

The War Rate: 1815-1816

Synopsis for: AmeriStamp Expo 2018

PURPOSE & SCOPE: This single-frame postal history exhibit demonstrates the postal rates and fees in effect from February 1, 1815 through March 30, 1816, commonly known as The War Rate. The exhibit shows the proper rates/fees, as intended, as well as misinterpreted and inappropriate rates/fees.

TREATMENT/PLAN:

- I: **Letter rates:** Basic single-sheet rate for each distance range, as well as the more challenging multiple rates.
- II: **Forwarding, Way letter fee:** Letters picked up along a postal carrier's route
- III: **Drop letter rate:** Both properly and improperly applied
- IV: **Ship rates:** Non-contract ship captain's fee, both properly and improperly applied, and port of delivery
- V: **Free mail:** Letters sent free of postage by authorized individuals/offices.
- VI: **Conclusion:** Last Day of rate

Key and important items are highlighted with green matt (versus a brown matt).

The "story line" appears in the exhibit in double-line boxes. This text describes the rates, and conditions affecting the rates.

Social, historical and other interesting facts about sender, recipient, etc. are presented as italicized text, and are included for the enjoyment of the viewer.

IMPORTANCE: This was the first surcharge on postal rates imposed by the United States government. Pressed to pay for the debt incurred by the war with England, Congress passed the Postal Act of December 23, 1814 imposing a 50% surcharge on rates set by the Postal Act of March 2, 1799. The surcharged rates would go into effect "from and after the first of February next."

KNOWLEDGE & RESEARCH: In addition to the material listed under References, I studied pertinent covers in other exhibits, read contemporary articles in The Hartford Courant, a read articles in other publications. Rates were meticulously researched to ensure that they were accurately presented in the exhibit. As I believe that history and postal history are inseparable, I researched the sender and addressee on covers shown, and included interesting facts (in the exhibit as italic text).

RARITY & CONDITION: The material in this exhibit is slightly over 200 years old. Considering this, the covers presented are in very good to excellent condition.

The large 50% surcharge on already high postal rates, rendering use of the official mails even more unpopular, in conjunction with the brief 14 month rate period, make for a relatively small population of covers. The War Rate is popular among postal history collectors, making it a challenge to acquire any but the most common rates.

While single-sheet rate letters are not all that difficult to obtain, this exhibit includes numerous multiple rate letters: double, triple, quadruple and even a quintuple rate cover (per sheets of paper versus ounce rate). Forwarded letters, where the surcharged rate was applied to each "leg" of the trip, are shown, as is a letter to Canada showing both U.S. and Canadian War Rates.

Shown are both the normal (1¢) drop rate as well as the incorrectly surcharged 1½¢ rate. Less than five, or so, of each are known to exist.

Likewise, in addition to showing properly charged ship letters (2¢), an improperly surcharged (3¢) ship cover is included, one of just 3-4 known to exist. A ship letter sent from England as a Withdrawn Ship Letter, a rate that

briefly overlapped with the War Rate is shown, as is a letter sent via packet to port of delivery at the surcharged 9¢ rate.

Also shown is a Way letter properly rated. Note: there is a purported incorrectly surcharged Way letter, but it has not gained acceptance by the philatelic community.

The exhibit begins with a first day of rate (February 1, 1815) letter and ends with a last day of rate (March 30, 1816) letter..

REFERENCES:

“1815 War Surcharge Rates” by Richard C. Frajola; The Chronicle of the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, Vol. 35, No. 3 (August 1983), pp. 158-167.

The text of the Postal Act of December 23, 1814 at <http://www.rfrajola.com/resources/1814Act.pdf>.

“The War of 1812 : The Richard Frajola Collection of Letters and Postal History” Net Price Sale at <http://www.rfrajola.com/catalogs/np1.pdf>