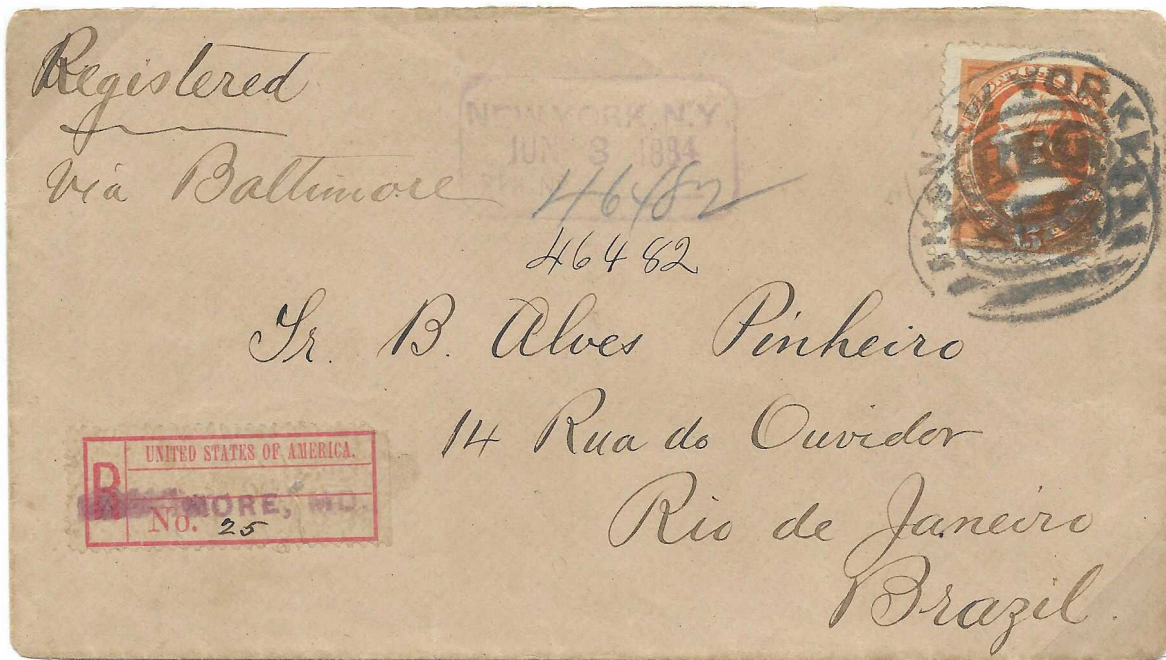


UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL REGISTRATION LABELS

This exhibit shows examples of the special exchange labels used by the U.S. Post Office Department on outgoing international registered mail (except for Canada) between 1883 and 1911. The idea was adopted by the U.P.U. at its 1882 convention in Paris, with a regulation stating that for international mail "Registered articles must bear a label or impression of a stamp, showing...the capital letter R in Roman text." Based on this, the Post Office Dept. ordered the printing of the special labels for designated offices authorized to exchange mail with foreign countries.

The exhibit is intended to show a label from as many different cities as possible, with 27 of the 28 recorded locations being represented (missing only Brownsville). Based on the latest census, label availability ranges from relatively common (especially New York, but also Boston, Cristobal CZ, Mobile and San Francisco, each of which handled a large quantity of foreign mail) to quite rare (Brownsville and Miami with but a single example reported for each; San Diego and Tampa with only two; and Douglas AZ, Key West and Naco AZ with just three). Some of the labels have the name of the city printed on them, while other places used generic labels with the name added by handstamp or in manuscript. For convenience in viewing, the order of the pages in the exhibit is alphabetic by city name, including the Possessions and the postal agency in China.



A very early use of a generic or utility label (without a printed city designation) on a registered letter sent from New York to Brazil in June 1884, with the label being affixed when the cover went via Baltimore in transit. Eight examples of Baltimore labels are recorded. In this case, the name was added with a one-line rubber stamp.

With the exception of a few temporary labels for Shanghai, all of the labels were produced at the Government Printing Office on white pelure paper and then gummed, perforated and numbered at the Bureau of Engraving & Printing. While these are clearly postal paper, they were not accountable. Thus, the official records are obviously incomplete and may be inaccurate in some respects. For example, the United States Official Postal Guide of December 1882 states that labels were supplied to 20 different offices, but examples have been reported from only 14 of these. In addition, however, labels have been recorded from fourteen other cities.

DOUGLAS, ARIZONA
EAGLE PASS, TEXAS

February 16, 1908
November 14, 1888



Douglas was an exchange point for registered mail with Mexico. However, it was not heavily used, so only three examples of its label have been recorded, all with handstamped city name. The one shown above is on a cover from Oakland to Sonora, Mexico.

Eagle Pass was a minor exchange point for Mexican mail. There are a total of seven examples of its label in the latest census. The one shown above is on a cover from Ontario to Salinas.

EL PASO, TX.
HAVANA, CUBA

September 18, 1909
June 6, 1900

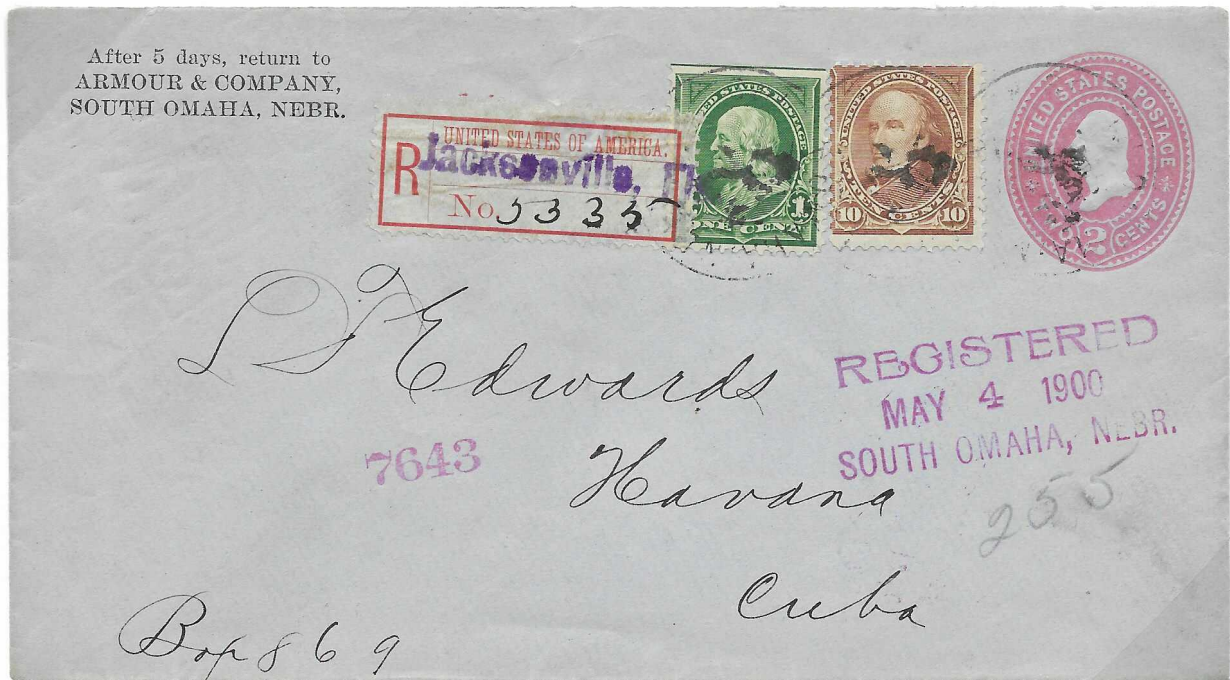


El Paso was the busiest exchange point in Texas, so that it provided nearly 50 examples of label covers, mostly with printed city name but including four handstamped examples. The cover above was sent from the Italian post office abroad in Constantinople to Guadalajara.

Locations in the U.S. possessions were also issued registry labels during the relevant period. However, covers with such uses are relatively elusive. For Havana during the period prior to the independence of Cuba, only 12 examples of labels have been recorded, including this one sent to Michigan.

HONOLULU, HAWAII
JACKSONVILLE, FLA.

July 17, 1905
May 8, 1900



For Honolulu, the census includes 9 examples, including the one above on a cover from Hawaii to New Zealand.

Florida also provided registry exchange offices which dealt with mail to and from Latin America. These were located in Jacksonville, Key West, Miami and Tampa. The amount of mail processed there must have been modest as the number of labels from these locations is very small. The latest census shows five examples from Jacksonville, including the cover above to Cuba.

KEY WEST, FLA.
LAREDO, TEX.

January 21, 1896
March 23, 1899



From Key West, only three labels are recorded, all with the city name in manuscript. The example shown here was sent by a doctor on the German warship S.M.S. *Storch* to Breslau.

Laredo was one of the exchange offices on the Texas-Mexico border. It was moderately active, resulting in a count of 28 label covers in the census, including the one above from Guatemala to Mexico.

MIAMI, FLA.
MOBILE, ALA.

March 24, 1904
March 17, 1904



This cover from New South Wales to the Bahamas with a Miami label is the latest discovery and still the only example of this use. It and Brownsville are the only two exchange offices for which only a single label has been reported.

Mobile was the most active of the Gulf ports in the exchange of registered mail, especially from Panama and the Canal Zone. As a result, there are more than 60 of its label covers in the current census, including this example from Panama to New York.

NACO, ARIZONA
NEW ORLEANS, LA.

September 18, 1907
June 25, 1900



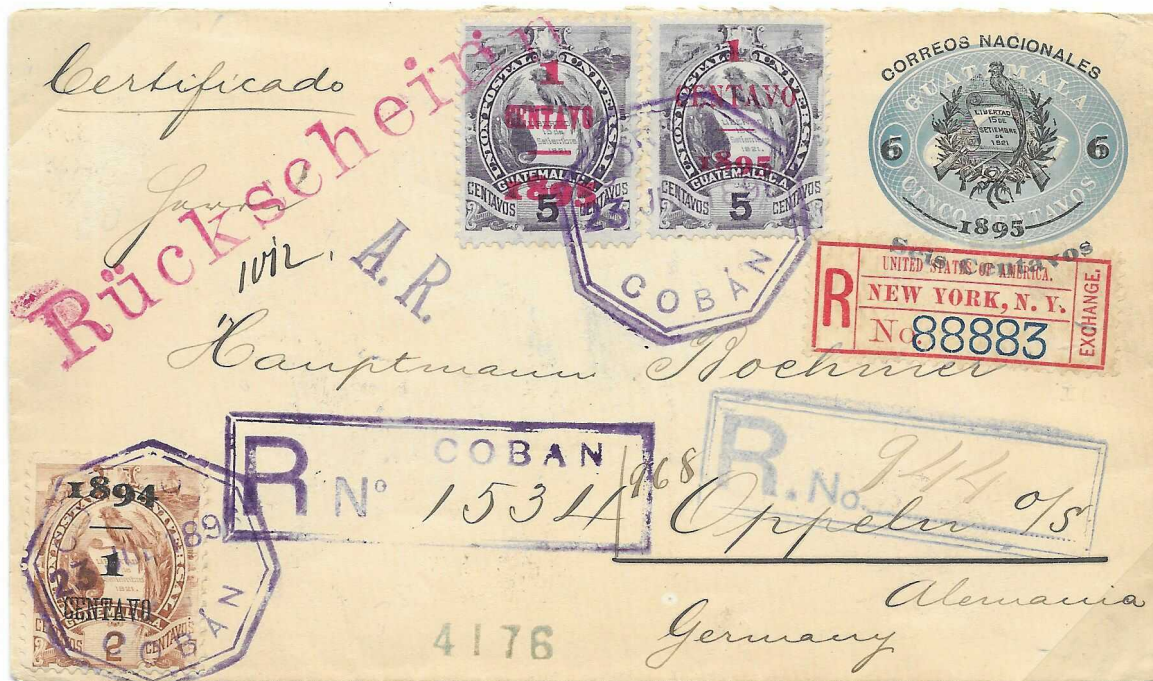
Naco was one of the three exchange offices in Arizona, along with Douglas and Nogales, none of which apparently processed a substantial quantity of mail. The labels from all of these locations are elusive, with just three from Naco in the census, including this attractive philatelically-created cover which was missent to Nogales before being forwarded to the addressee in Mexico.

Considering its importance as a port serving much of Latin America, it is a bit surprising that New Orleans contributes only 41 examples to the current census, including the one shown above on a cover from San Juan, P.R. to Guatemala.

NEW YORK, N.Y.

December 29, 1894

August 14, 1896



Not surprising considering that New York City was the most active post office in the United States, the supply of registered covers from the relevant period numbers literally in the thousands. The vast bulk of the labels used on this mail were inscribed "City" or "Exchange" on the right hand side. Theoretically, the former were intended to be applied to international registered letters originating within New York City, while the latter were intended for mail in transit through the metropolis. However, this rule was often ignored and the labels appear to have been used interchangeably. With a huge supply of such letters, it is possible to show unusually attractive ones, i.e. from Guatemala, or quite unusual uses, i.e. from Tonga.

NEW YORK, N.Y.

March 19, 1906
October 29, 1905



Within the huge supply of New York label covers are a couple of rarities. First, a small quantity of labels were provided without the "City" or "Exchange" on the right hand side. It is not known when or how many of these were printed, but it is apparent that they are very scarce. The example shown here is from 1906.

A second scarce variety was prepared for use on registered printed matter. It is inscribed "3rd or 4th Class" on the sides. Properly used examples mailing newspapers or business papers are very elusive. This type only exists for New York.

NOGALES, ARIZ.
PHILADELPHIA, PA

May 26, 1906
July 3, 1895



Nogales was the most active of the three exchange offices in Arizona, but it still accounts for only 15 examples of label covers, including this one from New South Wales to Mexico.

There are nineteen Philadelphia labels in the census, which is surprisingly modest considering the size of the city relative to some of the other exchange offices. The cover above was sent from New York City, where a generic label was applied, to the Danish West Indies.

ST. LOUIS, MO.
SAN ANTONIO, TX.

May 3, 1903
January 14, 1906



St. Louis presents an interesting mystery as to why this post office in the interior would be designated as an international exchange point. Nevertheless, it had labels and they were used on registered mail to Mexico, presumably sent down the Mississippi. There are 11 examples recorded, including this cover from Illinois to Guadalajara.

Registry labels from San Antonio are relatively scarce, with five examples having been recorded. One is shown here on a cover from Cambridge MA to Guadalajara.

SAN DIEGO, CAL.
SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

September 23, 1893
October 31, 1904



There was an active traffic in registered mail across the Pacific, mainly centered on San Francisco, which alone accounts for over 150 labels, the second largest number after New York. In contrast, San Diego was used relatively little as an exchange office, and has produced only two reported examples – the one here on a cover front from San Francisco to Colombia.

SAN JUAN, P.R.
SEATTLE, WASH.

April 12, 1907
April 9, 1907



San Juan handled some of the mail exchange with Latin America. There are eight recorded examples of its registry label, including this cover from Puerto Rico to Argentina.

Trans-Pacific mail is recorded from Seattle, of which the above example is a cover from Argentina to the Philippines. Twenty-eight covers bearing its label are recorded.

SHANGHAI, CHINA

December 4, 1899
July 19, 1902



Labels were also provided for the U.S. Postal Agency in Shanghai, China. Initially, a provisional label in black was obtained from a local printer and used pending the arrival of the normal supply in red from Washington. The census includes 18 examples in black and 29 in red, but any covers with Shanghai labels should be considered elusive.

TACOMA, WASH.
TAMPA, FLA.

August 18, 1898
December 9, 1901



Tacoma was a secondary Trans-Pacific mail route, with 14 recorded examples of covers with its registry label, including the above postal stationery envelope from Chile to Singapore.

Tampa labels are one of the most elusive of all, with only two covers recorded. In fact, one of these is in the collection of a historical society, so that only the single example above is in philatelic hands.