



The Registered Mail Study Group is back in action!

This past December, during an email exchange with Nicholas Lombardi, President of the United States Stamp Society, in which we were discussing some of the projects of the original **Registered Mail Study Group (RMSG)**, particularly the Census of covers which were used with the UPU mandated registration labels during the period 1883 – 1911. When I inquired about the future status of the group, he acknowledged that the Board had not been successful in identifying a candidate to take over the Chairman’s role since the death of Eliot Landau some years before. After some conversation about the expectations and activities that would be involved, I agreed to take on the position, and a formal announcement of this decision appeared in the January 2024 issue of the **United States Specialist**. For those of you who do not know me, I have included at the end of this newsletter a brief philatelic biography which appeared there.

The original **RMSG** was established in 2004 by a group of dedicated members of the United States Stamp Society to provide a vehicle to coordinate study of the Registered Mail System of the United States Post Office Department. Purpose and goals of this new group were described in an article by Landau that appeared in the May 2004 issue of the **United States Specialist** for May 2004, which can be found on the United States Stamp Society website. His vision of the goals of the group are still valid today, and I have no immediate plans to make any changes to what appeared there twenty years ago.

The RMSG will be an informal organization along the lines of the other Committees and Study Groups sponsored by the Society. There are no officers, other than the Chairman, who intends to be more of a facilitator than a leader. Membership will open to anyone with an interest in the Registry System of the US Post Office Department. A member does not have to belong to the US Stamp Society, but we hope that their exposure to the Society through the group will inspire RMSG group members to join our Society. We also have a webpage on the USSS website which can be found here: <https://www.usstamps.org/committees/registered-mail-study-group/>

Some years ago, I had obtained a copy of the original RMSG membership list, and then wrote and distributed several issues of an un-official newsletter titled “**Not the Registered Mail Study Group**”. That mailing list has been dusted off, the names of a few members who are no longer with us removed, and this will serve as the new membership roster to start. When you receive this initial issue of the new newsletter, please respond to the Chairman and indicate if you wish to continue to receive future newsletter and provide me with the information in the Membership Roster section later in this newsletter.

My first action is to prepare a short newsletter like this which will be issued on a quarterly basis, hopefully in the first month of each quarter: January, April, July, and September. The initial plan is to have several regular sections in each issue. These will include a Charman’s report, a Resources section, a Community Projects section, and a Member’s

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Research Requests section. I'll start with several of these in the current Newsletter, and will rely on you, the readers, to provide some feedback for what to include in subsequent issues. Suggestions for other sections, regular or one-time appearance, will be gladly discussed. One possible feature which might be of interest is what I would call the "**My Favorite Registered Cover**" page, or perhaps just a favorite registered item, which has some unusual aspect to it that might not be commonly encountered.

It is not my intention at present for this RMSG Newsletter to become a formal publication like the **Prexie Era** publication, although it is hoped that the collaboration between members will result in articles that will be appropriate for publication in the **Specialist**. The primary scope of the RMSG will naturally include the study and discussion of all phases of the United States Registry System. This includes registered mail which originates in foreign countries which is addressed to a domestic address, or which is routed through the US Post Office Department in transit to another foreign destination. The combinations are endless. In addition to the focus on registered covers and their rates, routing, postal markings and other details, I would like to see research done on the official forms used by the USPOD and USPS in their registry systems, with a study and tabulation of these forms, their varieties and their usage.

I envision two types of project activities in the beginning. On the large-scale side, there will be several group or "Community Research" projects that will provide a focal point to accumulate information about subject areas that are too broad or complex to be researched and managed properly by a single individual, or which will be of interest to a large number of collectors. On a smaller and individual scale, I hope that the Newsletter can serve as a facilitator to get the word out to all members that another member has a personal registry system research interest, and he would like to receive information about covers or documents related to that interest.

Mike Ludeman

Chairman, RMSG

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STAMP SMARTER LEARNING CENTER

Throughout this and future Newsletters, you will see me frequently make a reference to resources that may be found on **Stamp Smarter**. This is the abbreviated name for the **Stamp Smarter Philatelic Learning Center**, a privately owned philatelic website operated by Don Denman. I find it to be a marvelous collection of materials on stamp collecting and postal history, and advise everyone I am a sponsor, a contributor, and content developer for the site. Don Denman stepped up several years ago when Tony Wawrukiewicz digitized and edited the complete series of the **Official Postal Guide**, but we were unable to have them integrated into the searchable Postal Bulletin website, Don came forward and they are now on the Stamp Smarter website. Since then, One of my continuing projects has been to make other older, and more recent, post office publications available on that website.

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MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

This initial issue of the Newsletter is being sent to a wide range of individuals, including those names from my earlier RMSG roster. Each person receiving this is requested to respond by email to me with the following information: (1) Do you want to continue receiving the Newsletter, and if “Yes”, then provide your name, (2) the best email address to use, (3) do you want your name and email to be included on the distributed Membership Roster, (4) a list of Philatelic Organizations to which you belong, (5) any information you wish to share about what special interests you collect related to registered mail, or other collected postal history areas you wish to share. The Membership Roster will only include your name, email and your list of interests. Other information is for my own reference.

If you know of another collector (or two or three) with similar interests, then please forward a copy of this Newsletter to them, and request that they contact me if they would like to have their names added to the distribution list.

I will distribute an initial Membership Roster with the next issue of the Newsletter. If you see someone on this Roster who shares a common interest with you, please contact them and offer to share information. That’s the purpose of this activity.

RESOURCES

This section will be used to make members aware of new or important resources available to members of the RMSG. To start this off, I’ll note several of the most important references useful to collectors interested in registered mail. These include the following:

BOOKS:

- Milgram, James W., **United States Registered Mail: 1845-1870**, David G. Phillips, 1998.
- Ryle, Russell, **Registered U.S.A.**, self-published, 2009. This book may be download in PDF Format for free from the Stamp Smarter website, https://stampsmarter.org/features/NYReg_Book.html.
- Beecher, Henry W. & Wawrukiewicz, Anthony S., **U.S. Domestic Postal Rates, 1872-2011**, Cama Press. There are several editions, and information about errata, and updates covering years through 2014 are now available on the Stamp Smarter website here https://stampsmarter.org/learning/Home_TonyWRates.html. Readers might also be interested in viewing Tony’s a compilation of all of Tony’s column from linn’s Stamp News, **Modern U.S. Mail** which is also available on Stamp Smarter: https://stampsmarter.org/learning/Home_TonyW.html.
- Wawrukiewicz, Anthony S. & Henry W. Beecher, **U.S. International Postal Rates, 1872-1996**, Cama Publications, 1996. Errata and updates to this publication may also be found available at the Stamp Smarter link mentioned with the domestic book.

ARTICLES:

- James W. Milgram, M.D., has written a series of five articles on domestic registered mail, published in **The Chronicle**, the journal of the US Philatelics Classics Society between 2015 and 2023. In addition, he has three articles on the USPOD handling of foreign inbound registered mail during the years 1855-1875. All but the most recent article of these can be accessed and downloaded from the Classics Society website at <https://www.uspcs.org/resource-center/the-chronicle/search-the-chronicle/>.

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DIGITAL RESOURCES:

- **Notice 123.** This is the standard brochure published by the USPS with a full set of rates each time there is a rate change. An archive of these dating from the early 1990s through the proposed rate increases for January 24, 2024 are available on Stamp Smarter <https://stampsmarter.org/learning/PostalRates.html> .
- A comprehensive digital library of older USPOD and USPS publications is available on the Stamp Smarter website, with complete archives of many publications, such as the **Official Postal Guides, Postal Manuals**, and the **Postal Service Manual**. These may be found here: https://stampsmarter.org/learning/Home_USPOD.html. Spend some time reviewing all the publications that are available. You won't be disappointed. More posts office publications, old and new, are being added all the time.
- The Postal Bulletin Consortium and the searchable **Postal Bulletin** website: <http://www.uspostalbulletins.com/>.

Please let me know if you are aware of other resources that should be included in this section in future issues.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Is there any aspect of the US Registered Mail System that you think might be the subject of a Community Project? That is, one that would be of general interest to many of the members of this informal group, but for which no one individual might have enough material to prepare an article, monograph, or guide. Other suggestions are welcomed.

1. The Census of US Registered Covers mailed using the Form 1549A domestic registry label.

In 1907, the USPOD initiated a program to integrate a registration label that was part of the Window Registration Book which would be applied to the registered item at the time of mailing. After an experimental trial at the Washington, DC, post office, the program was spread out to approximately 66 of the larger post offices. to be applied to covers. Several articles on the use of these labels have appeared in the **Specialist** which were authored by Tony Wawrukiewicz, Russ Ryle, and Nicholas Lombardi. The program ended at the end of 1910, but a few covers with the label used in 1911 have been recorded. Since the initial articles were published, Lombardi had maintained an Excel spreadsheet with a limited amount of data for each cover reported, however no effort was made to acquire and preserve images of these covers beyond those in the compiler's collection. In parallel with that effort, beginning about 2010, I began to locate and preserve images of these covers with the Form 1549A label.

In 2016, a collector and recorder of these Form 1549A covers, Russ Ryle, collaborated with Don Denman (Stamp Smarter, again 😊) to construct an online database(DB) to record an expanded number of data fields and the images of the front and reverse of each cover. This is an open-source Community Project sponsored and supported by Stamp Smarter, and I am one of the Administrators. Earlier this fall, I added about 30 new covers to the DB, clearing out my backlog. The DB currently has 536 covers, but there are nearly 150 covers from the early days of the census for which we do not have cover images, and even more for which we do not have the image of the reverse of the cover. This DB can be found here: https://stampsmarter.org/features/NYReg_1549Home.html.

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We now have examples from 65 different post offices which used the Form 1549A labels, including a few for which the labels were not officially delivered. There are a few post offices which were reported to have been supplied the label but for which no examples are known.

RMSG members are encouraged to check your collections for these covers, and if you have one that is not recorded in the DB, you can contact either me or Nick Lombardi (8605@comcast.net) with a scan of the cover. In addition, anyone can register with Stamp Smarter to become a Contributor to one or more of their community projects, and then you can upload your own data and cover images.

2. The Census of US Registered covers used with Exchange Labels.

The original census for these covers was prepared by Al Kugel, who initially limited the search to all covers with labels from all exchange office except the largest ones at Boston, New York, and San Francisco. Following publication of the articles in the **Collector's Club Philatelist** in 2000, an Excel spreadsheet with a limited number of data fields was constructed and hosted on the RMSG website.

The Table to the right shows a comparison of the number of covers from the various exchange offices based on the reports from 2010 and the most recent report from 2018. This latter report is currently being updated by Nick Lombardi and myself, and we will report on the results of that update in a future Newsletter, as well as post the results on the RMSG webpage. As can be observed, we have essentially doubled the number of known reported covers during this period.

EXCHANGE OFFICES	2010 Census	2018 Census
Boston, MA	47	103
San Francisco, CA	77	247
All other office	318	550
TOTALS...	442	900

The original census effort focused on collecting only a small amount of information about each cover, but there was no effort at that time to obtain and archive images of each cover. During the past 15 years, I have focused on locating and archiving images of covers in the original census, as well as those added to the census since 2010. I have not updated my statistics recently (off on other projects) but believe I have images of perhaps 75% of the covers represented by the census. Once a better summary of covers in the archive is completed, I will distribute lists with an issue of the Newsletter so that members can examine their collections and see if they might have covers that they can scan to contribute to the digital archive, or new examples to add to the census.

3. Bibliography of Resources on Registered Mail.

On the current RMSG website page, there is available a **United States Registered Mail Subject Bibliography**, prepared in 2009 by David L. Straight. Since that bibliography was prepared, there have been many other useful articles published, and I would like to see this bibliography expanded to include those. If there are any members who have suggestions for new articles to be added to the bibliography, they are encouraged to send me the pertinent information. To avoid too much duplication of effort, there is no need to send information about articles in **The Specialist** and **The Chronicle**, or **LaPosta**, journals all of which I have. Even more important, if there are any members who have a flair or interest in bibliography, who would like to become the point person for this project, please get in touch with me.

As an adjunct to this project, I would propose that we consider the development of a digital archive of articles of this nature which cannot be readily located in the current on-line databases of society journals with public access. I do not

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propose that we violate the privacy or security of any organization's intellectual property, but there are many Societies who are willing to share these materials; they are just not readily available on-line. A central repository of available digital articles would allow members of the RMSG to obtain copies quickly. Articles which were available in this repository could be identified in our revised bibliography.

MEMBER'S RESEARCH REQUESTS

Short research requests can be submitted for insertion in this section. Send these to me at mike@ludeman.net. A small image can be inserted, but it is not practical to include a full-sized cover scan with one of these requests. To start this off, I will insert a few examples related to some of my personal interests. The code [24-1] at the end of these examples will indicate the year and issue with the initial insertion. Since digital space has no costs, we should be able to manage to keep an insertion indefinitely or until withdrawn by the submitter.

Some studies might be better presented on a full page, or perhaps two. Please submit these as a Microsoft Word document (*.doc, *.docx) and depending on the volume of these types of requests, I will plan to run a "Research Request" for at least four issues, and longer if it does not become burdensome. One example of this type of request is attached.

Wanted. Information or color scans of registered covers to foreign destinations which used the UPU registration label illustrated at the right, Scott FX-NY4. This is the generic utility label used at many smaller exchange offices with the name added with a handstamp or by manuscript. However, the New York examples observed to date have not had the name added. Most examples seen were used during 1892, but several seen used on dates a few years before or after. **Mike Ludeman.**
Email to mike@ludeman.net. [24-1]



Wanted. Information or color scans of registered covers mailed with the Scott F1 Registration stamp of 1911, mailed from a Texas post office to any destination. I am trying to build a population sample and census of the Texas post offices that had this stamp available. **Mike Ludeman.** Email to mike@ludeman.net . [24-1]

Wanted. Information about or color scans of the full pane of the New York registry stamp listed in Scott Catalog as NY1a(iii). Apparently in the 1930s, a package of these labels was found in a post office storeroom, and some panes were released into the philatelic community. I am trying to compile a list of known panes to get some indication of true scarcity. For the initial contact, please send the label number from starting (top right corner) position, and the ending (bottom left) position. If it is not recorded, then I would like to obtain a scan of the pane.
Mike Ludeman. Email to mike@ludeman.net . [24-1]

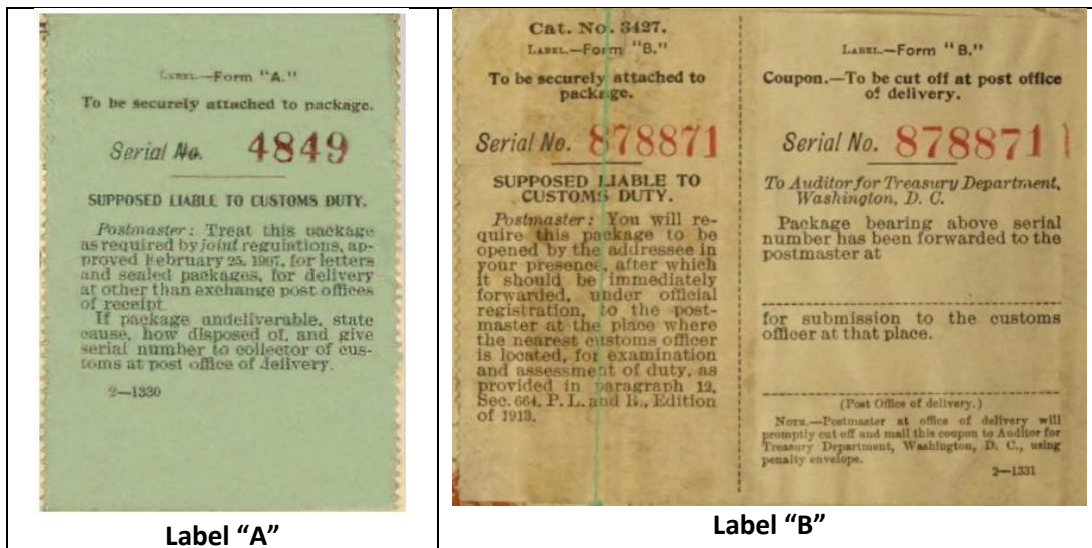


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Customs Labels on inbound Registered Mail. In 1907, the USPOD and Customs Division of the Treasury Department issued a new regulation (PB#8230, Feb 2, 1907) to all post offices and Customs Offices on how to handle incoming mail which was suspected of having contents which represented dutiable material. This regulation introduced two gummed paper labels that were to be used in the process. The **Label "A"** was to be applied to a suspected letter received at the six primary customs offices at Boston, Baltimore, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco, when the letter was addressed to a postal patron who would pick the letter up at that office, and who could be present when the letter was opened. The **Label "B"** was a two-part label, which was to be applied to any letter identified as potentially including dutiable material, but addressed to a post office that was not within the delivery area of the customs office. This label instructed the postmaster at the addressee's post office to personally have the addressee open the letter in his presence so that the postmaster could inspect the contents, and then advise customs of the contents. One part of the two-part label was detached with a report back to the Customs Office for this purpose. This procedure functioned between 1907 and 1923, when the labels were discontinued. My census of the covers with either of these labels currently has only 31 known covers.

Over time, the format and instructions printed on these labels evolved, and thus far, two varieties of **Label "A"** have been reported, and five varieties of **Label "B"** have been identified. An example of each label is shown here.



For more information, there are several articles which describe the use of these labels in more detail, written by John M. Hotchner in *La Posta Journal*, 2Q 2017, and Tony Wawrukiewicz in *Auxiliary Markings*, issues #57 & 57, 2018.

Please send any scans of any covers in your collection which used this label to **Mike Ludeman**, mike@ludeman.net.



Mike Ludeman to Chair the Registered Mail Study Group

Mike Ludeman of Denton, Texas, has volunteered to serve as chairman of the Registered Mail Study Group. Mike is a ten-year member of the USSS, a Life Member of the American Philatelic Society and the Society of Israel Philatelists, as well as a member of The Texas Philatelic Association, MEPSI, the US Philatelic Classics Society, the Auxiliary Markings Club, and several other smaller but equally interesting philatelic organizations. He served as the Life Membership Chairman and Research Director of the Society of Israel Philatelist for many years during the 1980s.

He began collecting as a boy, dropped out until after college, and began again, first collecting Israel postal history, then switching to Texas postal history in the 1980s. Texas is still one of his main interests, and he now focuses on the marcophily of some 60 counties in the Texas Panhandle, as well as all registered covers with a Texas connection. He also collects registered covers with the US Domestic Form 1549A registration label and is an administrator of a cover database for these covers, which is hosted on the Stamp Smarter Learning Center website at https://stampsmarter.org/features/NYReg_1549Home.html. He also collects the US registered covers to foreign destinations used during the exchange label period (1883-1911), again specializing in those with a Texas connection.

For the past 15 years, he has been collecting all manner of USPOD/USPS publications, forms, documents, circulars, reports, and ephemera (including registry-related materials), focusing on the materials from the 19th century and the Postmaster Commission documents from all eras. With the strong belief that original source post office publications are a significant resource for postal history research, he has worked to make older post office publications more accessible in their digital format. He collaborated with Tony Wawrukiewicz to edit and OCR the digital version of the *Official Postal Guides*, which are now hosted on the Stamp Smarter website along with a large number of other USPS publications, which can be found at https://stampsmarter.org/learning/Home_USPOD.html.

Mike also contributed information to the USPS Library for the revision of their *Publication 119: Sources of Historical Information on Post Offices, Postal Employees, Mail Routes, and Mail Contractors*, published in 2022. During the past year, Mike collaborated with the librarian at the USPS headquarters library to borrow and digitize their microfilm archive of the *Postal Manual* (1954-1969) and *Postal Service Manual* (1970-1979), which was the successor publication to the domestic volumes of the *Official Postal Guides*. These manuals are now available in their entirety and fully searchable, making all detailed incremental revisions available on the Stamp Smarter website. He plans to continue this activity with additional USPS publications during the coming year.

Mike has also written articles that have appeared in *La Posta, Mexicana*, *The Texas Postal History Journal*, and the *Auxiliary Markings Club Newsletter*, plus articles for the journals of the New Jersey, North Carolina and Dakota postal history societies.