

The United States 8-Cent Air Mail Rates of 1944 to 1946

Synopsis

Introduction: Rather than rehash what is on the title page, please let me give you some background information.

I am a long time exhibitor who has received two national level large gold medals and more than fifty national level gold medals, as well as two grand and one reserve grand awards at WSP shows. I am also an APS accredited judge, a philatelic writer, and a former Board of Governors member of the Bureau Issues Association, now the United States Stamp Society. But this aerophilatelic postal history exhibit presents a new challenge for me, and that is to create a rate study of a group of closely related rates that, with one exception, were in effect for only a short period of time.

This will be only the third time this newly developed exhibit is being shown. The first time was in 2025. It has since been expanded from 64 to 96 pages. My wife is listed as a co-exhibitor since she has been helping proofread and edit write-ups.

Treatment: After the title page and a short prologue, the exhibit first focuses on five 8-cents per ounce rates that came into effect on March 26, 1944. The exhibit then looks at four 8-cents per half ounce rates that came into effect in January or June 1945. Finally, there is a short epilogue. The appropriate section heading appears on each page, usually in the upper left corner, so viewers can easily tell what they are looking at. Where warranted, the sections are divided into subsections.

Importance: The 8-cent air mail rates that I chose to study are from a large and philatelically complex country, and their period of use includes part of World War II and the immediate postwar era. The time period has been well studied, but I believe this is the only exhibit that focuses on the 8-cent rates alone, rather than on the whole range of air mail rates, or on the air mail routes, or on the stamps of the era.

Knowledge, study, and research: These should be evident from the selection of the material as well as from the write-ups. Wherever possible, I chose items that are interesting for more than just the postal rates. You will therefore see all sorts of first day and last day of rate usages, auxiliary markings, insufficiently paid mail, multiple rate usages, censorship, usages to or from U.S. possessions, and more.

Rarity: Many 8-cent air mail rate covers are dollar box material. You know it and I know it. But that doesn't mean that all 8-cent air mail rate covers are such philatelic chaff. I will not claim that the correctly paid cover used to Saint Pierre and Miquelon via Canada is unique, but it very well might be. I challenge anyone to find another cover like it. Other difficult to find items include a cover from a Civilian Public Service camp for conscientious objectors, a cover to Puerto Rico from a Civilian Public Service project in the U.S. Virgin Islands, a P.O. Box 1663 undercover address cover from a soldier assigned to the secret atomic bomb project at Los Alamos, a cover carried to Japan in a diplomatic pouch, and a cover used from the U.S. Virgin Islands to the United Kingdom with 38 cents total air mail postage.



The airplane icon indicates those and other particularly noteworthy items.

Condition: Condition for the commercially used covers is what you would expect for covers from the period. Some have wrinkles, some show signs of toning, and a few are somewhat ragged from opening. Nevertheless, the overall condition is pretty decent. Any philatelically inspired covers in the exhibit are in excellent condition, as would be expected.

Presentation: I have tried to keep it as simple as possible, but some items are just plain difficult to exhibit. Rather than leave them out or go to odd sized pages, I mounted them diagonally. Ugly? Perhaps. But I hope you don't ding me more than a point while I keep searching for neat little examples of the same usages. Also note that the reduced size scans are printed in black and white rather than in color. Doing so enables me to better adjust the contrast and improve readability.

The United States 8-Cent Air Mail Rates of 1944 to 1946

As a wartime revenue measure, the United States raised its domestic air mail rate from 6¢ to 8¢ per ounce, effective March 26, 1944.* In doing so, the U.S. also set four other air mail rates at 8¢ per ounce.

In 1945, with the war progressing well, the United States lowered four of its Western Hemisphere air mail rates from 10¢ to 8¢ per half ounce.

This exhibit is a study of those nine 8¢ rates.

Eight of the nine 8¢ air mail rates ended on October 1, 1946. At that time, six of the 8¢ rates became 5¢ per ounce, while two seldom used rates became 7¢ per ounce.

One 8¢ rate, the half ounce air mail rate to Cuba, remained in effect until August 1, 1954, when it increased to 10¢ per half ounce. For the sake of completeness, the exhibit includes one cover mailed to Cuba at the 8¢ rate in 1947. Otherwise the primary focus is on 8¢ rates from March 26, 1944, through September 30, 1946.

** Note: The 8¢ per ounce domestic rate only provided air mail service within the continental United States, within a U.S. possession, or between the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Higher rates applied for air mail service to or from U.S. territories and possessions other than Alaska. Although officially classified as domestic, mail to or from such locations was flown on what were designated as Foreign Air Mail Routes.*



The airplane icon indicates especially noteworthy items.

Plan of exhibit

Tile page

Prologue

U.S. domestic air mail rate: 8¢ per ounce

Composite rate for air mail service within the continental United States only
plus surface transport to a foreign country: 8¢ per ounce

Air mail rate to Canada: 8¢ per ounce

Composite rate for air mail service to Canada
plus surface transport to Newfoundland: 8¢ per ounce

Composite rate for air mail service to Canada
plus surface transport to Saint Pierre and Miquelon: 8¢ per ounce

Air mail rate between the U.S. Virgin Islands
and the continental United States: 8¢ per half ounce

Air mail rate between Puerto Rico and the continental United States: 8¢ per half ounce

Air mail rate to Mexico: 8¢ per half ounce

Air mail rate to Cuba: 8¢ per half ounce

Epilogue