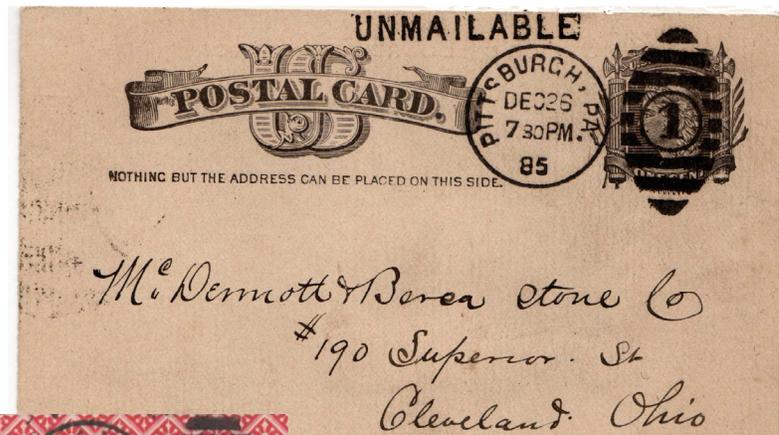


U.S. Domestic Postal Card Regulations

1874 to 1885

Robert Stendel



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Introduction

This book is about Post Office rules and regulations relating to domestic usage of the second design of the U.S. postal card [S3 (UX4), S4 (UX5) and S6 (UX7)] in use from Oct. 1875 to 1885 and a little after that.

While this book does not specialize in the first U. S. postal card, issued in 1873, it quotes some early law that I believe is not previously mentioned in philatelic literature. Several regulations quoted in the Postal Code of 1872 and 1873 were still in force in 1875 and beyond. More importantly, there were some Post Office actions, Rules, and errors that occurred before issue of S4 that have not been analyzed in philatelic writing and must be taken into account. There were a few adjustments and peculiarities that occurred when both the first design (S1 and S2) and second design were in use together.

Throughout this book the facts that I will present are mainly quotations from government documents and a number of collectibles related to the subject of domestic postal card regulations. I will try to tie all this together with logical arguments and a good deal of opinion. The documents contain a great number of things that surprised me and that few, if any, collectors knew. To a large extent I will defer to the work of Charles Fricke regarding the first design and will show only a few first issue usages. I will further restrict my coverage to leave out privately printed cards, sometimes known as picture post cards. Additionally, railroad cancels and other specialties are too large to be treated here. Also, the coverage of restrictions on gambling, pornography, profanity, deformation of character, poison pen, slander, etc. will only be treated when a list of *Postal Guide* Rules are shown verbatim and in order. I will try to mention every regulation that produced an interesting and uncommon domestic usage of the government postal cards.

The cited regulations come from two major sources:

Postal Laws and Regulations (hereafter referred to as *P. L. & R*) were issued in 1873 and 1879 and are considered the final authority. However, much information on practices was not included. When the new *P. L. & R.* 1879 was printed, it was considered to contain all the main subjects. If a penalized practice was not mentioned in the newly issued *P. L. & R.*, there is justification for thinking the practice had been repealed.

United States Official Postal Guide (hereafter referred to as *Postal Guide*) is the major source of quotations. It began in October, 1874 and was updated and reissued every three months initially and monthly starting in 1879. Most of the quotes will be Numbered Rules, also called Rulings, which are often paraphrases of the *P. L. & R of 1873 or 1879* or of Orders. There were no rulings in the first *Postal Guide* - postmasters were expected to understand the *P. L. & R 1873* or get information from *The United States Mail and Post Office Assistant*.

A third source of rules, though lacking official status, was *The United States Mail and Post Office Assistant* (hereafter referred to as *U.S. Mail*). It was a private publication edited by J. Gayler who was a Special Agent of the Post Office and had contact with and endorsement of high officials of the Post Office Department. It is mentioned in *P. L. & R.* 1866:

Chapter XXIV. Postage to Foreign countries.

Sec. 259...Any changes that may occur will from time to time be announced in the "United States Mail," a monthly journal, published in New York.

Rules were in force until changed by a new Rule, an Order, Circular, Bulletin, *P. L. & R.* or a Ruling of the Assistant Attorney General for the Post Office Department. There are quite a number of loopholes and odd situations that are mentioned only once or twice in the *Postal Guides*. These extended through the reissue of the *P. L. & R* as a matter of common sense. Orders, Bulletins and Circulars have one advantage over the Rules in the *Postal Guide* in that they have an effective date.

The Rates section of the *Postal Guide* was rarely changed and, while it is more authoritative than Suggestions, usually contained little of substance.

The *Postal Guide* had "Suggestions-to-the Public" and the domestic rates in the Oct. 1874 issue. I believe the "Suggestions-to-the Public" cannot stand on their own; they must have prior support from the Rulings or the *P. L. & R.* However, "Suggestions-to-the-Public" can explain the meaning of a regulation.