

# US Postal Laws & Regulations

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Dead letter office



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arising on questions touching foreign mail matter and for the remission of erroneous or excessive postage charges on matter for or from foreign countries; and the adjustment of the rates to be paid by foreign countries for transportation through the United States of their mails for other countries. Also the general correspondence with foreign countries, except that relating to the money-order and registry systems; the translation of letters and documents in foreign languages received by the Department; consideration of inquiries relating to our international postal service; the charges for United States customs duties made on articles received in the mails, whether from foreign postal officials or from private citizens at home or abroad; and application for the return to senders, or change of address, of articles contained in the mails exchanged with foreign countries; preparation of the blank forms for use in exchange of mails and their issue to postmasters on their requisition; preparation of monthly schedule of the sailings of mail steamers; the examination of the accounts of each vessel or line carrying mails from the United States, and preparation of recognitions by the Postmaster-General for payment of sums due for such service, and performance of such other duties as are from time to time required by the Postmaster-General.

#### VIII. THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE.

This office, under direction of the Superintendent thereof, is charged with the treatment of all unmailable and undelivered mail matter which is sent to it for disposition; the enforcement of the prompt sending of such matter according to regulations; the duty of noting and correcting errors of postmasters connected with the delivery or withholding of mail matter; the investigation by correspondence of complaints made with reference thereto; the verification and allowance of claims for credit by postmasters for postage-due stamps affixed to undelivered matter; the examination and forwarding or return of all letters which have failed of delivery; inspection and return to country of origin of undelivered foreign matter; recording and restoration to owners of letters and parcels which contain valuable inclosures; care and disposition of all money, negotiable paper, and other valuable articles found in undelivered matter, and correspondence, both foreign and domestic, relating to these subjects.

Its clerical force is distributed into six divisions, with duties assigned as follows:

*The Opening Division*, in charge of a principal clerk, receives all returns of unclaimed matter, keeps count of the same, verifies the returns from and keeps account of unpaid postage with free-delivery post-offi-

ces; records date and character of returns from other offices; notes and reports errors of treatment on the part of postmasters; assorts and delivers to the proper divisions all foreign and third and fourth class matter and such as requires special disposition; opens all unclaimed letters and distributes them to the appropriate divisions for final treatment according to the character of their contents. It also receives, records, and distributes all registered matter reaching the office.

*The Unmailable and Property Division*, under the supervision of a principal clerk, receives and verifies all returns of unmailable, hotel, and fictitious letters and parcels of third and fourth class matter; corrects and forwards misdirected and illegibly addressed letters; opens all such letters which cannot be otherwise treated; records the address, contents, and disposition of parcels of the third and fourth class and first class matter containing articles of merchandise; restores to owner such matter, as far as practicable; keeps, classifies, and prepares for sale such articles as are eventually unclaimed.

*The Money Division*, under the direction of a principal clerk, deals with all letters and parcels found to contain money and negotiable paper, properly records and returns them to postmasters for delivery to owner, the receipt for the same being preserved; files, subject to reclamation, such letters as cannot be delivered, after separating the money contents, an account of which is kept and the money delivered to the proper officer of the Department for deposit in the Treasury; receives and accounts likewise for money realized from the auction sale of undelivered articles.

*The Minor Division*, in charge of a principal clerk, is employed in recording and treating all letters which contain inclosures of minor value, not of a negotiable character, including letters which contain photographs and postage stamps, and the return of unmailable, hotel, and fictitious letters without inclosures.

*The Returning Division*, under the supervision of a principal clerk, receives from the Opening Division all ordinary letters without inclosures of value, counts and examines them, and returns such as can be returned to the writers, taking note of the number received, returned, transferred to other divisions, or destroyed.

*The Foreign Division*, directed by a principal clerk, receives, examines, and returns unopened to the respective countries all registered and ordinary mail-matter of foreign origin; keeps a record of all registered articles and parcels of obvious value; corrects and forwards misdirected foreign letters; verifies and keeps account of mail-matter of domestic origin returned as undeliverable by foreign countries, and makes such translations as may be necessary.

## PART II.

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### THE POSTAL SERVICE.

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#### TITLE II.

#### THE FISCAL SYSTEM OF THE POSTAL SERVICE.

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#### CHAPTER FOUR.

#### OF THE REVENUES.

**Sec. 148. The Revenue System.**—The revenues for the maintenance of the postal service are derived from:

- (1) Postages, box rents, and miscellaneous receipts by postmasters.
- (2) The net proceeds of the money-order business.
- (3) Transportation of mails for foreign countries.
- (4) Fines, penalties, and forfeitures imposed for violation of postal laws.
- (5) Dead letters.
- (6) Miscellaneous sources.
- (7) Appropriations by Congress, when necessary, from the General Treasury.

Revenues from all sources but the first named go direct into the General Treasury for the use of the Post-Office Department.

Mainly the revenues are collected by postmasters, and are applied in part to the expenditures of the service, under the law and special orders, by postmasters. All revenues not so expended are deposited by postmasters with their respective district depositaries, or with the Treasurer or some Assistant Treasurer of the United States, through whom the moneys are turned into the Treasury. No postmaster can otherwise turn over any moneys so as to receive credit therefor, except upon special written orders from the Postmaster-General. The De-

2. *As to the Office of Mailing and Address.*—A publication of the second class, claiming two or more offices of publication not in the same county, is entitled to pass free in neither county; but the publisher may elect which office he will regard as his office of publication, and notify the postmaster thereof, who must notify the other post-office of such selection.

The copy addressed to a subscriber actually residing within the county of printing and publication is entitled to pass free, though his post-office address be not within the county but in an adjoining county; but copies to subscribers not residing in the county are not free, although addressed to post-offices within it.

#### FREE MATTER IN FOREIGN MAILS.

Sec. 423. *Official Correspondence Only.*—Under the Universal Postal Union Convention official correspondence relative to the postal service and exchanged between the postal administrations of the several countries is alone exempt from payment of postage and admitted free.

The same is the rule under the separate conventions with the colonies of New Zealand, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, and Tasmania.

In the mails for Mexico and for Canada official correspondence, which is admissible free by domestic law and regulations, will also be transported and delivered free.

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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN.

### THE DEAD-LETTER OFFICE.

Sec. 424. *Establishment as Separate Office.*—The Dead-Letter Office, formerly a division of the office of the Third Assistant Postmaster-General, is now a separate office under the charge of a Superintendent. The general assignment of duties therein is given in section seven.

The object for which this office is maintained is—

1. To receive from the various post-offices all mail matter required to be forwarded thereto.
2. To assort the same, and to forward such of said matter as is properly deliverable to the person for whom it is intended.
3. To return to the senders all letters and mail matter of obvious value which cannot be delivered to the person to whom addressed.
4. To keep proper registry of all letters containing valuable inclosures which cannot be delivered to the party addressed nor to the writers.

5. To dispose of such undeliverable valuable matter according to the directions of the Postmaster-General.

6. To keep careful account of the amount realized in each case so that the same may be subject to reclamation as provided by law. (Section 427.)

7. To deliver to the Third Assistant Postmaster-General all moneys found in dead letters, which cannot, after due diligence, be delivered to the person addressed nor to the writer, and all moneys derived from the sale of other valuable inclosures, which have not been reclaimed and cannot be restored to addressees or senders, to be turned into the Treasury as part of the postal revenues.

8. To dispose of foreign dead letters in accordance with conventional stipulations governing the disposition of the same.

9. To destroy all matter which may come to the Dead-Letter Office, and cannot be restored to the owner, and which is without value and is liable to injure other matter with which it comes in contact, such as liquids, poisons, perishable articles; a suitable record being kept of the matter thus destroyed.

10. To destroy all obscene and lottery matter which has been sent in the mails in violation of law, and been intercepted and withdrawn therefrom and sent to this office.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL to establish the office and appoint the Superintendent is given in the acts of appropriation for the Department.

HIS AUTHORITY TO PRESCRIBE and regulate the treatment of the matter disposed of in this office, is, so far as not given in this chapter, found in sections 597 and 604.

#### TREATMENT OF MATTER IN THE DEAD-LETTER OFFICE.

Sec. 425. Examination of Returns.—On receipt of returns at the Dead-Letter Office they will be treated as follows:

1. Returns of unmailable matter will be promptly and carefully examined, and the matter therein compared with the entries on the accompanying list.

2. Such misdirected letters as can be corrected and forwarded to destination, and such as cannot be so corrected and forwarded, but can be returned to the sender, will be so treated.

3. Returns of hotel, fictitious, and other matter not forming part of the regular returns of unclaimed matter will be treated in the same manner as unmailable matter.

4. Returns of unclaimed matter from free-delivery offices must be compared with the accompanying dead-letter bills. If errors are found the originals and duplicates will be corrected; if no errors are found both will be indorsed correct and returned to the postmaster. A record



will be kept showing the number of pieces and character of matter sent in each return, the amount of credit allowed for postage-due stamps affixed to the matter comprising the return, and properly claimed for matter forwarded to other offices under the requirements of section five hundred and sixty.

5. Returns from other than free-delivery post-offices must be carefully examined and compared with the bills accompanying the same, and such account kept of the character of the matter and number of pieces sent as may be necessary for statistical report.

6. The dead-letter bills from other than free-delivery offices with the advertised lists accompanying the return will be filed and preserved for reference for six months.

7. All errors of treatment of mail matter by postmasters must be noted and proper action be taken to admonish the officer in fault, or otherwise as the case may require.

**Sec. 426. Opening Dead Letters.**—Such letters as cannot be forwarded to the addressee or returned to the owner without opening them to obtain the necessary information, must be opened only by the persons designated, and under the directions as to place, time, and manner prescribed by the Superintendent. Every letter containing a valuable inclosure must be indorsed with the name of the person opening it, and a brief memorandum of the character of the inclosure. When a letter is found to contain money, a record of the address of the letter and the amount must be immediately made by the clerk who opens it, and the record must be delivered at the close of each day to the clerk in charge of the opening division, with such letters and other letters containing inclosures of value.

**Sec. 427. Record of Valuable Dead Letters.**—Dead letters containing valuable inclosures shall be registered in the Dead-Letter Office; and when they cannot be delivered to the party addressed nor to the writer, the contents thereof shall be disposed of, and a careful account shall be kept of the amount realized in each case, which shall be subject to reclamation by either the party addressed or the sender for four years from the registry thereof; and all other letters of value or of importance to the party addressed or to the writer, and which cannot be returned to either, shall be disposed of as the Postmaster-General may direct. (R. S., § 3933.)

**Sec. 428. Money Letters.**—All mail matter containing money shall be entered in the register kept for that purpose, as required by the preceding section, stating the name of the person and post-office addressed, the name of the writer, the amount and description of the same, and the disposition thereof when finally made. Such mail matter must be

received and accounted for by each employé through whose hands it passes until final disposition.

Letters containing money which cannot be delivered to the person addressed, or returned to the writer, shall be held subject to reclamation three months; at the end of which time the money shall be separated therefrom and the amount entered upon the letter and the register. The money thus separated shall be promptly delivered to the Third Assistant Postmaster-General, whose receipt therefor will be filed, and the moneys deposited by him in the Treasury to the credit of the postal revenues.

**Sec. 429. Other Valuable Inclosures.**—All letters or other matter found to contain negotiable paper, notes, drafts, money orders, postal notes, &c.; also wills, deeds, or other valuable or important papers—and all personal photographs or pictures must be duly recorded before return to the sender. Such as cannot be returned to the owner must be properly filed for reclamation.

Letters containing postage stamps of more than one letter-rate value shall also be recorded before return to the sender; and such as cannot be restored to the owner shall be held for reclamation, and if unclaimed after a reasonable time the postage stamps shall be removed, an account kept of the value of the same, and the stamps destroyed under proper supervision.

**Sec. 430. Parcels of Third and Fourth Class Matter.**—A record shall be kept of the address and contents of parcels of third and fourth class matter and letters containing articles of merchandise. Every effort must be made to restore such articles to the sender or addressee; those that cannot be restored shall be filed to await reclamation for a period of two years from the date of recording (except unaddressed, which shall be held not less than six months). All articles of this character that remain unclaimed at the expiration of the time above prescribed shall be prepared for sale, in such a manner as not to destroy their identity, and sold at public auction by such person and under conditions as the Postmaster-General may from time to time direct. An account must be kept of the proceeds of such sale, and the amount realized delivered to the Third Assistant Postmaster-General for deposit in the United States Treasury in the same manner as money separated from dead letters. Parcels reaching the Dead-Letter Office containing medicine, perishable articles, liquids, or articles of a like character which are liable to injure other matter with which they come in contact, shall be destroyed as soon as it is ascertained that they cannot be restored to the owner; but a suitable record shall be kept of the articles destroyed.

Sec. 431. Letters without Valuable Inclosures.—All letters without valuable inclosures shall be returned to the writers when the address of the same can be ascertained, and no record kept of them except the number so returned. Letters which do not disclose the address of the writers, so that they can be returned, must be delivered to the Superintendent and Disbursing Clerk daily, to be sold as waste paper.

Sec. 432. Printed Matter.—Printed matter, obviously without value, sent to the Dead-Letter Office, must be delivered also to the Superintendent and Disbursing Clerk for disposal as waste paper.

Magazines and other periodicals, illustrated papers, and picture cards, which are suitable for that purpose, and not properly classed as merchandise, will be distributed to the various hospitals, asylums, and other charitable and reformatory institutions in the District of Columbia, as the Postmaster-General may direct.

Sec. 433. Obscene and Lottery Matter to be Destroyed.—All matter reaching the Dead-Letter Office, which is declared non-mailable by section three hundred and eighty, or is forbidden to be sent in the mails by section three hundred and seventy-nine, will, under the direction of the Superintendent, be immediately destroyed, unless it can be ascertained therefrom by whom the same was deposited in the mails, in which case the matter will be held and the fact reported to the Chief of Post-Office Inspectors; or, unless, on submission to him, the Postmaster-General shall direct it to be preserved as evidence or otherwise disposed of.

Sec. 434. Foreign Dead Letters.—The action of the Post-Office Department respecting foreign dead letters shall be subject to conventional stipulations with the respective foreign administrations. (R. S., § 401.)

Sec. 435. Disposal of Same.—Under the provisions of the Postal Union Convention (Article 21, Regulations of Detail and Order), and also under the postal arrangements with countries not included in the Postal Union, undelivered matter originating in foreign countries is required to be returned to the country of origin at the expiration of the period for keeping it required by the laws of the country of destination. Such matter received at the Dead-Letter Office must be carefully examined for the purpose of correcting the address and forwarding to its proper destination all matter that seems to have been misdirected or to be deficient in address. All other matter shall be promptly returned to the country of origin as required by the Postal Convention, a record being kept of the addresses of all registered articles and valuable parcels and the number of pieces so returned.

same to the Dead-Letter Office, but will notify the person mailing such package, whether he live within the delivery of the post-office or not, that some other means than the mail must be provided for its transportation. If the sender is not known, then the postmaster should notify the party addressed of the detention of the package, that it cannot be transmitted in the mails, and that he must provide some other means for its being forwarded at his own expense, outside the mails. Then, if such packages are not taken from his office by or for either the sender or addressee within thirty days, the postmaster should report the facts to the Superintendent of the Dead-Letter Office, and await instructions from him.

**Sec. 529. What Matter to be Sent to the Dead-Letter Office.**—The following unmailable matter will be sent from the office where it is deposited for mailing to the Dead-Letter Office, namely :

1. "*Held for postage*" matter which cannot be returned to sender and has not been prepaid by addressee, as required by section five hundred and twenty-five.

2. *Misdirected matter* which cannot be dispatched to the addressee nor returned to sender, as directed in section five hundred and twenty-six.

3. *Excess of weight and size of matter*, or those packages of domestic matter which exceed the weight limited by law.

4. *Obscene matter* declared non-mailable by section three hundred and eighty.

5. *Lottery circulars* forbidden to be sent in the mails by section three hundred and seventy-nine.

6. *Mutilated or damaged matter*, or that which when deposited in the post-office is, or before dispatch may become, so damaged that it cannot be forwarded to destination, and cannot be returned to the sender.

As to FOREIGN MATTER, see sections 434 and 619.

**Sec. 530. How to be Sent to Dead-Letter Office.**—Unmailable matter will be sent to the Dead-Letter Office from the office where offered for mailing, in connection with other unmailable and dead matter, at the periods prescribed in section six hundred and five.

#### AT MAILING OFFICES—WITHDRAWAL OF MAIL MATTER.

**Sec. 531. Before Dispatch.**—After mailable matter has been deposited in the post-office it cannot be withdrawn except by the writer thereof or sender, or, in case of a minor child, the parent or guardian duly authorized to control the correspondence of the writer. The utmost care must be taken to ascertain that the person desiring to withdraw the matter is the person entitled to do so. If necessary the postmaster should require the applicant to exhibit a written address in the same

in care of any such parties, to the named agent. When the mail is so delivered the responsibility of the postmaster ceases.

**Sec. 576. To Mail Carriers, to be Carried out of Mails.**—Mail matter of patrons of an office may, at their request, be delivered to the mail carrier, to be carried out of the mail and handed to them on his route before he passes another post-office.

**Sec. 577. Injunctions of Courts to be Obeyed.**—Where mail matter is claimed by different parties, and suit is instituted between them to determine their rights to it, and injunction is granted restraining either or all parties from receiving or the postmaster from making delivery to either or any party, he will obey the injunction and abide the decree of the court as to the disposal of the matter.

**Sec. 578. Letters "Opened through Mistake."**—Where a letter intended for one person is delivered to another of the same name and returned by him, the postmaster will reseal the letter in the presence of the person who opened it, and request him to write upon it the words "OPENED BY ME THROUGH MISTAKE," and sign his name; he will then replace the letter in the post-office. If the person who opens the letter is unable to sign his name, the postmaster will make the indorsement and have the person sign by "mark," in presence of a witness.

**Sec. 579. Of Second-Class Matter.**—A publisher may send a package of second-class matter to one address, and the addressee may call at the post-office, write addresses on single copies, and the postmaster may then deliver them; but the packages cannot be taken away from the post-office and returned again for delivery of the single copies or transmission in the mails, unless postage is prepaid anew. It is not the duty of the postmaster to open a package of papers intended for a club and write the several names of the subscribers thereon; but he may do so.

The liability of persons who take newspapers and periodicals coming to their address, out of a post-office, for the amount of the subscription thereto, is not determined by any postal law or regulation. The postmaster's duty is to deliver the matter on request, or, if unclaimed or refused, to dispose of it as required in sections five hundred and ninety-eight and five hundred and ninety-nine.

**Sec. 580. Of Valuable Letters from Dead-Letter Office, &c.**—When dead letters containing money or other valuable matter are sent from the Dead-Letter Office to a postmaster for delivery to the owners, he will make diligent effort to deliver them to the proper party. They are inclosed to him open to enable him to identify the owner or claimant. He and his clerks must maintain the strictest secrecy as to their contents; and under no circumstances can the postmaster, or any one through

whose hands such letters pass, be allowed to make any exchange for other funds of the money or matter therein contained.

If such letters containing money cannot be delivered, after holding them thirty days from date of receipt, the postmaster will indorse the reason for non-delivery on the circular which accompanies each, and return them to the Dead-Letter Office duly entered on one list, giving the Department letter, number, and book. This list must be sent in duplicate, and when verified one copy will be returned to the post-office. The package should be indorsed "DEAD REGISTERED MATTER FROM \_\_\_\_\_ [here add name of post-office], and be addressed "Dead-Letter Office, Washington, D. C."

Registered dead letters received containing money must be registered when returned to the Dead-Letter Office. Letters containing articles of value, not money, are not to be so registered on return unless they were received registered. No other kind of letters must be sent in the same package. The postmaster neglecting to register packages containing returned dead letters requiring registration will be held responsible for the contents if lost.

Dead letters containing money or other inclosures, sent from the Dead-Letter Office to a post-office for delivery, must never be forwarded to another post-office, but must be returned to the Dead-Letter Office with all information obtainable as to the whereabouts of the writer or owner; nor must they be retained longer than one month, unless the Superintendent of the Dead-Letter Office specially so direct.

Dead letters without valuable inclosures, when returned from the Dead-Letter Office direct to writers, not under cover to postmasters, may be forwarded to another post-office, when necessary, for delivery.

**Sec. 581. Unmailable Matter; when to be Delivered.**—If any matter excluded from the mails by the preceding section [section 368] of this act except that declared non-mailable by section thirty-eight hundred and ninety-three of the Revised Statutes as amended [380], shall, by inadvertence, reach the office of destination, the same shall be delivered in accordance with its address: *Provided*, That the party addressed shall furnish the name and address of the sender to the postmaster at the office of delivery, who shall immediately report the facts to the Postmaster-General. If the person addressed refuse to give the required information, the postmaster shall hold the package subject to the order of the Postmaster-General. All matter declared non-mailable by section thirty-eight hundred and ninety-three of the Revised Statutes as amended, which shall reach the office of delivery, shall be held by the postmaster at said office subject to the order of the Postmaster-General. (Act of March 3, 1879, § 21, 20 Stats., 360.)

postage be furnished by the sender, the postmaster at the returning office must affix to the matter returned the necessary stamps and cancel them, the same as if the matter had been originally mailed at his office.

UNCLAIMED SECOND-CLASS AND PRINTED MATTER.

**Sec. 597. Disposal of, Authorized.**—The Postmaster-General may provide, by regulations for disposing of printed and mailable matter which may remain in any post-office, or in the Department, not called for by the party addressed; but if the publisher of any refused or uncalled-for newspaper or other periodical shall pay the postage due thereon, such newspaper or other periodical shall be excepted from the operation of such regulations. (R. S., § 4061.)

**Sec. 598. Regulation as to Disposal.**—Domestic printed matter obviously without value, including printed postal cards, must not be sent to the Dead-Letter Office when unclaimed, except that upon which postage is due, but must be disposed of as waste paper, and the proceeds taken up and accounted for as other postal revenue. (See section 484.)

REFUSED SECOND-CLASS MATTER.

**Sec. 599. Publisher to be Notified.**—Postmasters shall notify the publisher of any newspaper, or other periodical, when any subscriber shall refuse to take the same from the office, or neglect to call for it for the period of one month. (R. S., § 3885.)

**Sec. 600. Notice; when and how Given.**—Notice will be given when a newspaper or periodical is uncalled for, or refused, or when the subscriber changes his address without notifying the publisher or ordering his matter forwarded, upon the blank form furnished for that purpose, which can be procured by application to the First Assistant Postmaster-General, Division of Post-Office Supplies. If the first notification be disregarded, a second may be sent, calling attention also to the fact of previous notice. The notice is to be given to publishers in Canada and Mexico as well as this country.

**Sec. 601. Disposal of Refused Second-Class Matter.**—After notification has been given, as required in the previous section, the postmaster will hold the refused matter for thirty days, after which the same and all copies subsequently arriving should be placed with the waste paper.

AT RECEIVING OFFICES—MATTER TO BE SENT TO THE DEAD-LETTER OFFICE.

**Sec. 602. Dead Matter.**—Dead matter, or such as is to be sent to the Dead-Letter Office from the office of address, may, for convenience, be classified as follows:

1. *Unclaimed.*—That which is not called for and cannot be delivered nor returned as provided in sections five hundred and ninety-two and

the three following, other than second-class matter, to be treated as waste paper, as directed in section five hundred and ninety-eight.

2. *Refused*.—That which for any reason the parties addressed decline to receive, other than second-class matter and printed matter, treated as waste paper, as directed in section six hundred and one.

3. *Fictitious*.—That which is addressed to fictitious or assumed names or to initials, or in any manner so that the person or persons for whom it is intended cannot be identified.

4. *Illegible*.—That which having reached the office of destination is so illegibly or imperfectly addressed that it cannot be ascertained for whom it was intended.

5. *Hotel*.—That which has been delivered at a hotel or public institution, or to a consul, agent, or other public officer, or individual who is in the habit of receiving mail for transient persons, and which has been returned to the post-office from such hotel, &c., as unclaimed.

6. *Obscene*.—That which has reached the office of delivery, but of which delivery is forbidden by section five hundred and eighty-one.

7. *Lottery*.—Circulars concerning lotteries, gift-concerts, or similar enterprises offering prizes, which are unmailable by section three hundred and seventy-nine.

**Sec. 603. Reason for Non-Delivery to be Shown on Matter.**—Upon every undelivered article of mail matter must appear the reason for non-delivery, such as UNKNOWN, REFUSED, REMOVED, FIRM DISSOLVED, DECEASED, IN DISPUTE, &c., as such indication is often of value to the writer. When no other reason can be ascertained, the matter will be indorsed UNCLAIMED, care being taken in indorsing or stamping not to deface or to obscure the original address or postmark.

**Sec. 604. Authority of Postmaster-General as to Dead Matter.**—The Postmaster-General may regulate the period during which undelivered letters shall remain in any post-office, and when they shall be returned to the Dead-Letter Office; and he may make regulations for their return from the Dead-Letter Office to the writers, when they cannot be delivered to the parties addressed. (R. S., § 3936.)

**MANNER, ETC., OF MAKING RETURN TO THE DEAD-LETTER OFFICE.**

**Sec. 605. Time of Return of Unclaimed Matter.**—Advertised matter will be held at fourth-class offices for one month and at all other offices for two weeks after date of advertisement, and then, if undelivered, will be sent to the Dead-Letter Office in regular periodical returns, to be made as follows, viz:

At fourth-class post-offices, once a month.

At other post-offices, once a week.



Sec. 306. Notice, when no Dead Matter to be Sent.—When it happens that there is no matter of any kind to be sent to the Dead-Letter Office at the proper time for making the return of such matter, a statement (Form 1523) properly headed and dated, and the words **NO MATTER TO SEND** noted thereon, should be sent to the Dead-Letter Office.

Sec. 307. Returns of Unclaimed Matter; how Made up and Transmitted.—In making up returns to be sent to the Dead-Letter Office the following directions will be observed, namely:

1. Every piece of mail-matter should be postmarked by stamp or hand with the name of the post-office and the date of sending to the Dead-Letter Office.

2. Each class of matter should be arranged separately and duly entered on the dead-letter bill (Form 1523) under its proper heading.

3. The bill and the copy of the advertised list must be sent with every return, not tied outside or inclosed in a separate envelope.

4. The advertised list so sent should give the name of the post-office, State, and date of advertising.

5. All matter delivered or otherwise disposed of since advertising should be indicated by a mark drawn through the name on the list.

6. A manuscript list of each piece of third-class matter of obvious value, and of all fourth-class matter, whether advertised or not, should be sent with such matter. For convenience this list may be made on a blank (Form 1522) for unmailable, changing the word **UNMAILABLE** to **UNCLAIMED**.

7. The whole return should be wrapped and securely tied in one parcel and plainly addressed, **DEAD-LETTER OFFICE, WASHINGTON, D. C.** It should also be indorsed, "**RETURN OF UNCLAIMED MATTER FROM**" (here add name of post-office). A penalty envelope may be used for the address label, but must be fastened securely to the parcel. If there be third or fourth class matter to accompany the return in too great quantity to tie the whole in one parcel, a pouch must be used so that all the matter will be received together.

8. Hotel and fictitious matter must be entered on a list (Form 1522½) and sent separately from other unclaimed matter.

9. Post-offices of the fourth class will use dead-letter bills (Form 1523) printed on white paper. Free-delivery offices will use the special form printed for them on blue paper and will register their returns. All other offices will use forms provided for them printed on yellow paper.

Sec. 308. Returns of Unmailable Matter; when Made.—Unmailable matter must not be held over to be advertised. Post-offices of the first class must make daily, and all other post-offices weekly, returns to the Dead-Letter Office of all unmailable matter deposited therein for mail-

ing (see section 530), or received through the mails, for which other treatment is not specially provided, on hand at the time of return.

**Sec. 609. Returns of Unmailable Matter; how Made up and Transmitted.—**

1. Each return of unmailable matter must be accompanied by a list made on the proper form (No. 1522) for such matter, stating as nearly as possible the full name and address of each article sent.

2. First-class matter should be entered on a list separate from third and fourth class matter.

3. Should be further separated into the classes named in section three hundred and seventy-eight, and the "Held for postage" matter subdivided into "Drop" and "Mail" letters.

4. Each class and subdivision must be arranged and entered on the list alphabetically, and every piece and its entry must be numbered to correspond. Where third and fourth class matter is without address, the pieces should be numbered and a description of each article given. But postal cards and miscellaneous printed matter of no obvious value need be entered only by a memorandum giving the number of the pieces,

5. Every piece of matter so sent must have plainly written or stamped upon it the specific reason of its being sent, as unmailable, stating whether "held for postage," "coin," "jewelry," "excess of weight or size," "misdirected," &c., and must also bear the name of the post-office, and the date on which it was sent to the Dead-Letter Office, care being taken in indorsing or stamping not to deface the original postmark or address.

6. Postmasters receiving matter postmarked and indorsed "DEFICIENCY IN ADDRESS SUPPLIED," &c., and forwarded in accordance with section five hundred and sixty-three, which cannot be delivered, must, after the expiration of seven days from receipt, send the same to the Dead-Letter Office as unmailable.

7. The returns of unmailable matter must be securely fastened in one package, with the list inclosed, addressed "DEAD-LETTER OFFICE, WASHINGTON, D. C.," and plainly indorsed, "RETURN OF UNMAILABLE MATTER FROM" (here add the name of the post-office). All matter should be included in the same return, unless the quantity of third and fourth class matter be too large to be conveniently made into one package, in which case the first-class matter should be sent in one parcel and the third and fourth in another, each with its proper list.

8. Duplicates of all lists and statements must be retained by postmasters for reference in making searches for missing matter.

9. Unmailable matter and the returns thereof must not be sent with returns of ordinary unclaimed matter.

FOR RETURN OF LETTERS RECEIVED FROM DEAD-LETTER OFFICE, see section 580.