

Birmingham - Ferndale Stamp Club Newsletter



February 2026

Welcome to February, the month when winter drags on, the groundhog makes questionable predictions, and stamp collectors everywhere decide it's finally time to tackle that "I'll sort it someday" pile. If your dining room table has disappeared under stock books, hinges, and that one mysterious cover you swear you've never seen before... you're in good company.



The first Motor Vehicle Use stamp was issued on February 1, 1942, to help fund World War II. The short-lived stamps were meant to be displayed on the inside of the windshield, to easily show the tax had

been paid. According to the commissioner of Internal Revenue, the motor vehicle use tax affected more individuals than all other categories of federal taxes combined.

A final look at our December 5th & 6th BIRMPEX stamp show at the Sokol Cultural Center revealed disappointing results. Dealer cancellation and low collector turnout contributed to our financial loss.

The FERNPEX show scheduled for May is being reconsidered. Club members voiced concern about the current show venue, and an effort is being made to secure a more desirable location.

The passing of long-time club member and newsletter article contributor, Walt Koster, has left a void in this publication. To fill that void, I have cajoled Pat Hensley to share her writing and philatelic abilities in our newsletter. Pat is a lifelong special education teacher, professor of education at Furman University, and author of *The Successful Teachers Handbook*. Pat splits her time between South Carolina and Florida. Her first article is in this issue.

Club Meetings –

February 3rd & 17th, 6:00 p.m. at the NEXT Senior Center, Birmingham.

Upcoming Events –

February 28th, Modern Stamps, Public Stamp Auction, 12 Noon at their Oak Park Facility.

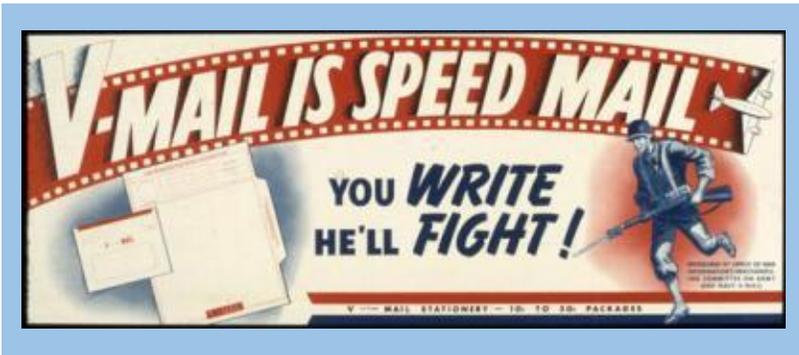
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V-Mail

Pat Hensley



V-mail is short for Victory mail which began during World War II. The name came from the “V for Victory” symbol used to support public spirit and patriotism. V-mail was utilized between June 1942 and November 1945, with over one billion items moved quickly, to and from overseas soldiers.

This method of delivering mail was new but the technology wasn't. Microphotography had been used for business and banking since the 1850s. The United States government and Kodak contracted for V-mail microfilming in 1942. President Franklin D. Roosevelt received the first two V-mails that year in June.

Letters were written on a specified form and then photographed on microfilm. The microfilm was delivered to special postal processing facilities where the letters were reproduced and delivered. V-mail was given preferential sorting and transportation. It reduced the weight of military mail which allowed more space for important cargo. Machines at V-Mail stations opened the letters and filmed them in 2000 to 2500 per hour. About 1600 letters would fit on a single roll. This number of the letters would weigh 1500 lbs. and fill 22 mail sacks, but the same number of microfilmed letters only weighed 45 lbs. and fit in one sack.

The Post Office separated mail by Army and Navy units and then delivered it to the appropriate V-Mail stations. V-Mail stations were established in New York City, San Francisco, Chicago, and different places overseas. Soldiers could send personal letters including V-mail for free because of a 1942 Act of Congress. Civilians paid three cents to send a V-mail letter by surface mail or six cents by airmail to domestic V-mail stations. The airmail rate was raised to eight cents in 1944. The Post Office offered two sheets of this special stationery free each day per customer or it could be purchased from stores.

V-mail service ended on November 1, 1945, but customers could still use the V-mail stationery until supplies ran out in March 1946.

References:

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<https://postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/victory-mail>

United State Postal Service

American Philatelic Society in Detroit

Michael Swope



In the closing days of February 1959, Detroit welcomed collectors from across the Midwest and beyond for the American Philatelic Society's Spring Meeting, held February 27 through March 1 at the Port of Detroit. Though smaller in scale than the APS summer conventions of the era, the spring gatherings played an important role in strengthening regional ties and keeping members connected throughout the year. Detroit's meeting was no exception.

The 1950s were a decade of expansion for the American Philatelic Society. Membership was rising, publications were strengthening, and the Society was becoming increasingly national in scope. Spring Meetings served as regional touchpoints - opportunities for members to gather, exchange ideas, and stay engaged between the larger summer conventions. Detroit's 1959 meeting fits neatly into this pattern: a well-attended, enthusiast-driven event that showcased the vitality of Midwest philately.

Featured above is a cacheted souvenir cover of the Second Annual Spring meeting of the American Philatelic Society in 1959 at the Port of Detroit on a (purple + green) 3¢ + 1¢ stamped envelope, Scott #U540. It was cancelled at Detroit on February 28, 1959.

References: Cover from Author's collection; American Philatelic Society