

## The U.S. Registration Stamp on Cover By Patrick Crosby

Sending something valuable through the U.S. mails? Since 1855 Registry Service has been available for greater security. Like the 1955 Certified Mail stamp (Scott #FA1), only a single Registration stamp was ever issued for this added service. But unlike the Certified Mail stamp that was issued as a promotion for Certified Mail, the Registration stamp (Sc. #F1, issued Dec. 1, 1911) had a different practical purpose – to speed up delivery.

The stamp was expected to be quickly noticed by postal employees at the originating, intermediate (if any), and receiving post offices and be immediately processed. But ordinary postage stamps continued to be allowed and most registered mail did not receive the benefit. Also, some postal patrons thought that if they used the special registration stamp, they did not need to go to the post office to fill out the required forms. So, they dropped their “registered” letter in a mailbox and received only first-class service.



As Scott Specialized puts it, “These special stamps were abolished May 28, 1913...”, but were allowed for registered mail until supplies were used up. The stamps were Special Usage, never allowed for other purposes.

The featured cover from Feb. 26, 1914, shows what to typically expect on a registered cover of this era.

On the front of the cover is a typical (for intermediate size post offices) carmine “Registered No.” box handstamp with the record number from the post office Registry Book penciled in the blank space. A return receipt to the sender stating when, where, and to whom the item was delivered was at this time free as long as this service was requested, as in “Return receipt demanded” on this cover.



In 1910 it was noticed that postal employees were not always checking the reverse side of registered envelopes for signs of tampering, as required. Consequently, all dated postmarks were only to be applied on the reverse.



So, the fronts on registered mail have oval postmarks with only the originating post office's city, state, and sometimes station. The backsides would show two originating post office's "Registered" dated handstamps tying the flap to the rest of the envelope as shown. The receiving and in-between (if any) post offices used their similar handstamp applied on the backside.

Registered U.S. mail service is still available. Items must still be presented to a postal employee, a mailing receipt is given to the sender, and, if requested, an electronic verification that the item was delivered, or an attempt was made is provided. Instead of the 10¢ fee that Sc. #F1 paid, today's registry fees start at \$14.65.

I recently paid \$18 for the featured cover. Scott values #F1 on cover at \$85, and I see examples online for sale from \$40 to \$100. The 2¢ envelope used is Sc. #U411d, which is common.

#### References:

- Scott 2019 Specialized Catalog of United States Stamps and Covers (Sidney, OH: Amos Media, 2018).
- Anthony S. Wawrukiewicz and Henry W. Beecher, U.S. Domestic Postal Rates, 1872-2011 (Bellefonte, PA: American Philatelic Society, 2011) [Available from APS].
- Richard W. Helbock, Postmarks on Postcards Revised Second Edition (Tarpon Springs, FL: Marrakech Express, 2002).

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