

The Travers Papers

I don't know about you, but the first time I heard the name Travers was when our philatelists started jumping up and down with excitement in 2009 about a new acquisition. Actually, make that hundreds of acquisitions, items that have not been available for more than a century. The collection consists of hundreds of typed and handwritten pages, an unpublished manuscript, and related post office documents from the Third Assistant Postmaster General's files dating from 1847 to 1910.

This work was the brainchild of Arthur Travers, who went from being a young stamp collector to working as the Confidential Clerk to Third Assistant Postmaster General Edwin Madden, a dream job for any philatelist. In 1903 Travers became Madden's Chief Clerk, and continued in that job after Abraham L. Lawshe replaced Madden in 1907.

During his postal career, Travers learned of his department's plan to dump thousands of documents to save space. Stunned by this potential loss of information to collectors, he did his best to save papers related to the creation and manufacture of U.S. postage stamps.

Unfortunately, Travers' love of stamps got him into hot water during the bluish-paper scandal when he was arrested and indicted for conspiracy and embezzlement. Postmaster General Hitchcock dismissed him in 1911 and the next year Travers replaced his "not guilty" plea with one of "no contest" and paid a \$1,500 fine. He never returned to the Post Office Department.

Fortunately for collectors, that was not the end of the story. Years later, these documents made their way to philatelic collector Jack Rosenthal. The Rosenthal family then donated these hundreds of pages to the National Postal Museum.

The museum partnered with the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society to make this collection available to everyone using online resources. This effort follows a previous collaboration that resulted in the publication of a two-volume set in 2011 that included transcriptions of the papers from 1847. The museum's own late Wilson Hulme served as co-editor with Tom Alexander on those volumes.

The original items are here and we welcome researchers who wish to study them here. But if a trip to DC is out of the question, you can peruse the collection at www.uspcs.org/traverspapers/. In either case, we have provided an online finding guide:

http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/findingguides/Travers_Papers_Finding_Guide.pdf. I am sure that you will enjoy browsing through these documents, and we can all say a belated "thank you" to Arthur Travers for preserving them for history.