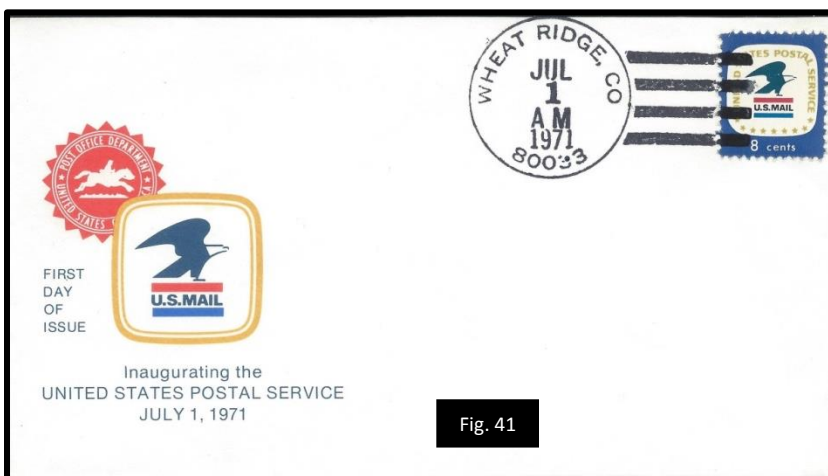


On July 1, 1971 the Post Office Department (POD) changed its name and legal structure and adopted the new name United States Postal Service (USPS). A special cachet was prepared for the occasion and a supply was sent to every post office in the United States, where the new stamp issued that day was affixed and canceled. Over 22,000 different post offices participated, and a whole new specialty field of cover collecting was created. Figures 40, 41, 42, 43, & 44 are a small representation of those covers.





Collecting covers from foreign countries also is very popular, especially if it is postmarked by a “dead” country that no longer issues stamps like Hong Kong (Fig. 45).

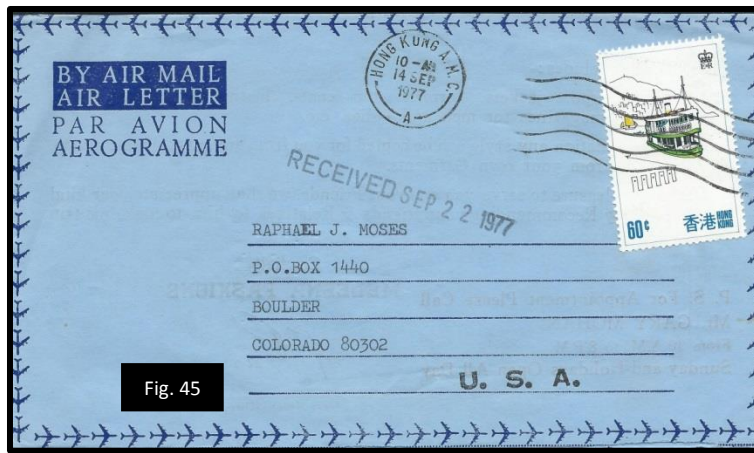


Fig. 45

Covers are prepared and collected that recognize the first day of a special event (Fig. 46 & 47).

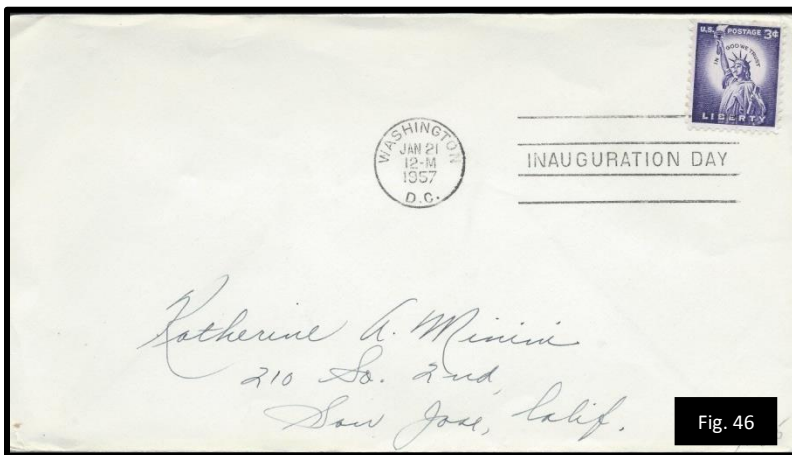


Fig. 46

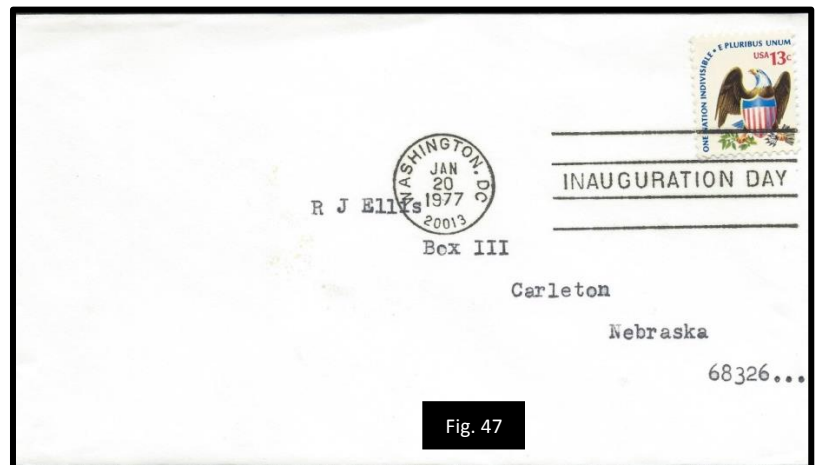


Fig. 47



Fig. 48

Very small covers such as Fig. 48 which measure just 3 3/8 inches by 3 3/8 inches are fun to try to find, especially since the USPS no longer accepts square envelopes for mailing that measure smaller than 5 inches by 5 inches.

Another fun specialty of cover collecting is to obtain covers with cancellations that feature the old abbreviations for states prior to the standard two-letter abbreviation now in use. Figure 49 shows COLO. for Colorado.

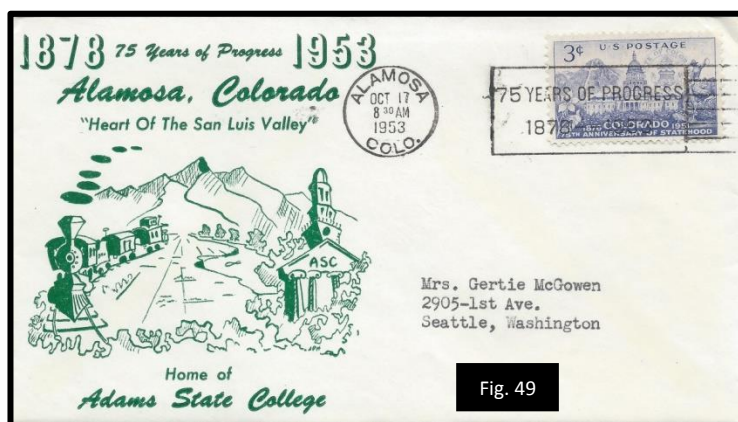


Fig. 49

Two letters are all that is now required to identify the state, and periods after the abbreviations are not used.

Covers for mail used for U.S. government business are called Official mail covers. Fig. 50 is a cover from the Veterans Administration with a pre-printed indicium.

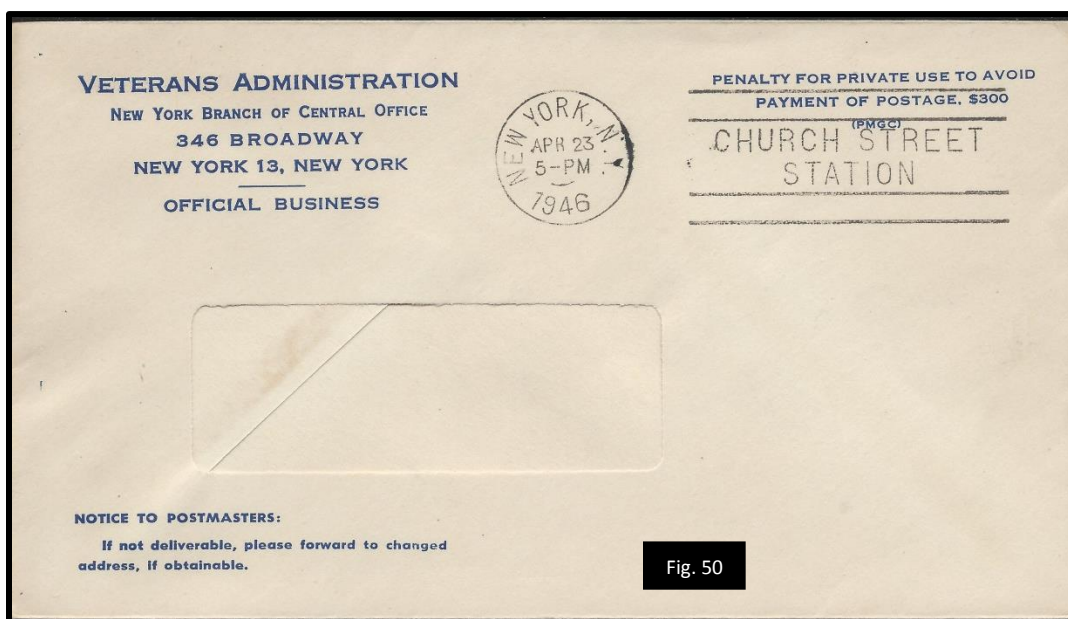
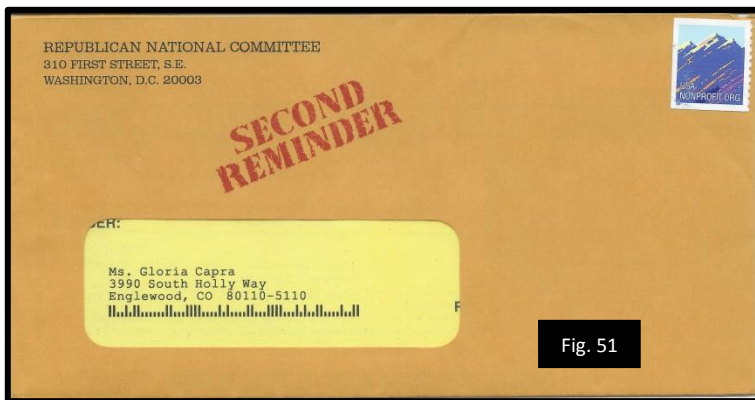


Fig. 50



Special discounted rates are available for certain types of organizations, such as non-profit organizations (Fig. 51).

Multiple stamps can be placed on one cover, creating the possibility of having more than one cancellation city and date. Fig. 52 was franked first with the 10 cent Salem Poor stamp on April 13, 1975 with the red SOPEX cancel from Andover, Massachusetts. A few days later the two Lexington & Concord stamps were added to the cover, and each received a cancellation, one from Lexington, Massachusetts, the other from Concord, Massachusetts.

This philatelic cover is all the more remarkable when one considers the fact that SOPEX stands for Southern Oregon Philatelic Exhibition held in Medford, Oregon. When this cover was created, the SOPEX show was held in Andover, Massachusetts. Although the SO in SOPEX stands for Southern Oregon, a clever play on those letters occurred when Samuel Osgood, initials also SO, was prominently featured on the cachet made by Art Craft. Samuel Osgood was the very first cabinet-appointed Postmaster General of the infant United States. He was appointed by George Washington and became the first Postmaster General under the new Constitution, replacing Ebenezer Hazard, the last Postmaster General to serve under the Continental Congress. Samuel Osgood, a Harvard graduate, became famous as the leader of the Minutemen who fought at Lexington and Concord. Covers like this can be used as a creative fun way for students to learn U.S. history.



Fig. 53 is a cover that received a very light machine cancellation in Denver, Colorado in 2002. The exact month and day are illegible. Prior to delivery of the letter, a postal employee decided to ensure that the stamps could not be reused by canceling them a second time, using a ball point pen creating a scribbled "manuscript" cancel. Collectors usually do not like this

type of manuscript cancel. In fact, the term manuscript cancel is not usually used to describe this type of secondary

cancel. When being polite, collectors just call it “a nasty way the USPS chose to deface the stamps and ruin their collectability.” This type of modern-day pen cancel, sometimes using a marker pen, is frequently seen on higher denomination stamps that are on packages or mail that could not be sent through canceling machines.

The internet has changed the way a lot of people purchase stamps. Fig. 54 is a cover franked by a commercial company’s internet sale of postage. This is sold by e-stamp.com.



Fig. 54

Occasionally a cover includes its original contents. Now in philatelic hands, reading some of those old letters can transport one back into a very different age and time. Fig. 55 is a cover containing a letter from the attorney demanding payment of \$11.28 – an amount that would not interest too many attorneys in today’s world.

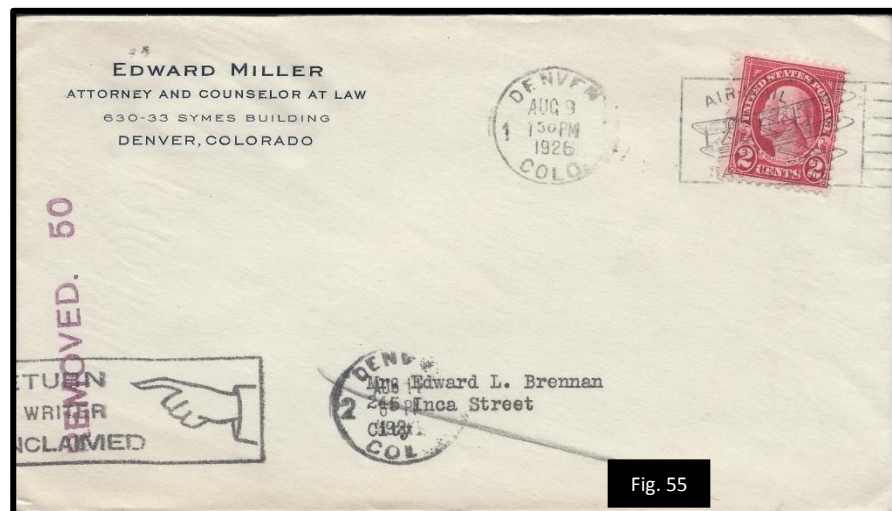
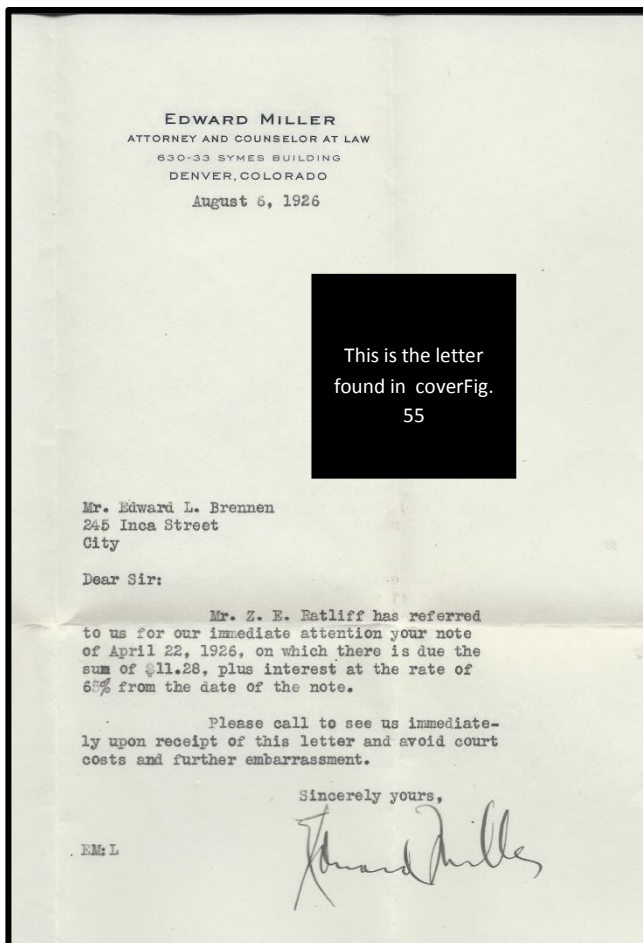


Fig. 55

This is the letter
found in coverFig.
55



Post cards are not covers. Postcards are collected as entires. Cut squares of post cards are considered not collectible. Postcards, and postal cards, will be the subject of a future article.

To new stamp collectors, the collecting of covers appears to be a very advanced and difficult area of collecting, not to mention difficult to put into albums or otherwise store. The vast majority of covers are thrown away by the recipients. The covers saved by collectors are mostly soaked in water, freeing the stamp from the envelope, so that the stamp alone can be placed into an album by the collector. A tiny, tiny percentage of all mail is saved as an entire, thus making it difficult for collectors to find certain stamps on

covers, creating a rarity and desirability that otherwise would not exist, and often does not exist at all in the exact same stamp in mint condition. Genuinely used stamps can thus, even when off cover, be more valuable to a collector than a mint stamp. The importance of a genuine and contemporaneous cancel can result in a tremendous difference in the value of a stamp. In those cases, it is necessary to have the stamp, even if still on a cover, to be authenticated by a competent expertiser. This is normally beyond the collecting level of beginners, yet beginners need to be made aware of the importance of stamps “on cover.”

Next time: Damaged stamps and what a kid cares about.

Comments? Write Robert W. Martin, P.O. Box 1809, Kihei, HI 96753 (Try to use a nice stamp on your letter.)

Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids is a 501 C (3) organization. All donations of \$10 or more are provided written receipts.

© 2015 Robert W. Martin