

DELAWARE POSTAL HISTORY – 1732 to 1847

The First State in the Union: Delaware

Purpose and Scope

Purpose of this exhibit is to illustrate the development and evolution of the rates and services of the U.S. postal system from the Colonial period to the issuance of postage stamps in 1847, shown through the window of Delaware post offices. The starting point is 1732, with the earliest privately held cover known from Delaware. Specific attention has been paid to include all types of letters handled by the Delaware post offices e.g., domestic and foreign, letters traveling by horse, ship, steamer, railroad, drop letters, free frankings, as well as a great variety of postal markings and postal routes during the rate periods, utilizing a broad range of originating Delaware post offices with varied destinations.

Organization

The exhibit is organized by the rate period and within the rate period by distance. This technique leads to basically a chronological approach. Postal markings used in Delaware in the Colonial period (pre-George Washington) are shown first, with other postal rate periods following. Page layout: In the upper section is the rate period; postal marking and rate information is usually to the side of each cover. Key route & date information is near the cover. Important items and unusual items are outlined in red. Primary and significant secondary research is appropriately notated.

Plan of Presentation

Colonial Period

Act of King George III 1765-1775 Queen Anne rates maintained; extended in zones of 100 miles

Acts of the Constitutional 1777-1792 Rates at pre-War levels, increased as currency devalued and Confederation Congress

Pre-war rates re-established 1782 Reduced by 25% in 1787

Act of Congress Feb. 1792 (eff. June 1) First rates under Constitution

Act of Congress Mar. 1799 Rate zones reduced from nine to six; Ship fee reduced

Act of Congress Dec. 1814 (eff. Feb 1) Rates increased by 50% to help pay for War of 1812

Act of Congress Mar. 31-Apr. 30, 1816 Rates restored to those of March 1799

Act of Congress Apr. 1816 (eff. May 1) Zones reduced from six to five

Act of Congress May 1825 effective date with only one change: 150 to 400 miles rate to 18-1/4

Act of Congress Mar. 1845/Mar. 1847 (eff. July 1) Rates greatly simplified

Importance

This is the first ever philatelic exhibit totally comprised of postal history covers of the colony/state of Delaware. Of significance: 99%+ of the 258 Delaware covers included have never been seen before in a competitive exhibit. Covers from 35 Delaware towns are shown in the exhibit, many are the only ones known/recorded. This is the definitive exhibit of the country's first state.

Note: Exhibit contains no duplicate items

🔍 Denotes personal research

DELAWARE

The name of the state is derived from that of Lord De La Warr, an early governor of Virginia. Early settlements were made by both the Dutch and Swedes, but eventually control passed to the English. Delaware was part of Pennsylvania from 1682 till 1776 when the Delaware Assembly voted to break ties with Great Britain and Pennsylvania.

The first of the original 13 states to ratify the federal Constitution, Delaware occupies a small niche in the Boston - Washington, D.C. urban corridor along the Middle Atlantic seaboard. It is the second smallest state in the country and one of the most densely populated.

Prior to becoming a state there had been operated, at one time or another, post offices in Wilmington (February 6, 1790), Duck Creek (August 30, 1790) and Dover (June 1, 1791).

The state is organized into three counties - from the north to the south, New Castle, Kent and Sussex - all established in 1682. Most state government operations are located in Dover, the capital.

Date of Statehood: December 7, 1787

Population: 64,273 (1800)

Size: 2,489 square miles



Delaware State Seal Engraving
C.F. Thomas & Co. Wilmington, Del



Essay with Delaware Seal
instead of Washington