

THE DIGITIZED

US POSTAL BULLETINS and PL&Rs

1880 - 2013

United States OFFICIAL POSTAL GUIDE

An Introduction to the Organization of the
Publication, and a Description of the Postal
Bulletin Consortium Digital Library of the
issues.

1874 - 1955

By
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community at no charge by the Postal Bulletin Consortium,
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[[http://www.uspostalbulletins.com/About the US PBC.aspx](http://www.uspostalbulletins.com/About_the_US_PBC.aspx)]

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Preface

This monograph describes a privately constructed version of the original PDF files created by the **Postal Bulletin Consortium** as part of their initial project to bring the USPOD **Official Postal Guides** into their online database of official USPOD publications. When technical issues made it impossible to complete the original project in the intended format, Tony Wawrukiewicz generously offered me a copy of the raw PDF data files he had developed to the postal history community for their use at no cost, if I would provide the media (a 64GB flash drive) and return postage.

As one of the original recipients of these PDF files, I have used them in my own research for several years, which nicely supplemented my own library of the physical books. Like most postal historians, I have my own view of what makes a useful resource, and over time, I began to see ways to reorganize and enhance the original PDF files into something which I viewed to be more useful to me, and possibly a package that would be easier for the less experienced postal historian, unfamiliar with these publications, to use in his own research.

The package of PDF files of the **Official Postal Bulletin** described in this monograph was compiled by me on an unofficial basis, and without significant input from Tony or anyone else. I did request permission to include the **Postal Bulletin Consortium** banner and logo on the title page. All of the files editing, PDF editing and manipulation, was performed by the writer during the winter of 2019, requiring several 100 man hours.

Upon completion, a complete set of the final PDF files were given to Tony for his use and subsequent integration into the PBC website if a practical implementation can be designed and implemented. In addition, with concurrence of Tony, a flash drive with a full set of the revised PDF files was provided to Jenny Lynch, the current USPS Historian, for inclusion in the USPS Library, and another set of the PDF files were sent to Scott Tiffney, Librarian at the American Philatelic Research Library.

It is hoped that eventually a host website sponsor can be found to make this set of files available for free downloading, either as part of the **Postal Bulletin Consortium**, or some other philatelic organization. In the interim, these files can be distributed freely by the **Postal Bulletin Consortium**, or a set of files can be obtained from me by providing me with a 64 GB flash drive and sufficient postage for its return.

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Introduction to the Postal Bulletin Consortium

The **Postal Bulletin Consortium** was established by Anthony S. “Tony” Wawrukiewicz, in 2013, as a vehicle to bring a high quality digital version of the United States Post Office Department’s publication **The Daily Postal Bulletin** to the philatelic community in an on-line, easy to access and search format. Working with Michael Eastick, an Australian stamp dealer and software developer, the original website was placed online in that year. It may be found at:

<http://www.uspostalbulletins.com/>

This website is presently supported and hosted as part of the American Philatelic Research Library (APRL) but still maintained by Michael Eastick.

The **Daily Postal Bulletin** was published on a daily basis (six days a week) well into the 20th century, and continues on a bi-weekly publication schedule today. It was distributed to every post office and postmaster, but few libraries maintained copies of these newspaper-like, oversized sheets. The US Postal Service Library had prepared a series of microfilm copies of their holdings back in the 1970s, which were made available to the collector community, and were the only practical way to research this material. A copy of this microfilm set was placed with the American Philatelic Research Library, and many collectors borrowed those and some created their own copies (the writer here was one of those).

The original **Postal Bulletin Consortium** website included access to all issues of the **Daily Postal Bulletin (PB)**, and its successors (the name changed with some regularity, as did the frequency of publication, beginning with March 1880 and continuing up until the end of 2013. It was later extended to include issues through the end of 2016. The US Postal Service Library provided a master copy of their microfilm to insure that the best quality microfilm images were available for the digitizing step, which was done by the staff at the APRL. The resulting files were then processed by an optical character reader (OCR) software package to insure that they were searchable.

Also in 2016, the website was expanded to offer similar search and access to many of the editions of the issues of the USPDO **Postal Laws & Instructions** and **Postal Laws & Regulations, (or PL&Rs)** published between 1798 and 1948. Again, the US Postal Service Library provided an original microfilm of the volumes in their library and the same processing steps were performed by the APRL staff.

A third project was planned to provide an on-line searchable version of the USPOD **Official Postal Guide (PG)**, which was initially published in 1874 and continued in regular publication through the end of 1955. This publication was published regularly in both the monthly and quarterly frequency formats, and was also provided to every post office and postmaster. For most years, there was an annual volume published in January or July, followed by eleven monthly issues, which summarized the significant features which had appeared in the **Daily Postal Bulletin**. A more complete description will be provided in the following sections.

It probably should be noted at this point that the original versions of the **Postal Guides**, both the annual edition and monthly supplements, published between 1874 and 1895 also included many pages of commercial advertising. Many of the advertisements were for products that a postmaster might find useful in his work: various supplies, postmark devices, etc., while others primarily were directed at postmaster to become representatives for the sale of products to enhance the postmaster's income.

However, these advertisements were discontinued in the 1896 issues, and never returned. It further appears that when the US Postal Service Library decided to bind their copies of the **Postal Guide**, they removed most these advertisements from their copies before binding, so that the digitized copies in this series of publications do not include them except in the rare instances where they were present on the opposite side of a page with post office information. This is unfortunate in that these advertisements often provided an insight into the commercial side of products that could be purchased and used in a small post office.

Again, a master microfilm was obtained from the US Postal Service Library, prepared in the past from the bound volumes in their library. And as before, it was digitized by staff at the APRL for use in the project. Unfortunately, the digitization efforts to create a fully searchable set of files were not as successful for this publication as for the previous efforts with the **PB** and **PL&Rs**.

This was an inconvenience, but not a disaster. Over the years, the Google Books Project had digitized and prepared an OCR-searchable version of many of the annual volumes of this **Postal Guide**, and most issues published through 1922 were readily available in their digital library. The viewable Google Books digital library holdings ended with 1922, as their operational philosophy regarding copyright protection essentially treated every publication dated after 1922 as under US copyright protections, regardless of source. Thus while these are official US government publications, and are not subject to copyright, they are simply not available to the public through the Google Books digital library. However, those editions of the PG which are

available in the Google Books digital library are readily available, fully searchable, and may be freely downloaded by the collector community.

In an interesting turn of events, many of these same digitized volumes in the Google Books digital library were also transferred to the Hathi Trust digital library, and were also made available there. This included many of the editions of the **Postal Guide** published between 1923 and 1955, as the Hathi Trust digital library had a different and more reasonable operating philosophy regarding the copyright protection of government publications. Unfortunately, since Hathi Trust was a private, educational consortium, they also had a different attitude on the downloading of materials in their library. Only members of their Hathi Trust consortium were allowed to freely download any publications in its entirety. The private user has the ability to access and search most of their digital publications, but could only download individual pages, which makes it impractical for the average postal history user to maintain a private copy of these later editions of the **PG**.

More unfortunately, since few libraries had retained copies of the various monthly and quarterly issues of the **PG**, virtually none of these supplementary issues were digitized and placed in either the Google Books or Hathi Trust digital libraries.

In my personal usage of these PDF files, I encountered three impediments in the straightforward use of the PDF files as originally distributed on the flash drive:

- (1) Because most years were represented by one annual volume and eleven monthly supplements, there were over 1200 individual PDF files on the original flash drive. Looking for a particular piece of information, even when the year was known, often involved the researcher having to access twelve different files.
- (2) The files for each set of files for a year or published volume were not uniformly named nor uniformly organized in files on the flash drive with consistent names.
- (3) The fact that the pages had been scanned in a two-up page format made it difficult to scroll through the pages at a magnification level that was easy to read.

After some thought, I determined that it would be both feasible and practical to reorganize most of the annual issues of the **PG** into two PDF files: one which consisted only of the large annual volume published in January or July, and a second file which included all the monthly or supplementary issues for the volume (usually one year, but occasionally two years). This would reduce the number of PDF files down to about 100, and thus reduce the number of files which would have to be managed and opened/closed during research.

The original set of PDF files for the **PG** were reorganized into a series of standardized named files, with each file containing only the files representing issues for an individual published volume. This process identified several of the monthly supplementary issues which apparently had not been present in the US Postal Service Library or which had not been digitized. Those issues were located elsewhere and digitized and added to the original set of files. These actions addressed the first two impediments noted earlier. Although it was possible to split the two up pages into a format with individual pages in sequence – as encountered in most Google Book versions, the process could not be automated, and simply was beyond the time resources available.

The final processing and organization of the annual **PG** PDF file and its associated monthly files were handled in different manners. A new standard **Postal Bulletin Consortium** Title or Header page was created for each file, identifying the contents. Equivalent Title pages were created for the Annual issue, and the combined monthly issues. A second attempt was made to try and process these files with an OCR engine available to the editor. Examination of the results showed that some pages and text did OCR the text in a useful manner, but there were a significant number of words that were not properly processed. The resulting files therefore can be searched, but many keyword matches may be missed. It may well be necessary to examine the individual pages word by word to locate specific information.

A short note was placed in red at the bottom of each Title page which identified when there was any search capabilities present in the individual file. These appear as either:

NOTICE:

These issues are searchable but expect some OCR errors. Be cautious.

NOTICE:

These issues are not OCR searchable.

Since these files could not be reliably searched, a decision was made to include as part of the Title page a short **Introduction** section that would provide a URL link to known copies of the same **Postal Guide** issues in the Google Books and Hathi Trust digital libraries. This supplementary feature would then allow the user an option to go directly to another copy of the same **Postal Guide**, and execute his search on that file. Once a search match was detected, the user could then return to his local copy to manipulate or print the desired pages.

A large percentage of the annual issues of the **Official Postal Guide** were present in the **Google Books** and **Hathi Trust** digital library, so most of these PDF editions have the URL links present. Unfortunately, very few of the monthly or quarterly supplements from 1880 through 1954 were digitized, and so few of these files have links. For a number of these files, the **Introduction** section that provided a URL link was not included, so if it is absent in the issue you are using, this indicates that there were no on-line copies of these issues available.

The Annual Issues.

Although each of the annual issues included a Table of Contents section at the beginning of the volume, and an Index section at the end, the page numbers shown in these sections do not match the page numbering in the associated PDF files, primarily because two **PG pages** appear on each PDF page. A number of PDF bookmarks were therefore added to these annual issues, primarily to mark for the user a location for page sections of particular interest. These bookmarks generally identified the following elements, when present, in each issue, although not all sections were present in each issue.

- (1) The Issue identification for each publication,
- (2) The Table of Contents,
- (3) The beginning of the Regulation and Instructions sections,
- (4) Orders of the Post Office
- (5) Domestic Mail Sections,
- (6) The Registry System,
- (7) The Money Order System
- (8) Foreign Mail System
- (9) List of Post Offices – Arranged Alphabetically,
- (10) List of Post Offices – Arranged Alphabetically by States
- (11) List of Post Offices – Arranged Alphabetically by States and Counties,
- (12) List of Counties – Arranged Alphabetically
- (13) List of Post Offices of the First, Second, and Third Classes
- (14) Lists of Post Offices Established, Discontinued, and Names Changed
- (15) List of Post Offices of the First, Second, and Third Classes
- (16) Index

Over the period of publication, the titles of some of these sections changed, but the wording in the bookmarks added was generally kept consistent to avoid confusion. Additional consideration was given to including a bookmark for every entry in the original Table of Contents, but this was not done because of the level of effort that would have been required.

Monthly/Supplementary Issues

Next, all the monthly issue PDF files for a particular volume were combined into a single PDF file. Again, the new PBC Title page was added. Bookmarks were then added to identify the starting point for each of the eleven individual issues, but since each monthly issue was relatively small (typically 50-100 pages), and the format remained consistent, no attempt was made to provide PDF bookmarks within each monthly issue. These bookmarks were also converted into a Linkable Table of Contents Page that was placed at the beginning of each combined monthly PDF file for easy access to the individual issues.

Organization of the Official Postal Guide

The **Official Postal Guide** of the United States Post Office Department began publication in 1874, and replaced an irregular series of official publications which had been published every five or ten years under the two headings: “**Lists Of Post Offices**” or “**Tables of Post Offices**”, and the various “**Postal Laws and Instructions**” and “**Postal Laws and Regulations**”. The contents of these publications consisted primarily of lists of post offices and their county and state, and often included additional information such as the name of the postmaster’s name, distance from Washington, DC, and/or the state capital, etc. Many of these early “postal guides” can be found in the Google Books and Hathi Trust digital libraries, and are beyond the scope of this discussion. The various **Postal Laws** generally included a combination of the Congressional Acts, followed by a section of instructions or regulations to the postmasters which described how the various Acts were to be implemented.

The **Official Postal Guide** was apparently an attempt to systematize the distribution of information to postmaster and post offices, replacing the previous series of occasional circulars of instructions and information that were sent on a regular basis by the USPOD headquarters. It was published in six series, each of which had different characteristics, and which will be outlined in the following sections. For an excellent description of the history and contents of these **Postal Guides**, the reader is directed to a series of articles by Robert Dalton Harris.¹

Series 1.

The first series was a set of quarterly publications, identified as **First Series, No. 1** (October 1874) through **First Series, No. 20**, which appeared in July 1879. These issues consisted of between 250 and 300 pages, with the first 50 or so pages describing regulations and instructions, postage rates, and the remaining pages being some combination of the standard lists of post offices:

- (a) List of Post Offices in Alphabetical Order
- (b) List of Post Offices in Alphabetical Order by State
- (c) List of Classified Post Offices

The first post office list appeared in each issue, but the others were alternated and not always present.

¹ Harris, Robert Dalton. “Postal Guides”, **PS: A Quarterly of Postal History**, Vol VIII, Issue 30, p. 34 and Vol VIII, Issue 31, p.73. These publications are available in the APS/APRL Digital Library for APS/APRL members.

Unfortunately, the US Postal Service Library microfilm did not contain all twenty of these issues. Many issues from 1875 and 1876: No. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 were not present and had not been digitized. Of these, only issue No. 8 had been digitized and could be located in the Google Books digital library.

Fortunately, Tony Wawrukiewicz was able to find other copies of these missing issues, and was able to obtain a photocopy of the beginning pages with the regulations and instructions. However the pages with the post office lists were not photocopied. These photocopies were then digitized and inserted into the PDF files.

A set of PDF bookmarks was inserted into each of the individual as described earlier.

The individual issues of this First Series were then combined into individual PDF files with the following names:

PG(1874)(Ser 1 No 1 Oct)(Quarterly)(X).PDF

PG(1875)(Ser 1 No 2 Jan)(Quarterly)(X).PDF

And so forth through

PG(1879)(Ser 1 No 20 July)(Quarterly)(X).PDF

Consideration was given to combining these files into larger files as annual volumes, but determined it was not practical. The final "(X)" indicates that efforts to create a searchable OCR of the file was unsuccessful. This notation was also used for all subsequent PDF files, while an (F) designates that there may be some search capability available.

Series 2.

The Second Series appeared at the end of 1879, and continued until June 1908. It would eventually consist of a large annual volume (typically with 600 -1200 pages), and set of eleven monthly supplements, which ranged in size between 25 and 100 pages.

To finish out 1879, the Second Series, Volume 1, consisted only of four monthly issues for September to December of that year. Beginning in 1880, Issue No. 1 was the annual edition, and issues No. 2 – 12 were the monthly supplements. The processing of these annual editions was minimal. The new PBC Title Page was added at the beginning, and a note was included which identified where the reader could find searchable editions in the Google Books and Hathi

Trust Digital libraries. A set of PDF bookmarks was inserted into each of the individual as described earlier.

Most postal historians are familiar with the contents of these annual editions, but less familiar with the monthly issues. These consisted of new instructions to postmasters, new regulations, new information about the registry system, mail distribution, and other facets of postal operation. Some of this information was repeated in following issues.

There was also a section on new post offices established, discontinued, names changed, new Money Order offices established, etc. These lists were cumulative, that is, all information from February was included in the March issue together with new changes effective during February, through the December issue, which included all updates affected between January and November. Then all of these updates would be integrated into the new annual edition to be published for the following January.

The eleven monthly supplement issues were combined into a new consolidated PDF file, and bookmarks inserted at the beginning of each issue to facilitate the user's access. Again, it was decided to not try and insert bookmarks to identify the various sections in these monthly supplements. Most had a standard format, and once one was familiar with the organization, locating a section in the small number of pages was straightforward.

The Second series ended effectively June 1908, thus the final monthly supplement for 1908 only included the five monthly issues, No. 2 – No. 6, dated February through June.

This Second Series consisted of 30 volumes, with 29 Annual volumes and 30 of the Monthly supplemental files. These PDF files were named using the following conventions:

Annual issues: **PG(1881)(Ser 2 Vol 2)Annual(X).PDF**

Monthly issues: **PG(1800)(Ser 2 Vol 1)Monthly(F).PDF**

As noted previously, the "(X)" indicates that efforts to OCR the file was unsuccessful, and the "(F)" indicates that there is some OCR search capability available, but it may be unreliable and should not be depended upon without further investigation.

Series 3.

A **Third Series** was introduced in July 1908, and continued through Volume 13 which began in July 1920. It is believed that this change in the starting date was done to bring the

publication into line with the USPOD Fiscal Year. The annual volume was now dated in July of each year, and the eleven monthly supplements were numbered from No. 2 in August to No. 12 which was published as the June issue in the following year.

The contents of the Annual issue were generally unchanged from the previous series, but the Monthly supplements included a new feature beginning with the monthly supplements in August 1913. These consisted of a series of pages consisting of new updates for both the annual edition of the **Official Postal Guide** and the current **Postal Laws & Regulations**. These updates were printed only on one side of the page (the right side of the two-up display in the PDF files), and the instructions were for the postmaster to remove these updates from the monthly supplement, and tip them into the appropriate original publication. That this was done is evidenced by the reader occasionally coming across an edition of the **Postal Guide or PL&R with a series of these “tipped-in”**.

Our organization of these files was identical with that described in the previous section. These PDF files were named using the following conventions:

Annual issues: **PG(1908)(Ser 3 Vol 1)(Annual)(F).PDF**
Monthly issues: **PG(1908)(Ser 3 Vol 1)(Monthly)(F).PDF**

Series 4.

The **Fourth Series** was started in 1921 and continued through June 1937. Again, the organization of the Annual and Monthly issues was quite similar to the previous series. The Annual issue for July 1925 was the first issue to include a section for Air Mail service. These PDF files were named using the following conventions:

Annual issues: **PG(1921)(Ser 4 Vol 1)(Annual)(X).PDF**
Monthly issues: **PG(1921)(Ser 4 Vol 1)(Monthly)(F).PDF**

Series 5.

The **Fifth Series** introduced several major organizational changes. The first was that the publication of the large Annual edition was changed to appear every **TWO** years in July, so that there were now 23 Monthly supplementary issues for each volume. A second change occurred

in July 1944, when the Monthly supplements were discontinued and replaced by Quarterly supplements issued in July, October, January, and April.

In addition, because the size of the international postal service section had increased to over 300 pages in the annual July issue, the decision was made to split the **Postal Guide** into two parts. The first part, designated “**Part I**” on the cover and title pages, retained all the information related to the domestic postal service, which the new volume was designated “**Part II – International Postal Service**”. This **Part II** was given a new series designation and is discussed later in the present document.

The monthly and quarterly supplements continued with updates and new information for both parts. The format for the file names were as follows.

Annual issues: **PG(1939)(Ser 5 Vol 1)(Annual)(F).PDF**
Monthly issues: **PG(1939)(Ser 5 Vol 1)(Monthly)(F).PDF**

Series 6.

The **Sixth Series** introduced some new formatting changes. What had previously been simply subject heading within the narrative of the Informational section were now presented as Chapter Titles with chapter numbers. The contents of these sections continued to include the same general information. The format for the file names were as follows.

Annual issues: **PG(1945)(Ser 6 Vol 1)(Annual)(X).PDF**
Quarterly issues: **PG(1945)(Ser 5 Vol 1)(Quarterly)(F).PDF**

The section identified in previous Annual editions as “**List of Post Offices of the First, second, and Third Classes**”, which listed the Presidential Class post offices along with the compensation paid to those postmasters, was removed from the annual issue of the **Postal Guide**, and began to appear in its own separate publication: “**List of Post Offices by Classes, with Salaries of Postmasters**”. These can be located in the Hathi Trust Digital Library, or by using my **Portal to USPOD Official Postal Guides (1875-1971)**, which can be downloaded from the Texas Postal History website at:

<http://www.texascovers.org/featured-articles/>

This **Sixth Series** of the **Official Postal Guide** was the final group of publications under this title. Beginning in July 1955, it was replaced by two new series of USPOD publications. The **Directory of Post Offices**, USPOD Publication No. 26, continued with the various lists of post offices, providing the same listings as before. The sections which had included various instructions and operating guidelines for the postmasters was first published in a volume titled **Post Office Manual** that appeared in 1952, but which was quickly superseded by a paperbound **Postal Manual** which appeared in 1954.

The **Postal Manual** was quickly replaced by a loose-leaf version of the **Domestic Postal Manual** and a corresponding **International Postal Manual**, which continued until 1970, when they were again replaced by a new edition under the United States Postal Service banner.

Postal Guide – Part II International Postal Service

Beginning in 1937, as noted above, the Annual issue was published in two parts, with Part II being designated as the “**International Postal Service**” section. This new publication was published annually between 1937 and 1941, but discontinued for the duration of World War II. Publication began again in 1946, and continued at two year intervals until the 1953 edition. The first eight issues were identified as **Series 1**, while the final two editions were identified as **Series 1**. For the years between 1937 and 1941, these “**Part II – International Postal Service**” issues were published each year in July, and designated as the First Edition and Second Edition. While no reason was provided, it was very likely the result of the rapidly expanding world airmail system and the changes in mail delivery associated with the beginning of World War II.

Only one of these “**Part II - International Postal Service**” issues was not present on the US Postal Service Library microfilm, so it is included here only in the form of a “stub” which points the user to the associated edition in the Hathi Trust digital library. This was the 1940 edition (Series 1, Volume 2, Second Edition).

The contents of these new Part II issues were essentially the same as had been present in the **Foreign Mail** and **International Postal Service** sections of the earlier Series 4 issues of the **Official Postal Guides**, but continued to be expanded to include new information about rates and other information about mail matter not allowed to be shipped to each country. The format for these file names were as follows.

PG(II)(1937)(Ser 1 Vol 1)(F).PDF

PG(II)(1938)(Ser 1 Vol 1 2nd Ed)(F).PDF

Reporting Errors, Corrections, and Other Problems

When dealing with the large number of PDF files in this package, it is expected that some overlooked problems will be encountered, both in the original files as microfilmed and digitized, and in the subsequent edition to create this Postal Bulletin Consortium package. During all the editing and organizational processes, each original PDF file digitized from the US Postal Service Library was examined for missing pages, and when encountered, these missing pages were scanned from other copies of that issue and inserted into the original file. Similarly, when a page was incompletely microfilmed or digitized, the page was replaced.

Many of the original volumes were bound tightly with sewn signatures, and the center margins were often difficult to microfilm clearly, and these may be illegible in a few places. There was no simple, economic solution to this problem. If it adversely affects your research, please refer to the comparable volume in either the Google Books or Hathi Trust digital library.

There may be instances where PDF bookmarks for a particular section will be missing, or have a typographical error. It was difficult to be consistent in terms of which sections were bookmarked, and some issues simply did not have the equivalent section headings.

If you encounter any one of these type problems, and wish to report it, please contact me at the address below, and I will update the file, and we can provide you with a corrected copy if you desire.

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