

# 1876 US Centennial Envelopes

## The World's First Commemorative Issue

In 1876 the US Centennial was celebrated by a World's Fair (the first to be held in the US), which took place in Philadelphia from May 10 to November 10, 1876. The Post Office Department issued commemorative stamped envelopes to mark the Centennial, and these are notable as the first philatelic items issued anywhere to commemorate a specific event. As part of a Post Office exhibit inside the US Government Building, visitors were able to watch as a blank piece of paper was embossed, gummed & folded to produce a finished envelope. They could buy an envelope, write a message to a friend, and have it cancelled and mailed on site.

3c envelopes were issued in 2 colors, and 2 different sizes: green - personal  
vermilion -commercial



The embossed design is in the form of a shield enclosing a mounted post boy and an express train, separated by a telegraph pole & wire.



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Cover mailed at Exposition Post Office



3c green Centennial Envelope + 2c vermilion Jackson Banknote stamp  
correctly paid 5c UPU rate to Great Britain

Exposition Post Office Hand Cancel  
CENTENNIAL PHILADA PA OCT 3 5PM (1876)

At right - copy of arrival stamp from reverse side of envelope  
Skipton, England - Oct 16, 1876



3c vermilion  
Centennial Envelope  
mailed Sept 19, 1876  
Millville to Millbury, MA  
Duplex Hand Cancel  
MILLVILLE MASS SEP 19  
(1876) center date stamp  
and target cancel

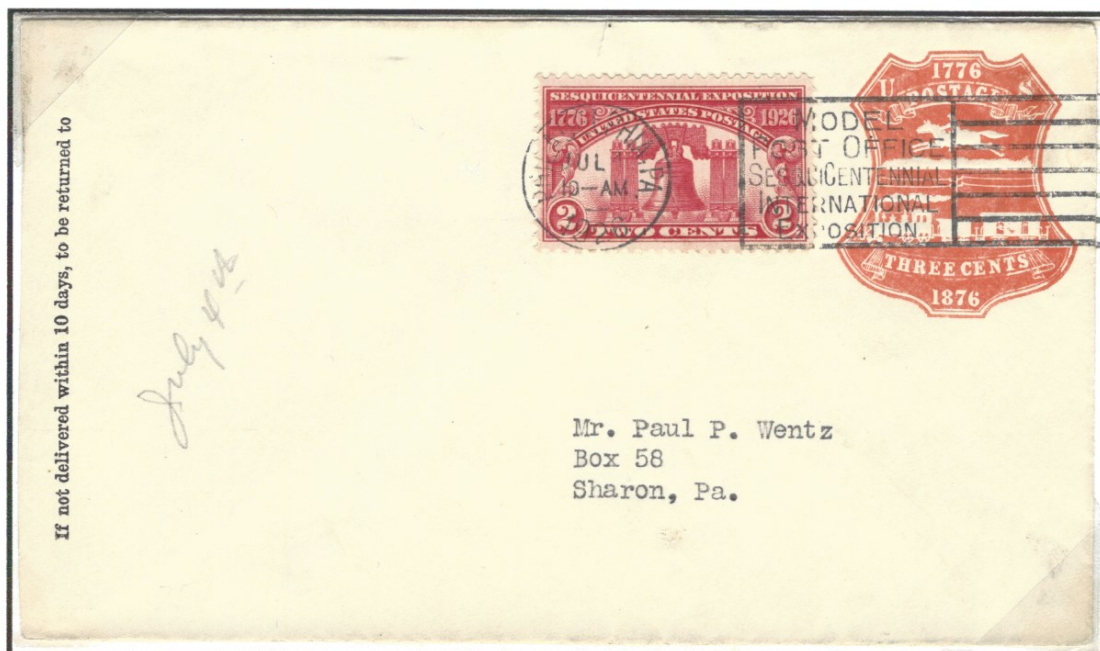


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50 years later the Sesquicentennial Exposition was held in Philadelphia from June 1 to December 1, 1926, and someone made creative use of the 1876 Envelopes to produce a pair of covers linking the 2 events.



The Liberty Bell stamp (designed by Clair Aubrey Huston) was issued May 10, 1926 and is tied to each cover with a July 4, 1926 Model Post Office Exposition Station Machine Cancel



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100 years after the original issue, the design was updated and used for the 1976 American Bicentennial envelope, issued October 15, 1976 with a 13c value.

