

THE VERY SHORT OFFICIAL LIFE OF E7, THE “MERRY WIDOW”

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The December 1908 issue of the **E7 Special Delivery** postage stamp may have seen the shortest official life of any United States adhesive. E7 was issued on December 12, 1908 and withdrawn on June 9, 1909, just six months of official life and hence scant postal history has survived.

E7 was designed by noted architect Whitney Warren, accepted by Postmaster General George von L. Myer and withdrawn by Postmaster General Frank H. Hitchcock. The stated reason for this withdrawal was that the green color of the 10c E7 caused postal confusion with the 1c regular postage stamp then in use, causing some Special Delivery letters not to receive proper speedy delivery. In over thirty years of collecting E7 no examples of postal history supporting this confusion have been found. E7, which depicted the winged hat of Mercury, was a radical departure in color and design from all previous special delivery stamps that featured a running or bicycle messenger. This may have been too radical for the new postmaster.

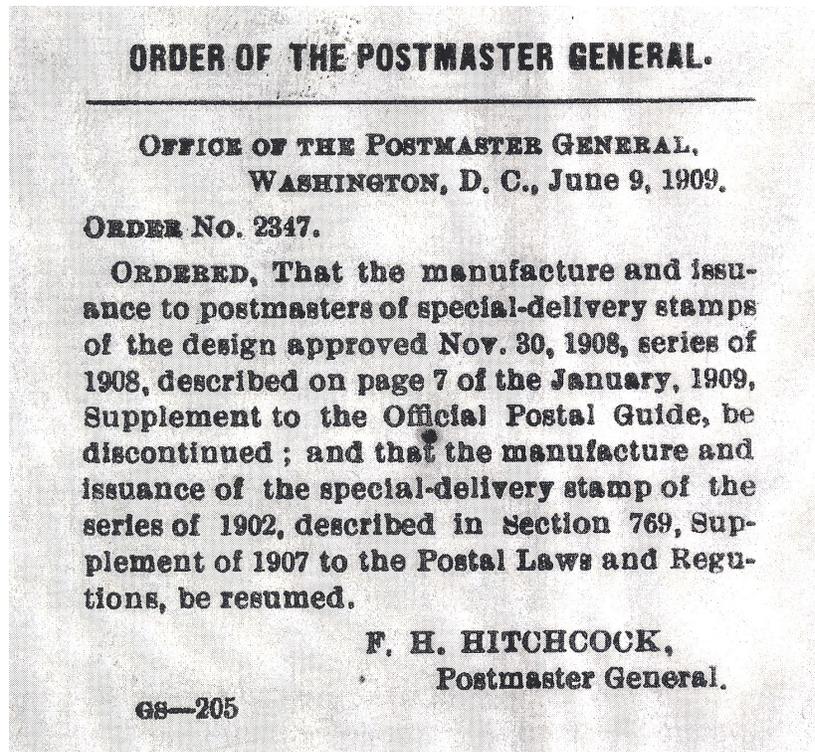
Upon withdrawal of E7, post offices were permitted to use existing inventories and then were supplied with the reissued 1902 Special Delivery stamp. Eight printing plates were authorized but only four were actually used starting on December 7, 1908. Over 3.8 million stamps were produced but it is uncertain how many were actually distributed to the post offices and if any were destroyed.

This exhibit shows the Rates, Markings and Uses of E7 with data drawn from over 300 covers in this exhibitors collection as well as from the very limited existing literature and auction results.

Exhibit Directory

- Position 1: Title page and exhibit directory.
- Position 2: Post Office withdrawal notice and early use.
- Position 3: 11c rate for postal cards and third class use.
- Position 4: 12c standard rate.
- Position 5: 13c war rate.
- Position 6: 20c and 22c registry rates.
- Position 7: 10c permitted use.
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- Position 14: Advertising letters.
- Position 15: Advertising and private markings.
- Position 16: Commemoratives and very late use.

This is a copy of the **withdrawal notice of E7** by Postmaster General F. H. Hitchcock dated June 9, 1909.

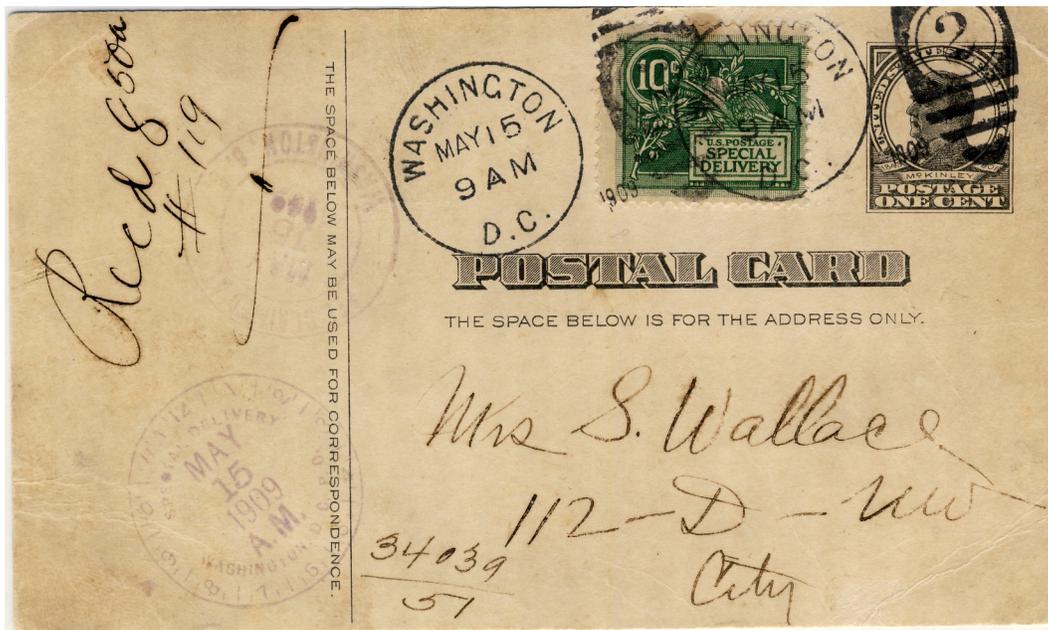


The **earliest documented** use of E7 is December 14, 1908 which is consistent with the start of printing on December 7, 1908. This letter, dated December 31, 1908, is a **very early use** and is in Washington DC. The contents are a note from Florence Hazard reminding Mrs. Henry Bearce of their meeting on the 31st. There is a purple time dial on the reverse showing AM on December 31.

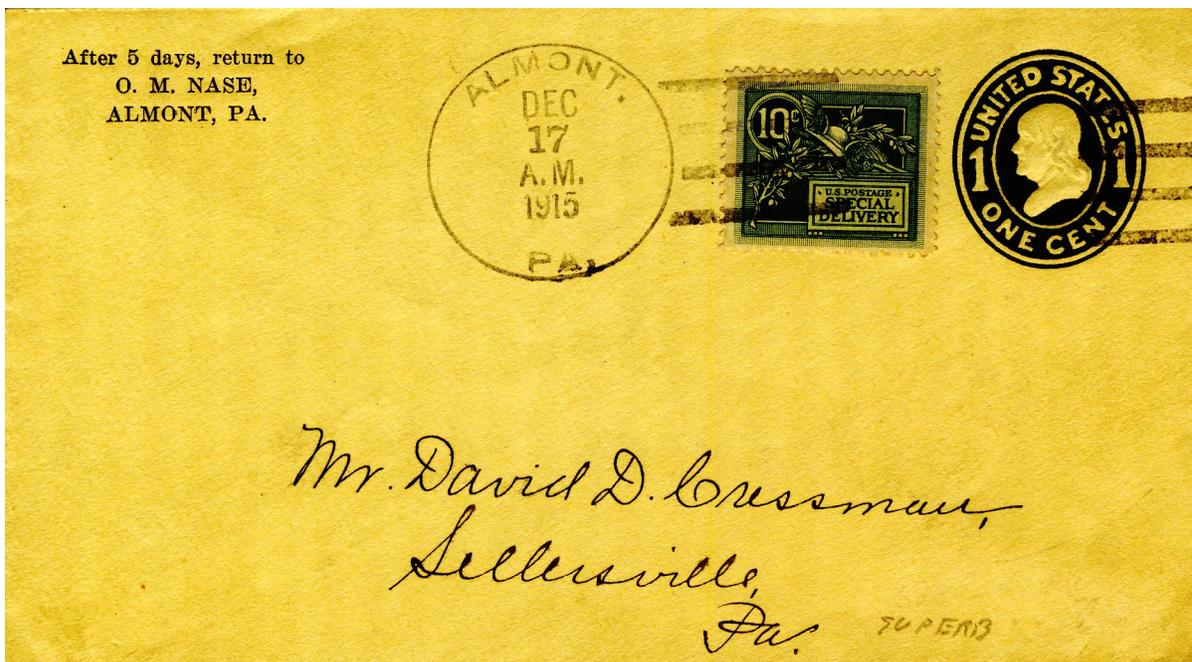


11c Rate

Amongst the scarcest uses of E7 is on postal cards. **Only 12 examples are known** dating from May 15, 1909 to May 21, 1919. Here is the May 15, 1909 postal card showing local use in Washington DC.



The only other 11c rate use that has thus far been found is this **third class** use dated December 17, 1915 from Almont to Sellersville, Pennsylvania. The envelope is unsealed and has full gum on the back flap. 11c is the correct rate for the date of this letter.



12c Rate

The special delivery fee was 10c from 1885 until October 30, 1944. The first class postage rate was 2c from 1883 until November 2, 1917 when the War Rate raised it to 3c for a short period. This letter is an early use of the 12c rate with E7, dated January 27, 1909. Dodgeville is a section of Attleboro, Massachusetts and this mill manufactured textiles dating back to 1809.

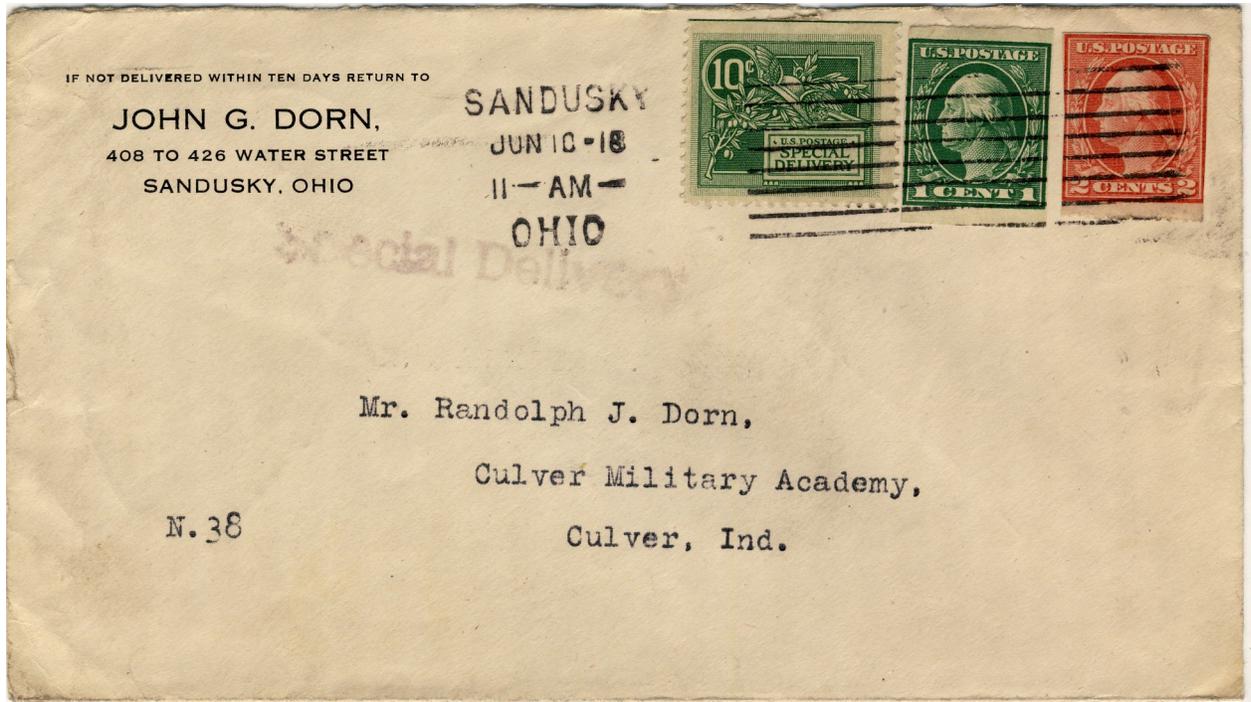


Another example of the 12c rate with E7 is this letter dated July 17, 1909 from Station O in New York City to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Mail chutes were used in multi-storey buildings to deliver the mail to a central location within the building and remain in use today.

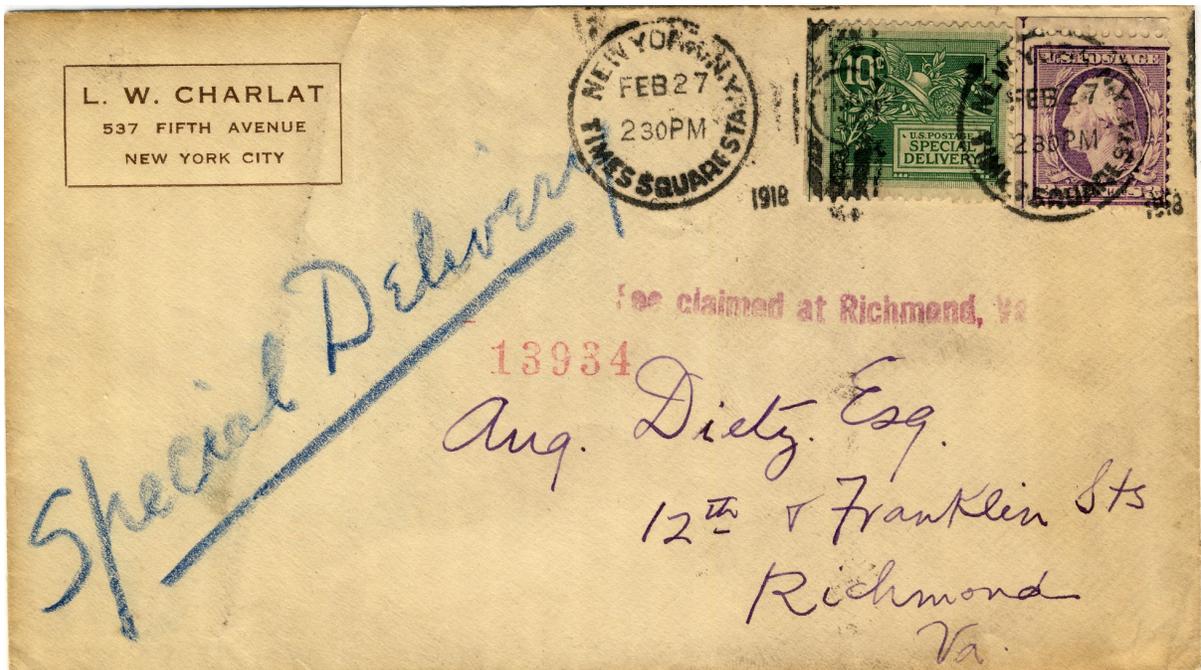


13c War Rate

On November 2, 1917 the first class postage rate was increased to 3c and remained in place until June 30, 1919. The Special Delivery use for this period was therefore 13c. This letter is dated June 10, 1918 from wine grower and wholesale dealer John G. Dorn. For some reason the 1c and 2c stamps appear to have their perfs trimmed. There is a very large advertisement on the reverse.



This war rate letter is dated February 27, 1918. It is backstamped February 27 3:30PM at the Pennsylvania Terminal Station in New York City and February 28 10AM in Richmond Virginia.



20c and 22c Registry Rates

The registry rate was 8c from July 1, 1898 until October 30, 1909. This Atlanta, Georgia to Boston, Massachusetts letter is dated March 18, 1909. It is correctly rated at 8c registry, 10c special delivery and 2c first class for a total of **20c**.

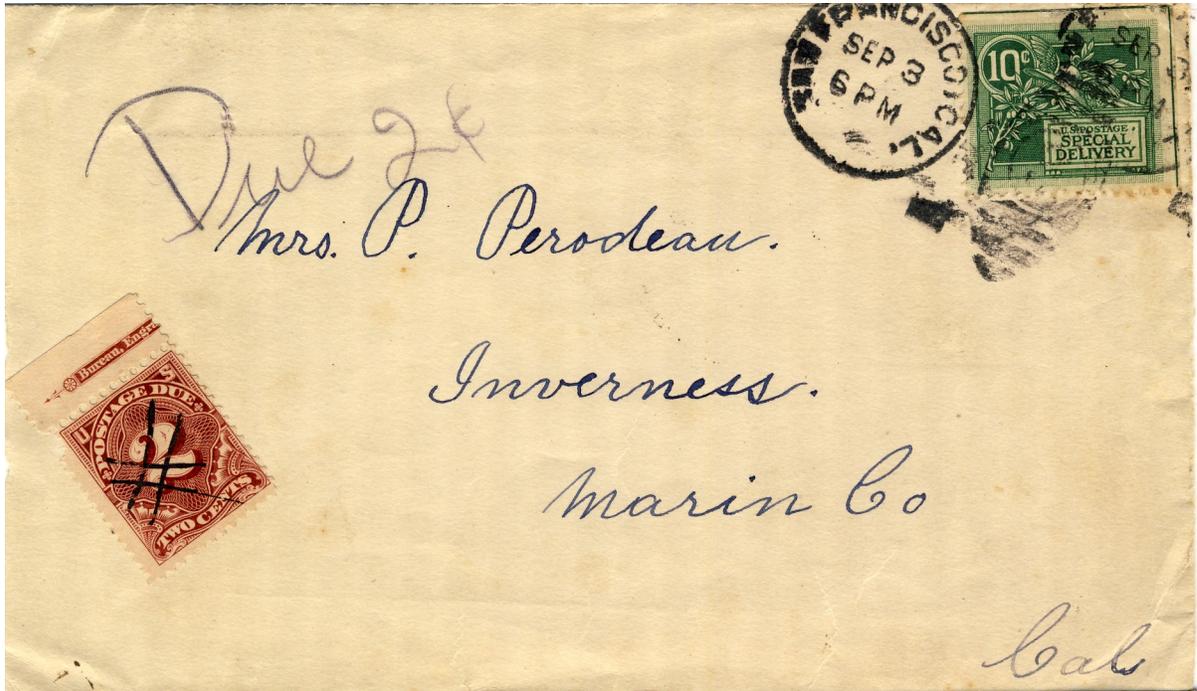


On November 1, 1909 the registry rate was increased to 10c. This letter from Pasadena, California to Chicago, Illinois is dated November 4, 1909, just four days after the rate change. It is correctly rated at **22c**. It is backstamped in Chicago on November 8., 1909.

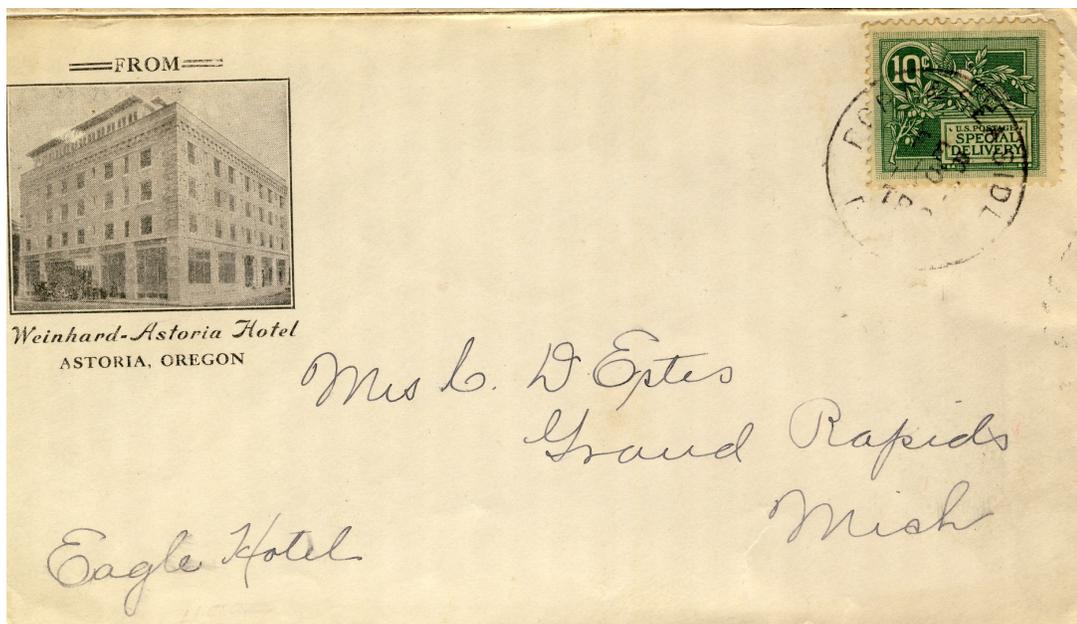


10c (permitted) Use

The postal authorities anticipated that E7 might be used without adding the 2c first class postage and permitted the post offices to accept such letters but required the 2c be **paid** by the addressee. Only two of these letters have been found to date. This letter is dated September 3, 1909 with a 2c postage due stamp affixed and also bears a manuscript "Due 2" notation.

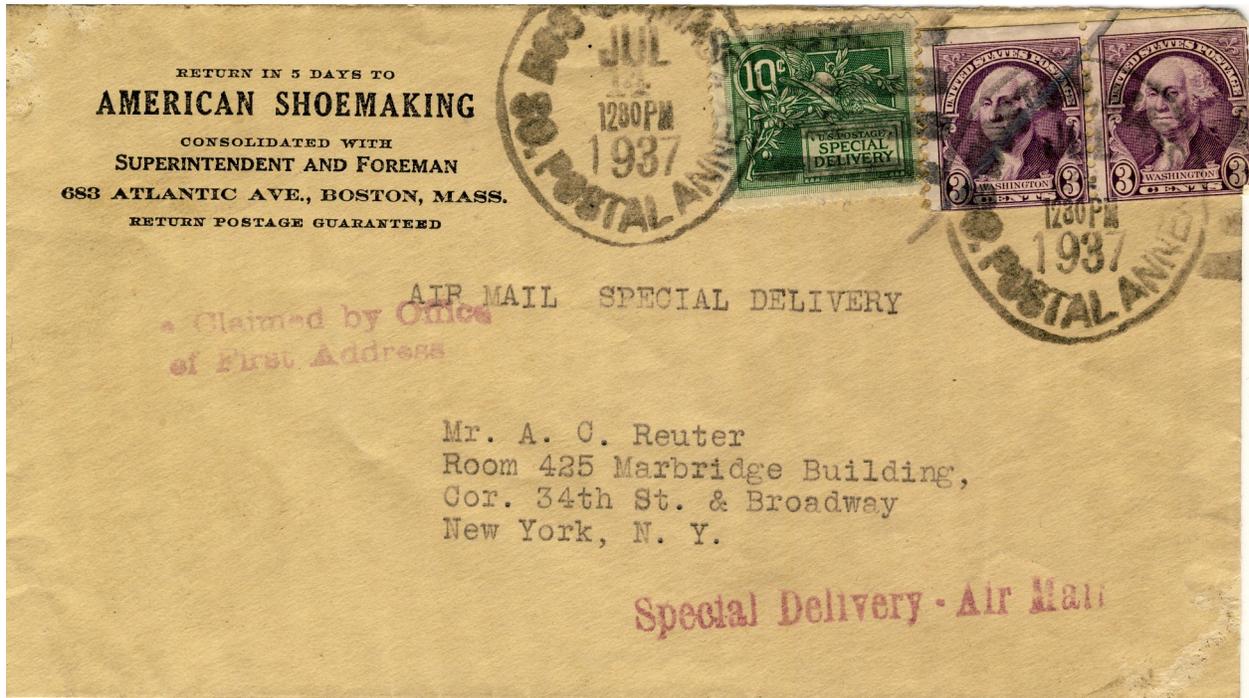


In this letter the 2c first class postage was **not paid** by either the sender or the addressee. It is dated February 16, year dated unreadable but was likely between 1910 and 1922 as the hotel was destroyed by fire in 1922. The postmark is the Port(land) and Seaside Railroad



Airmail Special Delivery and Non-Profit Use

This very late use **airmail special delivery** letter is dated July 14, 1937 from Boston, Massachusetts to New York City, New York. It is correctly rated at 10c special delivery and 6c airmail. It is the only E7 letter seen with this use.



This letter is a local use in Dayton, Ohio dated December 21, 1935. 1-1/2c was the **non-profit** rate at this time. It is postmarked Dayton Station D at 7:30 AM with a Dayton CDS showing 9AM on the reverse. The date is 4 days before Christmas and may have been an invitation. This is the only known E7 with this use



Territorial Use

Very few E7 letters have been seen with foreign or territorial use. This letter dated August 7, 1909 was posted in Luzerne, New York destined for Honolulu, Hawaii. The manuscript notation reads "Postmaster please notice. If too late to deliver in Honolulu send to Manchuria Pacific Mail Co. Sailing August 21st from Honolulu. The Manchuria sailed the pacific from 1905 to 1915.



This February 17, 1911 letter was posted in Tombstone and sent to Phoenix, Arizona. This date is almost a full year before Arizona became a state.



Streetcar and Railroad Markings

This July 6, 1909 local letter was transported via **streetcar** in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This is the only E7 streetcar letter that has thus far been found.

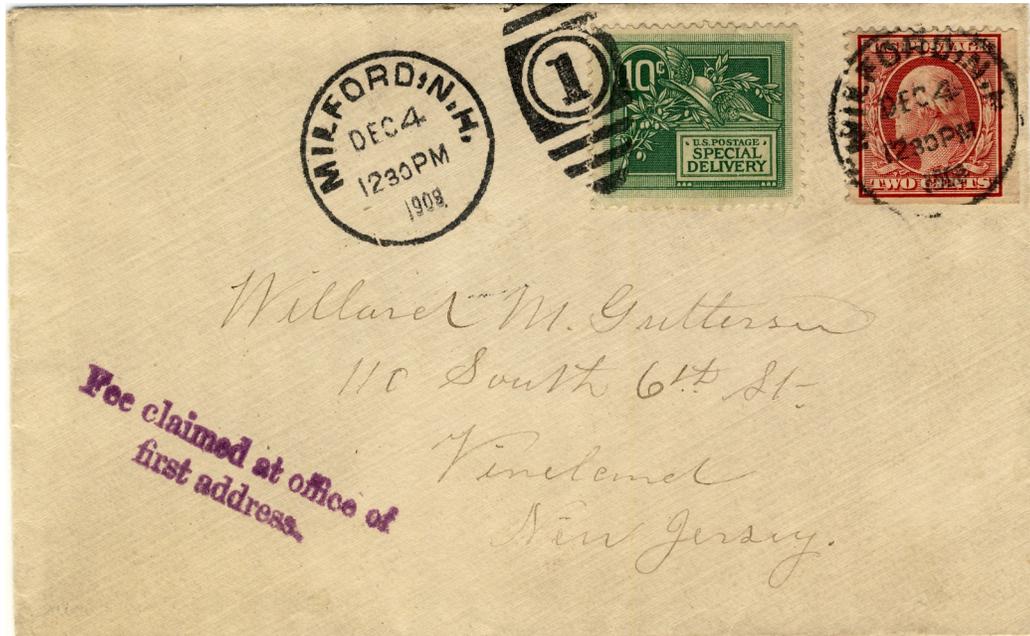


The vast majority of E7 special delivery letters were carried by **railroad** as it was the fastest way to deliver the mail. Therefore many E7 letters bear railroad markings. This June 29, 1909 letter was carried from Walpole to Boston, Massachusetts via the Boston & Poughkeepsie railroad. This railroad was part of the Central New England route from Poughkeepsie to Boston and did stop in Walpole. The blue Boston receiving dial is marked 4AM.



Markings

8c of the 10c special delivery fee was paid to the carrier that delivered the letter from the receiving post office to the addressee. There are many different handstamps used to indicate the fee had been paid. This December 4, 1909 letter from Milford, New Hampshire to Vineland, New Jersey shows one of the common varieties.



This January 12, 1910 letter from Cincinnati, Ohio to Worcester, Massachusetts shows another common handstamp where the receiving city or town is shown.



Markings

This May 6, 1911 letter to Enfield, New Hampshire could not be delivered and was forwarded to Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts. Because the letter could not be delivered the "Forwarded--Fee not Claimed" handstamp was applied at Enfield and the "Fee claimed at the office of last address" handstamp was applied in Chicopee Falls indicating delivery was completed.



Just three E7 letters have been noted with a receiving dial marking the time of receipt at the receiving post office. This January 12, 1910 letter from Brockton to Boston, Massachusetts shows the time of receipt as 1:30PM.

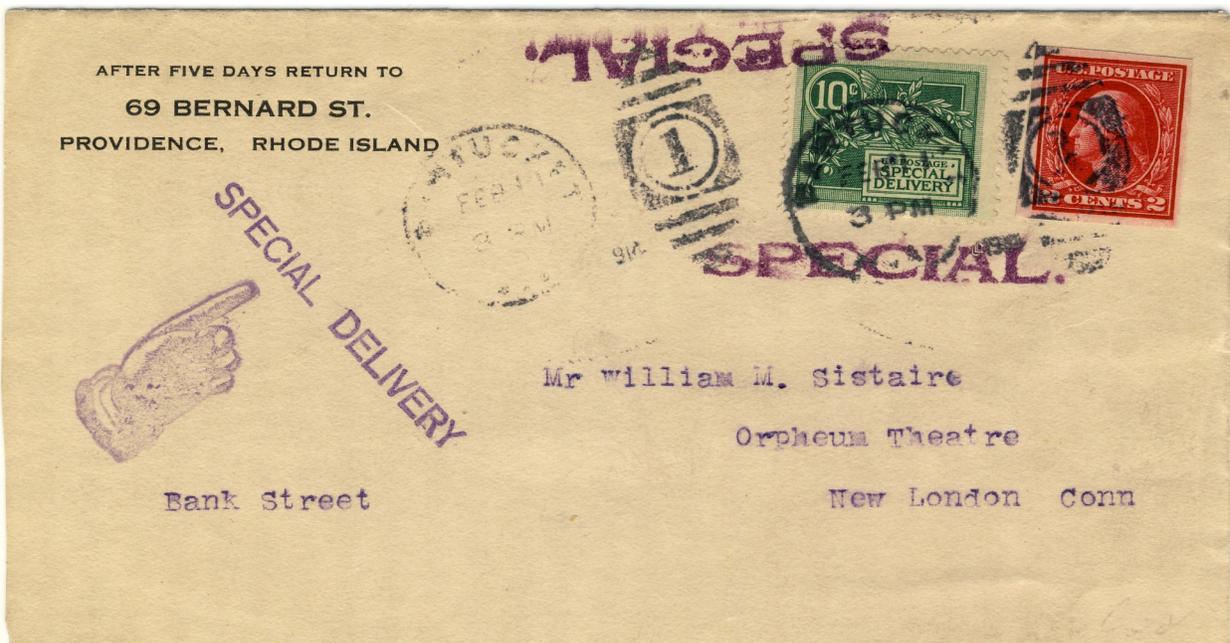


Markings

This August 25, 1911 letter from Greenville, Maine to Boston, Massachusetts shows the dial receiving time as 7:30AM on August 26. It is backstamped Bangor & Boston R.P.O. August 25, 1911.



Pointed finger handstamps are used to show something of importance on a letter. Only two have been found on E7 letters thus far. This February 11, 1914 letter from Pawtucket, Rhode Island to New London, Connecticut with pointed finger may have been applied by the sender as the ink color is the same in the handstamp and address.



Advertising Use

Most of the known handful of E7 advertising letters are from hotels. This November 20, 1909 letter is from Los Angeles to Elmhurst, California and shows an image and address for the Rosslyn Hotel.



This August 25, 1910 letter shows the River-View Hotel in Pequea, Pennsylvania. The manuscript notation at the top shows an alternate address "If absent P.M. please deliver to Residence 550 South 48th St. Philad".



Advertising and Private Markings

This December 9, 1911 letter from Richmond to Norfolk, Virginia shows a multi-colored return address for The Dietz Printing Co. August Dietz formed his printing company in 1901. He was a very active philatelist publishing many works centered on philately of the south and the Confederacy.



This August 23, 1909 letter from San Francisco, California to the Hotel Knickerbocker in New York City, New York shows two handstamps applied when trying to deliver the letter to a guest. "NOT IN ROOM" and "PAGED BY BOY" are both in purple ink.



Commemorative and Very Late Use

Many 2c **commemoratives** were issued in the 1909 period and are seen providing the first class postage that accompanied E7 letters. This July 27, 1909 letter from Newark to Avon -by- the- Sea, New Jersey bears the 2c Lincoln issued on February 12, 1909.



The **last official day** for E7 was June 9, 1909 when it was withdrawn by the Postmaster. Since E7's remained in post offices and in private hands for many years there is no way to know when the last E7 appeared on a letter. Here is a **very late candidate** dated October 28, 1939 from Richardson to Bismarck, North Dakota.

