

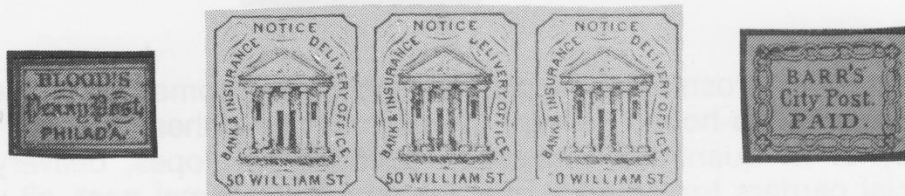
COLLECTING U.S. LOCALS

D.O. Huggard

In my early days of stamp collecting I collected the whole world with a special interest in New Zealand but as time went by I found my scope of collecting was far too great, so I decided to drop the Rest of The World and concentrate on New Zealand. After many years and a reasonable collection and my involvement with other collectors at meetings and social functions I began to lose interest as I found everyone else collected New Zealand and I therefore felt a need to collect something different.

I wrote to a very dear friend of mine overseas of my feelings, and he came back with the suggestion that I perhaps might find an interest in collecting Local Posts of the United States of America. Now that was one for the box — what were local posts of the USA. I had heard of the local posts of Germany but the USA — never. With the letter came a packet of 30 USA Local forgeries and yes I was hooked.

A learning program started and still continues to this day. Their historical interest is intriguing and the problems they present are most stimulating. I learnt that in the early days of stamp collecting, these private issues were very popular. The stamp albums of the day included pages for them. Catalogues recognised them as essentially collectible. But the unethical practices of certain dealers, and later the private operators themselves, caused an inevitable reaction and these private stamps fell from favour from which they have never quite recovered. I also learnt of S. Allan Taylor of New York who claimed his stamps to be as good as any ever issued and of S.C. Upham of Philadelphia. Both were largely responsible for the many thousands of forgeries and bogus issues. George Hussey of Hussey's Post contributed his full share as did John W. Scott of the Scott Stamp Empire.

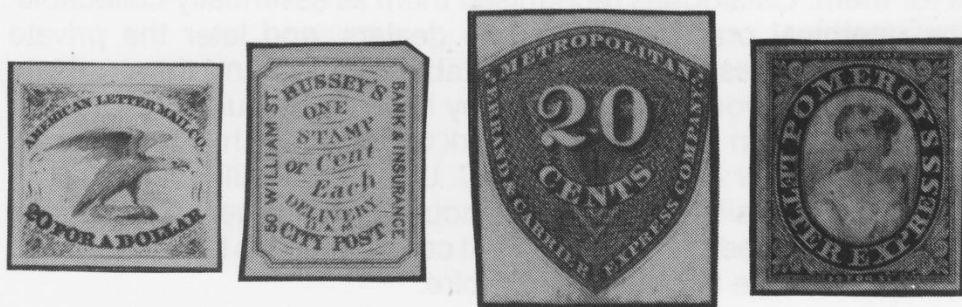


I still find excitement on opening an old album or stock book and finding treasures that I can add to my life long collecting of Private Posts of the USA. The thrill of adding a cover that has been carried by a horse rider across the plains of the US during the pioneer days brings to mind romantic adventures. To have items such as these in an exhibition display makes one feel proud to be part of the New Zealand Philatelic scene. Always try to make your display as exciting and informative as possible. Concentrate on your chosen subject and be proud of it.

BACKGROUND TO THE ISSUES

In the USA in 1781, the Articles of Confederation created a perpetual union of the 13 States and it gave to Congress the sole and exclusive rights and power to establish and regulate post offices throughout the United States, from one State to another and collect postage as might be necessary to pay the expenses of the office.

The Postal System continued to develop over the years but the actual mechanics of delivery and collection of mail was far from satisfactory. The very nature of the country, especially in the west were great distances and rugged terrain helped to contribute to the problem. The Government Postal Service was just not up to the enormous task and so Private Companies soon flourished. Private entrepreneurs established posts for the carriage of mail within the cities (local posts), and between two or more cities (independent mail routes) making use of the railways, coasts and river steamship lines, stage coaches etc. So it is appropriate to call the whole group, Private Posts of the United States, as on many cases they interlace. No other country ever had as many private posts nor as many private postage stamps as did the United States. In Scott's catalogue listing there are approximately 700 recognised varieties. Many of these are great rarities and only authenticated by a few known specimens on cover, properly cancelled or with other evidence of proper use.



The Private Posts were the pioneers in the development of the postal service. Post-to-house delivery, prepayment by adhesive labels sold singly or in quantities, embossed stamped-envelopes, delivery by special carriers for an additional fee and local parcel post, all were successful innovations of the private posts that were subsequently imitated in the Government Service.

These private posts were established in the early 1840's, Blood's Penny Post of Philadelphia in 1840, being probably the earliest. Its first stamp appeared in 1841. The New York City Despatch Post was started in 1842, the New York Post office purchased this post and gave birth to what is conceded to be the first United States Postage Stamp. This was in 1842, though the nation-wide government issues did not come into being until 1847.