

The State of the US Mails

a Snapshot in Time

Purpose & Scope:

This exhibit will take a figurative snapshot of US postal affairs by examining the country's mail stream for a single year. The year we selected is 1909 because it was a critical year of change as the United States moved decisively into 20th century modernity. We will review the wide variety of uses of stamps and postal stationery with their rates, routes, markings associated with US-originating mail for the year, the goal being to better understand how the United States Post Office Department contributed to facilitating communication.

A New Year



We start (appropriately) with a New Year's card — January 1, 1909 — West Lima, Wis to Viola, Wis — hand stamp cancel — correctly franked with a 1¢ 1902 2nd Bureau series stamp

Organization:

Our review is divided into the following chapters:

- Uses of stamps & postal stationery
 - Stamps & Stationery
 - New Issues
 - Withdrawal
- Rates
- Destinations
- Types of Uses
- Means of Carriage
- Markings

Key items are framed in red

Background:

During this year we note the following major philatelic milestones-

- The new Washington-Franklin series, though introduced in late 1908, only achieved general circulation in 1909. The “spare” modern design of this series is in contrast to the “baroque” design of its predecessor.
- An “active” commemorative release schedule. Three new commemorative series were issued in a single year. A first for the US.
- An experiment in paper that we now know as “blue paper” was attempted.
- The use of “real” US Post Office perforated coils
- Wide commercial use of privately prepared coil stamps.
- The “Merry Widow” special delivery stamp arrived and was then withdrawn.
- There were advances in the mechanization of the postal system, across a nation of 46 states & 10 possessions—in the form of cancellations, coils and the manner by which the mail was carried.