

More on the Mailomat

By Patrick Crosby

In a May 2022 *Post Boy* article James Steckley introduced the Mailomat Coin Operated Letter Box by showing an advertising /instructional postcard. I would like to add some tidbits on the postcard and the Mailomat.

It seems the free Mailomat postcards were available from about 1942 until 1948, which is the World War II era. Pitney Bowes had their Mailomat machines in use beginning in 1939 and the first of three postcard versions, "pre-war", is shown in James' article. But manufacturing materials and employees were scarce and manufacturers had other priorities. So a second variety of free postcard was printed with the information paragraphs changed. The "wartime" cards included "Manufacturing will begin when the war is won" and "Use this card to say "hello" to that boy in the service." Then there is a third version, "post-war". All three versions are shown and have the same photo views of a lady depositing mail and a mailman emptying the collection box in b/w or blue. The address sides, printed in blue, black or brown, can vary a bit in their notations. Some card examples are darker overall, but this is not toning.



Mailomat machine

The "MAILOMAT"

... is a coin-operated postage meter and U.S. mailbox for people with letters to mail—and no stamps. It is a "self-service postoffice" that stamps and mails your letters without need of adhesive stamps.

INSTRUCTIONS: to mail a letter you (1) drop money in coin slot (2) dial desired stamp value (3) insert letter in letter slot. The machine does the rest: automatically takes your letter, *prints* a postage meter stamp with dated postmark on it, and holds it for scheduled mail collection. It prints stamps from 1c to 33c including fees for Air Mail, Special Delivery. Though it does not make change, it charges no premiums for postage. *Metered* Mail, needing no postoffice canceling and postmarking, often catches earlier trains and planes—for earlier dispatch and delivery.

The "Mailomat", a product of Pitney-Bowes, Inc., Stamford, Conn., was developed in cooperation with the Post Office Department to increase public postal service in postoffice lobbies, railway terminals, etc. When stamp windows are crowded or closed, try this new "stampless" mailing convenience. And when using the mails these days, at home or office, remember to *mail early and often*—to help your Post Office help you!

Pre-war instructions.

The "MAILOMAT"

... is a coin-operated U. S. mailbox for people who have letters to mail—and no stamps. It is a "self-service postoffice" that mails your letters without need of adhesive stamps.

To mail a letter you (1) drop money in coin slot (2) dial correct postage denomination (3) insert letter in letter slot. The machine does the rest; automatically takes your letter, *prints* postage and postmark on it, and holds it for collection ... provides postage from 1c to 33c, including Air Mail, Special Delivery, etc., with no premium for postage. *Metered* mail needs less postoffice handling, often catches earlier trains and planes, starts on its way sooner.

The "Mailomat" is a pre-war invention of Pitney-Bowes Postage Meter Co., Stamford, Conn., now converted to war production; was developed in cooperation with the U. S. Post Office Dept. to facilitate public use of the mails in post office lobbies, railway terminals, etc. Manufacturing will begin when the war is won. Try this new "stampless" postal service now. Use this card to say "hello" to that boy in Service. And when using the mails these days, at home or office, remember to *mail early and often* ... to help clear the track for war mail ... and to help the Post Office help you!

War time instructions.

The "MAILOMAT"

COIN-OPERATED LETTER BOX

... furnishes postage and mailing service, day and night, to people who have letters to mail ... and no stamps. It is a coin-operated U. S. mail box and postage meter.

To mail a letter you (1) drop coins in a slot (2) dial your postage value (3) insert your letter ... and away it goes, stamped, postmarked and automatically deposited for collection. No adhesive stamps ... no stamp-licking ... no premium for postage.

This "self-service post office" *prints* U. S. meter stamps in denominations up to 32¢ on letters of various kinds and sizes, including Air Mail, Special Delivery and foreign mail. It can handle as many as 72 letters a minute.

The "Mailomat" was developed by Pitney-Bowes Postage Meter Co., Stamford, Conn., in cooperation with the U. S. Post Office Department, to provide the public with stamp-buying and mailing facilities at times and places where they are not now available ... in post office lobbies, hotels, stores, railway terminals and other public places.

Post-war instructions.

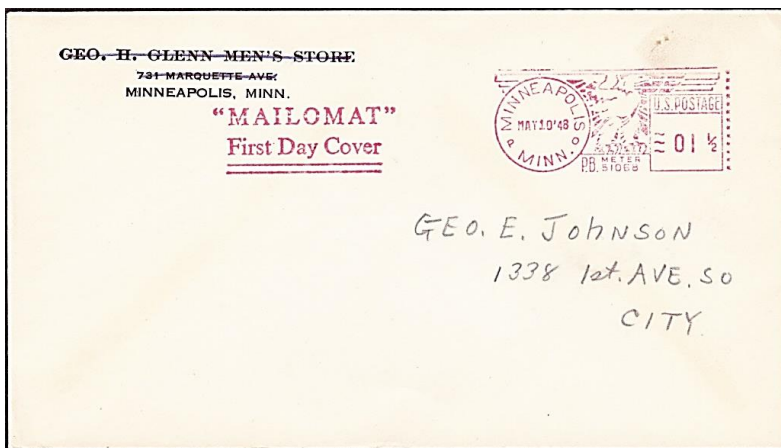
The Mailomat automatically stamped an item with a meter stamp which included the date and therefore did not require further canceling (metered mail must be posted on the date shown). Besides Pitney Bowes prototype cancels and much later cancels, the meter stamp was a Type G or Type I, and either of these is found on the postcards (see illustrations below). If a Mailomat was in a post office, then "P O" or "POST OFFICE" is found in the stamp's dial. The "P O" was not used when the Mailomat was installed elsewhere, like a department store, hotel, or a railway station.

Any mail items that were processed through a Mailomat can be identified by the P.B. Meter number located bottom/center of the meter stamp. Besides the prototype (with 100 or 101), the numbers were only 5 digits and are 51001 to 51171 and 52000. Other Pitney Bowes postage meters used 90000 on up and mostly into the 6 digits. Each meter machine has a unique number. Some servicers of ship and patriotic covers used Mailomats.

It is reported that 155 Mailomats were placed into service in 68 towns beginning May 17, 1939, with the last one being placed into service on January 12, 1963. Beginning about 1954 large post offices received "Screenline" Mailomats which were flush mounted on a wall and didn't need the collection box. Most of the meter stamps were printed in red ink, but because of red Christmas envelopes the ink color might be changed to purple for the season.



The top one shown is "Group G – rectangular framed" and the bottom one is "Group I - rectangular unframed".



The "Mailomat" First Day Cover shown is for the first day a specific Mailomat was placed in service in Minneapolis, MN. Early on the postage value range was 1¢ to 23¢. Eventually there was 1½¢ rate option for third-class printed matter, like my philatelic cover. In 1959 the value range became 2¢ to 39¢. I'm not sure, but it seems that all third-class items put through a Mailomat would then have been dated, which is not supposed to happen because third-class is not time sensitive. The Mailomat did not make change.

The free Mailomat postcards are no longer free, but they don't necessarily cost a lot. Since they were free many unused cards were snatched up (today's value \$2-\$4 unused). For cards serviced through a Mailomat with a Pitney Bowes meter stamp I've paid \$1.50 to \$8.00 over the past three years, but the exact same things can be found online for as much as \$85.00, so shop wisely.

Reference: *The United States Postage Meter Stamp Catalog*, by Rick Stambaugh, www.en.wikibooks.org/wiki/United_States_Postage_Meter_Stamp_Catalog

Patrick Crosby is a member of the Nevada Stamp Study Society and collects U.S. postal stationery, stamps, and postcards with an emphasis on postal history.