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8-Cent and 5-Cent Air Mail Rates: First Day and Last Day of Rate Covers

by Stephen L. Suffet



Fig. 1. First day of 8-cent domestic air mail rate. Washington, DC. March 26, 1944.

Note: This is the second in a series of articles exploring the first and/or last day of postal rates during the Prexie Era.

United States domestic air mail service began May 15, 1918, and during its first 16 years of existence, the basic rate changed nine times. Rate stability finally came on July 1, 1934, when the rate decreased from 8 cents for the first ounce plus 13 cents per each additional ounce to a flat 6 cents per ounce. This new rate applied to air mail sent between any two post offices within the continental United States, including the Territory of Alaska, as well as

to air mail sent from the continental U.S. to Canada. Higher rates applied for air mail to or from U.S. possessions other than Alaska.

After close to 10 years, the domestic air mail rate increased from 6 cents to 8 cents per ounce on March 26, 1944. That increase, along with several other wartime postal rate increases, was authorized by Public Law 78-235, passed by Congress on February 25, 1944, and paradoxically called the Revenue Act of 1943. (That was the year the bill had been drafted and introduced.)



Fig 2. Last day of 8-cent domestic air mail rate. Postmarked Passaic, NJ. September 30, 1946.

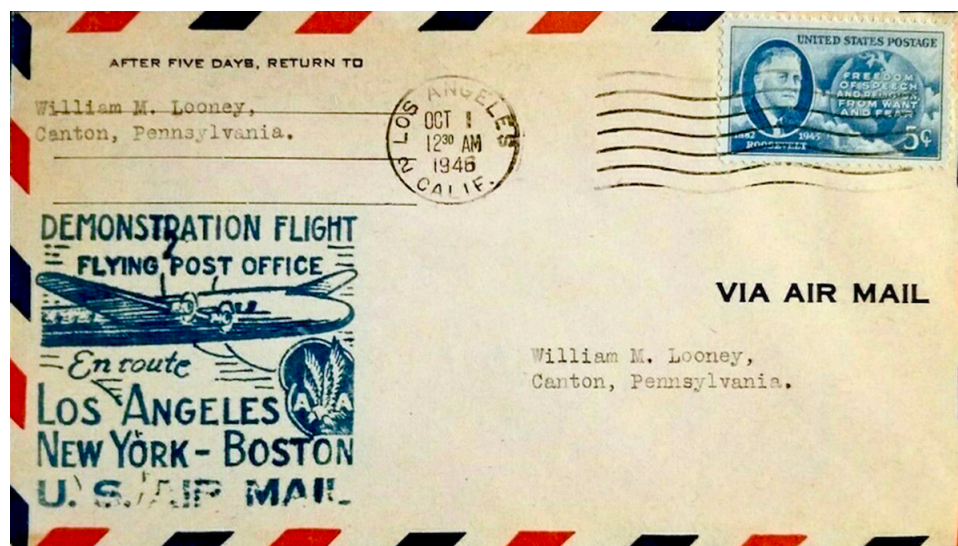


Fig. 3. First day of 5-cent domestic air mail rate. Postmarked Los Angeles, Calif., October 1, 1946.

Figure 1 pictures a cover with a Pent Arts cachet used from Washington, D.C., on March 26, 1944, the first day of the new rate. The postage is paid with the 8-cent air mail stamp that had been added to the current Twin-Motor Transport Series five days earlier. Pent Arts first day, special events, patriotic, and rate change cover were produced between 1943 and 1958 by Edwin P. Haworth of Kansas City, Missouri, and this cover is addressed to him.

The cover shown in Figure 2 was used from Passaic, New Jersey, on September 30, 1946, the last day of the 8 cents per ounce domestic air mail rate. It, too, has an 8-cent Twin-Motor Transport air mail stamp of 1944 paying the

postage. Unlike the previous cover, it appears to be an ordinary commercial usage rather than an intentional philatelic creation. The following day the rate dropped to 5 cents per ounce. That new post-war rate applied to air mail between any two U.S. post offices, including post offices in U.S. possessions, U.S. Army Post Offices, and U.S. Fleet Post Offices. It also applied to U.S. air mail sent to Mexico, in addition to U.S. air mail sent to Canada.

Figure 3 illustrates a cover postmarked from Los Angeles, California, on October 1, 1946, the first day of the 5-cent domestic air mail rate, with a 5-cent Franklin D. Roosevelt memorial stamp paying the postage. The Post Office



Fig. 4. Last day of 5-cent domestic air mail rate. Toledo, Ohio. December 31, 1948.

Department rubber stamped cachet shows that this cover flew aboard one of the demonstration flights used to test the feasibility of having postal clerks sort mail aboard aircraft en route. The trials proved that the idea was not cost efficient, and the so-called Flying Post Offices were not put into regular service.

Figure 4 pictures a cover used from Toledo, Ohio, on December 31, 1948, the last day of the 5-cent domestic air mail rate. Two 1-cent and one 3-cent Presidential Series stamps paid

the postage. The next day the rate returned to 6 cents per ounce for letters, but dropped to 4 cents apiece for post and postal cards. Like the cover in Figure 2, but unlike the covers in Figures 1 and 3, this appears to be an ordinary commercial usage rather than one created for stamp collectors.

U.S. domestic air mail, as a class of service, ended on May 1, 1977. By then the rate had changed six more times.

Late Uses of the 2-Cent Adams Prexie

by Richard D. Martorelli

Why are we collectors so fascinated by the stamps of the 1938 Presidential Series? The 32 values included one for each deceased president, the value corresponding to the numerical order of his presidency, from Washington through Cleveland. Higher values appeared for Harrison through Coolidge. Three fractional denominations pictured Benjamin Franklin, Martha Washington and the White House. The Series, appearing in 1938 and 1939, was gradually replaced by the Liberty Series starting in 1954. Over 240 billion stamps were issued over the 20-year life of the Prexies.

For some, the answer is in the overall unifying design of the Series, or perhaps the sheet/coil/booklet pane/Electric Eye variations. For others, it is in finding uses of a wide variety of postal rates (especially solo) of the denominations on cover. For me, the interest is in the history of the period, as reflected in the mail as the United States moved to the status of international superpower while simultaneously dealing with domestic economic, social and political issues that echoed throughout the next 20 years. While not concentrating on the Prexies themselves, they are ever-present on



Figure 1: A single-piece 3rd class rate up to 2 ounces. Two cents due for forwarding.

the mail of the times.

While looking at a group of covers recently, I found several that represented late, mostly “in-period” uses of the 2-cent John Adams Prexie. In this case, knowing its replacement (Scott 1033) was issued September 15, 1954, I define “late” as the years 1952-1954 and “in-period” up to September 15, 1954.

The cover in Figure 1 is a 9” x 6” kraft paper envelope, with no return address, franked with a 2-cent sheet stamp (Scott 806), and postmarked 1954 with a year-date-only machine slogan cancel. Unsealed, the original franking of two cents was to pay the single-piece 3rd class rate up to 2 ounces. The item was forwarded in June 1954 and, as noted by the auxiliary marking, postage was guaranteed by the addressee. Postal regulations at the time required postage due to be assessed at the same rate as the original mailing. The receiving post office canceled the envelope, affixed a 2-cent postage due stamp (Scott J81), and box-cancelled it.

Figure 2 shows a Number 10 envelope bearing a religiously-oriented corner card, franked with a 2-cent vertical coil (Scott 841) and postmarked in 1952 with a year-date-only machine slogan cancel. At first glance, the correspondence appears to be a 1st class local letter. However, the undated postmark and unsealed flap clearly identify it as a 3rd class mailing at the single piece rate. As in the first cover, forwarding was guaranteed by the addressee, a minister and on-air radio personality in both Boston and the forwarded address of Apollo, PA, outside Pittsburgh. A total of six cents postage due was affixed to the envelope, making it likely this was a personal “top of stack” cover for the relocated individual.

Keeping to the theme, Figure 3 is a Number 6¾ envelope with a commercial corner card, franked with a 2-cent horizontal coil (Scott 850) and postmarked in 1955 with a year-date-only machine slogan cancel. This represents another 3rd class mailing at the single piece rate. While the envelope itself was sealed at mailing, it



Figure 2: A single-piece 3rd class rate up to 2 ounces, postage due assessed for forwarding. Additional 4 cents due for two additional forwarded items in the bundle.

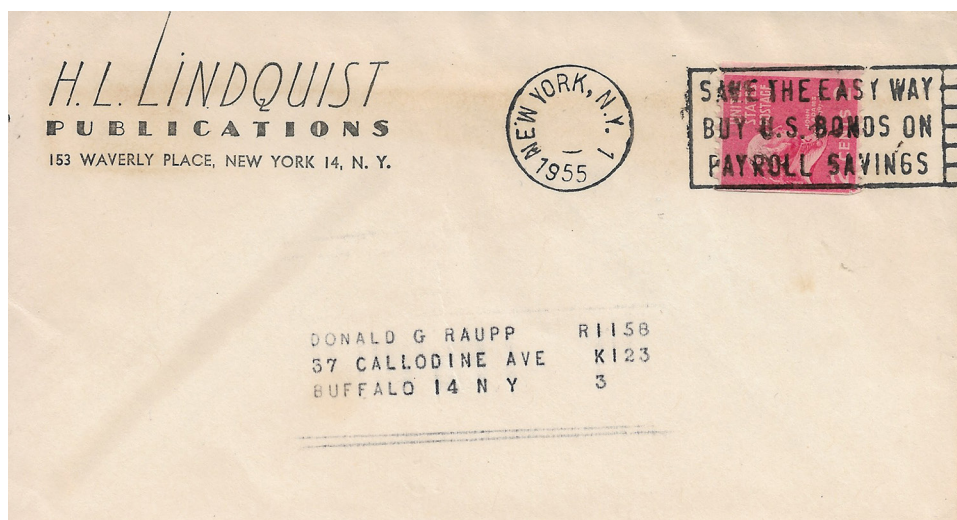


Figure 3: A single-piece 3rd class rate up to 2 ounces on cover with "Pull-Out For Postal Inspection back panel."

was the type constructed with an opening back panel with printed directions "Pull-Out For Postal Inspection."

Rounding out examples of the 3rd class rate is the unsealed envelope in Figure 4, measuring $5\frac{3}{4}$ by $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches. It is franked with a 2-cent Adams stamp, cancelled with a McCracken, Kansas handstamp dated September 24, 1954. It is addressed to a person in town, "c/o Hosps". Both this directional mark and the addressed town name on the front of the envelope are crossed out, and "Mc Cracken" is written in. On the front a 2-cent due stamp is affixed and

cancelled by straight line "McCRACKEN, KANS" and "SEP 27 1954" handstamps. The size and shape of the envelope are consistent with a greeting card envelope. The marking of "c/o Hosps." is likely an abbreviation of "Hospital", suggesting a "get well" card. Likely it was returned because the addressee had been discharged. The town to which the envelope was originally addressed, La Crosse, is the county seat and site of a county owned hospital that replaced a small physician-owned hospital in 1950. It appears this envelope was mailed under the "Christmas card" rule, a greeting card with only salutation and signature permitted



Figure 4: Greeting card envelope mailed under the “Christmas card” rule, unsealed with only salutation and signature allowed.

and left unsealed for inspection. Such mail could be sent using the 3rd class single piece rate as opposed to the higher 1st class rate. If sealed, the item would be charged postage due as 1st class mail. In this case, the 2 cents postage due was assessed to forward the mail at the 3rd class single piece rate.

From January 1, 1952 until July 31, 1958, two cents paid for domestic surface postcards/postal cards. Four cents was the rate for domestic airmail postcards/postal cards from January 1, 1949 to July 31, 1958. Both rates were payable with the 2-cent Adams stamp. Figure 5 shows examples of both of these conventional usages.

The postcard in Figure 6, however, is different. It has neither postmarks nor other overt dates. It is a set of three connected post cards from the GEICO automobile insurance company, addressed to a Washington, D.C. female resident. A 2-cent Adams adhesive sealed the set of postcards together. GEICO originally targeted for automobile insurance sales federal employees and certain categories of military enlisted and officer personnel.

Four clues help date this item. Of the three post cards, one is to the destination address, the second is a pre-stamped (1-cent Prexie) return information card, and the third a business reply mail (BRM) postcard. The latter two cards have a printed return address of 14th and L Streets, NW, Washington 5, D.C. First, this mailing had to occur after 1943, because that was the start of Postal Zone codes, in this case, the “5”. Second, in 1949-50, GEICO bought and occupied as their headquarters the building at 14th and L Streets.

Third, the “Sec. 34.5 PL&R” reference on the BRM card dates to the 1949 change in the federal code numbering, including postal laws. Referring specifically to the postage rate, the 1-cent pre-stamped return card was intended for use before January 1, 1952, when the postcard/postal card rate rose to 2 cents.

Last, the outgoing postage of the 2-cent Adams stamp is consistent with a new, January 1, 1949 rate for a 3rd class single piece item up to 2 ounces. In summary, this item was mailed sometime in 1950 or 1951.



Figure 5: Postcards showing two different domestic rates, for surface and airmail.

Last in the postcard class, as shown in Figure 7, is a July 1954 card franked with two copies of the 2-cent Adams, one of them from a booklet pane (Scott 806b). This novelty postcard was mailed from Salt Lake City, Utah, with a 1-inch cloth bag of "Salt from The Great Salt Lake" attached. To begin, as this item is clearly not a publication, periodical or newspaper, it would not be classifiable as 2nd class mail matter. Also, as it clearly weighed less than 1 pound, it would not be classifiable as a 4th class/parcel post item. Considering the possibility as 3rd class mail, the postage paid would calculate out to the postcard-and-salt weight being 4 ounces (2 cents for the 1st 2 ounces plus 2 x 1 cent per additional ounce). Finally, considering 1st class, it is my understanding that extraneous matter attached to a postcard rendered that item no longer classifiable as a postcard, but subject to 1st class letter rates. In this case, that would have required the 1st class letter rate of

3 cents, or a multiple of 3. Of all these choices, I think it most likely that the sender did a convenience overpay for the 1st class letter rate in an attempt to avoid problems (postage due) for the recipient.

In the discussion above concerning Figure 2, I made reference to it resembling a 1st class local letter, at first glance. The cover in Figure 8 appears to be an example of that less-often found rate. The window envelope is postmarked November 5, 1952 and franked with a 2-cent Adams sheet stamp. It was mailed in Lake Mills, Iowa by a utility company furnishing natural gas by piped distribution. The envelope was sealed, thus excluding it as 3rd class matter, but is consistent both with 1st class mail and the type routinely used for mailing invoices. Also, it has no auxiliary or directional markings. As the contents of the envelope are not present, it is impossible to confirm the envelope was sent

Important
 Notice of Expiration
 and
 Renewal Instructions

(Return Postage Guaranteed)
 GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES
 INSURANCE COMPANY
 Government Employees
 Insurance Building
 Washington 5, D. C.

Kathryn L. Everett
 3027 Weaver St., N.W.
 Washington, 16, D.C.

2005877 7/15

UNITED STATES POSTAGE
 2 CENTS

TO UNDERWRITING DEPT.:

Please renew my auto insurance policy—subject to my approval of rates and coverages. I am giving below the information you require for correct rating.

Expires
Month & Day
2005877 7/15

Kathryn L. Everett
3027 Weaver St., N.W.
Washington, 16, D.C.

ANSWER EACH QUESTION

1. Excluding to and from work is auto used by any operator in his business or occupation? ☐ Yes ☐ No.
2. Age of youngest driver in your household? _____ years.
3. Estimated yearly mileage for next 12 months? _____ miles.
4. Your age? _____ Date of birth _____ / _____ / _____ ☐ Married ☐ Single
Mo. Day Yr.
5. Is car fully paid for? ☐ Yes ☐ No.
6. Please list any change in address, occupation, location of car, use of car, description of car, additional coverages desired, etc. _____

Date _____ Signature _____

U-56 (Detach Here)

(Please detach and mail separately)

DON'T FORGET — — — —

... those friends and relatives who own automobiles and are eligible for our insurance services. By merely noting on this card their names and addresses, you can give them the opportunity to consider the benefits available to them by insuring their automobiles with your Company. We shall be pleased to forward them full information. Of course, they will be under no obligation — AND NO AGENT WILL CALL.

2005877 7/15
Kathryn L. Everett
3027 Weaver St., N.W.
Washington, 16, D.C.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zone _____ State _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zone _____ State _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zone _____ State _____

Figure 6: Three connected postcards soliciting addressee for automobile insurance. Four clues help diagnose a 1950 or 1951 mailing date.



Figure 7: First class postage paid on postcard with extraneous matter attached.



Figure 8: Local first class postage applied on utility bill.

to a local address. On the other hand, at that time there was no other instance where a 2-cent stamp would have paid a sealed letter-envelope postage.

This small collection joins others in my albums, and illustrates the main reasons I collect stamps and postal history. First, it is interesting, and

sometimes challenging, to identify different uses, and to seek and find appropriate examples. Second, there is much I learn about the culture and history of the time periods involved. Third, the collecting and research provides a relaxation of the mind.

Finally, to me, it's just fun!

Manhattan Project Mail from Oak Ridge, Tennessee

by Albert “Chip” Briggs

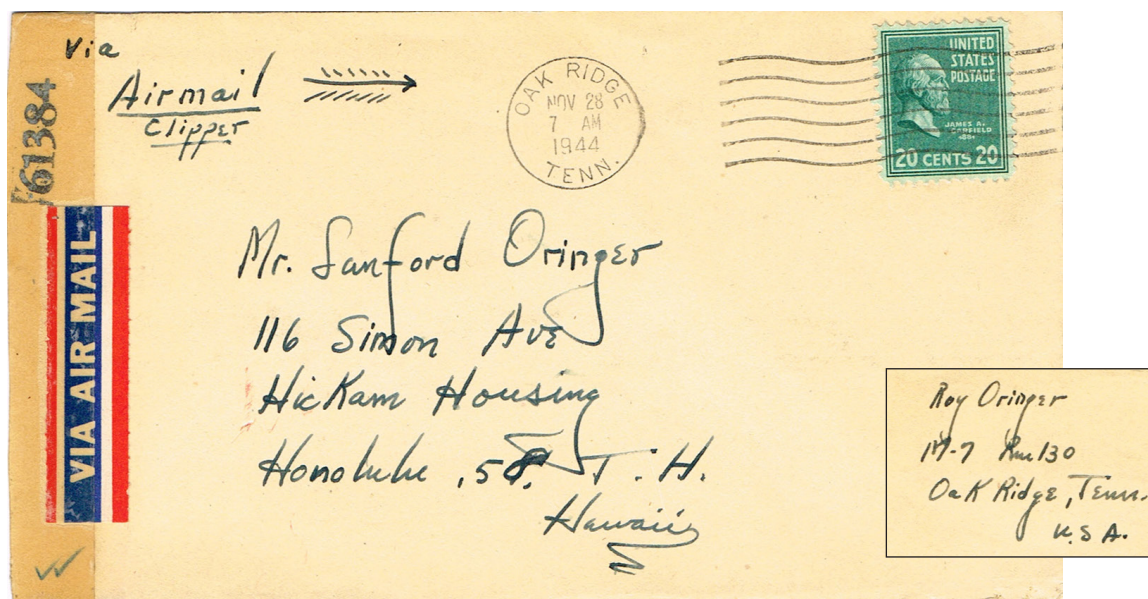


Figure 1: Correspondence between brothers. Examined locally and again at San Francisco (61384). Roy Oringer was employed as a chemist at Oak Ridge.

In 1942, when Roy Oringer was a senior at Boston University majoring in chemistry, General Leslie Groves approved Oak Ridge, Tennessee as the site for a major wartime industrial project. The plutonium and uranium enrichment plants built there would eventually play a vital role in the development and production of the atomic bomb. Located along the Clinch River just west of Knoxville, this area was first known as “Site X”. It was later changed to Clinton Engineering Works, after the closest town.

Four major facilities were constructed near Oak Ridge: Y-12, the electromagnetic plant; X-10, a graphite reactor; K-25, gaseous diffusion plant; and S-50, a thermal diffusion facility. Y-12 used an electromagnetic method of separation of uranium isotopes developed by Ernest Lawrence at University of California-Berkeley. Tennessee Eastman, a division of Eastman Kodak, incorporated in 1920 and headquartered

in Kingsport, Tennessee, initially produced methanol, methyl acetone, and other byproducts of the dry distillation of wood.

As a result of work done on synthetic rubber, the company developed a close relationship with the War Production Board manufacturing the explosive RDX. It was this work that caught the attention of General Groves who enlisted the company in the operation of the Y-12 plant at Oak Ridge. Tennessee Eastman scientists and engineers were transferred from Kingsport to Oak Ridge to work at the new facility. Eastman managed the plant from January, 1943 until May, 1947.

Roy Oringer, the newly minted chemist whose family hailed from Dorchester, Massachusetts, was employed by Eastman Kodak. He was recruited by Tennessee Eastman to work at the vast enterprise taking shape in Oak Ridge.

Some of the work Roy did involved uranium peroxides; he is credited with co-authorship of at least two scientific papers, one of which was not declassified until 1955.

The ability to maintain secrecy surrounding the work at the various places participating in the Manhattan Project was vital. There was considerable fear at the time that Germany was in advanced stages of developing an atomic weapon, as well as sabotage and espionage concerns.

Incoming and outgoing Oak Ridge mail was censored. Letters and cards were not allowed to mention the writers exact location, names of associates, professions of employed personnel, nature of or details of work, or of the number of people at the site either military or civilian. Outbound mail was typically submitted unsealed to facilitate inspection by censorship officials, thus did not show censor markings.

The cover illustrated above is one example of mail from Oak Ridge sent by a Manhattan Project employee. The cover is franked with a 20-cent Prexie paying the then current air mail clipper rate to Hawaii. Postmarked November 28, 1944, this cover was mailed by Roy Oringer to his brother Sanford, a Defense Department employee living near Hickam Field in Honolulu. The return address is 17-7, Room 130, Oak Ridge, Tenn. USA. This was undoubtedly some of the hastily erected pre-fab housing for the rapid influx of personnel that occurred in a very short period of time.

The cover bears cellophane resealing tape and censor number 61384, which was applied at San Francisco. It is likely this cover was censored twice, once as an unsealed letter



Figure 2. Oringer giving blood at the Oak Ridge infirmary.

at Oak Ridge, and again at San Francisco. Underneath the cellophane tape in the lower left hand corner are two blue check marks. The exact meaning of these marks is uncertain. However, they were almost certainly applied at Oak Ridge and not by Mr. Oringer as they are in a different medium. It would be interesting to know if other mail from Oak Ridge bears similar markings and their meaning.

Not only was Roy Oringer a productive chemist, he was also a good citizen. In Figure 2 he is shown donating blood at the Oak Ridge Infirmary in 1944. He met his wife Frances (also an employee of Tennessee Eastman) in Oak Ridge, and they were married in February, 1946. After leaving the company in May, 1946 he returned to Massachusetts where he joined the family business. He received his masters degree in chemical research from MIT in 1948 and went on to become president of Oringer Manufacturing Co., maker of flavors and toppings for ice creams. Roy Oringer died in 1991.