Tips on Mailing Using Older Postage Stamps
by **Nadiah Beekun**

Stamp Collectors know about having a lot of stamps taking up space in boxes, drawers and on stock pages. These are the extra ones you had to buy from the Post Office to get the ones you wanted. They are the duplicates that you got when you forgot your list of what you needed for your collection. They are the really great deal you got at an auction or at a garage sale. They also take up room...

The best use for this excess inventory is to sell them at a really high price. But since there are already loads of these stamps in everybody else's collection and Stamp Dealers will only give you 40 -50% of face, the next best use is as postage.

Using stamps to mail letters and boxes has been a long standing tradition, but now "forever" stamps and meter strips are being pushed as the "best" and "easiest" way to get your mail sent via USPS. True it is easier, but using your excess US postage stamps means that you are actually monetizing unproductive assets. It is also a great way to bring smiles to the faces of the mail handlers as well as the eventual recipients. The USPS is not as pleased because the really old stamps don't have the tagging that more recent stamps do so there is more handling required, but hey, you paid for the service, it is time to USE THEM! Also, saving those old stamps is COSTING you money, because as stamp prices continue to rise, it takes MORE of the vintage stamps to get the value that a forever stamp keeps pace with.

So how can you use your stamps most effectively?

Postal regulations stipulate that all US postage stamps are valid for postage except for certain issues created around the time of the Civil War. This means that you can use any denomination of stamp to mail a letter or a package, including using 49 1¢ stamps for 1 ounce of USPS service.

Again, according to postal regulations, all stamps must be placed on the FACE of any letter, the face being judged to be the side where the name & address of the recipient is located. This information is supposed to be located in the lower right hand quadrant of the letter, with the return address above & to the left.   Typically, the return address is located in the upper left hand quadrant of the letter, but that is NOT mandated by the regulations, and that give you more room to be creative!

Regulations permit the use of multiple stamps on mail as long as they are US postage, have not been used before, and the denomination of the stamp is showing. This allows the use of LAYERING stamps on top of each other to reach the postage due. I just used 31 3¢ "Win the War" stamps on a letter that weighed 1.4 ounces and had a rigid object inside. The postage needed was 93¢ and I used a legal sized envelope with stamps layered like lizard scales along the top and left side. I can also use 2 6¢ plate blocks and add a 1¢ stamp to remit a payment to a billing department. (6 x 4 = 24¢ x 2 = 48¢ +1¢ = 49¢) Just make sure that the denomination of all stamps used is visible to anybody checking. Also, you should NOT cheat by turning the .01 stamps upside down and pretend they are 10¢ stamps.

Using postage on Priority Flat Rate boxes is similar. But here, postal regulations are not as clear. The nature of these boxes is that they will weigh OVER 13 oz. and must therefore be accepted by a window clerk. Some window clerks allow the use of stamps anywhere on the package...others follow the regulations that apply to letters...stamps must be on the FRONT (address side). I have been trying to pin down this requirement, but have still not gotten a response from the USPS. That is why I (personally) place all info and ALL stamps on only the ONE side. As before, the Name and Address go into a space in the lower right hand quadrant, but ADDITIONALLY, I have to leave a space above for a "zero meter strip" to go as well as additional space for insurance/tracking labels. I therefore confine my artistic inclinations of decorating with postage to the right two-thirds of the box. Remember, if it fits, it ships...

The above also applies to using your own packaging, but here preparation is the key, because you have to figure out weight and postage before you get to the Post Office otherwise you will be standing off to the side, licking stamps, and thinking that it would be a lot faster to just meter it.

Priority Mailing Rates

$17.90
Priority Mail Large Flat Rate Box
23$^{11/}_{16}$" x 11¾" x 3"   12" x 12" x 5½"
$15.90 to APO/FPO/DPO
$12.65
Priority Mail Medium Flat Rate Box
13⅝" x 11⅞" x 3⅜"   11" x 8½" x 5½"
$5.95
Priority Mail Small Flat Rate Box
8⅝" x 5⅜" x 1⅝"
$5.75
Priority Mail Flat Rate Envelope
12½" x 9½"
$5.90
Priority Mail Legal Flat Rate Envelope
15" x 9½"
$6.10
Priority Mail Padded Flat Rate Envelope
12½" x 9½"

According to USPS, these prices will be going up in January (2016).