

A Private Mailing Card

By Patrick Crosby

When the USPOD issued its first government postal card (gpc) in May, 1873 it provided a less expensive way of communicating by mail, if you didn't mind the loss of privacy. At the time the domestic letter rate was 3¢. However, the reduced 1¢ rate did not include non-post office issued cards, which are termed postcards (or post cards). The 3¢ rate lasted well into 1883 when it dropped to 2¢, which is illustrated in Example 1 from 1887.



July 1, 1898 ushered in the short-lived Private Mailing Card (PMC) era when postcards used domestically were allowed at the same rate as postal cards. I say short-lived because this era, with its special rules, lasted less than 2½ years. To receive this lower postage rate, the address side (called the face or front by stamp collectors) needed to include "Private Mailing Card," "Authorized by act of Congress of May 19, 1898," and, if for resale, an oblong box in the upper right corner stating "Place a one-cent stamp here." Requested, but not required, was the statement

"This side is exclusively for the address."



Example 2 shows why the post office wanted all this room – for postmarks and auxiliary markings. Its first postmark from 11-17-1900 is partly under the stamp since the card was mailed without postage. It was held in Washington, D.C. until it was franked 11-21-1900. Notice also that the post office later corrected the street address from 1728 to 1128. The reverse side of the card has a received machine flag cancel from Bridgeport, CT dated 11-22-1900.

Example 3, which is the star of this article, meets all the wording requirements for the 1c rate, but it certainly does not fulfill the intent of "This side is exclusively for the address." Also, the post office wanted this statement to be in the lower left corner, as with example 2. But this card was for a National Exposition and the post office probably did not want to disrupt the flow of mail for these irregularities. This strikingly beautiful card was from the first U.S. exposition to take advantage of the reduced 1¢ rate for Private Mailing Cards. Although not a World Fair, the National Export Exposition – Philadelphia included displays of manufactured goods from over 4,000 exhibitors.



This wasn't the first time that the USPOD bent the rules for an exposition. At the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition many expo view cards were printed on the 1¢ gpc Scott UX10, which was larger sized than allowed for international mail in order to receive a lower postal card rate. Most of these expo postal cards when used internationally are seen with a 1¢ Columbian stamp (Scott 230) added for the 2¢ international postal card rate instead of with 4¢ added for the correct 5¢ letter rate (the latter is much sought after and expect to pay upwards of \$400). It was up to the originating Universal Postal Union country to apply the UPU rules, which the USPOD chose not to do until immediately after this expo ended 10-30-1893.

This article brings up an important point for collectors of postal history on postcards. The PMC era ended 12-24-1901 when all the wording requirements were replaced for the simple "Post Card" logo to enjoy the 1¢ rate. Cards with the old wordings remained valid and are seen used many years after, but they are outside of the PMC era and should be valued considerably lesser than those used during the PMC era.

To give examples of value, I purchased Example 3 at the recent AmeriStamp Expo in Reno for about \$45. Although used during the exposition in Philadelphia, PA, it does not have a special expo cancel. Not long ago I purchased the much older, pre-PMC Example 1 for \$22.50, and Example 2 PMC with its auxiliary markings for \$12.

References:

Postal Markings of United States Expositions, William J. Bomar, 1986, available through www.amazon.com

U.S. Domestic Postal Rates 1872-2011, Beecher and Wawrukiewicz, available from the American Philatelic Society at www.stamps.org

Patrick Crosby is a member of the Nevada Stamp Study Society and collects U.S. postal cards, especially used, including first days; the 1886 Grant Letter Card (or Sheet); UC16, the first U.S. aerogram; and postal history on business or picture post cards.