

Invalid Use of a Postal Card Stamp

By Patrick Crosby

What was Bill Johnson thinking? Perhaps he wasn't thinking. He tried to mail a letter using a 1¢ cut-out from a postal card. Eventually he paid the proper 3¢ letter rate. A few clues that something was amiss would tip off a postal clerk in Rochester, NY.

First off, a clerk would be aware of the color scheme being used on U.S. stamps—green equals a 1c stamp, the card rate, and violet equals a 3¢ stamp, the basic letter rate. So a lone green stamp on an envelope is a red flag.

And then there is mutilation. Only the Postmaster General could determine the government postal card size. Any change in a postal card's size is considered mutilation and "...renders the stamp impressed thereon valueless." Bill had neatly cut around the stamp portion of the reply half of a message-reply card and glued it to the envelope. In effect, on February 4, 1941, he mailed a letter without postage.



Underneath the later added 3¢ violet stamp is a "Due 3 cents." marking. A straight-line "Feb 5-1941" shows up as a date control marking. Then Bill comes forward with the proper postage and "Postage subsequently paid by writer" is added. A parcel/general purpose dateless roller cancels the stamp. The letter is then on its way with a second Rochester, NY postmark.

If there was a chance that a postal clerk could miss the above irregularities and went to send the letter at the card rate, the item was still taller (top to bottom) at $3\frac{3}{4}$ " than the $3\frac{9}{16}$ " allowed by postal regulations for cards at the time.

What kind of a warped person would try to mail something like this? A stamp collector? Speaking of warped, I recently paid \$1.55 for this piece of postal history.

References:

Mutilated Postal Cards, Daily Bulletin, Vol. XVIII, No. 5361, 9/29/1897, (Post Office Department, Washington, DC)

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.