Registered Mail Study Group
NEWSLETTER

| Issue No.2 | | April 2024 |

Chairman's Column

Welcome to the second issue of our **RMSG Newsletter**. The inaugural issue went out to over 60 collectors, and responses were received from over half of you. Thank you. Our initial Membership Roster / Mail List, which only includes the names and contact information for those who provide authorization to include their information is also attached. I you would like your name included in future Membership Rosters, please let me know. If you no longer have an interest in registered mail, and wish to no longer receive our newsletter, please also contact me.

This issue has a few new, short notes, and I retained many of the original sections from the initial issue with resource information as they may be of interest to new subscribers.

Several readers provided me with examples of previously unreported registered covers with the New York exchange labels mentioned in the **Research Notes** section of the previous issue. Thank you for the new information.

I envision two types of collaborative project activities in the future. 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 many 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.

If you have a special project that you would like to share, please consider preparing a short one page summary and send it along for inclusion in our next issue of the Newsletter.

Mike Ludeman
Chairman, RMSG
mike@ludeman.net

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.

UPDATE. It is with much sadness that I must report the recent death of Don Denman. He singlehandedly worked to create the original Stamp Starter website, and was a great friend to the philatelic community, both beginning and advanced collectors could find something of value on his Stamp Started website. Fortunately for the philatelic world, earlier this year, Don and a small group of regular supporters worked together to establish the Stamp Smarter Foundation, Inc., with the goal of preparing for the future. The Foundation will keep the website operating in its present configuration for the remainder of the year, and it expects to be able to continue to add new features to the website in the future. I'm proud to report that I am on the Board of Directors of the Stamp Smarter Foundation.

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

An initial **Membership Roster** is attached to this email along with the newsletter. The names on this roster include only those recipients of the initial issue of the Newsletter who responded with permission to include their name and email contact information in our roster. If your name is not present, and you would like to have it included in the next roster, please write to me and include a brief summary of your particular collecting interests related to registered mail.

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 updated Membership Roster with the future issues of the Newsletter when I have a few new names to include. 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.

POST OFFICE FORMS USED BY THE REGISTRY SYSTEM

As one of the largest government bureaucracies in the 19th century United States, the United States Post Office Department (USPOD) was a prolific user of paper forms to standardize and simplify the operation of all areas of the postal system. The introduction of the official Registry System on May 10, 1855, initiated a flood of forms which were

distributed to all post offices to both instruct and guide the postmaster in his handling of this new category of mail. The book by Russell Ryle in the resources section provides an excellent summary of these procedures.

These registry forms can be broken into two broad categories. The first category is comprised of the various Circulars of Instructions prepared by the Registry Division in Washington, DC. These circulars provided postmasters with the information they needed to safely and correctly handle and distribute registered mail. Remember, this registry system started in 1855, and there was no **Daily Postal Bulletin** or even the **Official Postal Guides**. The only information the postmaster received was what was provided in these circulars. The publications by Russell Ryle and James Milgram include the text of some of these circulars, but to my knowledge there is no complete collection of these circulars, even in the USPS Library and Historian's Office in Washington.

The second category deals with the forms which were used at the individual post offices to manage the registered letters. This set of forms began small, but as the registry system expanded in size and volume, the number of forms grew as well, and even the more common forms went through necessary revisions.

When the registry system was introduced in 1855, there were only four standard forms introduced: (1) the Post Office receipt for the registered letter, the Customer receipt for the registered letter, which were provided to the postmaster in a printed sheet that consisted of three rows of forms, with each row containing a pair of the forms. When a registered letter was presented to the postmaster, he would complete each form, then separate the Customer receipt and give it to the customer. The additional two forms were the (3) Registered Letter Bill, and (4) the Return Registered Letter Bill. These two documents were completed by the postmaster at the post office of origin, and he would then send them with the registered letter to its destination. At the destination, the receiving postmaster would mark the Return Registered Letter Bill "correct", and then return it to the original post office. This pair of documents maintained the chain of custody for the registered letter from the sender to the recipient, and postmasters were required to retain them for one or two years.

These early forms were distributed as individual sheets of paper, as the concept of a window registration book was 30 years into the future. On a nearby page is an example of one of these pages.

This set of forms continued in use until April 1863, when a new set or registration forms were designed and distributed. Over time, it is quite feasible to put together a reasonable series of examples of these registry forms if one pays attention to such things on eBay.
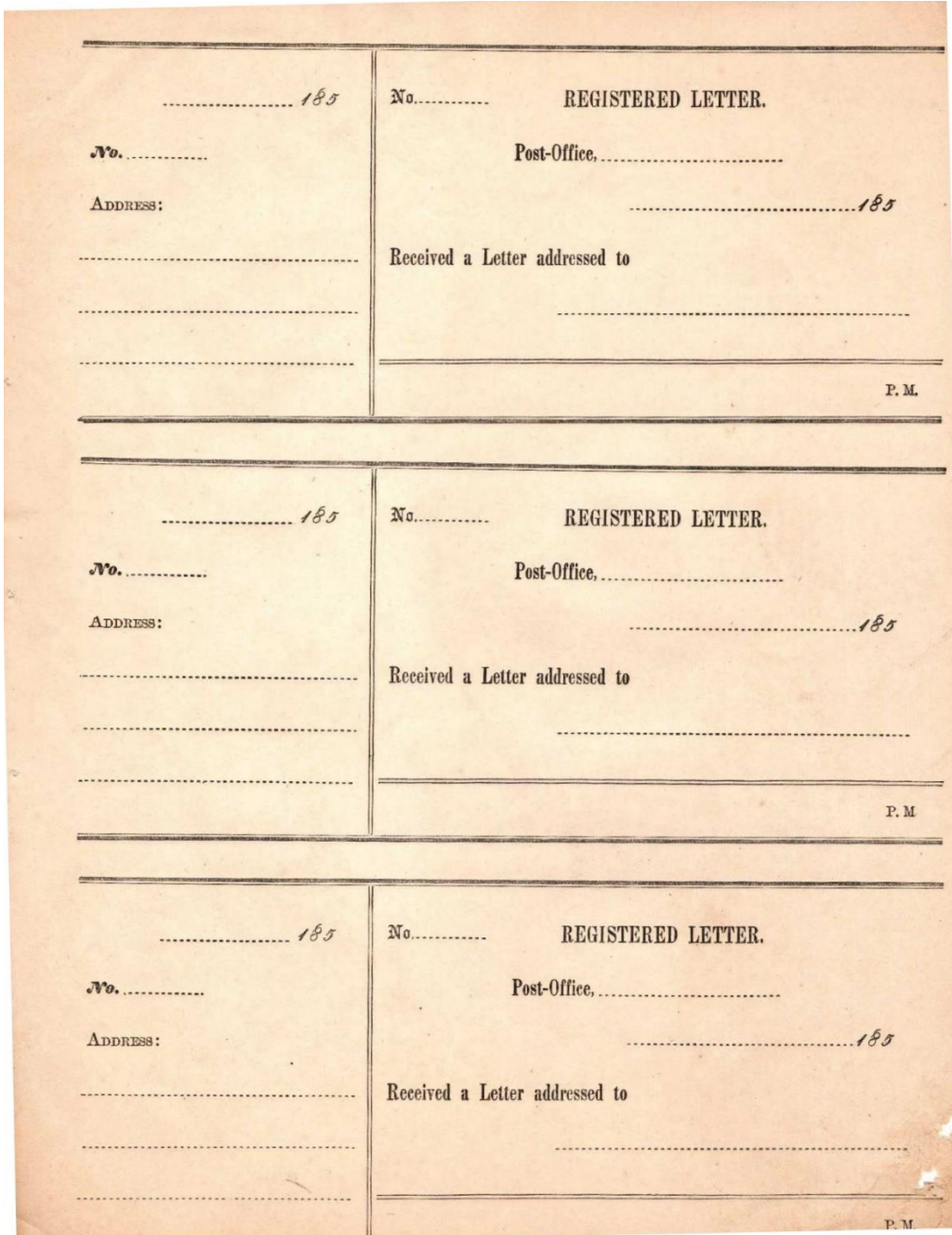
Additional changes in the procedures and forms occurred in new regulations distributed to postmasters dated October 7, 1868.

Also in 1867, the USPOD introduced a secure envelope, called the Registered Package Envelope, which allowed registered letters to be securely wrapped and sent in such a way that tampering was readily apparent. A new form, the Registered Package Receipt, was also placed into service. These Registered Package Envelopes were also sealed on the reverse with the Official Seal, Scott OFX1.

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By the time the *Postal Laws & Regulations* of 1873 were published, there were many new forms introduced and placed into service. It can be interesting to follow the evolution of these forms over time. I will not take this narrative though the many evolutions of these forms, but I will try and at least compile a list of forms and their USPOD form numbers for inclusion in a later issue of the newsletter.

If anyone reading this newsletter collects these post office forms, whether registry forms or any other type, please contact me to discuss POD forms in general. **Mike Ludeman. mike@ludeman.net.**

Postmaster's Registry form used 1855 -1867.

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REGISTRY RETURN RECEIPT Penalty Postal Card forms

Eventually, a few of the frequently used registry system forms were converted from a paper receipt that had to be sent through the mail in an envelope into a penalty postal card format. This conversion took place effective July 1, 1879, The **Official Postal Guide** for April 1879 makes no reference to the penalty card format, which the edition for July 1879 notes that the RRR should be returned without being enclosed in an envelope.

Member James Robinson recently sent me the Registry Return Receipt (RRR) penalty card shown here, which was dated Oct 8, 1879, and returned on Oct. 22, 1879. He asked if anyone could provide an earlier example. Examination of my small accumulation of these RRR cards found only a December 1879 example. His RRR card is here.

The early versions of this RRR did not include a USPOD Form number, but this one was eventually assigned as Form 1548. Consider this as a challenge to the readership. Please examine any examples you have of this common form, and please let us know the date of your earliest example which is earlier than the illustrated card. Then, look at your copies of the penalty card version of the Registered Letter Bill, (Form 1550), the Registered Package Receipt (Form 1556), and the Registry Dispatch Receipt Card (Form 3830), and report those dates to us.

The Registry Return Receipt card went through a series of at least six major format or design changes, and there must have been millions of them printed. Post Offices which originated a high volume of registered mail could request custom cards with their post office name printed. The example above shows how "Philadelphia" was printed on each side, thus saving the clerk time when preparing these RRR cards. One can easily identify and classify a number of variants for each design change. I learned James has done some work on this study, and the late Joe Pryluck and I made a similar study about a decade ago. This is an area where a collaboration could result in a very useful handbook.

This Registry Return Receipt card had a long life, as it was used up into the USPS era, although at some time by 1920, the form number was changed from Form 1548 to Form 3811. That designation is still in use today as the green Domestic Return Receipt card which is now used for Registered, Insured, C.O.D., and Certified mail.

THAT "DOG-GONE" REGISTERED COVER

The registered cover shown below was spotted on eBay in February. This registered letter was mailed Dec. 12, 1906, from Cameron, Idaho, and addressed to Germany. Sadly, the New York exchange office label that should have been applied to the letter in New York is missing (possibly removed by a previous collector), but the dog's head and the registry number placed in the dog's tag made this a desirable addition to my collection, but despite a strong effort on my part, it did not find its way to my cover kennel.

I've seen my share of the various "REGISTERED" markings that were manufactured and sold by private enterprises in the 19th and early 20th century, but this was one I had never encountered previously. **Mike Ludeman.**

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/.

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.

TECHNICAL NOTES

Since few of us can afford to wildly purchase every item of registered mail that comes to our attention, I often take the approach of "harvesting" the images of interesting covers and documents discovered during my regular eBay searches. Earlier this year, I discovered that many of these covers in eBay listings were being formatted using the Google image format with extension "**webp**." This image file format is like the more familiar **"JPG"** format, but is more efficient, preserving the image quality but generally 25% smaller. In my case, the greatest disadvantage is that it has a very limited set of user accessible properties, unlike the "**JPG**" format, which has 100s of possible properties that can be added and stored to describe the file. I use several of these to identify the source of the images of those files I harvest, and I also use a similar approach to document the scanned images of covers and other items in my collections.

When saving files from eBay, or other websites, that are in the "**webp**" format, there is no integral way to save a file in the "**webp**" format as a "**JPG**" file. It is necessary to save the file, then use another application to convert it to the desired "**JPG**" format. I recently found a browser extension which can be added to your Chrome browser called **Save As File**, which allows the user to specify the format he wants to use when saving a file, with options for **JPG", "PNG",** and **"webp".**

Information about the extension for Chrome can be found here.
https://github.com/image4tools/Save-Image-as-Type

I have been using this version for several months now with no significant issues. There is one behavior that is annoying. While the user can specify the final file name that he wants to use for the downloaded/saved file, if he allows the application to default to the name of the file on the internet, **the application truncates that file name to 32 characters.** Therefore, when downloading a file whose name was originally longer than 32 characters in length, the user should take care to compare the file name on the internet with the file name stored on his computer.   There are apparently several versions for this extension, so watch for dates when you read reviews. There are some old and negative reviews for similar extensions that have been around, so read carefully, and always be cautious when downloading files from the internet.

Information about a similar extension for the Firefox browser can be found here.
https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/save-webp-as-png-or-jpeg/

I have not used the Firefox version, so you should check it out carefully if you need this capability.

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.

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.

Update.

Since the above was written in late December, I received a group of cover scans representing over 50 covers with Form 1549A usage which had been in the Stamp Smarter DB, but for which no images were previously available. As a result, we are now down to just below 100 examples of these registered covers for which we currently have no images.

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.

TABLE

Count of reported covers with Exchange Labels

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 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, 24-2] 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]

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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]

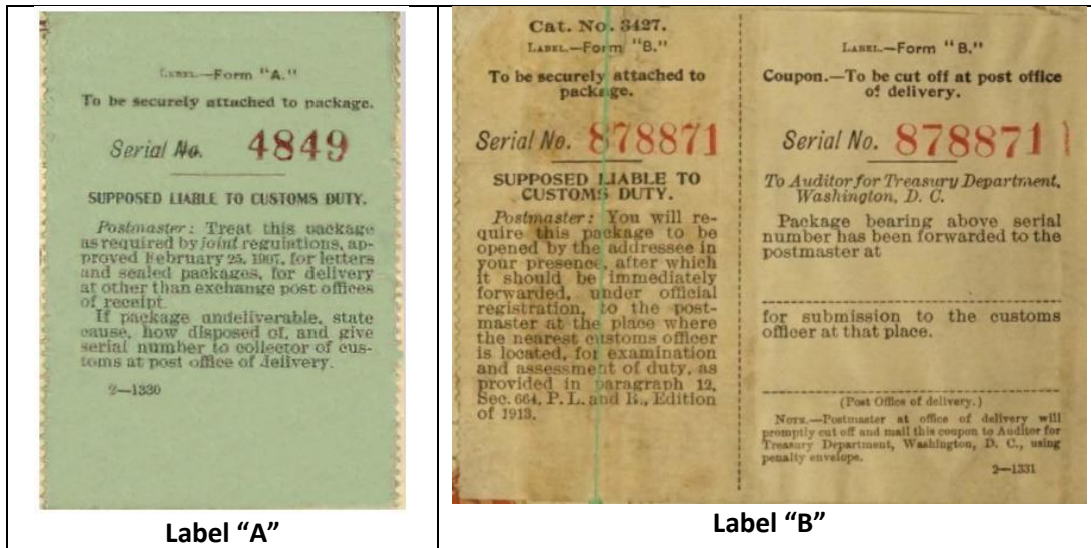
MEMBER'S RESEARCH REQUESTS

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.

| Label "A" | Label "B" |

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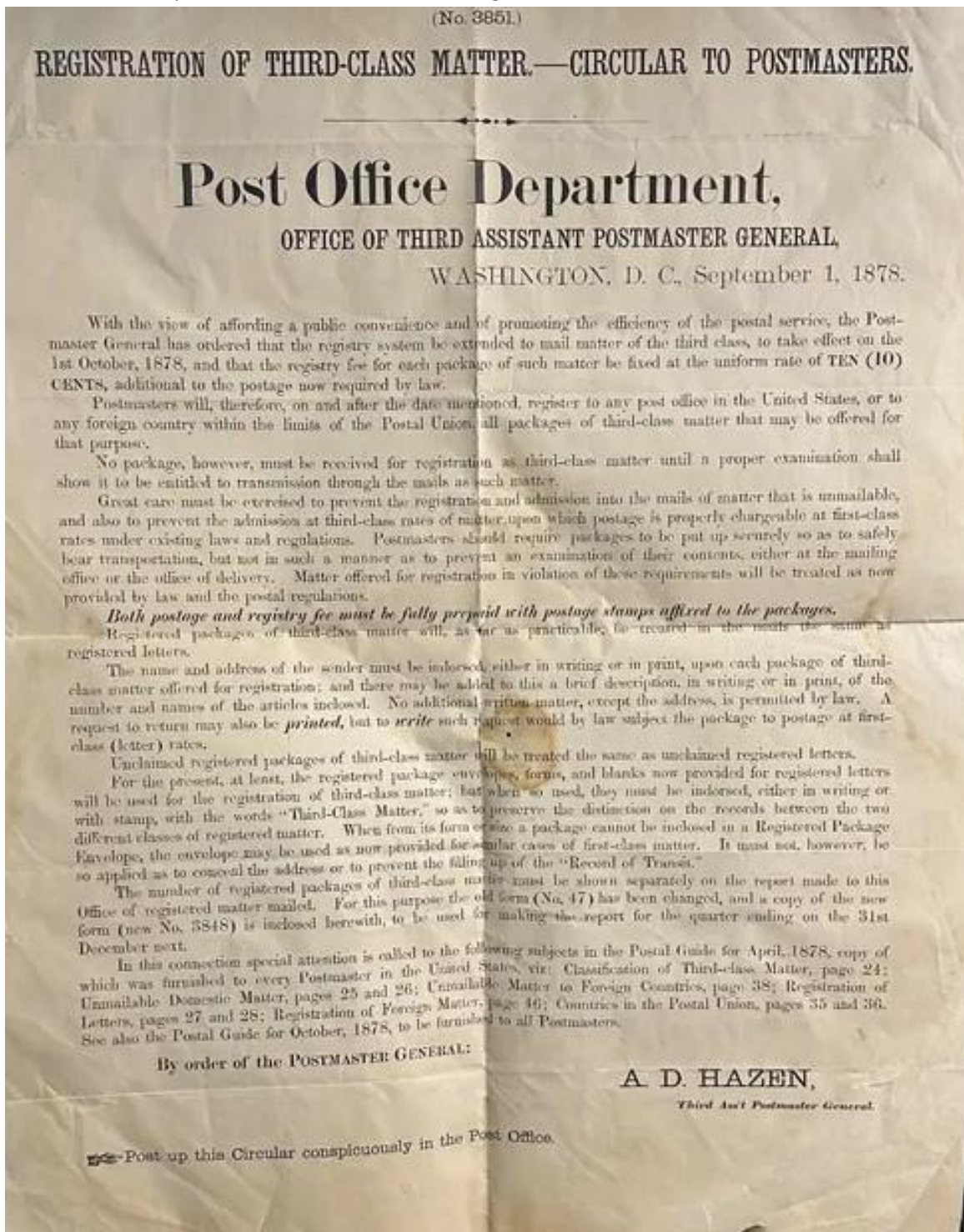
Please send any scans of any covers in your collection which used this label to **Mike Ludeman**, mike@ludeman.net.

[24-1]

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The circular illustrated here was observed on eBay earlier this year. Dated September 1, 1878, it instructs postmaster regarding the rates for the new service which allows for registration of Third-Class matter. These regulations were expanded in the *Postal Laws & Regulations* of 1879, at section 815.

I apologize for the image quality. It was harvested from a listing by eBay seller mainebarnattic, Feb. 2024.