

US Postal Laws & Regulations

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Misdirected

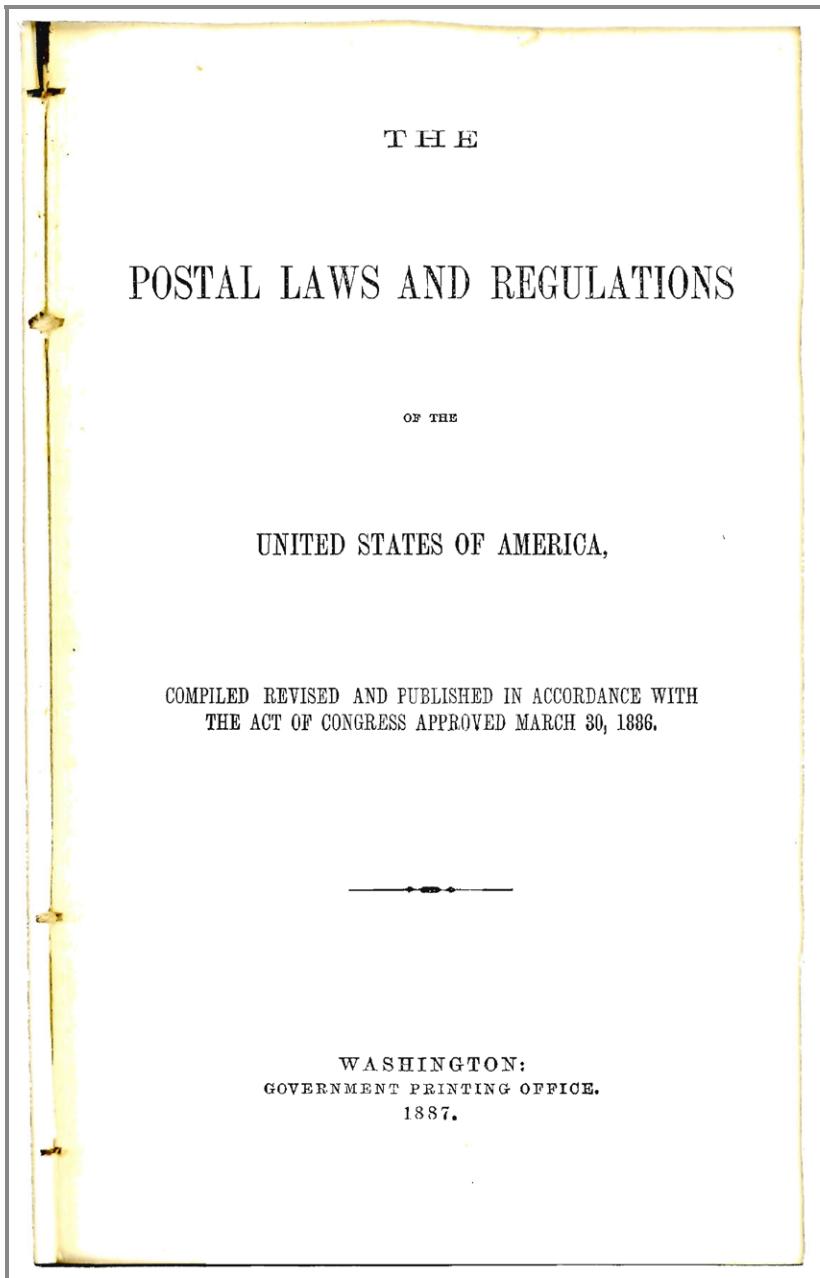


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by section three hundred and seventy-one, it is subject to postage at letter, or first-class, rates, and will be treated as a letter; that is, if one full rate, two cents, has been paid, it will be rated up with the deficient postage at letter rates; if less than one full rate has been paid, it will be treated as prescribed in section five hundred and twenty-five.

UNMAILABLE MATTER.

Sec. 378. Definition and Classification.—Unmailable matter includes all matter which is by law, regulation, or treaty stipulation prohibited from being transmitted in the mails; or which, by reason of illegible, incorrect, or insufficient address, it is found impossible to forward to destination. For convenience it is divided into the following classes:

1. *Held for postage*: That matter which is insufficiently prepaid to entitle it to be forwarded in the mail. This includes all domestic matter of the first class which is not prepaid at least one full rate of postage, and all other domestic matter not fully prepaid; and all insufficiently prepaid matter addressed to foreign countries on which prepayment is necessary.

2. *Misdirected*: That matter which is without address or so incorrectly, insufficiently, or illegibly addressed that it cannot be forwarded to its destination.

3. *Destructive matter*: That which, from its harmful nature, is forbidden to be in the mails. (See section 368.)

4. *Coin and jewelry*: That matter, to wit, coins, jewelry, or precious articles, which is by treaty stipulation prohibited from being sent in the mails to certain foreign countries. (See section 401.)

5. *Obscene matter*: That matter which is by sections three hundred and eighty declared unmailable and prohibited from being sent in the mails.

6. *Lottery*: That matter which is by section three hundred and seventy-nine prohibited from being sent in the mails.

7. *Mutilated*: That matter which is recovered from wrecked or burned mail cars or vessels, or which has been so damaged by any other means that it cannot be forwarded to its destination. This includes all matter of value found loose in the mails, separated from the wrapper, label, or envelope containing the address, so that the destination cannot be known; and all matter recovered from depredations on the mails, which the Postmaster-General is required to restore to the owners when ownership is proved. (Section 151.)

8. *Excess of weight and size*: Those packages of domestic third and fourth class matter weighing more than four pounds each, except single books exceeding that weight, and of foreign matter which are in ex-

AT MAILING OFFICES—UNMAILABLE MATTER.

Sec. 523. Unpaid Letters.—All domestic letters deposited in any post-office for mailing, on which the postage is wholly unpaid or paid less than one full rate as required by law, except letters lawfully free, and duly certified letters of soldiers, sailors, and marines in the service of the United States, shall be sent by the postmaster to the Dead-Letter Office in Washington. (R. S., first part of § 3937.) (See section 326.)

Sec. 524. Weight of Matter.—When matter is received for mailing, its weight should be ascertained and postage thereon rated up. The weight at time of mailing determines the postage, as mail matter, from various causes, frequently diminishes in weight during transit. If it be insufficiently paid first-class matter and one full rate shall have been paid, the postmaster will stamp the amount of postage due on it and dispatch the same. For treatment of other deficient matter, see next section.

Sec. 525. Treatment of Unpaid Matter Deposited for Mailing.—When a letter wholly unpaid or prepaid at less than one full rate (two cents), or any second or third class matter of obvious value, such as magazines, pictorials, music, pictures, photographs, books, or pamphlets likely to be of use or value to the addressee, or any parcel of fourth-class matter, not fully prepaid but otherwise mailable, shall be deposited in any post-office, it will be treated as herein directed, namely:

1. It must be postmarked with date of receipt, rated up, and amount of deficient postage noted thereon.

2. If it bear the card or address of the sender, or he be known to, or conveniently ascertainable by, the postmaster, the letter or package will at once be returned to him for proper postage, if he be within the delivery of the office.

3. If the sender thereupon pays the postage the stamps will be affixed, if not done by him, and the matter dispatched.

4. If the sender be not known or conveniently ascertainable, the matter on receipt will be indorsed "HELD FOR POSTAGE," the addressee notified by next mail, by an official postal card (Form 1543) or otherwise, of the detention and amount of postage required, and requested to remit the same.

5. It should then be held awaiting reply, not longer than two weeks. If within that time the required postage is received from the addressee the required amount of stamps will be affixed to the matter so as to cover a portion of the words, "HELD FOR POSTAGE," and the matter dispatched.

6. If the sender shall pay the postage, after dispatch of notice to ad-

no through pouches to be dispatched by mail trains unless specially instructed to do so.

Sec. 543. Facing Slips to be Used.—Facing slips, bearing postmark with date and time of close or dispatch, and name of person making up the same, must be placed upon each package of letters or circulars, and in each pouch or canvas sack of newspapers, or on the label holder, if any, attached thereto. For form of facing slip, see section 994.

Sec. 544. No Hooks on Mail Bags.—The use of hooks in handling mail bags is forbidden.

Sec. 545. Delivery of Mail Matter on Mail Cars by Postmasters.—Postmasters are required to dispatch mail to railway post-offices in the lock pouches provided for that purpose, except in the case of a few late letters or postal cards, which they may deliver in person or by a sworn assistant after the postmark of the mailing office has been impressed thereon and the stamps canceled. Such postmarked and canceled letters and postal cards must not be received by the postal clerk from a mail-messenger nor from the public, as after the mail is once deposited in a post-office it cannot again come into the hands of the public until its final delivery. (See sections 532 and 979.)

AT OFFICES IN TRANSIT.

Sec. 546. Missent or Unmailable Matter Inadvertently Sent and Misdirected Matter.—Misdirected, destructive, or manifestly obscene matter, which should not have been, but through inadvertence may have been, dispatched from the post-office of mailing, should be detained and withdrawn from the mails by any postmaster into whose hands the same may come in transit. But other matter which should have been detained at the office of mailing as "held for postage," "excess of weight or size," "coin," or "lottery" (see section 379), must not be stopped in transit.

Misdirected matter of the first class, if it bear the card or request of the sender, should be withdrawn and returned to him with the words written or stamped thereon, "RETURNED FOR BETTER DIRECTION." (See section 526.)

Missent matter, or that which is plainly addressed, but sent in the wrong direction, should, when discovered, be placed in the first mail going in the proper direction.

Sec. 547. Mail Stopping Over Night.—When the mail stops over night where there is a post-office, it must be kept in the post-office, except at points where transfer clerks are on duty during the night in charge of such mail, or where otherwise ordered by the Department.

For time allowed in opening mail, see section 510.