

## Postal Uses of the U.S. 12¢ 1861 Issue – Exhibit Background

Because there was no single 12c rate during the period of 1861-68, the 12c stamp was predominately used in combination with other denominations on international rate covers. However, as there were 10, 15, 24, and 30c stamps available, each designed to pay a common rate and likely well stocked in post offices, the 12c stamp was not commonly used. Over the eight years that this stamp was current, only about 10 million 12c stamps were issued. However, over 1/3 of these were issued with grills and were predominantly used to pay the reduced single rate to Great Britain effective January 1868 – seven years into its lifespan. As such, developing a comprehensive collection of rates, routes, and destinations with the postage paid or partially paid using this stamp is a daunting task. A survey of philatelic auctions shows the infrequency of available material other than common covers to Great Britain and France as compared to examples with other stamps of the period.

This collection has steadily been expanded and improved over the past decade. Each showing of the exhibit includes modifications and improvements based upon recent acquisitions and comments from judges and other viewers. Although not exhibited competitively recently, the exhibit has been continually updated and expanded.

Following the 2010 dispersal of the other major collection of covers with this stamp, key pieces were added to create what is the broadest and deepest archive of 12c 1861 covers in the world. In addition, it contains most of the key 12c items from other major collections dispersed over the past 15 years.

The exhibition history shows a solid progression in breadth and depth:

|      |                |          |                                             |
|------|----------------|----------|---------------------------------------------|
| 2006 | Garfield Perry | 3 Frames | Gold                                        |
| 2006 | Boxborough, MA | 3 Frames | Gold                                        |
| 2008 | Vapex          | 4 Frames | Gold + special awards                       |
| 2009 | Nojex          | 4 Frames | Gold + special awards                       |
| 2010 | PNSE           | 4 Frames | Gold                                        |
| 2011 | Nojex          | 5 Frames | Gold + special awards                       |
| 2012 | ARIPEX         | 5 Frames | Gold                                        |
| 2016 | NY2016 (FIP)   | 5 Frames | Gold (92 pts.) + special award for material |

Notable sections in the exhibit include:

- Mail originating outside of the US mail system from Hawaii, Canada, and Cuba
- The third-earliest recorded use of the 12c 1861 stamp and the earliest recorded use of a grilled 12c stamp
- Domestic registered mail for three different domestic rate periods as well as international registered mail
- Mail carried internationally by British mail to countries in five continents; including Uruguay, Brazil, Portugal, Spain, Aden, South Africa, Philippines, China, Japan, Australia, and others
- Mail carried internationally by French mail, including Algeria, Mauritius, Europe, and an unusual high-value stationary envelope sent to Switzerland which was the subject of a 2011 article in the *USPCS Chronicle* (issue 230, p. 134)
- Examples showing the progression of German mail treaties from Prussian Closed Mail, to Bremen and Hamburg treaty mail, and North German Union Mail, including examples to Norway, Russia, Poland, Turkey, and the first recorded cover to Rome by a rarely used special rate through Bremen in effect for only 10 months and the subject of a 1972 article in the *USPCS Chronicle* (issue 75, p. 151)
- BNA, Brazilian, Belgian, Netherlands, and Italian treaty mails

# Postal Usages of the US 12 Cent 1861 Issue

## Introduction

“Occasionally there is a stamp which is itself attractive in design, but has little of interest to tell about. This is why my clipping file for this stamp contains not a single item.<sup>1</sup>” So begins the April 10, 1965 column in *Stamps* by Hugh and David Baker. However, this is far from the case.

By 1861, the early kinks in long-distance international mail were working themselves out. Treaties had been negotiated with Great Britain, France, and Germany streamlining the carriage and accounting for mails transiting multiple jurisdictions. International trade was burgeoning. European colonialism was near or at its peak. The Far East was seeing more and more contact and trade with the West. Mail steamers were regularly plying most of the major seas, connecting with rail and other forms of transportation.

Domestically, at the same time as the country was (temporarily) being wrenched apart, settlers were moving west, taming much of the area from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean and filling the areas first explored by Louis and Clark some 50 years earlier. Mail communications between the east and west coasts, both business and personal, was increasing. Express companies supplemented and complemented the services provided by the Government. Mail agents and outposts were established in other countries to facilitate the handling of mails to and through the United States.

With this as a backdrop, the United States Government issued the 12 cent denomination of the issue of 1861. This, in itself, was an interesting decision. At the time of its issuance, and until January 1, 1868, there was no 12 cent single rate domestically or internationally.

As such, the 12 cent stamp became more of an observer to the changes outlined above than an instigator, riding along with other stamps to fill in any gaps as needed. We too can ride along with this 12 cent stamp to get a sense of the movement of mails at this tumultuous time.

The purpose of this exhibit is not to be all inclusive. Rather, it is designed to show, through select examples, the carriage of mails around and across the country and the world and how this stamp participated in the expansion of communications.

### The exhibit is organized to show:

- **Getting to the U.S. Mails**, including mail that originated outside of the United States, mail handled by forwarding agents, express companies, and carriers;
- **Post Office Operations**, including the steps taken to prevent the reuse of adhesives; postal services, and anomalies to normal operations;
- **Domestic Mail**, including domestic mail rates, registration, and special services;
- **International Operations**, including international routing, accounting, and markings;
- **International Carriers and Conventions**, including British, French, Prussian, Bremen, Hamburg, North German Union, BNA,, Belgian, Italian, and Brazilian treaty mails;
- **International Forwarding of the Mails**, including private and governmental forwarding.

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<sup>1</sup> *Bakers' US Classics*, Hugh J. Baker and J. David Baker, US Philatelic Classics Society, 1985, p248.