver frame	Engraver lettering
N/A	Frame	569	9 November 1912	14 November 1912	C. A. Huston	E. E. Myers	
JQ1	1¢	570	14 November 1912	16 November 1912	C. A. Huston	E. E. Myers	E. M. Hall, J. C. Benzing
JQ2	2¢	571	14 November 1912	18 November 1912	C. A. Huston	E. E. Myers	E. M. Hall, E. G. Rose
JQ3	5¢	572	14 November 1912	17 November 1912	C. A. Huston	E. E. Myers	E. M. Hall, T. Lamasure
JQ4	10¢	573	14 November 1912	18 November 1912	C. A. Huston	E. E. Myers	E. M. Hall, E. E. Myers
JQ5	25¢	574	15 November 1912	18 November 1912	C. A. Huston	E. E. Myers	E. M. Hall, J. C. Benzing

TABLE 3. Plate numbers and other information about the printing of the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps.

Scott No.	Value	Plate No.	First printing	Last printing	Issue date	Number printed
JQ1	1¢	6225, 6226, 6227, 6228	20 November 1912	30 November 1912	27 November 1912	7,322,400
JQ2	2¢	6241, 6242, 6243, 6244	25 November 1912	10 January 1913	9 December 1912	3,132,000
JQ3	5¢	6229, 6230, 6231, 6232, 6239, 6240	21 November 1912	11 January 1913	11 November 1912	5,840,100
JQ4	10¢	6250, 6251, 6252, 6253	27 November 1912	10 January 1913	12 December 1912	2,124,540
JQ5	25¢	6246, 6247, 6248, 6249	30 November 1912	6 January 1913	16 December 1912	2,117,700

FIGURE 6. Postage Due cover with a mix of a 2¢ regular issue Postage Due stamp and two 5¢ Parcel Post Postage Due stamps (Scott JQ3s). This cover from Australia was postmarked on 1 November 1918 and illustrates a typical mixed usage after the exclusive use period. From the collection of Harry K. Charles Jr.

regular Postage Due series. As will be shown, these Parcel Post Postage Due stamps were still being used many years after their printing and official withdrawal date.

A postage due cover, with a mix of both regular Postage Due and Parcel Post Postage Due stamps, is shown in Figure 6. The cover was double weight (note the blue crayon notation 2/60) and was assessed 60 gold centimes due. The required postage was double the 2½d rate plus ½d war tax (which went into effect 3 days before the postmark date) for a total of 5½d. The letter was 3d underpaid, equivalent to 6¢, which was doubled to 12¢ per UPU regulations. The Parcel Post and Parcel Post Postage Due stamps remained in use for several years (until inventory had been depleted), but no further printings were made. The total number of printed Parcel Post Postage Due stamps is given in Table 3. Table 3 also captures a brief printing history for the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps. All remainders in the hands of the BEP and/or the POD were destroyed in September of 1921. With the destruction of central supplies and no additional printings, supplies in postmasters' hands dwindled, although residual usage continued for some time. Figure 7 illustrates part of a package wrapper with a block of six 5¢ Parcel Post Postage Due stamps (plus two 2¢ regular postage issue dues) used in 1922.

The cover shown in Figure 8 was mailed in 1927. The cover required 3¢ postage due, which was paid with a 1¢ Parcel Post Postage Due and a 2¢ regular issue Postage Due stamp. This 1927 usage is a full 14 years after the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps were printed and introduced.

The cover in Figure 9 illustrates a rare usage of the 10¢ Parcel Post Postage Due stamp along with three regular Postage Due stamps (Scott J46) paying the postage and penalty on an unstamped envelope from Russia. The blue crayon notation 2/80 indicates a double weight cover and that 80 gold centimes was due. It was rated double deficiency per UPU regulations, which was equivalent to the U.S. rate of 5¢ per first ounce plus 3¢ per second ounce, or 8¢ (which was doubled to 16¢).This stamp is tied to the cover with a faint cancel. At this point it should be mentioned that Parcel Post Postage Due stamps tied to covers are scarce if not rare. Most often, the stamps were precanceled in sheet form, either with a stamping or roller device or by hand with a crayon to facilitate ease of use. The Parcel Post Postage Due stamps illustrated on the covers in Figures 6–9 have all been tied.

As far as I know, only one model or essay exists for the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps. This essay for the 25¢ value is listed in the Scott catalog as JQ5-E1a and is described as a "retouched photograph of the design as adopted, officially dated and approved."[12] It was signed by Postmaster General Hitchcock. A description following the listing in Scott is "25¢ model, black." It is believed this essay is unique. Gobie did not list this essay in his book on the Parcel Post System.[13] This essay was also not listed

FIGURE 7. Part of a Parcel Post package wrapper containing two 2¢ regular Postage Due stamps (Baltimore, Maryland precancel) plus six Parcel Post Postage Due stamps (Scott JQ3) for a total of 34¢. The Parcel Post Postage Due stamps are tied with a Baltimore, Maryland, oval hand stamp and the circular date stamp on the wrapper was applied on March 27, 1922. From the collection of Harry K. Charles Jr.

FIGURE 8. A Dead Letter Office envelope with the 3¢ Postage Due paid by a 2¢ regular Postage Due stamp and a 1¢ Parcel Post Postage Due stamp (Scott JQ1). The cover was canceled in 1927. From the collection of Harry K. Charles Jr.

FIGURE 9. Unpaid overweight letter from Budapest, Hungary to Red Bank, New Jersey. The cover was rated 16¢ postage due by the New York port of entry (Penn. Terminal Station) on July 18, 1915. Postage due was paid by a 10¢ (JQ4) and 3 regular 2¢ postage due stamps. From the collection of Harry K. Charles Jr.

by Brazer in his seminal work on essays in 1941.[14] An illustration of this essay has been published recently by Charles.[15]

There are three types of die proofs listed in the Scott catalog for the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps. An illustration of the 1¢ Parcel Post Postage Due large die proof (Scott JQ1P1) is given in Figure 10. This proof is part of a set that was originally given by the Post Office Department to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. This set of proofs is unique, and each proof has a separate BEP control number in blue ink on the back, as listed in Table 4. Table 4 also lists die numbers, die sinkage dimensions, and card sizes for the Roosevelt set. The remaining large die proofs (Scott JQ2P1–JQ5P1) are shown in Figures 11 and 12, respectively. These large die proofs came to my collection through the Babcock estate.[16] Babcock had purchased these proofs from the Irvin Heiman sale of the Caroline Prentice Cromwell Collection in 1957.[17] Cromwell acquired the JQ1P1 to JQ5P1 proofs from the Roosevelt Collection sale in 1946.[18]

Table 5 lists the BEP control numbers for the Parcel Post Postage Due proofs (presumably large die proofs) in the possession of both the POD and the BEP.[19] The control number sequences for these proofs are high when compared to the control numbers on the Roosevelt set. Since proofs retained by BEP and POD were made in the 1912 time frame (rather than in 1933 for the Roosevelt set), their number sequences suggest they were assigned from the original BEP proving room books.[20] The Roosevelt proof numbers are listed in the new series books and are consistent with the proof printings done in the 1933–34 time frame.

The second and third types of die proofs for the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps are small die proofs. The first of the small die proofs is listed by Scott as JQ1P2–JQ5P2. Since the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps were not developed or in use until the 1912–13 time frame, these small die proofs are obviously not from the so-called Roosevelt Albums, which were produced in 1903.[21] A careful inspection of the Southgate Collection sold by Brazer[22] in the early 1940s shows that it did not contain such a set of proofs. A similar statement can be made about the auction of the Roosevelt Collection in 1946. They also were not part of the Hackett or Cromwell sales in the 1950s.[23] In fact, a careful examination of major auction catalogs over the last fifty or so years has failed to yield any reference to such proofs.

By the time of the Panama-Pacific Exhibition in 1915, the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps were in use and included in the special printing of proofs for the Post Office Department's display at the exhibition. A set of the Parcel Post Postage Due

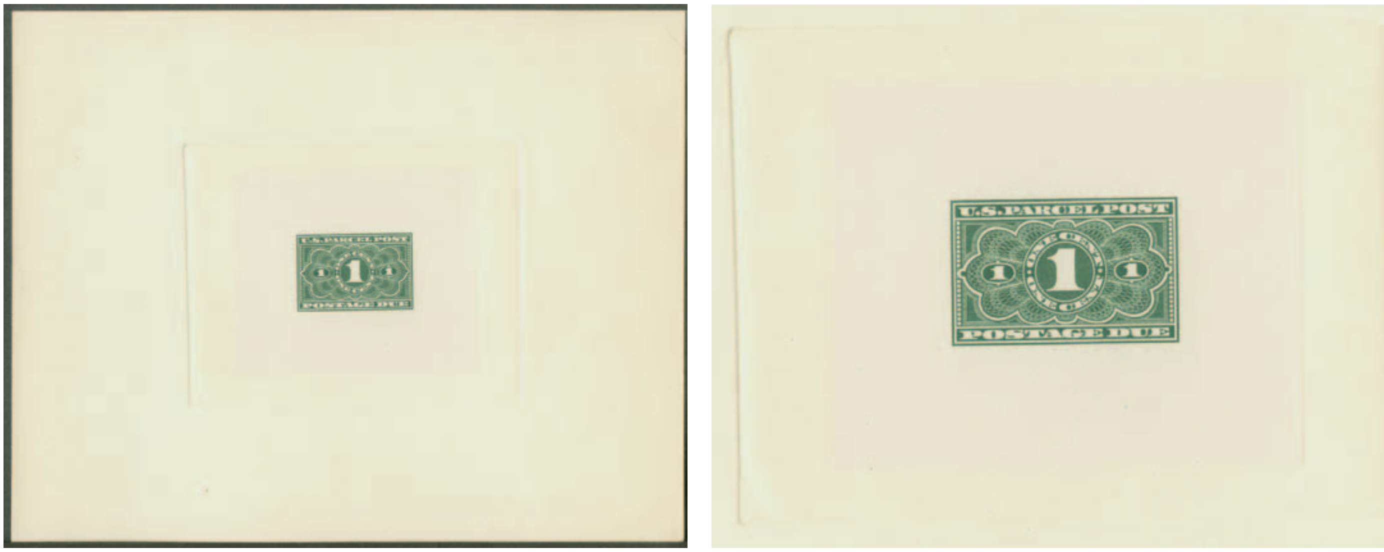

FIGURE 10. Parcel Post Postage Due 1¢ large die proof (Scott JQ1P1) given to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The proof has BEP control number 330721 printed on the back in blue ink. The enlargement on the right illustrates the proof details. From the collection of Harry K. Charles Jr.

TABLE 4. Details of the Parcel Post Postage Due large die proofs in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Collection. Die sinkage and card size are height × width, in mm. BEP, Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

Scott No.	Value	Die No.	Die sinkage	Card size	BEP Control No.
JQ1	1¢	570	74.9 × 99.6	152.4 × 201.9	330721
JQ2	2¢	571	76.2 × 95.3	152.4 × 201.9	330740
JQ3	5¢	572	73.4 × 99.6	152.4 × 202.7	330732
JQ4	10¢	573	75.4 × 97.8	152.4 × 203.7	330728
JQ5	25¢	574	76.2 × 96.5	152.4 × 201.9	330745

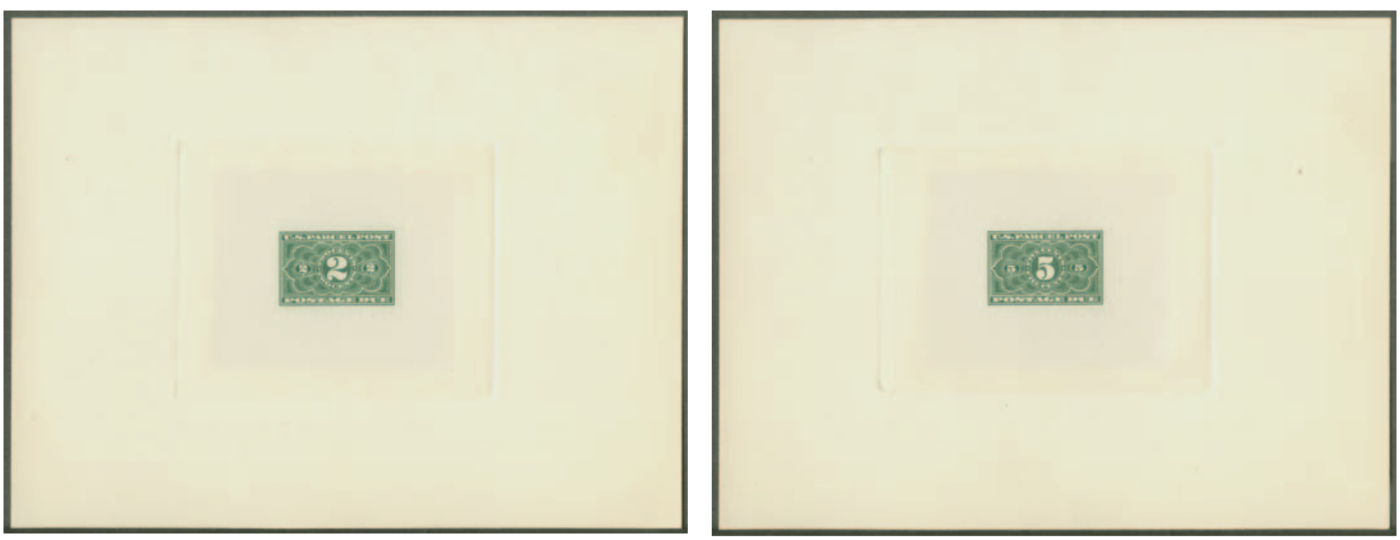

FIGURE 11. Parcel Post Postage Due 2¢ and 5¢ large die proofs (Scott JQ2P1 and JQ3P1) given to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The proofs have BEP control numbers (330740 and 330732, respectively) printed on their backs in blue ink. From the collection of Harry K. Charles Jr.

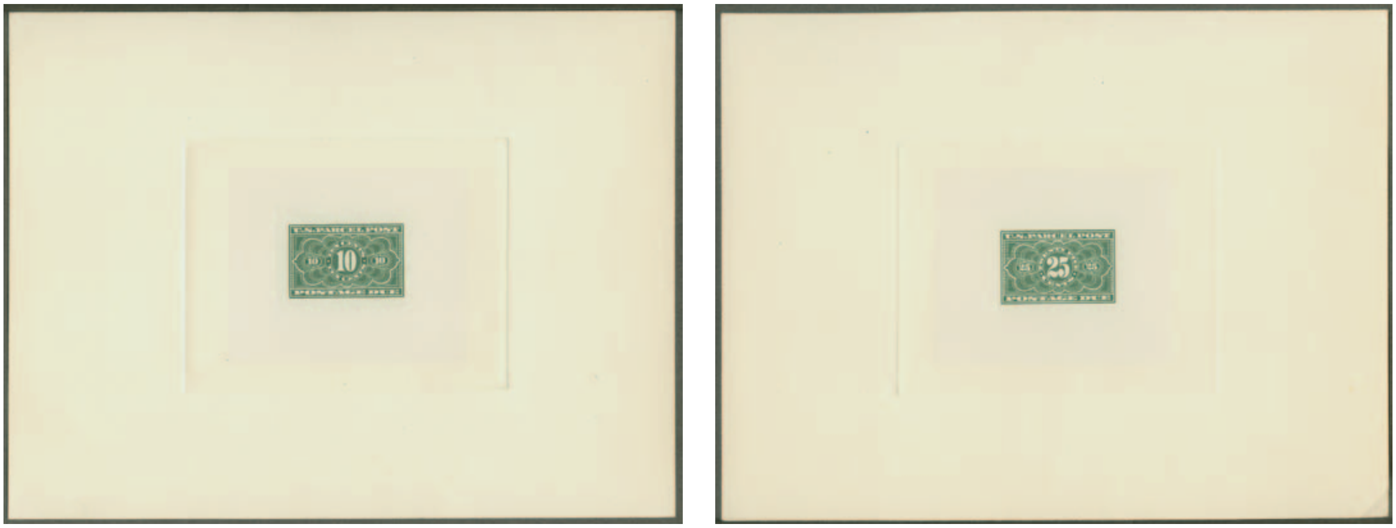

FIGURE 12. Parcel Post Postage Due 10¢ and 25¢ large die proofs (Scott JQ4P1 and JQ5P1) given to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The proofs have BEP control numbers (330728 and 330745, respectively) printed on their backs in blue ink. From the collection of Harry K. Charles Jr.

TABLE 5. Control numbers of the Parcel Post Postage Due proofs retained by the Post Office Department (POD) and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP). Whether these proofs were large die or small die is unknown.

Scott No.	Value	POD retained proof No.	BEP retained proof No.
JQ1	1¢	559333	559330, 559331
JQ2	2¢	559486	559488, 559490
JQ3	5¢	559350	559346, 559348
JQ4	10¢	559371	559357, 559358
JQ5	25¢	559471	559468, 559470

Panama-Pacific small die proofs (Scott JQ1P2a–JQ5P2a) is shown in Figure 13. This set of proofs was the set offered as lot number 355 in the Heiman sale of the Cromwell Collection in 1958.[24] These proofs are printed on a wove paper that has yellowed with time. The design of the Parcel Post Postage Due stamp measures 25.4 mm × 38.1 mm, and each proof has a 2–3 mm margin, which is consistent with the margins on the regular Panama-Pacific Postage Due small die proofs. According to the BEP proving room books, only six proofs of each value were printed, as shown in Table 6. Ruling out the Panama-Pacific set in the Smithsonian and the whereabouts-unknown mounted exhibition set, four potential intact sets are possible.[25] Through careful study

FIGURE 13. Panama-Pacific Parcel Post small die proofs (Scott JQ1P2a–JQ5P2a). Three sets have been documented in the philatelic literature. From the collection of Harry K. Charles Jr.

TABLE 6. Proving room data for the Parcel Post Postage Due Panama Pacific small die proofs.

Proof		Printing dates	
Value	Die No.	13 January 1915	14 January 1915
1¢	570	6	
2¢	571	6	
5¢	572	7[a]	
10¢	573	7[a]	
25¢	574		6
Frame[b]	569	6	

[a]One proof destroyed on 31 January 1916.
[b]Reasons for printing this die for the Panama-Pacific series is unclear.

of auction catalogs and private communications with collectors, I can definitely account for three sets. Three sets are consistent with the identified three sets of the large-numeral Postage Due Panama-Pacific small die proofs described in an article by Charles,[26] where there were again only six proofs of each value-color combination printed. There is some indication that a fourth set may exist, but I have not been able to verify its existence.

Although it has been said that the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps were the most unnecessary and perhaps useless stamps in the world during the exclusive use period,[27] they received significant usage as regular dues after the exclusive use period ended, and, in fact, they provided a 25¢ postage due stamp, which received considerable use on bundled return mail. Some postmasters even went so far as to allow them to be used in place of a regular issue stamps and may have sold them to the general public. Both these activities were strictly forbidden by postal regulations.

No other proofs or essays for the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps are known in private hands. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing did, however, dust off the 25¢ Parcel Post Postage Due stamp design for use on a souvenir sheet issued in 1993, as shown in Figure 14. The souvenir sheet measures 257 mm wide × 203 mm high and was printed in dark green on white card stock. This sheet was issued for the Omaha Stamp Show, Omaha, Nebraska, September 1993. In addition to the 25¢ Parcel Post Postage Due stamp (Scott JQ5) the sheet features the 10¢ Special Handling stamp (Scott QE3), the "Merry Widow" Special Delivery stamp (Scott E7), and, finally, the 10¢ Newspaper and Periodicals stamp (Scott PR2a). The Parcel Post Postage Due (die number 574), the Special Handling (die number 736), and the Special Delivery (die number 440) stamps were all die-stamped intaglio reproductions from the original BEP dies. The Newspaper and Periodicals stamp was an offset printed reproduction

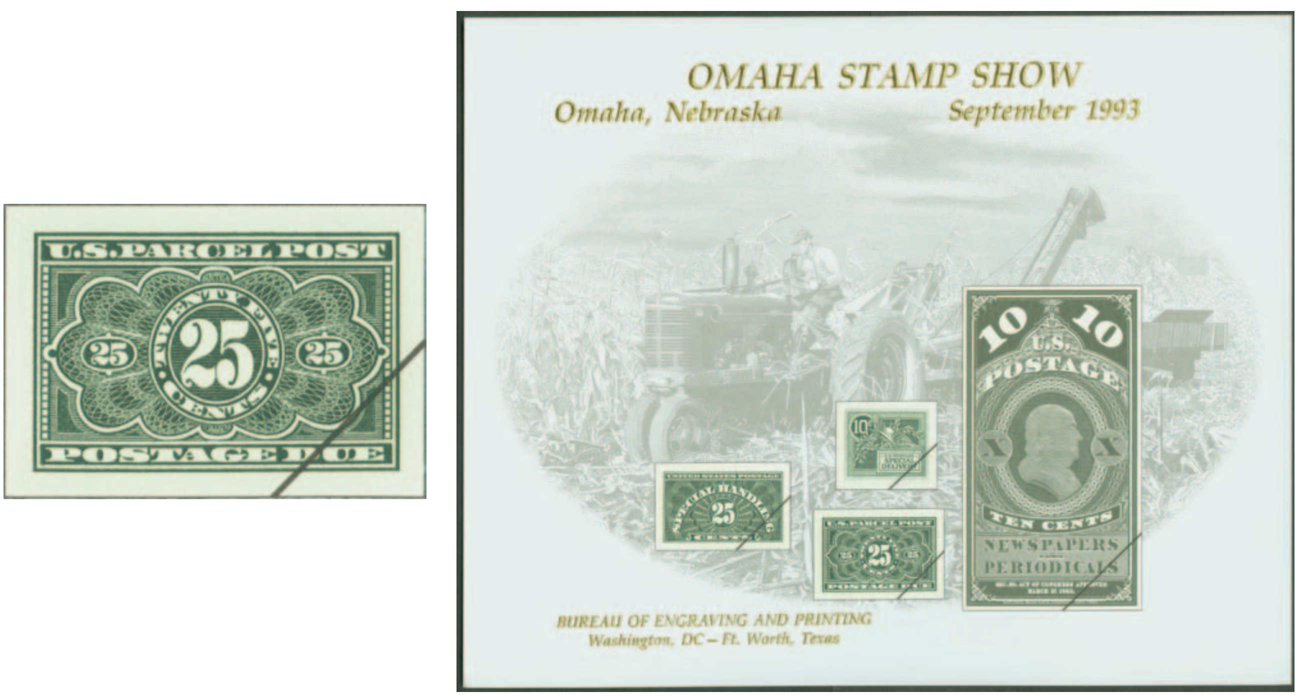

FIGURE 14. Souvenir card issued by the BEP for the Omaha Stamp Show, Omaha, Nebraska, in September of 1993. The card features a die-stamped intaglio reproduction (from the original BEP die) of Scott JQ5, as shown in the enlargement. Other green back of the book issues associated with mail delivery are also pictured (see text). From the collection of Harry K. Charles Jr.

from the original National Bank Note Company die. No record of the engraver or die history exists for this National Bank Note Company stamp. Because these are excellent reproductions and could be cut from the card to form imperforate proofs, the BEP also printed small diagonal lines on these "proofs." Such lines were discussed in connection with the Postage Due stamps depicted on the bureau's 100th anniversary card issued in 1994 in an article by Charles.[28]

Their widespread use as regular Postage Due stamps contributed to the recognition of their classic design. At least one other nation, Senegal, modeled a series of Postage Due stamps (Senegal, Scott J22–J31) after the U.S. Parcel Post Postage Due stamps. Figure 15 illustrates the Senegal five centimes Postage Due stamp (Scott J22) in green. Both perforated and imperforate stamps are shown along with a United States Scott JQ3 (5¢) Parcel Post Postage Due stamp pair for comparison. Unlike the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps, Senegal printed each value in a different color to avoid confusion. The frame for all the values was printed from a master die that had the central numeral position blank. A die proof of this master die is also shown in Figure 15. It is printed in a rose lilac color, which is the color of the issued fifty centimes stamp (Senegal, Scott J27).

In summary, the Parcel Post System was and still is a major contributor to the growth of our nation. Coupled with RFD and COD, Parcel Post allowed the rural population of the United States to engage in communication and commerce with the rest of the nation and the world. In the beginning, the Parcel Post System used special stamps to ensure strict accountability because of concerns over profitability (especially by the postmaster general). These concerns or fears soon vanished as the Parcel Post System rapidly grew into the robust service it is today, ranging from the handling of regular packages to urgent parcels that are shipped by express mail.

The Parcel Post Postage Due stamps were, at first, practically useless. Since most packages had to be taken to a Post Office to be weighed, there was little or no need for them during the exclusive use period. Once they were allowed to be used in place of or in conjunction with regular Postage Due stamps, their utility increased greatly. In fact, the 25¢ Parcel Post Postage Due stamp filled a significant void in the regular Postage Due stamp series, and thus, it saw widespread use until its limited supplies were depleted. Only a little over two million 25¢ Parcel Post Postage Due stamps were printed (see Table 3). Because of their limited numbers all values of Parcel Post Postage Due stamps are relatively scarce, especially on cover.

This article has traced the development of the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps while providing insight into the adoption and general operation of the Parcel Post System. The unique large

FIGURE 15. (bottom) Senegal (Scott J22) perforate and imperforate five centimes Postage Due stamps in green. The design measures 36.4 mm wide × 21.2 mm high. (top left) A 5¢ Scott JQ3 plate number pair is included for reference. (top right) Proof of the master frame and background design for the Senegal (Scott J22–J31) series of Postage Due stamps missing the central number value (the central numbers were engraved separately on each working die created from the background master die). The proof is rose lilac in color and measures 54.2 mm wide × 39.4 mm high. From the collection of Harry K. Charles Jr.

die proofs of the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps have been described and illustrated. The rare Panama-Pacific small die proofs have also been shown. A later use of the Parcel Post Postage Due stamp design by the BEP on a souvenir card was described along with the adaptation of the same design by Senegal for use in a series of Postage Due stamps.

NOTES

1. Scott Numbers can be found in the yearly *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* (Sidney, Ohio: Scott Publishing Company).

2. The National Grange (Order of Patrons of Husbandry) is a farmers' fraternal organization that encourages farmers to unite for common economic and political purposes. It was founded in 1867, and by the 1890s it had over one million members. While forming the center of social life in many farming communities, the grange was also a very effective advocacy group fighting the railroad monopolies and lobbying Congress for the passage of Rural Free Delivery and Parcel Post. The grange still exists today, with about a quarter million members in thirty-seven states. The National Grange headquarters are in Washington D.C. The Farmers' Alliance was an economic movement among farmers that was founded in 1876 and flourished during the 1880s. The alliance met its defeat at the hands of the commodity brokers (and the railroads), but its elements went on to form the Populist Party in 1892. The Populist Party was a major advocate for Rural Free Delivery.

3. Rural Free Delivery is said to have been created by an act of Congress in 1896 during President Grover Cleveland's administration, but in fact, it actually started several years earlier. In 1891, the Post Office Department began a series of experiments on rural mail delivery. They began with five routes covering 10 miles in rural West Virginia (Jefferson County). The experiments were a success, and by the time the RFD act was passed in 1896 the number of routes had increased significantly. In 1896 alone eighty-two rural routes were added. Nationwide RFD took several more years to implement. By 1902, the mileage logged by rural carriers was over 100,000 miles, and by 1910 it had risen to almost a million miles on an annual basis.

4. The National Farmers Union (Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union of America) is a federation of state farmers' unions dedicated "to protect and enhance the economic well being and quality of life for family farmers and ranchers and their rural communities." It was founded in 1902 and is the second largest farm organization in the country after the Farm Bureau. The current membership is about 250,000 distributed over 32 states. It is headquartered in Washington, D.C. The National Farmers Union has been very politically active from its beginnings. In the early 1900s, the union lobbied for Parcel Post, direct senatorial elections, and women's suffrage.

5. Richard B. Kielbowicz, "Government Goes into Business: Parcel Post in the Nation's Political Economy, 1880–1915," *Studies in American Political Development*, 8 (1994): 150–172.

6. The act of Congress on 24 August 1912 authorized Parcel Post, a service that would "embrace all other matter, including farm and factory products not now embraced by law in either the first, second or third class, not exceeding eleven pounds in weight, nor greater in size than seventy-two inches in length and girth combined." Full details of the Parcel Post System as implemented on 1 January 1913 may be found in a thirty-two-page pamphlet printed by the Government Printing Office, entitled *Parcel Post Regulations*, that is dated to be effective on 1 January 1913. It was issued by Postmaster General Frank H. Hitchcock in connection with Post Office Department Order No. 6685 (Washington, D.C., 30 November 1912), which described the conduct of the Parcel Post System.

7. Henry M. Gobie, *U.S. Parcel Post: A Postal History*, Miami, Fla.: Postal Publications, 1979.

8. Gobie, *U.S. Parcel Post*, 47, figure caption.

9. There is evidence that Postmaster General Hitchcock actually received a recommendation from his Postal Advisory Committee to make all the Parcel Post stamps the same color; Gobie, *U.S. Parcel Post*, 17.

10. H. L. Wiley, *United States Parcel Post Stamps, Stamp Booklets, Postal Savings Stamps*, Handbook 7 (Boston, Mass.: Meekel-Severn Wylie, 1914), 3–16.

11. Harry K. Charles Jr., "United States Postage Due Stamp Essays and Proofs Part IX: Parcel Post Postage Due," *The United States Specialist*, 83, no. 4 (April 2012): 151–164.

12. *Scott 2008 Specialized Catalog of United States Stamps and Covers* (Sidney, Ohio, Scott Publishing, 2008), 712.

13. Gobie, *U.S. Parcel Post*.

14. Clarence W. Brazer was the foremost expert on essays (and proofs) during the first half of the twentieth century. His seminal book on essays is still the bible for essay and proof collectors today. Clarence W. Brazer, *Essays for U.S. Adhesive Postage Stamps* (Handbook Committee American Philatelic Society, 1941).

15. Charles, "United States Postage Due Stamp Essays, Part IX."

16. Edward P. Babcock (1909–2000) was born in Geneva, New York. He soon moved to Rochester, New York, where he grew up. Edward started stamp collecting as a youth. He attended engineering school at Cornell during 1927–28, but he had to drop out because of financial issues associated with the stock market crash in 1929. He worked at many engineering jobs around New York City. Because of his continued interest in stamps, Edward was fortunate to meet Clarence Brazer in the late 1930s, beginning a long dealer-customer relationship that lasted until Brazer's death in 1956. Edward Babcock was one of Brazer's key outlets for back of book material, especially postage due proofs and essays. He was a philatelist and was not only interested in the stamps but also in every nuance of their design and history. Edward kept up a running correspondence with Clarence Brazer, and after Brazer's death, he met and corresponded with another philatelic great, Walter McIntire. Between Babcock and McIntire, they solved several mysteries surrounding the bureau issue Postage Due stamps. Babcock was McIntire's sounding board and offered him many cogent comments on his philatelic articles prior to publication. Edward worked behind the scenes asking probing questions of the experts to see if they would come to similar conclusions about philatelic postage due mysteries that he had already solved. His collection, his attention to detail, and his willingness to share his knowledge with other philatelists made him an important contributor to postage due stamp history. Edward died at the age of 91 in Wilmington, Delaware, his home for the last 50 years of his life.

17. *The Caroline Prentice Cromwell Collection of United States Stamps, Proofs, Essays,* (New York: Irwin Heiman, 7–8 November 1957), 68, lot no. 676.

18. *The Postage Stamp Collection of Franklin Delano Roosevelt,* Part 1, *United States of America and Latin America*, (New York: H. R. Harmer, 4–5 February 1946), 28, lot no. 87.

19. Gobie, *U.S. Parcel Post,* 165 (Scott JQ1P), 172 (Scott JQ2P), 177 (Scott JQ3P), 183 (Scott JQ4P), and 186 (Scott JQ5P).

20. Ronald A. Burns, *A Study of the Production Records for the 1903 and 1914–15 Printings of the "Roosevelt" and "Panama Pacific" Small Die Proofs*, Bureau Issues Association Research Paper 7 (Arlington, Mass.: Bureau Issues Association, August 1994), 72.

21. Allan M. Thatcher, "The Roosevelt Albums of United States Die Proofs," *Essay-Proof Journal*, 10 (1953): 67–71.

22. Clarence W. Brazer, "U.S. Essay and Proof Unit 'The South Gate Collection,'" *The American Philatelist*, August 1942:725–726.

23. *The "Robert P. Hackett" Proofs and Essays of United States Stamps* (New York: H. R. Harmer, 6–9 February 1956), 106–107.

24. *The Caroline Prentice Cromwell Collection of United States Stamps, Proofs, Essays, Private Coils, Miscellaneous Foreign*, Part 2 (New York: Irwin Heiman, 20 March 1958), 29, lot no. 355.

25. James H. Bruns, "The Scarcity of the Panama-Pacific Proofs: Part III," *The United States Specialist,* 59, no. 9 (September 1988) 419–449.

26. Harry K. Charles Jr., "United States Postage Due Stamp Essays and Proofs Part II: Large Numeral Postage Due Die Proofs," *The United States Specialist*, 83, no. 2 (February 2011): 61–70, 75–83.

27. George Wren, "Parcel Post Dues," *The American Philatelist*, 10, no. 3 (March 1996): 224–226.

28. Harry K. Charles Jr., "United States Postage Due Stamp Essays and Proofs Part VII: First Bureau Small Die and Plate Proofs," *The United States Specialist*, 82, no. 12 (December 2011): 536–550.

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