



The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Issue of 1909

“Many persons incline to the view that the Seattle fair monstrosity is the ugliest thing that has yet been forced on the public”--- New York Sun

Reviled as artistic monstrosities when issued, Scott #370 and its imperforate twin Scott #371 remain the least popular U.S. commemorative stamps of the first decade of the twentieth century.

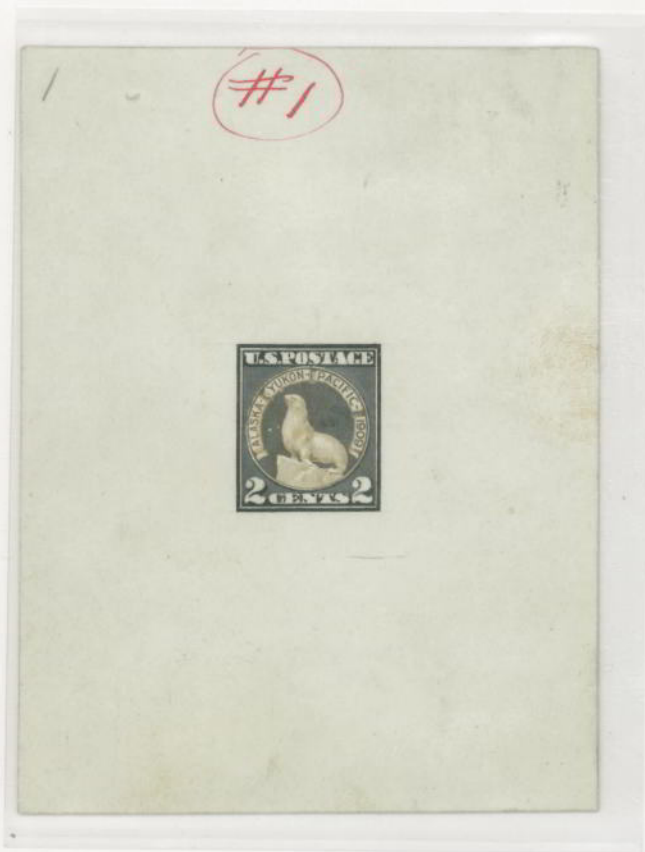
This exhibit shows how political pressure interfered with the design process, leading to replacement of a handsome seal by a politician with big ears and a big nose. A selection of covers mailed on June 1, 1909, the first day of issue, is presented, as well as a complete showing of proprietary coils prepared from sheets of the imperforate stamp. Representative usages of the issue on cover, extending into the 1920s, are included.

Items of special interest include:

- The series of essays prepared by Bureau designer C. A. Huston
- The large die proof of the final design approved by the P.M.G.
- The only U.P.U. specimens of the stamp outside official archives
- A postcard mailed from the Exposition on the first day of issue
- A 280-subject press sheet of the imperforate stamp
- Early demonstration airmail covers

First Design

March 1909. Bureau designer Clair Aubrey Huston's first model for the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamp was based on his circular seal-on-ice essay for an abandoned commemorative envelope project .



Black and white wash drawing of frame with pasted photo of seal vignette. Unique (ex-Johl)



Photograph of essay for the stamped envelope

Second Design

Huston's second design was for a larger stamp, also incorporating the seal-on-ice vignette. This essay was approved for production by the new Postmaster-General, Frank H. Hitchcock, on April 3, 1909.



*The approved essay:
black, white and gray
wash drawing of frame
with pasted photo of seal
vignette (cut-out of
Seward profile was placed
on backing card later).*

Ex-Johl.

Third Design

A strongly adverse reaction from the Exhibition's backers to a stamp which would emphasize the more frigid aspects of Northern life sent Huston back to his drawing board to prepare a pair of essays which replaced the seal with William H. Seward, the Secretary of State who bought Alaska from the Russians.



(Above) Small Seward essay with ink-on-wash inscription of the dates 1870 and 1909 in the ribbons of a definitive series frame. The vignette of a snuff stamp die proof appears behind a central cut-out. Unique (ex-Johl).

(Below) 1/2 ounce snuff stamp, Series of 1891

Fourth Design

Huston's second and larger Seward essay, combining the frame of the previously approved seal-on-ice design with a retouched vignette of Seward derived from an 1876 bond, was approved by the Postmaster-General on April 24, 1909, with the proviso that Seward's name be added.



*The approved Seward essay.
Photo of wash drawing of frame
and arched ribbon of approved seal essay
with vignette cut out, mounted over photo
of engraved Seward vignette
(Bureau die number 2373).
Vignette background retouched
with black wash.
Unique (ex-Brazer).*

On April 26, 1909, Bureau Director Joseph E. Ralph approved the lettering of William H. Seward's name on a new essay. *Incredibly, Seward's name appeared below a vignette of . . . the seal!* A Seward vignette may at one time have been loosely stuck over the seal and subsequently dropped off, or perhaps the seal vignette was used purposely to elicit a chuckle from Director Ralph.



*Retouched photo of adopted frame with
pencilled WILLIAM H. SEWARD on
white wash ribbon below seal vignette.
Unique (ex-Johl).*

The framing and lettering already having been engraved by Robert Ponickau and Edward Hall, Marcus W. Baldwin began engraving Seward's portrait on the die the day after Director Ralph's approval. Engraver Baldwin pulled progress proofs during his work on the die vignette. Two survive (they are listed as "die essays" by Brazer and as essays by Scott).



*(Above). Small progress
proof of die.
Face and collar lightly
engraved,
no shading lines on ribbon,
background
shows horizontal lines
only.*

*Compare with small proof
of completed
die (Below).*

Unique (ex-Johl).

Postmaster-General Hitchcock approved the completed die for production on May 6, 1909.



*Large proof on india paper, die sunk
on card. Unique (ex Lilly).*

The first plate (#5142) was certified on May 11, 1909. There were 280 subjects, divided into four panes of 70 stamps each.



*Plate number block from
the first plate certified*

In late May, 1909 specimen stamps were sent to member countries of the Universal Postal Union.



*Specimens overprinted
“Ultramar” (overseas) by
Portuguese colonial authorities.
These are the only known specimen
stamps outside official
archives.*

Plate Numbers

Twenty plates were used in May 1909 for the press run of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific commemorative. Over 150,000,000 perforation 12 stamps were printed on double-line USPS-watermarked paper



Plate number singles from the twenty plates used to produce the stamp. Later, nine of these plates will be used to print its imperforate twin



Siderographer and Pressmen Initials

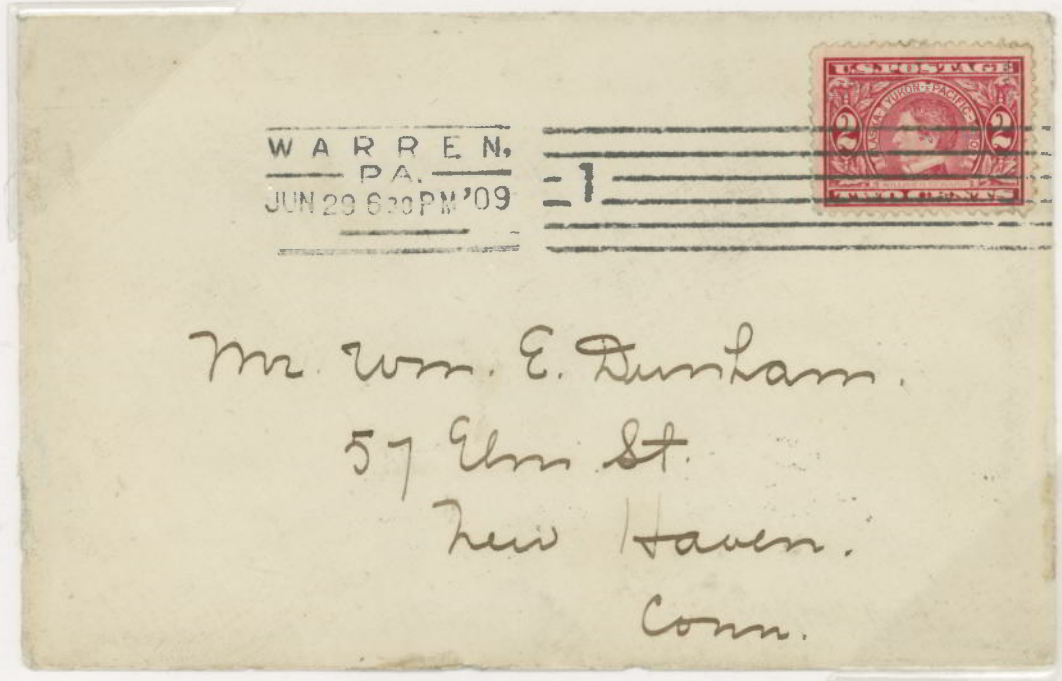
The Bureau siderographers transferred the design of the stamp from the die to a transfer roll, which was then used to enter 280 impressions, in 4 panes of 70, on each steel printing plate. Upon completion of a plate, the siderographer entered his initials in the margin of the lower left plate.

Pressmen were required to punch their initials into the margin of the plate every time they removed it from the vault for printing

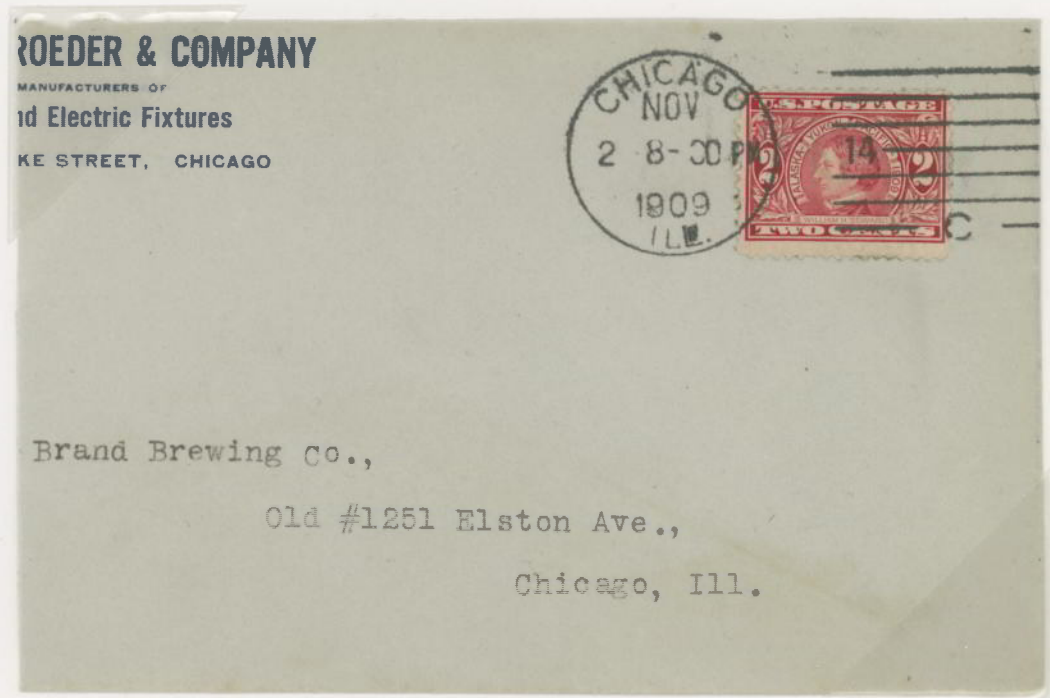
Siderographer John A. Mooney entered his initials in the corner of the left lower pane of plate 5144 upon completion of the transfer process. Various pressmen punched their initials in the upper corner of the pane before putting it to press



Incomplete Right Inner Frame Line

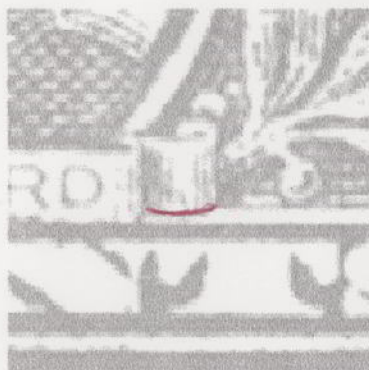


Scratched Plate



Transfer Roll Relief Break, Plate 5257

A relief break in the transfer roll at the right lower edge of the Seward name riband developed after the first two rows of plate 5247 had been rocked in



Normal



Relief Break

A transfer relief break is present on all 5 examples of this vertical strip of the imperforate Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamp



Double Transfer, Plate 5249



*The only Scott-listed double transfer,
located in position 8 (the first stamp
in the second row) from the upper
left pane of plate 5249*

Paper Inclusion



"Earmuff"

Paper Folds



Overinking

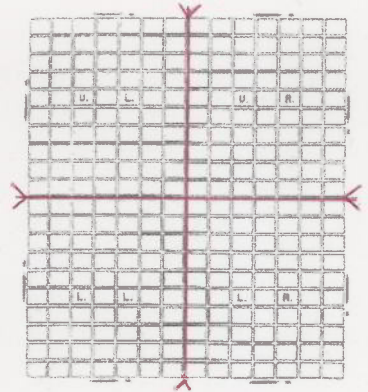


Freak Perforations



Imperforate Sheets

The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific issue was printed from plates of 280 subjects. Perforated sheets were cut along horizontal and vertical guide lines into four panes each containing 70 stamps before being distributed to post offices. The imperforate stamps were supplied to vending machine manufacturers in entire 280 subject sheets, accounting for the existence of centerline and arrow blocks



*Centerline
and
arrow blocks*



Proprietary Vending and Affixing Machine Coils

Five manufacturers of stamp affixing or vending machines made coils from imperforate sheets of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific issue. The Attleboro and Brinkerhoff products were actually used in their machines. However, because of the size of the stamp, the coils made by Shermack and Mail-O-Meter could not fit into the narrow dispensing channels of the machines made by these companies, and should be considered favor items. The coils prepared by the U.S. Automatic Vending Machine Company likewise did not fit their *stamp* vending machines, but were successfully dispensed by their *ticket* vending machines at the Alaska-Yukon Exposition when placed in ticket-shaped manila pockets.

The Attleboro Stamp Company



ex Agris

*The company used an affixing machine
to frank its first-class mail
with the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific
stamp during the Summer and
Fall of 1909*

The Brinkerhoff Company



Type I perforations,
coiled sideways



Type II perforations,
coiled endwise



Type II perforations,
coiled endwise
(line pair)



Type II perforations,
coiled endwise



Type II perforations,
coiled sideways
("double hole" variety)



Type II perforations,
coiled sideways
(line pair)



Type IIa perforations,
coiled sideways



Type IIa perforations,
coiled sideways (line pair)

The knife cuts in Type IIa coils were made by the Brinkerhoff machine as it dispensed the stamps at the Alaska-Yukon Exposition

The Mail-O-Meter Company



Type I perforations,
coiled sideways



Type II perforations,
coiled sideways



Type III perforations,
coiled sideways



Type IV perforations,
coiled sideways (block)



Type IV perforations,
coiled sideways

The Shermack Company



Type III perforations,
coiled sideways



Type III perforations,
coiled sideways (pasteup pair)

*Types I and II Shermack perforations
are not found on this stamp*

The U.S. Automatic Vending Company



Type I perforations,
coiled sideways



Type I perforations,
coiled sideways (line pair)



Type II perforations,
coiled sideways



Type II perforations,
coiled sideways (line pair)



Type III perforations,
coiled sideways



Type III perforations,
coiled sideways (line pair)

Proprietary Vending and Affixing Machine Coils



Type I perforations (top and bottom margins trimmed in an attempt to make the coils narrow enough to fit USAV machines at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition)



ex Agris

Type 2-1 pocket (Sc. 371+343)



ex Agris

Type 2-3 pocket (Sc. 371+343 USAV Type I)



Type 4-3 pocket (Sc. 371+343); no printing on front

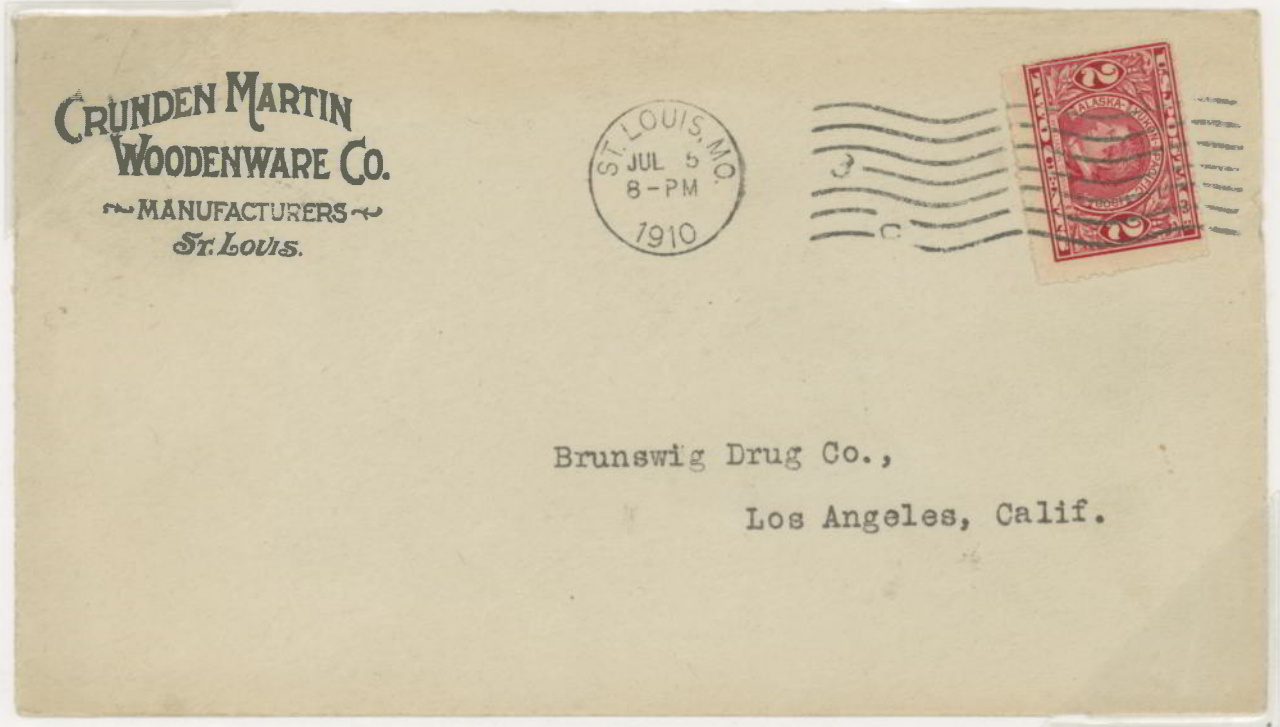
The pockets were dispensed from USAV ticket-vending machines at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition

Cleveland "Sewing Machine" Perforations



*Probably unique plate block with
provisional "sewing machine"
perforations applied by
the Cleveland postmaster during a
Christmas shortage of stamps
in 1914 (ex Wampler)*

St. Louis "Sewing Machine" Perforations



Sheets of imperforate stamps excess to the needs of the St. Louis branch of the Mailometer Co. were purchased by a stamp broker in 1910 and perforated by sewing machine for his commercial customers

Precancels

Only a few precancels are known on the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific issue--- Benton Harbor, Michigan on both the perforated and imperforate stamp, New York, Chicago, and Maywood, Illinois. The Chicago precancel has not been seen in recent times. The Maywood precancel is a recent discovery



*Full left margin imprint and plate
5257 block of six with the Benton
Harbor precancel*



*Inverted Benton
Harbor precancel*



*New York City
precancel*



*Maywood, Ill. precancels
(discovery copies)*

Perfins

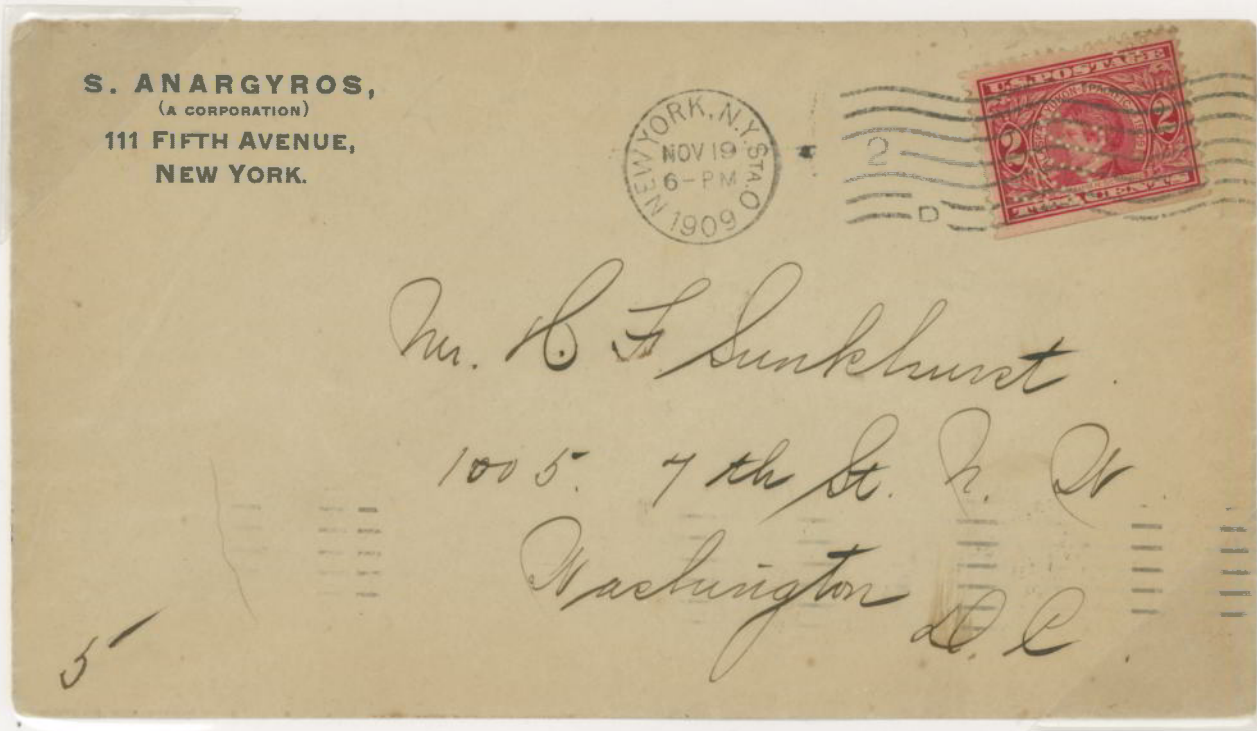
Compared with other countries, the United States was late in authorizing the use by companies of stamps perforated with control initials to reduce employee pilferage---the enabling regulation was not issued until 1908. Very few firms chose to perfin a large commemorative.

W. M. Hoyt Company



"HOYT"

S. Anagyros Trading Corporation



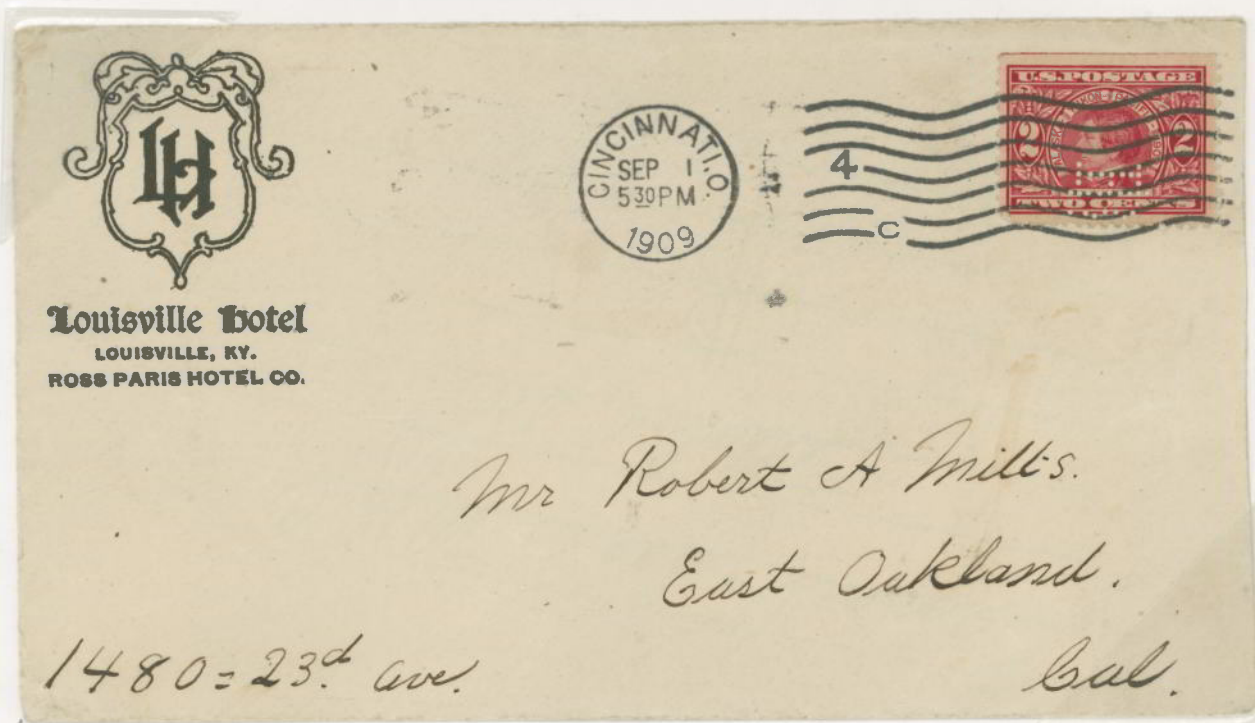
"A. T. C."

Remien & Kuhnert Company



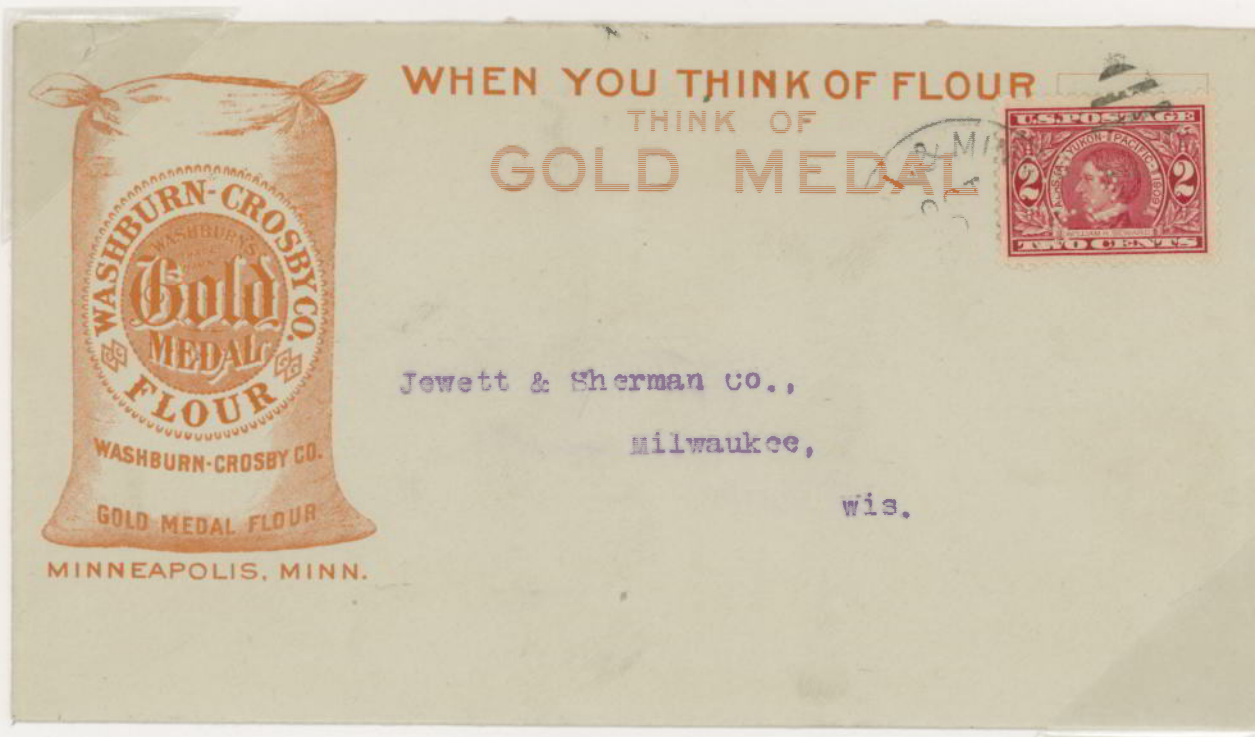
"R & K"

Louisville Hotel (Ross Paris Hotel Company)



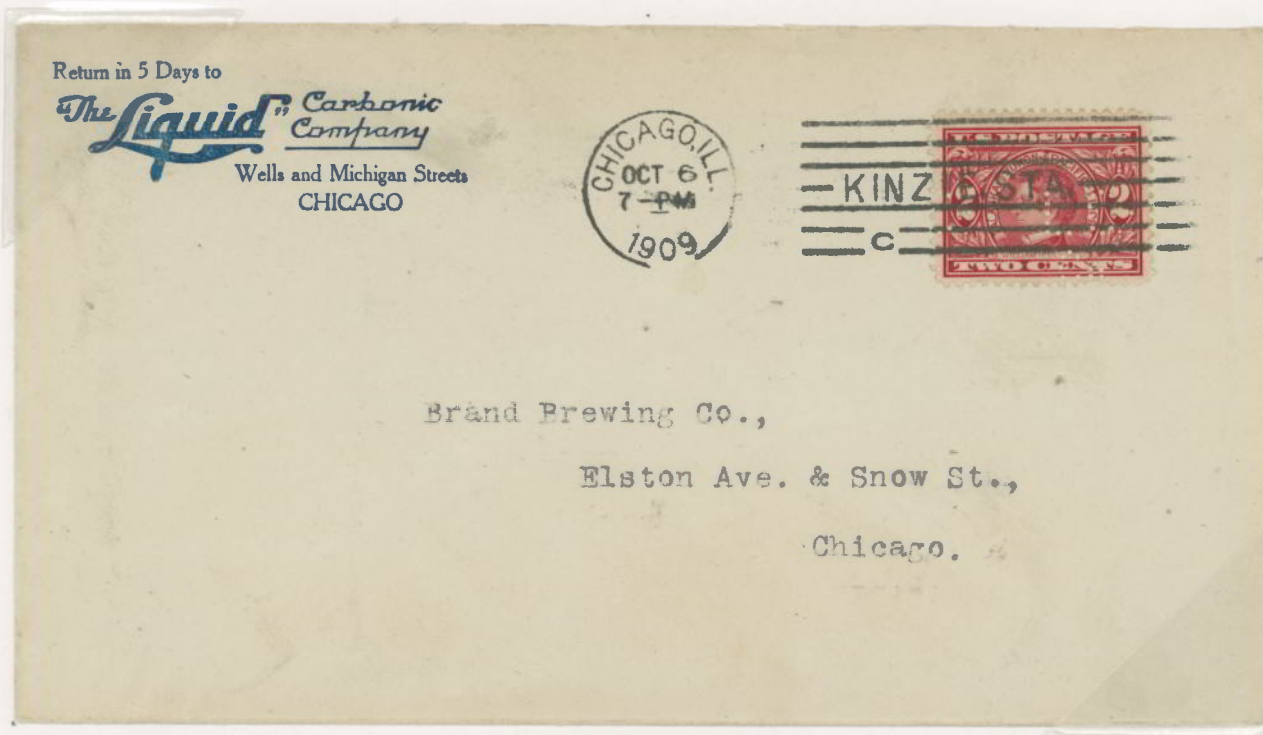
"LH" and "RP" intertwined

Washburn-Crosby Company



"W-C / Co"

The Liquid Carbonic Company



"LC/Co"



"LC/Co"
(punched from back)

Kansas City Journal



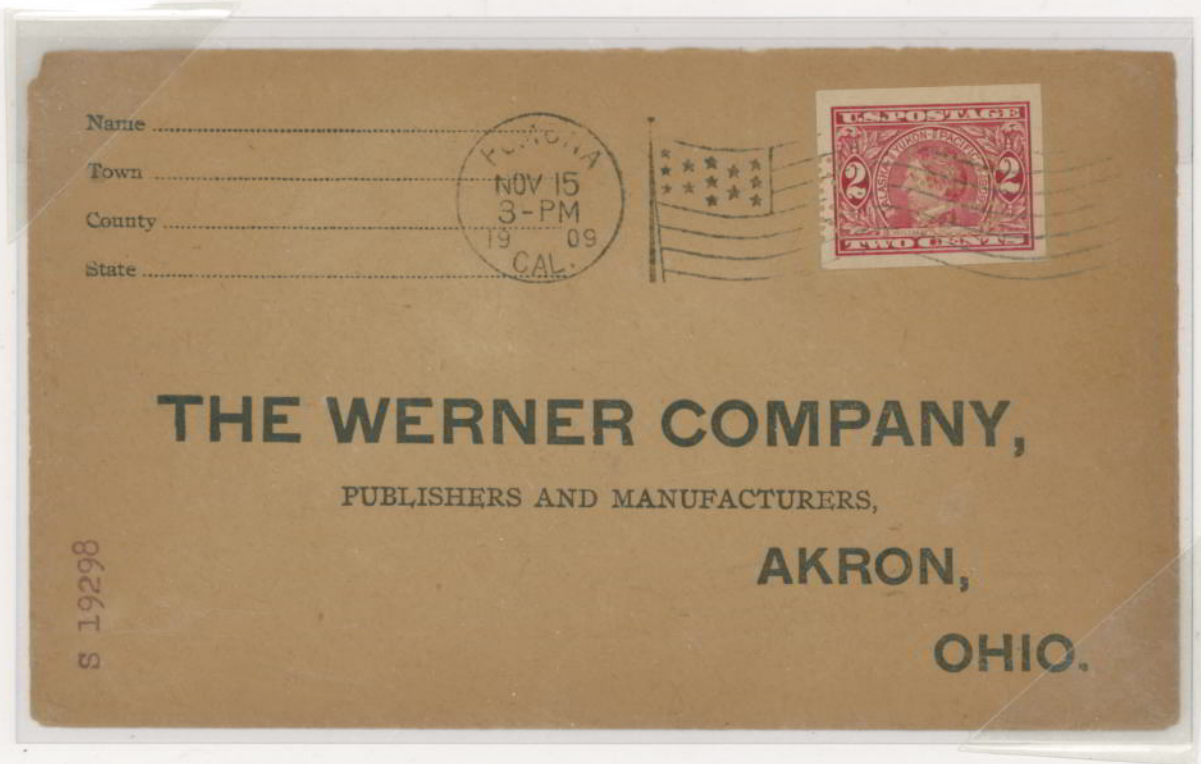
"KCY"

Gibbes Machinery Company

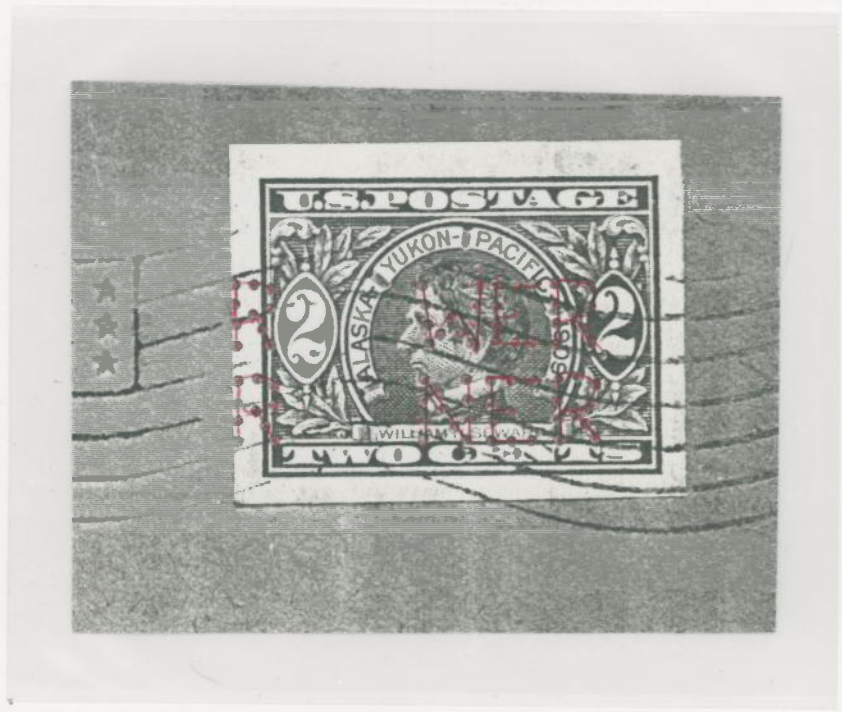


"GMC"

Imperforate Perfin: The Werner Company



Imperforate Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamp with perfin (WERNER, in two lines) on late 1909 cover. The Werner Co. perfin is the only one recorded on Scott #371.



First Day Covers and Cards

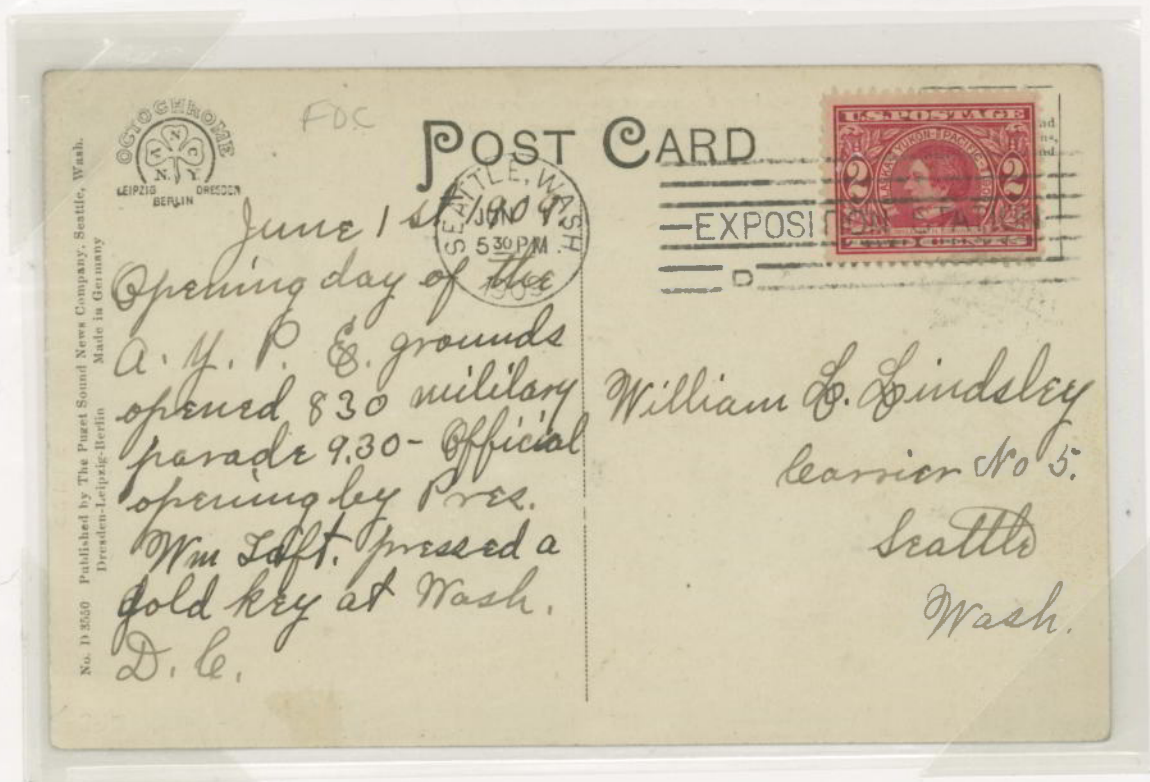
The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamp was officially issued on June 1, 1909, opening day of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition which it commemorated. Sixty first day covers and cards have been recorded.

First Day Cover: Personal Letter



Personal correspondence mailed at Cambridge, Massachusetts on the first day of issue

First Day Card: Memento of Opening Day

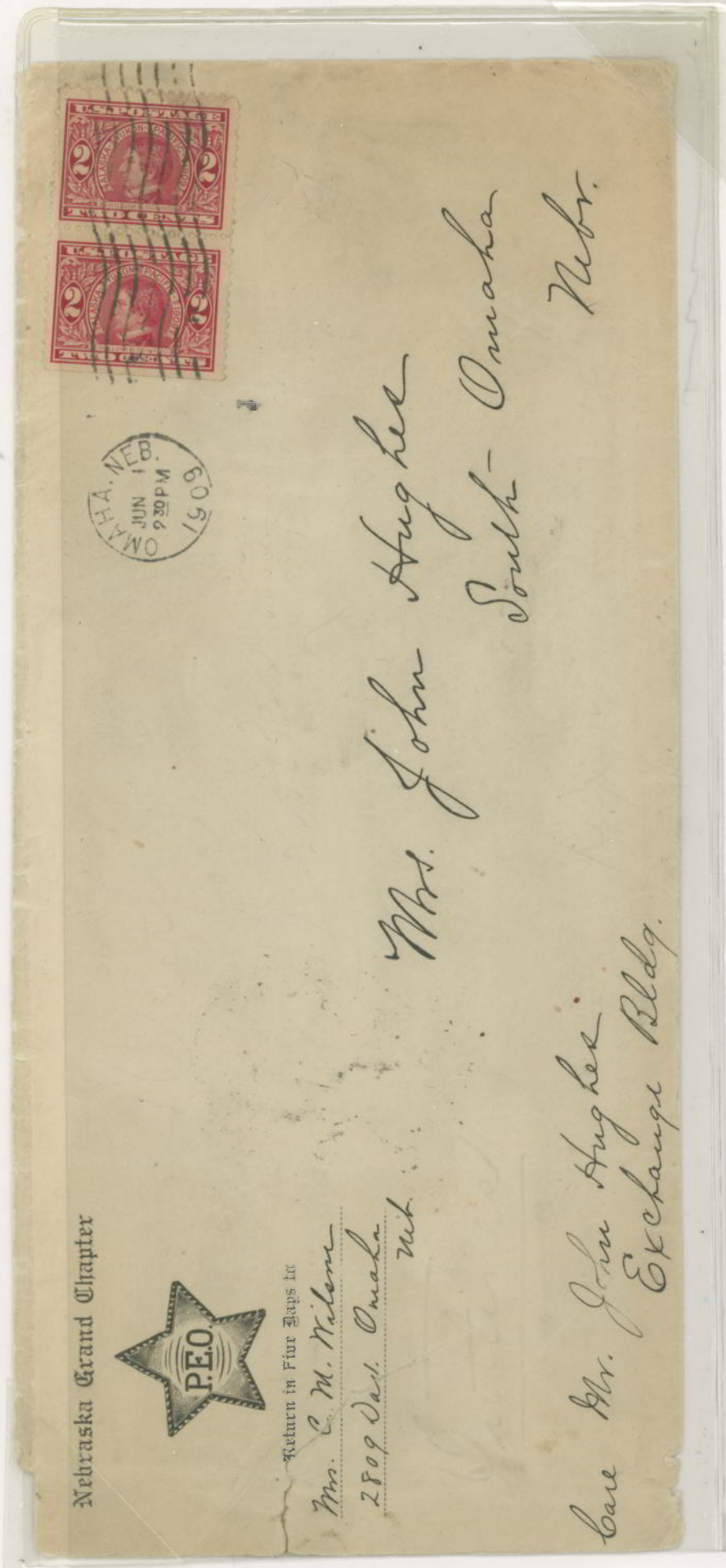


Picture postcard mailed at the Exposition Station on June 1, 1909, describing the opening day events

*“June 1st, 1909.
Opening day of the
A.Y.P.E. Grounds
opened 8.30, military
parade 9.30---Official
opening by Pres.
Wm Taft. Pressed a
gold key at Wash.
D.C.”*

First Day Covers and Cards

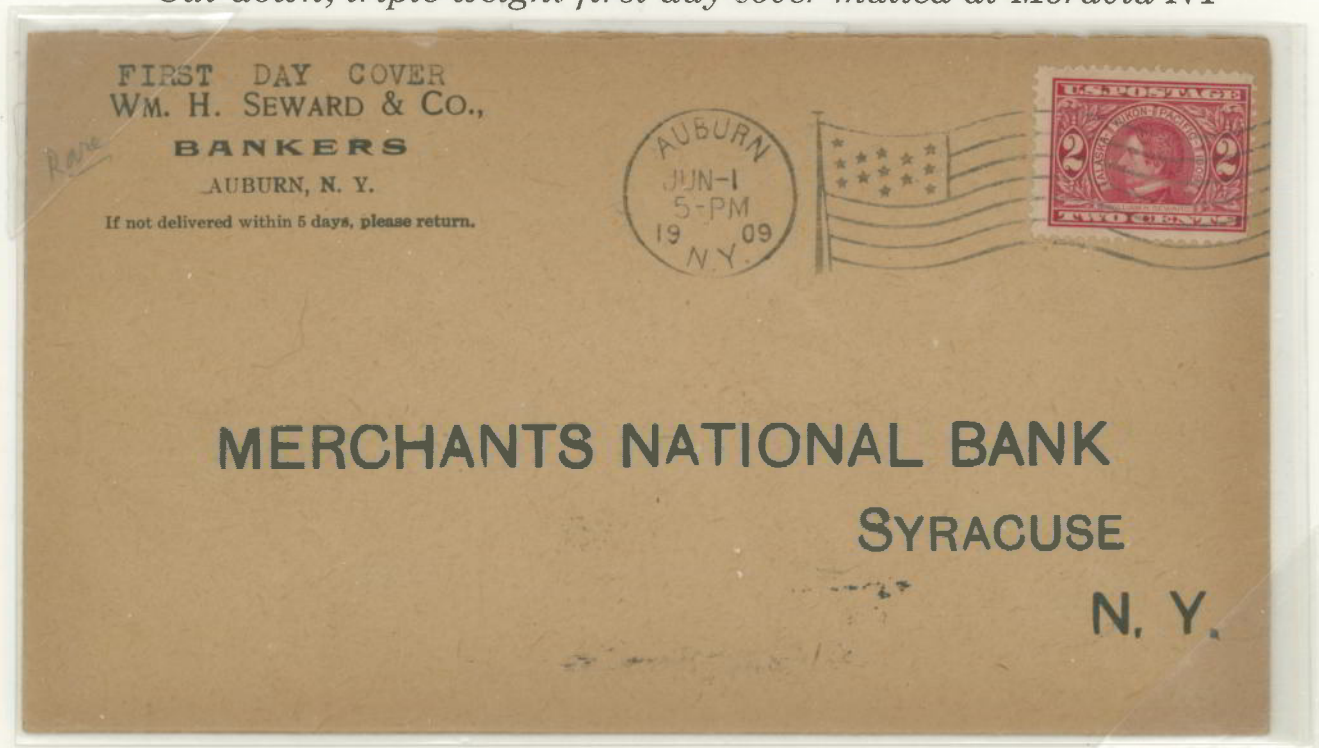
**First Day Cover:
Commercial Letter**



*One of 5 recorded
first day covers
franked
with more than
one stamp*



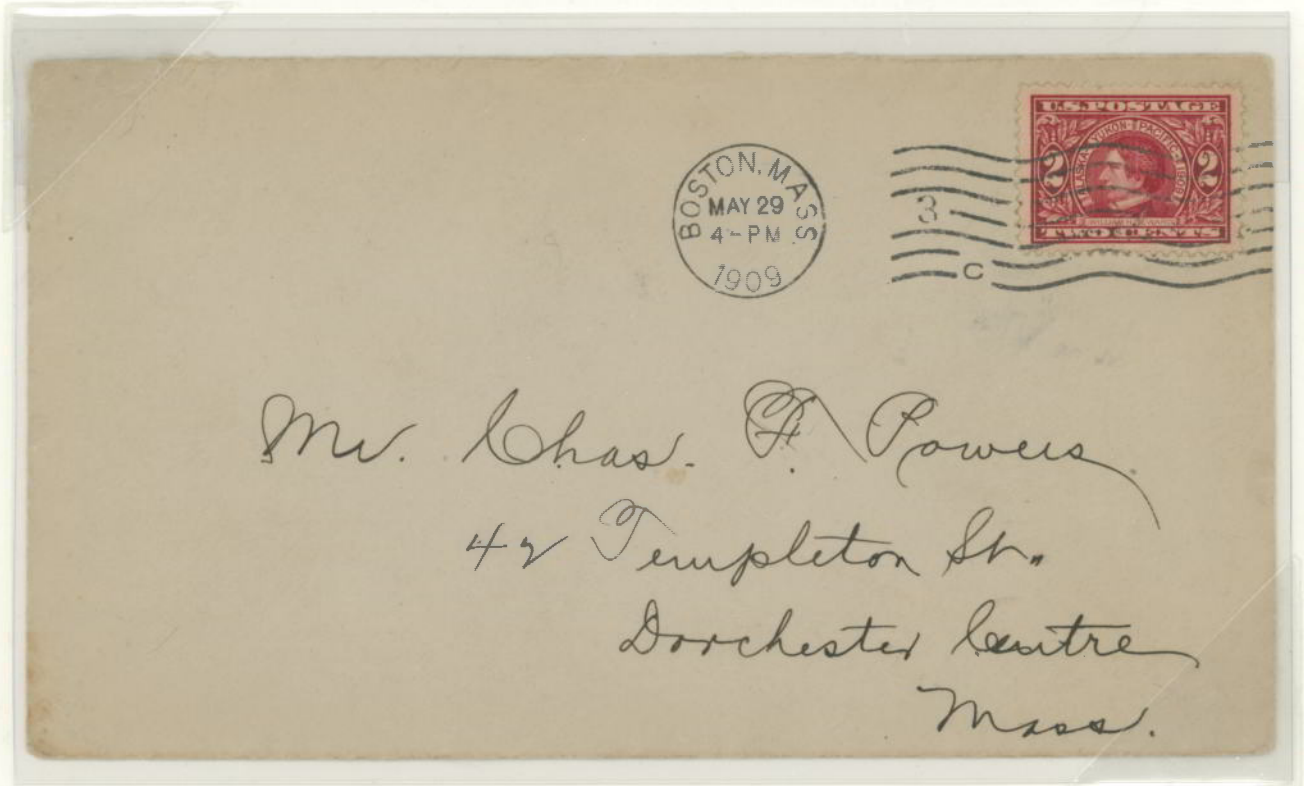
Cut-down, triple-weight first day cover mailed at Moravia NY



Cover from the private bank which Seward's son operated in Auburn NY (hometown of the Seward clan) to a bank in Syracuse. The typed "First Day Cover" was probably added later

Earliest Documented Usage

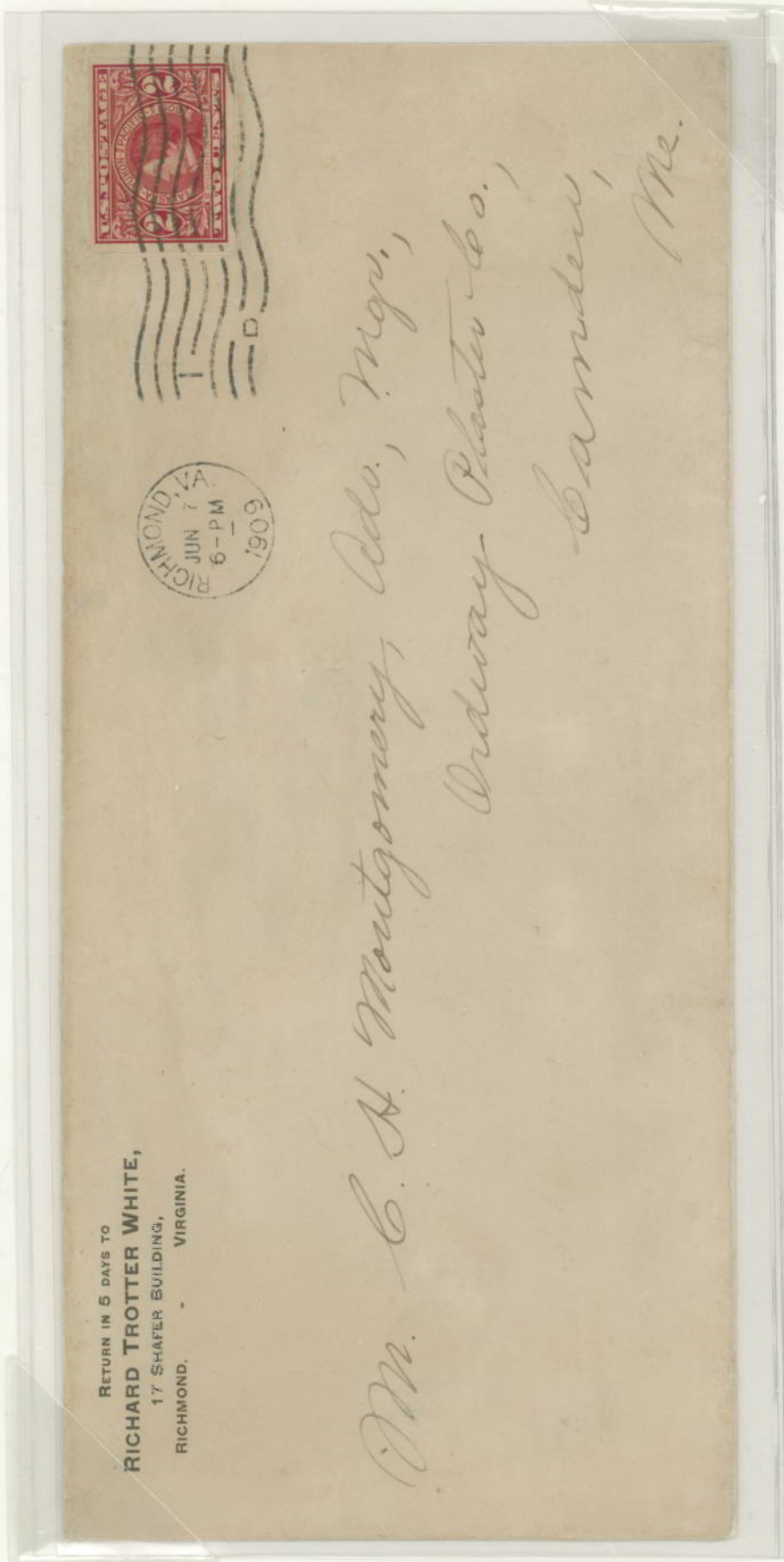
Meekel's Weekly for June 5, 1909 reported that the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamp was first seen in Boston on May 29, three days before the official first day of issue. One Boston cover is known from that date; two later pre-issue covers (May 30 and 31) are known from Santa Cruz, Cal.



*Personal correspondence mailed at Boston on
May 29, 1909--- the earliest known usage*

Earliest Documented Usage

Earliest Documented Usage, Imperforate Stamp



The official date of issue for the imperforate stamp is not known. This June 7, 1909 cover is its EDU

First Class Letter Rate

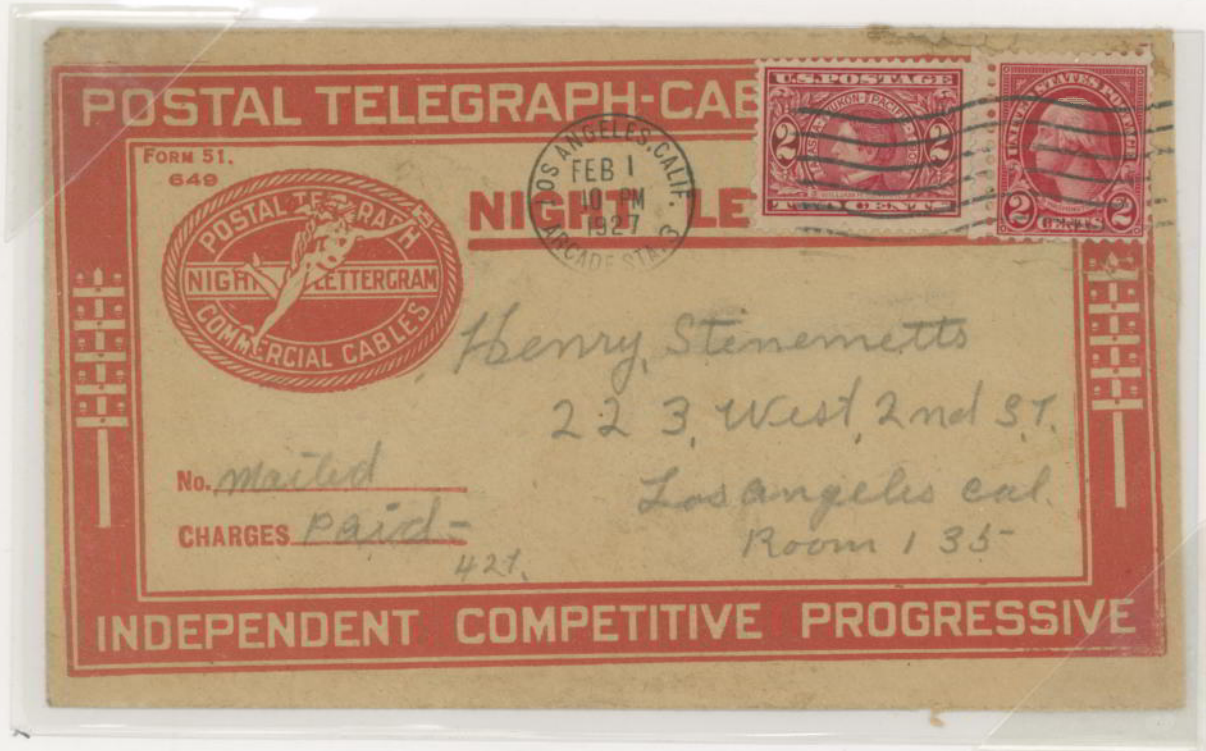
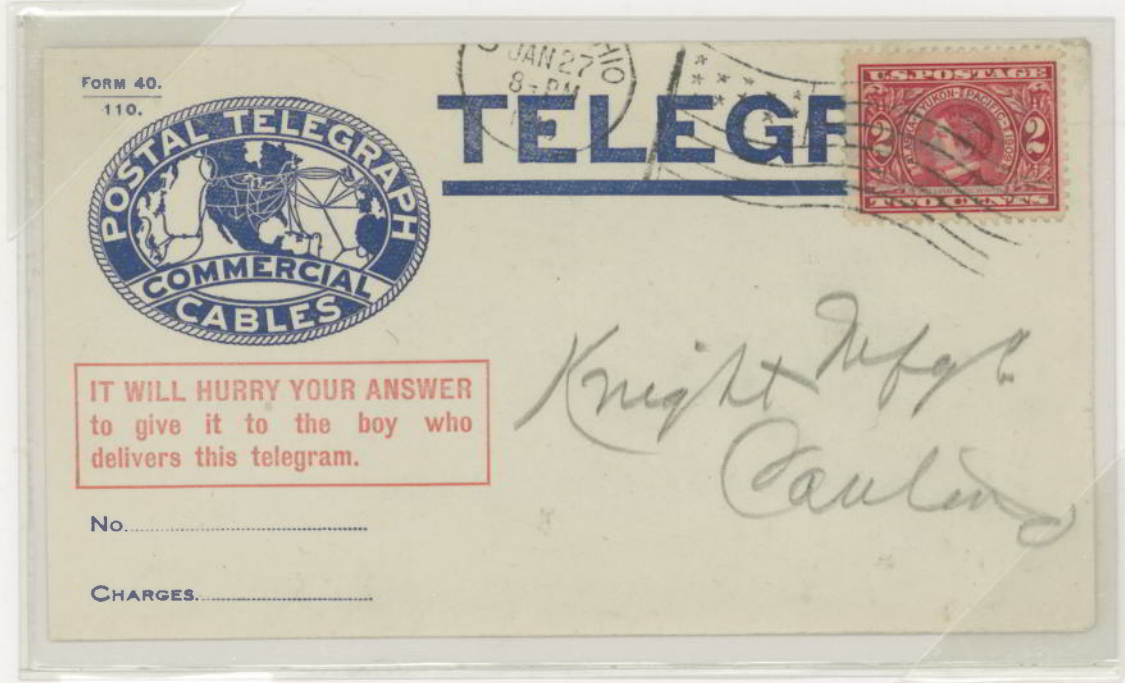


July, 1909 cover from Seattle to Nome, Alaska



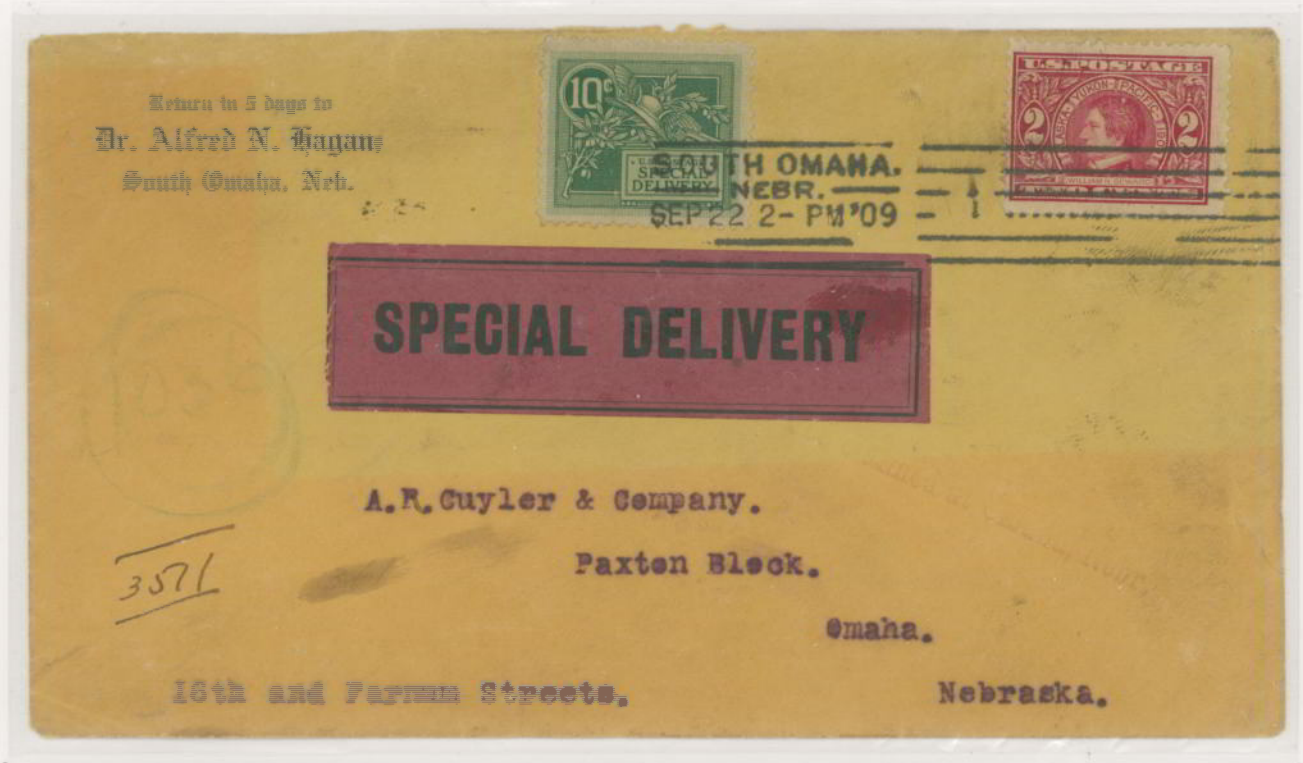
*August, 1909 cover from Seattle to Boston,
with Exposition seal*

First Class Letter Rate: Telegrams



The Postal Telegraph-Cable Company provided sheets of Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamps to its offices for franking telegrams received in the evening for morning mail delivery to local addresses. These were used well into the 1920s

Special Delivery Rate



*Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamps used with
10 cent Special Delivery stamps on 1909
covers to pay 12 cent rate.*

Special Delivery Rate



Beginning in 1907, regular stamps could be used in place of a Special Delivery stamp if the item bore a "Special Delivery" endorsement, as on this 1909 cover bearing an Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition station "C" cancellation. The two cents deficiency in postage was evidently overlooked

Eight Cent Registry Rate



An 8 cent registry fee was in force during the first five months of use of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamp, both for domestic and international mail. The cover to Germany was sent at the 2 cent/oz treaty rate for regular mail

Eight Cent Registry Rate (Puerto Rico)



The island possession of Puerto Rico enjoyed domestic postal rates. October 30, 1909 registered letter from Mayagüez to San Juan, mailed just before the registry rate increased from 8 cents to 10 cents

Eight Cent Registry Rate ((Transition Cover))



Registered cover mailed to Canada just before the 8 cent registry service rate expired. It was received the day after the 10 cent rate came into effect. The reverse side of the envelope bears additional stamps paying six times the 2 cent/ounce treaty rate to Canada.

First Day, 10 Cent Registry Rate



On November 1, 1909 the rate for registry service increased from 8 cents to 10 cents. Registered letter from New York City to Utica, franked with Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamp and 10 cent regular issue

10 Cent Registry Rate



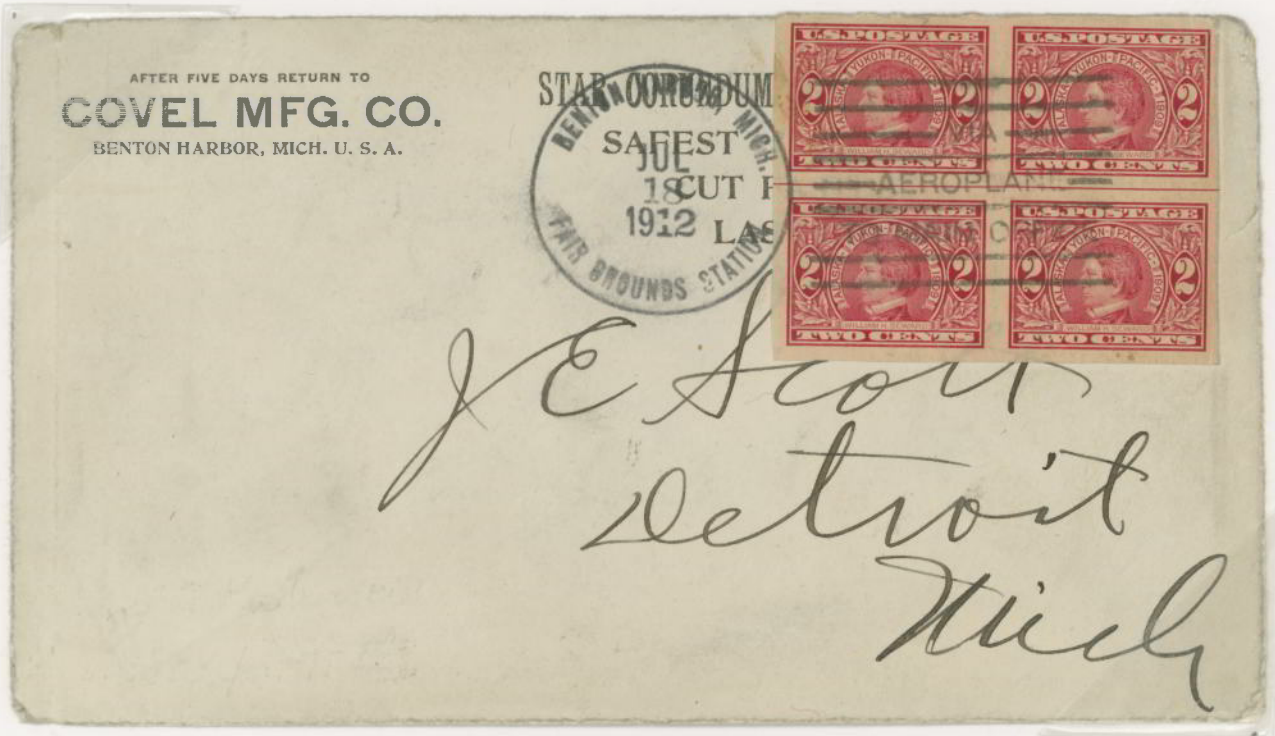
1915 registered covers to and from Wisconsin towns franked with plate blocks of imperforate Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamps to pay the 10 cents registry fee, plus 2 cents first class letter rate.

Circular Rate



*One cent rate for unsealed
circular paid by diagonally-
bisected Alaska-Yukon-Pacific
stamp on 1909 cover*

Early Demonstration Airmail



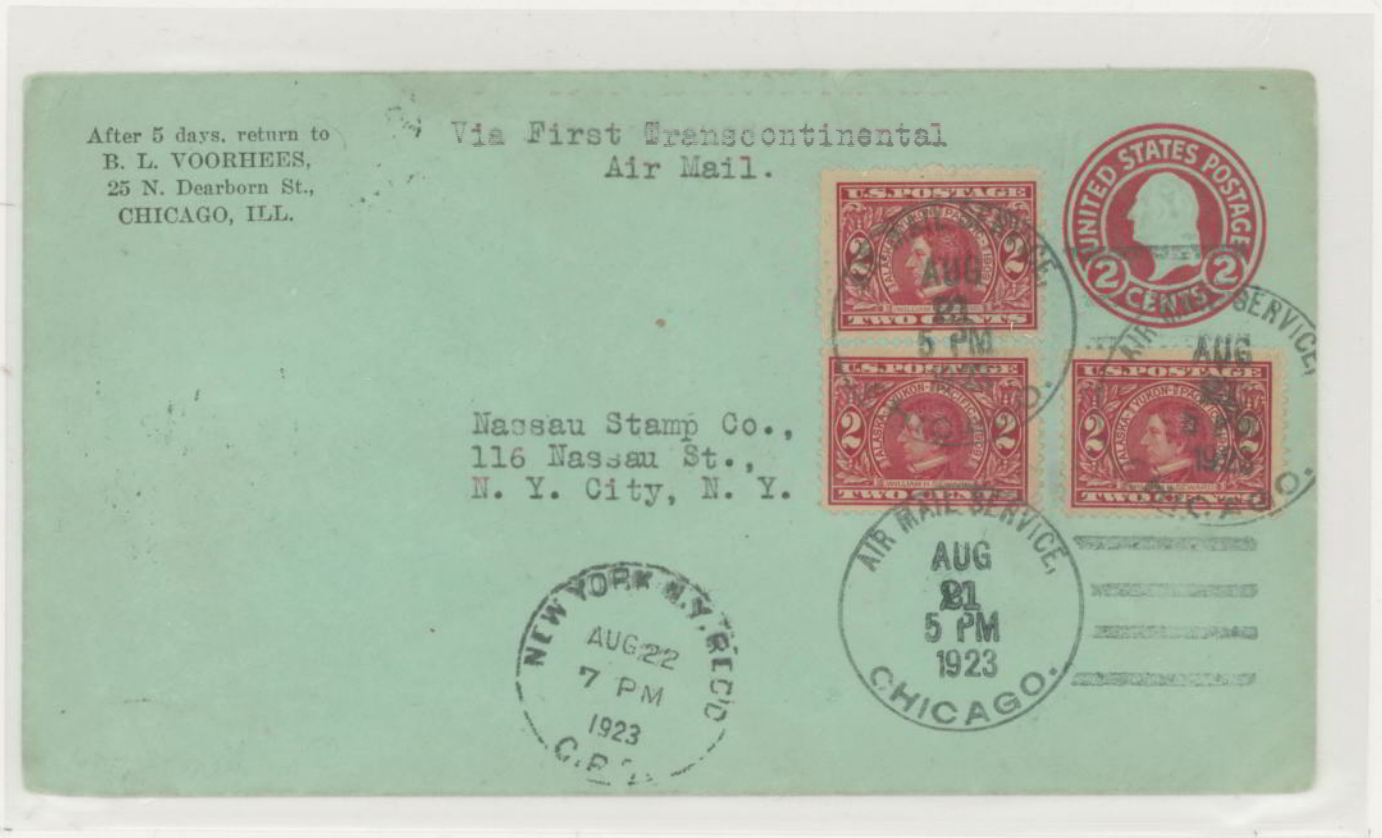
Pioneer barnstormers carried airmail on short hops during aviation's early years, generally from a fairgrounds to a near-by post office. On July 18, 1912 aviator Lincoln Beachey transported this cover in his Curtiss pusher biplane from the State Fairgrounds in Benton Harbor on officially-authorized route #637,001 to the east lawn of the post office about two miles away.

Early Demonstration Airmail



In September 1912 aviator Horace Kearney flew mail from the substation at the Columbia, Tennessee fairgrounds approximately one and one-half miles to a drop point near the post office (official mail route #627,001). This was the first airmail service in the State of Tennessee.

Experimental Airmail Rate



A series of coast-to-coast test flights was made on August 21, 1923 to prove the feasibility of a transcontinental airmail service. This cover was relayed from Chicago to Cleveland, where pilot C. Eugene Johnson, who had flown Chicago-bound mail from Long Island to Cleveland earlier in the day, took it on the return trip to New York on a DeHavilland biplane. The 2 cent stamped envelope is franked with three additional Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamps. The experimental 8 cent rate for the New York-Chicago zone was made permanent on July 1, 1924 when the transcontinental air mail service was officially established.

U. S. Naval Mail



July 1914 cover posted on the U.S.S. Monterey, an obsolete 4000 ton monitor then in active reserve at Olangapo, Philippines. Mail posted aboard Navy ships was carried at domestic rates to the mainland

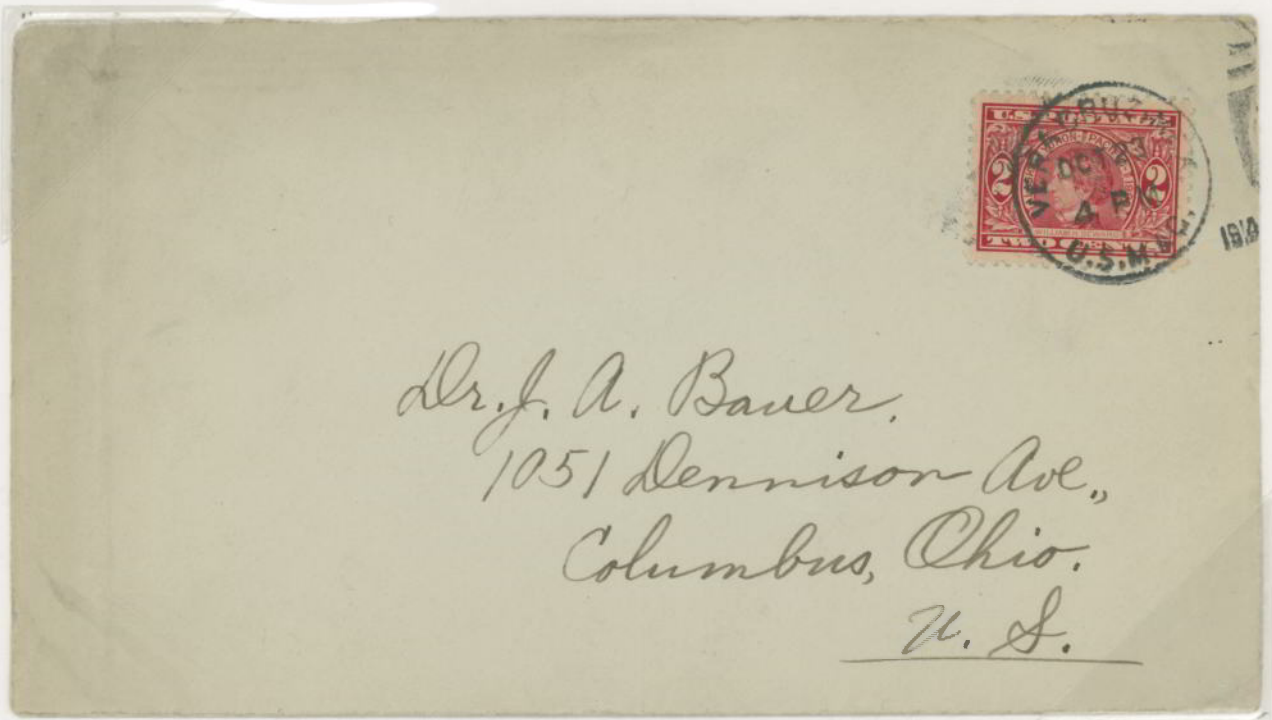
Ship Mail



Cover (which probably contained a circular from a drug company) mailed on an American ship with an Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamp to pay the postage. The purser applied a handstamp reading "POSTED ON THE HIGH SEAS" and delivered the letter to the post-office at the ship's first port of call: Hamilton, Bermuda. Here it was postmarked and entered the international mail stream. By treaty, mail to and from Bermuda was carried at the domestic rate

U. S. Postal Agency in Vera Cruz

United States Marines and Naval personnel seized the Mexican port of Vera Cruz in April 1914, departing in November 1914. U.S. domestic rates prevailed at the postal agency set up shortly after the occupation.



*Domestic letter rate covers mailed
from Vera Cruz in 1914*

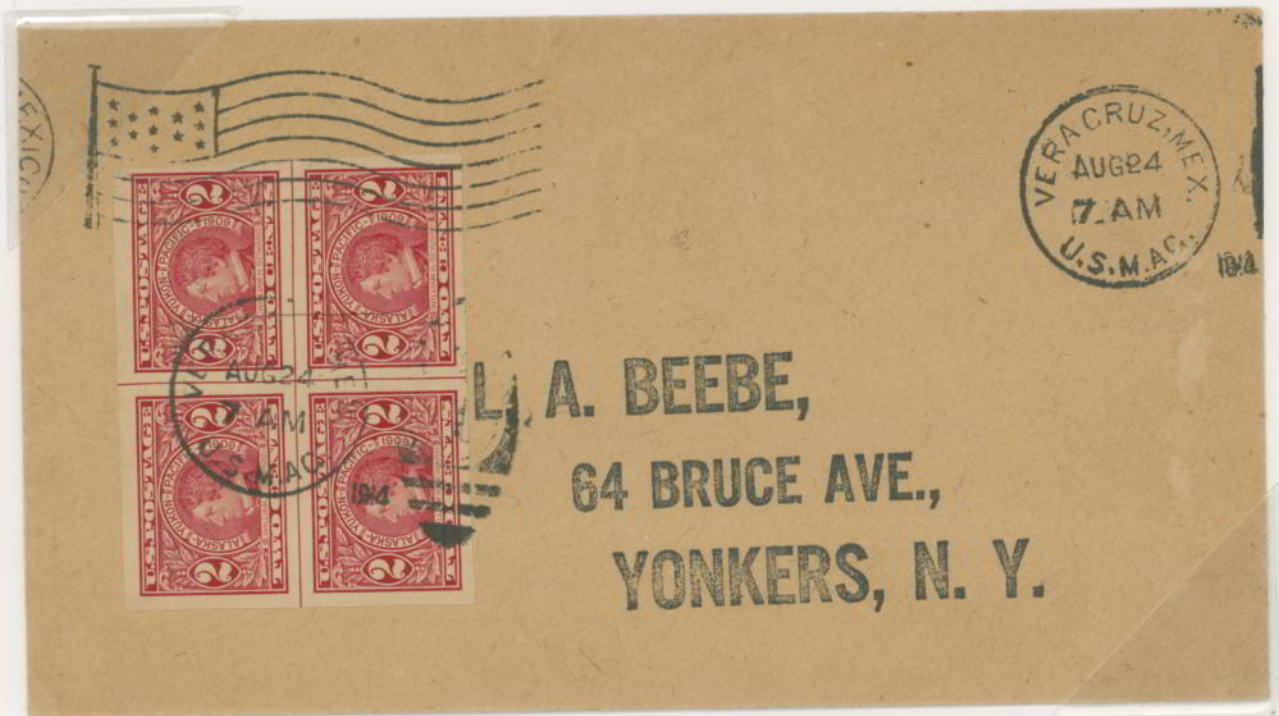
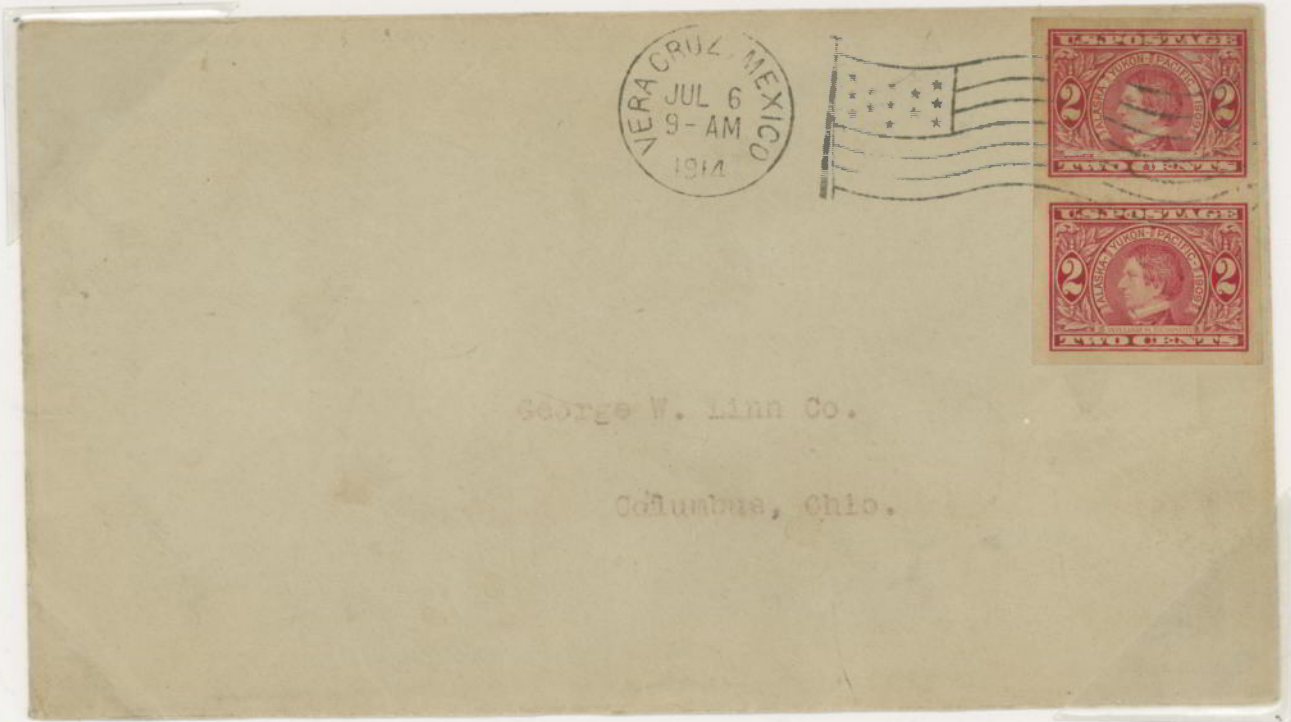
U. S. Postal Agency in Vera Cruz



Registered letter (2 ounce rate) from
the German Consulate in Vera Cruz
to St. Louis

Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Stamps on Cover

U. S. Postal Agency in Vera Cruz



*Covers overfranked with imperforate
Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamps
undoubtedly were collector-inspired*

U.S. Postal Agency in China



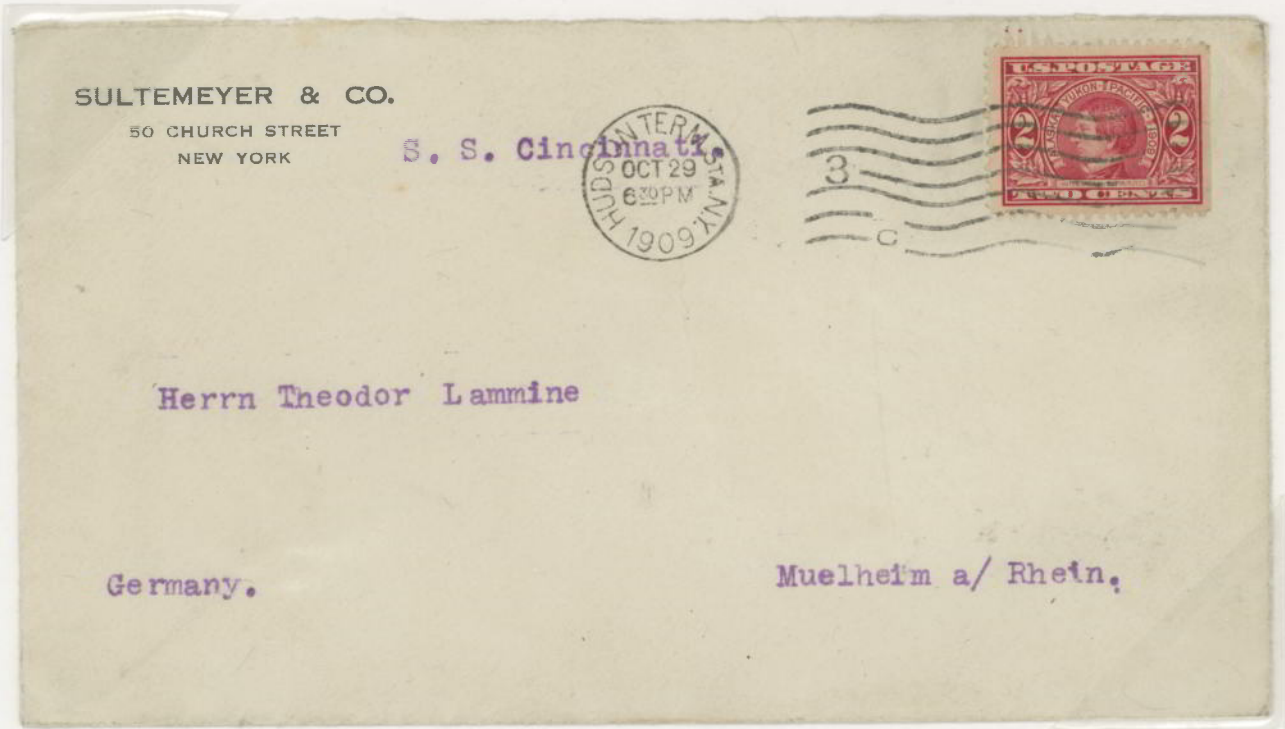
Covers to the United States mailed at the U.S. Postal Agency in Shanghai. Domestic rates applied to mail from this Office. The Special Delivery cover is overfranked, possibly because the sender thought it required the international mail rate

Discount Treaty Rate with Germany



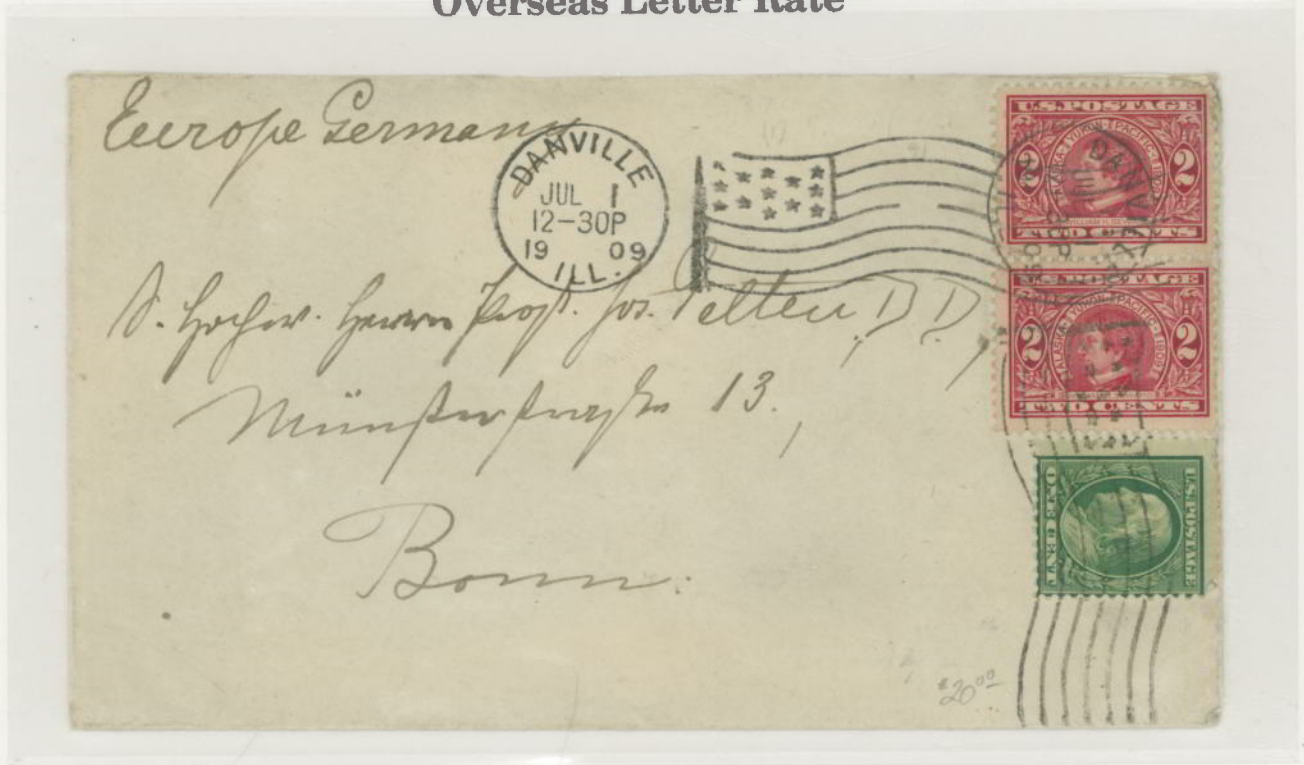
In 1909, the rate for letter mail conveyed directly from the United States to Germany became two cents/ounce, as opposed to the standard five cents/ounce U.P.U. rate. Registered letter, sent to Germany in 1912 on the North German Lloyd liner "George Washington," franked with Registration stamp F1 and three Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamps to pay the treaty rate for a three ounce letter.

Discount Treaty Rate with Germany



Covers (one registered) which travelled to Germany on German ships, thus qualifying for the two cents/ounce treaty rate

Overseas Letter Rate



1909 cover from Illinois to Germany. If it had been carried directly to Germany (not via England or France), the treaty rate would have been only two cents



Cover from Newark to Sweden (no year on cds or backstamp). overfranked by one cent

Overseas Postcard Rate



Seattle to Japan, 1909



Massachusetts to Egypt, 1910

Overseas Postcard Rate



A Hoboken steamship ticket agent sent postcards to his clients by U.S.-German Seapost, to be delivered at their first European port-of-call

Overseas Postcard Rate



Brooklyn to New Zealand, 1910



Connecticut to Sweden, 1909

Overseas Postcard Rate



Indiana to Cochin China, 1909

International Printed Matter Rate



Wrapper for printed matter, sent to the Åland Islands (Finland) at the special international rate of one cent / two ounces



Wrapper for printed matter sent to Switzerland at the same rate

International Registry Rate



1909 registered letter from New Hampshire to Malta. The postage applied was more than sufficient to pay the 8 cent registry fee then extent and the 5 cent overseas letter rate, but fell short of paying the 5 cent fee for the demanded return receipt for registered mail sent abroad

International Postage Due



December 1909 cover from Santa Barbara CA to Brig. Gen. Quinton in Pacific Grove CA, franked with an Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamp. The letter was forwarded (without additional postage) to Paris, where a strip of French postage due stamps was affixed, then forwarded for a second time to Florence, where yet another strip of postage due stamps was added---totalling (as U.P.U. regulations required) twice the three cents deficiency in postage

Around-the-Circle Card



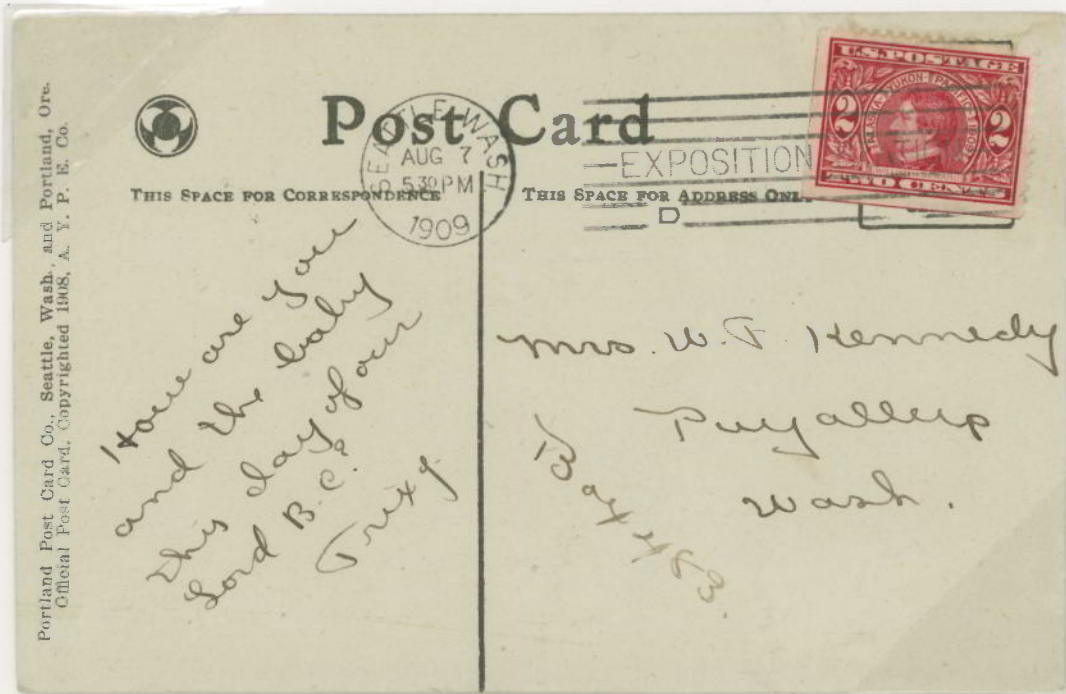
A 1909 "Around-the-Circle" card sent to proponents of Ido (a simplified version of Esperanto). It originated in Switzerland and then travelled to Japan, Philadelphia (where an Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamp was affixed and tied by a machine cancel), Uruguay, Western Australia, Egypt, and then back to Switzerland. Usages such as these were banned by the U.P.U. in 1924 because they were confusing to postal clerks

Around-the-Circle Cover



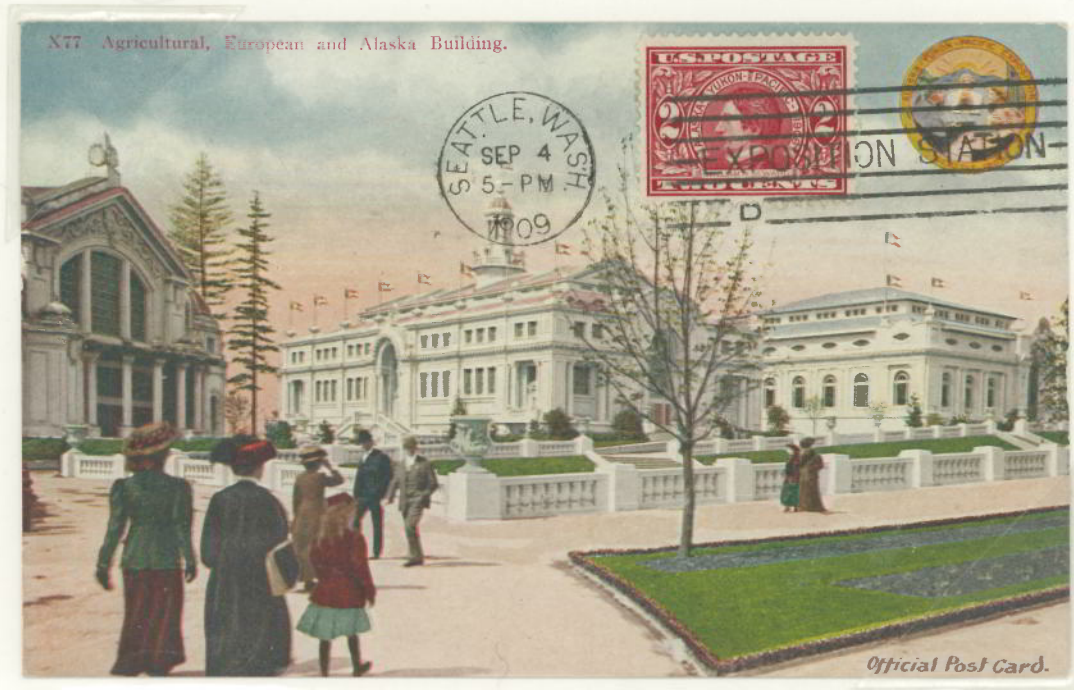
Letter sent from Paris to the Yokohama agent of the Chargeurs Réunis steamship line, for a passenger aboard the Amiral Fourichon. The passenger sailed for San Francisco before it arrived in Japan, and had left for home by the time it reached the United States. The forwarding postage from San Francisco to France includes an Alaska-Yukon-Pacific stamp

Exposition Station Cancellations



Letter and over-franked postcard mailed at post office on Alaska-Yukon-Pacific exposition grounds.

Exposition Station Cancellations



The bottom card is franked with an imperforate stamp from one of the U. S. Automatic Vending Company machines on the Exposition grounds

Railroad Post Office Cancellations



R.P.O. cancellations on covers with foreign destinations. The Boundary Line and Grand Forks cover was sent at the Canadian treaty rate for letters

Railroad Post Office Cancellations



R. P. O. cancellations on domestic covers

Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Stamps on Cover



A 1909 philatelic extravaganza, correctly franked for registered special delivery of a double-weight letter