

The Telepost and Sterling Debenture Corporation

Purpose: This will explore the history of the Telepost using The Sterling Debenture Corporation (Sterling) as the lens. Sterling was established to market securities. The firm marketed the securities of several companies between their formation in 1906 and the arrest of the principals in 1912. This exhibit will cover the postal cards that were used between 1907 and 1911 to market their securities as well as philatelic material related to the Telepost.

Challenge: The challenge has not been finding material from the Sterling Debenture Corporation; it's been locating the subtle varieties that form this exhibit. Every example requires review of previously acquired examples to see if there is a meaningless difference.

Significant Items: This exhibit includes few items of significance. Even the items that are of significance are only of interest to those who collect telegraph stamps and primarily those that venture into the non-Scott listed telegraph stamps. The exhibit includes an RPPC of the Telepost office in Fort Revere Massachusetts. It includes two copies of the 1908-1909 version of the Telecard. It also includes a used copy of the 1909-1910 Telecard, the only copy known.

Knowledge, Personal Study, and Research: The starting point of this project was the Telepost. Very little is known about the firm and the total page count between Rich (1947) and Kramer (1992) is four (4) pages. Rich incorrectly posited that the Telepost did not operate and Kramer gave very little support outside of noting collection boxes and a cancellation on a stamp. Being interested in learning more about the company I started a series of web searches which led to the Sterling Debenture Company.

Sterling was formed on January 19, 1906 with a capital of \$1,000.00 and their business was promoting corporations. While they were in the business of promoting corporations, they were really in the business of promoting worthless stocks. Searches on eBay for the Telepost and Sterling led to one main item, postal cards. The postal cards were included in communications that Sterling sent out to prospective customers marketing various companies. The exhibit will show cards from ten (10) different organizations represented by Sterling. In addition to Sterling, all reference the Telepost.

What this exhibit will show is the means for advertising the stocks, the postal cards. It will also include more detailed information on the Telepost and its operations. My knowledge on postal cards is non-existent. I will use the Scott catalogue and AI to help with the research on that.

Condition: The items in this exhibit are the best that can be found.

References: Rich, Kramer, and a lot of searching via Google and Newspapers.com. To be honest it's required a lot of digging to locate information. Google is terrible and a lot of trial

and error for searching was required. A court case from the New York County Supreme Court from 1913 yielded a lot of information (see Metropolitan Telephone and Telegraph case). It is 77 MB and 1,143 pages in length and is located at <https://tinyurl.com/59w3m2pp>. AI is a bad resource for either Sterling or Telepost, so be careful if you use that. I tried Claude to jog my memory as I haven't touched this in a few years, but it came out with little of value.

The Telepost and Sterling Debenture Corporation

Purpose: The purpose of this exhibit is to delve into the history of the Telepost using the Sterling Debenture Corporation's (Sterling) advertisement of its stock through postal cards and other philatelic material.

Scope: The scope of the exhibit is postal cards issued between 1902 and 1911 used by the Sterling in its offerings between 1907 and 1911.

Importance: The material in this exhibit is only important to those that collect telegraph stamps and more specifically to those that venture into the non-Scott listed stamps. For years the Telepost was viewed as an entity that did not operate a telegraph system, however the research shows that they operated in the midwest and northeast United States. This sheds new light on the Telepost and its operations as an upstart that was meant to challenge the Western Union and Postal Telegraph System.

Research: U.S. Telegraph Stamps & Franks (Kramer, 1992) and U.S. Telegraph Stamps (Rich, 1934) formed the basis for this exhibit. Their scholarly research on the Telepost was limited: Rich did not think that the Telepost was a functioning system and Kramer made only a reference to the collection boxes. With access to online resources through Google and newspapers.com it can be shown that the Telepost operated in the Midwest and Northeastern United States. The telegraph stamps issued by the Telepost are dated to the time period where their stock was marketed by the Sterling through the use of postal cards.

The postal cards create a record of the Telepost's existence, their stock structure, and even areas of operation. Not only will the viewer see postal cards from the Telepost, but numerous other companies marketed by the Sterling featuring the Telepost as a means with which to contact them. Combined with the telegraph stamps and postcards an interesting, albeit unimportant, story unfolds. The culmination is the use of postal cards resulted in two (2) court cases against Sterling: one against a postmaster for pumping the sale of stamps and another case regarding fraud using the mail system.

Rarity: Postal cards from the Sterling Debenture Corporation are scarce and there are many minute differences that one has to look for. There are some pieces, however, that are rare. The RPPC, below, and the Telecard forms would be considered rare with less than five (5) copies of each known. Rare items will be highlighted in red.

Condition: The condition is the best that can be obtained.



Telepost Exchange - Fort Revere, Massachusetts