

Foreign and Domestic Use of Ordinary Stamps  
For Official Correspondence by the Treasury Department  
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The article by Alfred E. Staubus ("Stamps for Use on Official Correspondence to Foreign Destinations Under GPU and UPU Treaties") in the Aug. 1990 issue of the Chronicle (No. 147) called for readers to submit examples of official covers that used ordinary postage stamps for payment of postage to UPU countries during the first quarter of use, April 1 to June 30, 1879. Such a cover has been in my exhibit collection for several years. This cover (Figure 1), also from the Charles F. Conant correspondence, is franked with a 15 cent Continental Bank Note stamp paying triple the UPU rate and postmarked May 16 (1879), the year date confirmed by the red London receiving mark May 28, 1879. Located in London, England, Mr. Conant was in charge of the United States Agency for Refunding the Public Debt. Since this cover still contains a contemporary copy of a two-page letter which is headed "Unofficial" (Figure 2) and is from a bank vice-president to John Sherman, Secretary of the Treasury, regarding a banking transaction to which Mr. Conant was party, I had previously assumed that the use of ordinary postage stamps demonstrated scrupulous care by some clerk who did not choose to use official stamps in an unofficial (private) capacity. This explanation is somewhat questionable because the term "Unofficial" in the context used in this letter does not appear to be the equivalent of referring to private correspondence. However, after the publication of the editor's research, it is clear that another explanation exists, especially since the weight of the cover and surviving lettersheets are less than one ounce, suggesting that some portion of the contents apparently additional official correspondence - is now missing. Note that the cover was weighed and specifically marked "1 1/2" (ounces).

I much prefer the interpretation that the presence of an ordinary stamp on this cover is an unofficial use adhering to the new UPU regulation, since unofficial uses of official envelopes and penalty franks are only of marginal interest to the true student of official mail. Until now, official covers franked with ordinary postage stamps have languished in philatelic limbo, with no possibility of redemption and elevation to the status of true official covers. Among my reference material, I have covers from most departments franked with 3 cent Bank Note stamps. I always believed that some of these must be official usages, partly because none of them has the "Official Business" clause crossed out. Being neither fish nor fowl, their principal value rests, I am afraid, in their potential to be used - because of their legitimate imprinted corner cards - as the raw material for forged official covers.

In the meantime, from the editor's research we now have a justification for the mailroom clerks at the Treasury Department having in their possession ordinary postage stamps. The possession of ordinary postage stamps by the mailroom clerks begins to explain how the registry fee on certain Treasury Department penalty envelopes (clearly official business, with the regular postage portion of the fee covered by the penalty frank) could have been paid with ordinary postage stamps either through clerical error or, more likely, a temporary shortfall of 10 cent Treasury Department stamps. There may well have been a shortfall of 10 cent Treasury Department stamps in Washington, D.C., during part of 1882 and the first half of 1883 because official records indicate that the next to last delivery of 10 cent Treasury Department stamps (391,500) was in December 1879 (Stamp Bill Book No. 3, Record Group No. 28, National Archives, Washington, D.C.) and none were delivered during the years of 1880, 1881, and 1882. Stamp Bill Book No. 3 shows that the final delivery of 10 cent Treasury Department stamps (200,000) occurred during July 1883, presumably relieving, at that time, any existing shortages of this stamp. Support for the hypothesis of a possible shortage of 10 cent Treasury

Department stamps during at least the latter half of 1882 is found in the use of a 7 cent and 3 cent combination of Treasury Department stamps in place of a single 10 cent Treasury Department stamp on the registered October 4, 1882, cover illustrated as lot #835 in Christie's December 14-15, 1989, auction of the Weill Brothers' stock. The use of lower denomination Treasury Department stamps versus ordinary stamps may have been left to the judgment of individual mailroom clerks.

Figure 3 shows a cover where the registry fee is paid by a 7 cent National and a 3 cent American. The cover oddly lacks a dated postmark; the pencil-written date of July 1, 1882, falls within the transitional period when official stamps ought to have supplemented the penalty frank. Formerly in the collection of Rae Ehrenberg (lot #373, Robert A. Siegel, 577th Sale, April 10, 1981), this cover was franked by Assistant Treasurer A. U. Wyman, but the lack of a wax seal from the Redemption Division on the back indicates the cover did not contain new currency for mutilated bills and therefore was not entitled to free registration under the Congressional Act of June 8, 1872 (see article "A Joy Forever in the Eye of the Beholder? The 100 Treasury Cover Nobody Wanted" by Alfred E. Staubus in *Opinions V*, pages 150-157, 1988, The Philatelic Foundation, New York, NY). In Eliot Landau's exhibit collection of the 6 cent Lincoln Bank Notes stamps, there is a similar cover from the same correspondence. This one, postmarked October 3, 1882, is franked with two 2 cent Bank Note stamps and one 6 cent Bank Note stamp to make up the supplemental registry fee. Another example of a similar registry use of 3 cent (Scott #207) and 7 (Scott #149) Bank Note stamps on a Treasury Department cover postmarked July 10, 1882, can be found as lot #269 in the Walter C. Klein Collection of United States Stamps and Covers, Part Three (Christie's auction, November 3, 1988). It seems plausible that all three of these makeshift frankings on official mail were drawn from stocks of ordinary postage stamps laid in by the Treasury Department to comply with the new UPU regulations during the time period of an apparent shortage of 10 cent Treasury Department official stamps.

Figure 1. An example of a single 150 ordinary postage stamp paying the UPU postage on a triple weight Treasury Department correspondence to Charles F Conant in London, England, postmarked Washington, D.C., May 16, (1879). This example was used during the first quarter (April 1 to June 30, 1879) of the UPU regulations which required the use of ordinary, rather than official, postage stamps.

Figure 2. A portion of the surviving copy from the cover shown in Figure 1 of a two-page letter which is headed "Unofficial" - a term which can give a potentially false impression of referring to 'private' correspondence.

Figure 3. An example of the domestic use of ordinary stamps for the payment of the 100 registry fee on official Treasury Department correspondence. This cover is one of at least three known domestic examples of official Treasury Department covers franked with ordinary stamps and used between July 1 to October 3, 1882. It is probable that these ordinary stamps came from the stock intended for use on Treasury Department correspondence to UPU countries during a period of a shortage of 100 Treasury Department official stamps.