

# **SYNOPSIS**

## **UNITED STATES DOMESTIC LETTER RATES**

### **1800 TO 1900**

#### **GENERAL**

Between 1800 and 1900, the United States experienced rapid population growth, significant westward expansion, and a general rise in literacy. During this time period, the United States established more than a dozen significant postal regulations which affected domestic letter rates. The purpose of this Exhibit is to illustrate the development of the domestic postal system with respect to the rate structure during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

#### **SCOPE**

This exhibit describes the development of the various domestic letter rates and methods of postal communication during this significant 100 years in our nation's history. The Exhibit traces, in chronological order, the development of the postal rate structure applicable to personal and business letters. The duration of this study precludes the inclusion of ancillary postal delivery methods, such as Registration and Special Delivery, due to the limited number of pages available. Because the postal system established by the Confederate States of America was not a part of the U.S. postal system, postal communication under the Confederacy is appropriately excluded.

The Exhibit concentrates on the rate structure for typical U.S. postal communications in effect from 1800 to 1900. During approximately the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the rate structure was based on both distance and weight, and the examples are presented primarily according to the distance travelled and the secondary concern applicable to multiple-weight correspondence for the various distances. During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the variation in weight of the correspondence became the predominate factor in the rate structure and, consequently, the Exhibit stresses multiple-weight correspondence.

#### **PRESENTATION**

This study of the postal rates is based on the nine primary Postal Acts applicable to the rate structure in effect during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. These Postal Acts were established in 1799, 1815 (War Tax), May of 1816, 1825, 1845, 1855, 1863 (distance factor eliminated and created three classes of mail), 1883, and 1885. Examples of the affect of the Postal Acts of April, 1816 (restoration of previous rates) and March, 1847 (authorization of postage stamps) are included. However, these Postal Acts are of secondary consideration because they (1) restored the previous rates by the elimination of a surcharge and (2) established the issuance of postage stamps for convenience but did not alter the postal rates in effect.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

Examples of the War Rate Surcharge of 1815 (except for the scarce 1-1/2 cent Drop Rate), several examples of the Restored Rates of 1816, the Express Rate and Transcontinental Rate, Ship Rate fees, and the reunited *Pittsburgh Twins* court covers paying 18 and 25 times the 3 cent rate. Also included are the first two regularly issued stamps of 1847, carrier stamps used in combination with regular issues, examples of the 3-cent pink issue of 1861, and the only known green Norfolk, Connecticut circular date stamp used before 1851.

#### **REFERENCES**

American Stampless Cover Catalogs