

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

SYNOPSIS

PURPOSE

Illustrate the continuous simplification and decrease in the cost of the Domestic Letter Rates from 1792 to the end of the Act of 1872 and demonstrate that the reduction of the Postal Rates was the primary factor in reducing the effective postal costs.

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.*

October 1, 1883: The Domestic Letter Rate was reduced to 2¢ per half ounce delivered anywhere within the continental United States. From this date onward, the fundamental Domestic Letter Rate continued with little change except for an increase in the weight allowance and postage rate increases primarily due to inflation.

Subject Limits: Exhibit does not include:

- Postal activity of the Confederate States. This Postal System was created by "...states in rebellion."
- Postal Convention between U.S. and Great Britain involving "Retaliatory Rates" – this is considered a special situation affecting rates between governments for a relatively short duration. (Inclusion adversely affected purpose of the exhibit).
- Registration and Special Delivery – these "Additional Service Fees" are tangential to the basic Domestic Letter Rates.
- Non-Letter items such as newspapers, printed circulars, packages, and similar postal matter.
- **ACT OF 1847** rates applicable to mail to or from Chagres, Havana, and Panama – these are considered international rates.
- Secondary Postal Acts affecting sundry matters such as establishment of postal roads, compensation of postal workers, and **ACTS** not significantly affecting Domestic Letter Rates.

Organization and Development: Chronologically based on the **POSTAL ACT**. Each **POSTAL ACT** includes the Domestic Letter Rates in order of "Distance of Travel" and is typically arranged as follows:

- **LETTER RATES:** Example of the correct "Single Weight" Letter often followed by examples of variations (i.e., prepayment or payment due, multiple weight, erroneous rate, unusual events and markings, etc.)
- **TERRITORIAL USAGES**, to indicate the territorial expansion of the United States.
- **SHIP FEE**, added to the Domestic Rate, when imposed by the Act.
- **FORWARDING**, to illustrate the methodology and application of forwarding costs as established by the Act.
- **WAY LETTER FEE**, added to the Domestic Rate when allowed by the Act.
- **DROP LETTER FEE**
- **CARRIER FEE**, as established by the Act.

A brief **INTRODUCTON** and **CONCLUSION** are included. Also, a **SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION** Chapter illustrates the relationship of the **WAR RATES** of 1815, the **RESTORED RATES** of 1816 (one month duration), and the **NEW RATE** of 1816.

Balance: The amount of material to illustrate the Letter Rates within each Act is a function of the number of different Postal Distance Zones and other related fees (i.e., Ship Fee, Way Letters, etc.). In order to illustrate the economic factors comparing postal costs with the Daily Wage Rate, multiple weight letters are frequently used. 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., 1845 and beyond) would typically decrease due to simplification of the rate system. However, these later **ACTS** contain relevant examples of multi-weight letters, free forwarding, unusual markings, and other interesting 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 all of the **ACTS** is essentially complete, and representative examples of Postal Fees are included.
Exceptions: An example of the 1¢ Drop Rate during the **WAR RATE** (less than 8 known) is not included. However, an example of the elusive, unauthorized, and improper 1½¢ Drop Rate used during the **WAR RATES** is included. Also, despite more than 25 years of searching, I have never seen an example of the obscure 40¢ rate to or from Astoria and the 40¢ trans-continental rate posted during the brief time span of the **ACT OF 1847**. However, within the **ACT OF 1848**, examples of the new 12½¢ rate within California and the reiterated 40¢ trans-continental rate via Panama are 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 selected representative examples.

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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: 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: Developed the exhibit to illustrate the *Effective Cost* (Duration of Labor to pay for Postage). Researched historical pay vouchers and Department of Labor data to analyze labor required to pay postal costs. Unaware of any other U. S. Rate Study comparing U.S. postal costs with daily wage rates.

RARITY

Challenge: Development of the exhibit required searching for items from numerous sources. Initial exhibit material was first acquired in 1975 and has continued to the present, representing a time span of more than 40 years.

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

- Extent of completion of the Letter Rates for the **WAR RATES** and the **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 the effect of a rate change and examples of “First Day of Rate.”

PRESENTATION

Organized chronologically by each applicable **POSTAL ACT**.

Chapters: Each **POSTAL ACT** and other Chapter is presented within a multi-line Blue Box. Postal Rates and Postal Fees, as appropriate, are presented immediately below Chapter Headings.

Subchapters: Subchapters, such as “Distance of Travel” for a specific rate, is presented initially in **Bold Black Text**.

Significant Items: Matted with an additional red border. Justification for prominence is within a double-line Red Box.

Economic and Social Factors are presented in a double-line Green Box.

REFERENCES

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 Acts: Available online at 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 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.” [Frame 1 / Page 2]
- Page 216: Discovery of latest usage of New York City Straight Line Handstamp during First Federal Rates. [F1/P8]
- Page 75: Discovery of previously unlisted Augusta (Georgia) handstamp used during **WAR RATES**. [F3/P12]
- Page 55: Discovery of Norfolk (Connecticut) of unlisted earlier example of green CDS. [F6/P2]
- Page 315: Discovery of previously unlisted usage of Philadelphia 30mm CDS in 1845. [F7/P2]
- Page 52: Discovery of previously unlisted usage of blue Bridgeport (Connecticut) CDS used in 1846. [F7/P3]
- Page 52: Discovery of previously unlisted (latest) usage of Bloomfield (Connecticut) 28mm CDS in 1852. [F8/P2]
- Page 379: Discovery of previously unlisted (earliest) usage of Staunton (Virginia) “high” a variation in 1852. [F8/P2]
- Page 254: Discovery of previously unlisted usage of red Pleasantville (New York) 31mm CDS used in 1868. [F8/P2]