

America's Archives

Often enchanting stories of historic documents and artifacts (including sometimes ones that are postally related)—and how things that may have once seemed rather ordinary can turn out to be national treasures. On other occasions, they immediately become artifacts of history the minute they were created.

Documents and Stamps

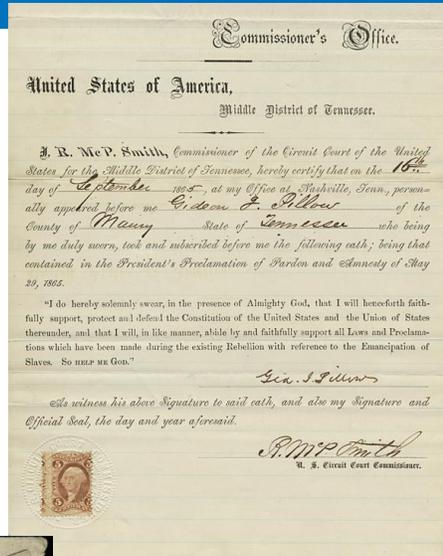
Sometimes a stamp (whether a revenue or postage stamp) appears on a piece of paper and, consequently, adds value, human interest and history to the document. On countless occasions, we have encountered material (like the examples shown on this page) in the possession of families who wish to know if their family papers contain anything of value. In many cases, they do! Some of them are so important they end up in museums.



As long as we're discussing the Confederacy in the Civil War, one must remember that there were terrible paper shortages in the South during that conflict. People made envelopes out of all sorts of things—including the one shown above made from an astrology chart by someone in Arkansas.

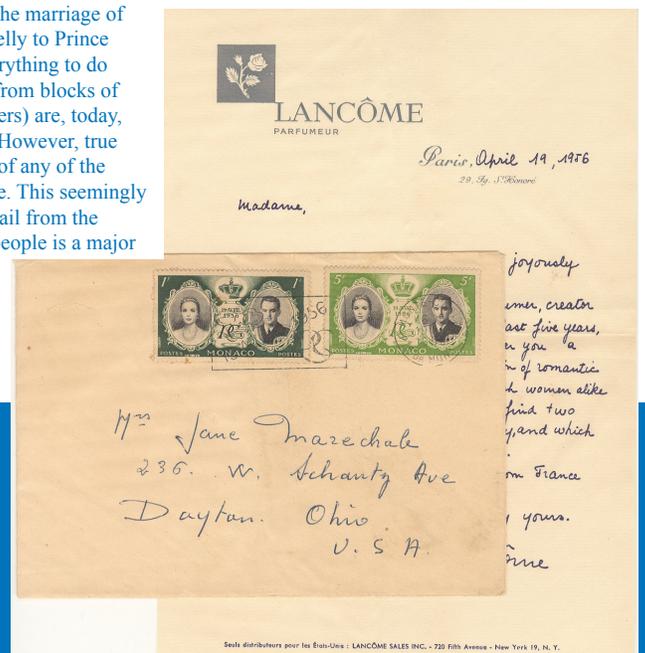


During the period just prior to (and during) World War II, the United States Post Office Department's delivery of mail by air was still in its infancy. Because this form of mail was considered so special, many businesses designed and printed very colorful and imaginative envelopes to commemorate this service—many such envelopes being used on regular airmail routes. Today, covers like the one shown above are highly sought after by collectors. They are generally always found in old correspondences dating back to the war era.



In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, paroled Confederate soldiers of all ranks were required to complete a written oath and swear allegiance to the federal government. Filed among these papers is the loyalty oath of Brigadier-General Gideon J. Pillow, remembered for his ill-fated command of Fort Donelson, Tennessee, where the Union claimed its first major victory of the war. (National Archives)

In 1956, Monaco issued a set of stamps to honor the marriage of movie star Grace Kelly to Prince Rainier. Almost everything to do with these stamps (from blocks of four to first day covers) are, today, rather inexpensive. However, true commercial usages of any of the stamps are quite rare. This seemingly common piece of mail from the Lancome perfume people is a major find and worth well over \$100!



Fred Schmitt's

PERSPECTIVE

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During World War II, the military, the press and the general public used every opportunity under the sun to find ways to disparage the enemy (the Japanese and the Germans—not so much the Italians, who left the war in 1943). Some of these methods were very negative, such as the cartoon or a Japanese soldier in the "Free" handstamp on this cover. In this case, someone from the homefront made these handstamps and made them available to soldiers and sailors before such handstamping was disallowed.

Like many philatelic items we find in some of the correspondences we have bought over the past half century, this piece of soldier's mail draws interest from not only stamp and cover collectors, but people who collect general World War II memorabilia.

What's the lesson to be learned from this colorful little item? We think it is this: be careful what you throw out, especially if it's ever gone through the mails and may be 50 or more years old. In many cases, more than one type of collector is interested in a particular item. Just as a Japanese sword may be of interest to an edged weapons collector AND a WW II memorabilia hunter, your correspondence may contain items of more than passing historical and monetary value!

We buy this material. **Call us!**