
May 1939 and cost 30¢ per half ounce, including additional surface transport as required, or air mail transport as available.

Simplification of international air mail letter rates occurred on November 1, 1946 when the world was divided into three destination areas. Mail destined for most of the Western Hemisphere was charged 10¢ per half ounce. Mail for Europe, Turkey, and Mediterranean Africa was charged 15¢ per half ounce, while mail for the rest of the world was charged 25¢, per half ounce. Air mail rates since 1946 have followed a modified zone approach. For example, effective July 1, 1961, rates were 13¢ for Central America and the Caribbean, 15¢ to South America and Europe, and 25¢ for the rest of the world. Then, effective April 3, 1988, a basic air mail letter could be sent anywhere in the world, except Canada and Mexico, for 45¢.

Classes of Mail

The growing diversity in the types of mail handled by the POD led to the Act of March 3, 1863, which divided mail into three classes. Carrying letters was regarded as the primary business of the Department, and therefore the most important. Letters became known as First Class mail, a designation they still carry today. **First Class** mail includes letters, **post cards**, **postal cards**, and **priority mail**. Any matter that is wholly or partly in writing, except book manuscripts and corrected proof sheets, is defined as First Class mail. Postal cards were introduced in May 1873 with a rate of 1¢. Post cards could also be mailed at this rate beginning July 1, 1898. Since then, postal cards and post cards have paid the same rate of postage, except from April 15, 1925 to July 1, 1928, when post cards were charged 2¢. The 1¢ rate for postal cards lasted three-quarters of a century, giving rise to the term “penny post card”. The rate was finally raised to 2¢ on January 1, 1952. The rate was raised fourteen more times by the end of the twentieth century.

Second Class mail was comprised of publications exclusively in print, issued at stated intervals, including newspapers and magazines. Most postage on Second Class mail was paid in cash or from a prepaid account, although **Newspaper and Periodical stamps** (ch. 24) were used from January 1, 1875 until June 30, 1898. As part of the classification reform enacted in 1996 Second Class mail was renamed Periodicals Class mail.

Prior to 1863 newspapers and magazines had designated rates. Once based on the number of sheets, in 1845 the criteria was changed to weight. By 1851, the rate basis was per copy, a response to growing variety in sizes and dimensions of newspapers and magazines. Distance was a factor until eliminated in 1852. The Act of 1852 eliminated any distinctions between magazines and newspapers, setting the stage for the introduction of Second Class mail in 1863.