

# **SYNOPSIS**

## **UNITED STATES DOMESTIC LETTER RATES, ACT OF 1792 THROUGH THE ACT OF 1872**

### **GOAL**

Use relevant **POSTAL ACTS** to illustrate the continual simplification and corresponding decrease in cost of the Domestic Letter Rates from 1792 to the conclusion of the Act of 1872. Demonstrate the reduction of the effective cost based on the Daily Labor Rate of a Textile Worker as the postage costs decreased. Initial exhibit material was first acquired in 1975, and development and refinement has continued to the present, representing a time span of more than 40 years.

### **TREATMENT**

- **Exhibit Beginning:** *The First Federal Postal Act established by the U. S. Government.*

Prior to 1792, postal operations were a continuation of the British System based on the Pound / Shilling / Pence. The First Federal **POSTAL ACT OF 1792** established new rates based on the U. S. Dollar (**COINAGE ACT OF 1792**).

- **Exhibit Conclusion:** *End of the Act of 1872 / First Day of the Act of 1883.*

On October 1, 1883, the Domestic Letter Rate was 2¢ per half ounce delivered anywhere within the continental United States. From this date onward, into the 20th century, the fundamental Domestic Letter Rate continued with little change except for an increase in the weight allowance and minor changes in the postage rate due to inflation or war emergency.

**Subject Limits:** Scope does not include the postal activity of the Confederate States. This Postal System was not part of the United States but was rather a postal system created by "...states in rebellion."

Also not included (primarily due to space limitations), are:

- Postal Convention between U.S. and Great Britain involving "Retaliatory Rates" – this is considered a special situation affecting short-duration rates between governments. (Inclusion adversely affected fundamental purpose of the exhibit).
- Secondary Postal Acts affecting sundry matters such as establishment of postal roads, compensation of postal workers, extent of punishment for crimes against the postal system, and **ACTS** not significantly affecting Domestic Letter Rates.
- Registration and Special Delivery – these "Additional Service Fees" are a tangential to the basic Domestic Letter Rates.
- Non-Letter items such as newspapers, printed circulars, packages, and similar postal matter. These items are not part of the Domestic Letter Rates applicable to typical correspondence for personal and business matters.

**Organization and Development:** Chronologically based on those Acts affecting the Domestic Letter Rates. Within each **POSTAL ACT** are presented the Domestic Rates in order of "Distance of Travel" and Fees relating to specific procedures for handling letters. In the event a letter is sent at an erroneous rate (i.e., overcharged or undercharged), that item is included in the correct (actual) "Distance of Travel" subchapter and not according to the erroneous rate.

Each **POSTAL ACT** Chapter is typically arranged as follows:

- Domestic Letter Rates: Show an example of the correct "Single Weight" Letter (based on Distance of Travel, as applicable) followed by examples of variations (i.e., payment by recipient or prepayment by sender, multiple weight, erroneous rate, unusual events and markings, and similar variations).
- Territorial Usages – to indirectly indicate the expansion of country.
- SHIP Fee, added to the Domestic Rate based on Inland "Distance of Travel" where imposed by the Act.
- FORWARDING – To illustrate the methodology and application of forwarding costs where established by the Act.
- WAY Letter Fees, added to the Domestic Rate (where established and allowed by the Act).
- DROP Letter Fees, where established and allowed by the Act.
- CARRIER Fees, where established and allowed by the Act.

A brief **INTRODUCTION** and **CONCLUSION** are included, as well as a **SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION** Chapter to illustrate the relationship of the War Rates of 1815, the Restored Rates of 1816 (one month duration), and New Rates of 1816.

**Balance:** The amount of material to illustrate the Domestic Letter Rates within each Act is a function of the number of different Postal Zones (i.e., rates based on "Distance of Travel") and other related fees (i.e., Ship Fee, Way Letters, etc.). Due to the gradual decline in the number of Postal Zones, it is apparent that the number of examples presented towards the end of the exhibit (i.e., 1868 and beyond) would typically decrease. However, these later **ACTS** contain interesting examples of multi-weight letters, free forwarding, unusual markings, and other unusual postal activity.

**Relevance:** Material was selected to illustrate the steady simplification of the rate structure and reduction of postal costs.

**Completeness:** No Postal History exhibit is ever *complete*. There are always new items to add. It is significant that:

- Each "Distance Zone" for the various **ACTS** is essentially complete. In order to illustrate the economic factors comparing the costs with the Daily Wage Rate, multiple weight letters are frequently used. **Exception:** An example of the 1¢ Drop Rate during both the **WAR RATE** (less than 8 known) and **RESTORED RATE** (none known) are not included. However, an example of the elusive unauthorized and improper 1½ ¢ Drop Rate used during the **WAR RATES** is included.
- The limitation of ten frames mandated that many examples of Territorial Origins and Destinations, Forwarding, and "Ship Fee Added to Domestic Rate" in the collection be excluded. The exhibit includes representative examples.

# UNITED STATES DOMESTIC LETTER RATES

## IMPORTANCE

**Subject Importance:** Between 1792 and 1883, the U. S. population grew from approximately 4.2 million to nearly 53.8 million and the land under U.S. control expanded from 892,135 square miles to 3,617,800 square miles. During this time period, the U.S. established more than a dozen significant postal regulations affecting Domestic Letter Rates.

**Philatelic Importance:** The exhibit illustrates the evolution of the postal system from a complex system of rates and fees, based on multiple “Distance of Travel” zones, to a simplified and low-cost method of conveying mail within the U.S.

**Exhibit Importance:** The exhibit incorporates the significance of the Subject Importance and Philatelic Importance, and further illustrates the economic advantages of declining postal costs with respect to wage rates at the time of mailing.

## PERSONAL STUDY and RESEARCH

**Personal Study and Research:** Extensive Investigation of cancellations to verify previously published usages. Extensive research of historical maps to determine distances by post roads in existence at the time the correspondence was mailed.

**Original Comparative Analysis:** Further developed the exhibit to illustrate the *effective cost* (Amount of Labor for Postage). Researched historical and Department of Labor data, plus actual payment statements from the time periods, to analyze labor required to pay postal costs. Unaware of any other rate study comparing U.S. postal costs with wage rates.

## RARITY

**Challenge:** Development required searching for items from numerous sources over an extensive duration of time.

**Difficulty of Acquisition:** Obtaining exhibit-quality examples is very difficult in many instances, especially regarding:

- Extent of completion of Letter Rates for the **WAR RATES** and **RESTORED RATES**.
- Inclusion of various Ship Rates, Territorial examples, forwarding, early Drop and Way Rates, and multi-weight letters.
- Letters to and from identical persons to illustrate effect of rate change, and examples of “First Day of Rate Change.”

## PRESENTATION

**General:** Material organized chronologically by each applicable **POSTAL ACT** affecting Domestic Letter Rates.

**Presentation Rules for Exhibit:**

- **Chapters:** Each **POSTAL ACT** (and other Chapters) is presented at the top of the page, in bold *Monotype Corsiva Text*, within a multi-line Blue Box. Applicable Postal Rates and Fees are presented immediately below Chapter Headings.
- **Subchapters:** Subchapters, such as “Distance of Travel” for a specific rate, or similar differentiation, is presented initially in **Bold Black Text**. Subsequent pages within the same category are presented in **Bold Grey Text**.
- **Significant Items:** Matted with Blue stock (rather than typical light gray). Justification for prominence is placed within double-line Red Box.
- **Economic and Social Factors** are presented in a double-line Green Box.

## REFERENCES

- **Postal Acts:** Available online at [www.rfrajola.com](http://www.rfrajola.com). From Homepage, scroll down to **Postal History Resources** and “Click” the banner. New page activated listing Reference Material in three columns. “Click” the specific **Postal Act** (Left-hand column) for the PDF File of the ACT. **Note:** “**1792 Postal Rates**” (middle column) is a good summary of the 1792 Rates rather than the entire 1792 Postal Act.

Disadvantage of Website: Many of the **POSTAL ACTS** often contain extensive extraneous information.

- **Postal Rates:** “**POSTAGE RATES, 1789 – 1930, Abstract of Laws Passed Between 1789 and 1930 Fixing Rates of Postage and According Free Mail Privileges**” United States Post Office Department, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1939; **Reprinted by Virginia Postal History Society, Nov. 12, 1982.** Pages 1 to 15.

Advantage of Literature: Information from each **POSTAL ACT** is condensed and includes only significant data.

- **Postal Markings:** **AMERICAN STAMPLESS COVER CATALOG, Volume I**, Fourth Edition, David G. Philips Publishing. In order of appearance in the exhibit, the following pages from the above reference apply:
  - Page 23: “Notes on Postage Rates and Payment of Postage, The 6-1/4¢ Rate.”
  - Page 216: Discovery of latest usage of New York City Straight Line Handstamp during First Federal Rates.
  - Page 75: Discovery of previously unlisted Augusta (Georgia) handstamp used during **WAR RATES**.
  - Page 55: Discovery of Norfolk (Connecticut) of unlisted earlier example of green CDS.
  - Page 312: Discovery of Westchester (Pennsylvania) CDS predating earliest recorded usage by two years.
  - Page 315: Discovery of previously unlisted usage of Philadelphia 30mm CDS in 1845.
  - Page 52: Discovery of previously unlisted usage of blue Bridgeport (Connecticut) CDS used in 1846.
  - Page 52: Discovery of previously unlisted (latest) usage of Bloomfield (Connecticut) 28mm CDS in 1852.
  - Page 379: Discovery of previously unlisted (earliest) usage of Staunton (Virginia) “high” a variation in 1852.
  - Page 254: Discovery of previously unlisted usage of red Pleasantville (New York) 31mm CDS used in 1868.