

THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1981 - 1998

The Transportation Series of stamps, with its seventeen year life span of new issues, contains an extremely large number of designs for a United States stamp series, especially when considering that they were issued only as coil stamps. Throughout its life there were fifty-four face-different designs, with varieties bringing the total to one hundred and fourteen distinguishable types.

The designs all depict different modes of transportation, ranging from the commonplace to the exotic, from the 1770's through 1933. Surprisingly, only three have designs which are related to vehicles handling mail. This series of stamps was primarily used for bulk mailings, and more than twenty values have denominations including fractional cents to accommodate the frequently changed pre-sorted, bulk mail and non-profit organizational postage rates.

Shown here are all the normal untagged and tagged varieties, as well as the ink, gum, precancel, perforation and paper types. All types were printed from engraved plates, and the 5¢ *Circus Wagon* was produced by photogravure as well. Errors, plate numbers and line pairs appear only by chance. The stamps are arranged by denomination, not by date of issue.

THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1983

Phosphor Tagged



1986

Block Tag - Dull Gum



Untagged

Dull Gum



Shiny Gum



Low Gloss Gum



The omnibus shown on the 1¢ stamp is a type frequently used in large cities in the 1880s, and was drawn by horses. The particular example shown was used on the Broadway and Madison Avenue route in New York City.

The image has two types: on the earlier stamp, the text reads "USA 1c" while the newer issue the inscription is "1 USA", the numeral being much larger. The omnibus itself is also slightly larger.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1982

Phosphor Tagged



1987

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged

Dull Gum



Shiny Gum



The locomotive on the 2¢ value is typical of the 1860s - 1870s types used nationwide. The wide conical smokestack shown was primarily used on wood-burning engines in order to trap large cinders, which were not produced when coal was the fuel.

As on the 1¢ stamps, the revised stamp has a larger image, and the text changes are in the same format, the newer having a large numeral followed by a small "USA".



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1983

Phosphor Tagged



The handcar was a utility vehicle used by railroad work crews to travel to their jobs. It was operated by two men facing each other pumping the handles up and down to turn the gearing on the wheels. It continued in use until motorized units replaced them in the twentieth century.

1987

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged - Dull Gum



Untagged - Shiny Gum



Untagged - Low Gloss Gum



In 1987 the handcar type was replaced by a new image, a Conestoga wagon, a rugged horse- or ox-drawn vehicle built in eastern Pennsylvania. For settlers moving westward over the Alleghenies to homestead new lands, it was the Cadillac of wagons, and it was used long after to carry cargo to the West.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1985

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged - Precanceled



A 1920s era schoolbus is a vehicle instantly recognizable as to its purpose, as except for refinements of design and added safety features, the same basic platform performs the duties it did when this model was new.

It is the lowest denomination in the series with a fractional cents value.

1982

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged - Precanceled



1986

Block Tagging



Overall Tagging



The stagecoach on the 4¢ value was the most common form of long-distance transportation for passengers for at least a century before the 1880s date on the stamp. Drawn by a team of four to six horses, it also carried mail and packages, and lasted until the railroads took over the jobs handled by the stagecoach



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1991

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged



The steam carriage, built in 1866, was an early attempt to adapt the technology of the railroad steam locomotive to over-the-road cargo transportation. Before it could be refined for economic use, the internal combustion engine was developed and proved more practical, leaving steam as a motive power only for a few passenger vehicles in the early 1900s.

1985

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged - Precanceled



The buckboard was a lightweight horse-drawn wagon designed to carry one or two people and perhaps a few packages. Designed for construction at minimum cost, it had none of the amenities required for comfort or protection from the elements.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1983



This 1913 model motorcycle follows the same basic structural layout that has remained the standard ever since, with changes mostly being larger tires, windshields and provision for carry packages. More comfortable seats and larger engines have been added, but today's bikes are easily seen to be the descendants of the ones used by all the armed forces during World War I.

1987



The horse-drawn milk wagon was a common sight on city streets in the 1900s. Pulled by a single horse, this type of vehicle also served for home delivery of bread, eggs, laundry and other home necessities on a regular basis for those who could not easily travel to markets.

Adapted to gasoline engines, this type of vehicle served the same purpose until the 1960s, when the service became uneconomical.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1990

Engraved Issues

Tagged - Dull Gum



Untagged - Dull Gum



Untagged - Low Gloss Gum



1992

Photogravure Issues

Non-Luminescent Ink



Luminescent Ink



This type of wagon was used by circuses on tour, primarily when they came into town and paraded through the streets on their way to the circus grounds. Between stops, they were secured on railroad flat cars.

The circus wagon design has the most varieties of any design in the Transportation Series. The ones on this page have the denomination expressed as 05, and they were printed from engraved plate and by photogravure. The photogravure types have both luminescent and non-luminescent ink types, and they are the only ones not printed only from engraved plates.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1995

Photogravure Issues

Large Perforation Holes



Small Perforation Holes



Non-Luminescent Ink - Shiny Gum

Large Perforation Holes



Luminescent Ink - Low Gloss Gum

Small Perforation Holes



Changes made in 1995 to the photogravure version are most noticeable in the denomination reading "USA" followed by a large "5¢". This is the only issue on which the "¢" appears on the stamp. In addition, the date "1995" has been added in the lower left corner. The 1995 version is also the only stamp design in the series which has two sizes of perforation holes.

1991



The "Canoe" design was almost contemporaneous with the circus wagon, but had the additional inscription "Additional Nonprofit Postage Paid" to indicate its intended service.

The boat depicted is of the traditional type constructed by Native Americans in the northeastern part of the country long before European settlers arrived. They were constructed of birch bark sheets fastened with sinew over a frame of limbs before the bark had a chance to dry out. Until stronger materials were developed, it saw use into the early 1800s.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1991

Shiny Gum



Low Gloss Gum



Several months after the appearance of the Canoe design, the color was changed from brown to red. The red type has two different gum types, shiny and low gloss.

1983

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged - Precanceled



The sleigh shown on the 5.2¢ stamps is typical of those most frequently found in New England, where they were known as pungs. They were often the only means of transportation over snow-bound roads, and sometimes across fields, as in the song *Jingle Bells*. This issue continues the trend toward identifying the service it was intended to perform.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1988

Untagged



This passenger elevator is of a type most often found in office buildings and multi-floor stores of the 1900s era. It would be too large for an apartment building, yet not practical for freight as the doors are too small. The inscription, "Non Profit Carrier Route Sort" indicates that it was intended for mail with nine-digit zip codes.

1986

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged Precancel



The Star Route truck on the 5.5¢ stamp is typical of the stake-body trucks of the period, and is not a uniform type, as Star Routes were operated by private contractors selected by bidding. They no longer exist, but a similar service is provided for bulk deliveries on highway routes today.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1982

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged Precancel



The 1890s style bicycle on these stamp bears little resemblance to those in use today except for having two wheels. The very tall front wheel, with pedals mounted on it for direct drive like a child's tricycle, made it an acrobatic feat to climb aboard and get it moving. Those big wheels enabled the rider to go quite fast, but the unstable configuration made hitting a bump often cause the rider to catapult over the handlebars, and helmets were unfashionable in that era.

1985

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged Precancel



The 1880s tricycle was quite a different machine than the bicycle above. With a small front wheel for steering and two large chain-driven ones at the rear. This was a lot safer than the bicycle, and could be easily managed by non-athletic types. The chain drive made gearing possible to reduce the effort required for pedaling it.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1987 - 1989

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged Precanceled, 5-Digit



Untagged Precanceled, 9-digit



The farm tractor shown is similar to those in use nationwide between the World Wars. Gasoline-powered, it had large steel driving wheels with plates welded onto them to provide traction in loose soil or mud. It also had a power take-off to enable its use as a power source for other farm machinery. Two types of precancels exist; one for five digit zip codes and one for those with nine digits.

1984

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged Precancel



The illustrated baby buggy is similar in most respects to those in use throughout the 19th century, with large wheels and a body constructed of wicker. Those models used today have the same basic design, but smaller wheels, fabric sides and top and collapsible frames make it a far more convenient carriage for infants, since it must often be carried in a car.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1988

Untagged - Precanceled



The carreta, shown as being from the 1770s, has a long period of use before and after that, being used in Europe in medieval times and in remote areas into the 1800s. A carreta, by definition, is simply a two-wheeled cart, usually pulled by a single animal. They were usually built by the users to suit their own needs, as shown by the crude construction, particularly the wheels.

1985

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged Precancel



1986

Untagged - Precanceled



The ambulance of the 1880s was no more than a generic goods wagon which was fitted out in the back with beds or stretchers. The bumpy ride probably did as much harm to the patients as their injuries in many cases.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1988

Untagged - Precanceled



This stamp for non-profit organizations depicts an early form of wheelchair from the 1920s. Without the amenities available in today's chairs, it simply provided basic transportation for immobile persons.

1987

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged Precancel



This type of tow truck was universally used to bring inoperable vehicles to a repair shop from their breakdown location. The hoist in the bed had a hook which lifted the car by the bumper and towed it on two wheels. With modern vehicles plastic replaced the steel bumpers, making this method impractical, a new type of truck appeared, with a tilting flat bed onto which the vehicle could be drawn right onto the bed and carried without touching the ground.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1985

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged - Precanceled



The mail wagon of the 1880s was not used for the same purpose as the modern trucks used for door-to-door home delivery today. Its primary purpose was to carry mail bags to and from the post office and railroad stations and also for inter-office transportation.

1991

Intaglio Printing - Gray Overprint

Untagged - Precanceled



1994

Gravure Printing - Black Overprint

Untagged - Precanceled



By the 1920s, the trucking industry required larger vehicles to handle cargo previously sent by rail, and the tractor-trailer combination enabled them to be much larger and still be maneuverable on city streets. Having a separate cab unit made much more economical for a company with a fleet of trucks not to have to purchase vehicles with built-in engines for each.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1987

Phosphor Tagged

Large Block Tagging



Overall Tagging - Dull Gum



Overall Tagging - Shiny Gum



Mottled Tagging - Shiny Gum



Overall Tag - Low Gloss Gum



Where railroads didn't run and the highway system had not been developed, transportation by water was an important means of distributing merchandise. Between destinations with a large amount of traffic, it was economical to construct canals. These were just wide enough to accommodate narrow barges built for the purpose. They were towed by draft animals who walked along towpaths on the sides of the canals. Paved highways and the trucking industry largely caused these boats to vanish from the scene, though in parts of Europe they still compete with other methods of delivery.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1982

Phosphor Tagged



Black Lines & "BULK RATE"

Red "BULK RATE CARRIER ROUTE SORT"



The horse-drawn oil wagon of the 1890s fulfilled much the same role as the heating oil delivery trucks do in modern times. However, the product carried was usually kerosene for lamps and space heaters, as oil furnace for home heating had yet to make an appearance and gasoline-powered vehicles were still on the horizon.

1985

Phosphor Tagged

Untagged Precanceled



The Hansom cab is the precursor to today's taxi. Compact with the ability to carry only a small number of passengers, it was very maneuverable in urban areas. The driver sat upon a high seat above and behind the passenger compartment, unprotected from the elements as the riders were.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1982

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged



Untagged - Precanceled



The caboose was an essential part of every freight train from the inception of railroads until modern times, when electronic communications and video cameras made them unnecessary. They were intended to carry the train's crew except for the engineer and fireman, and were the base of operations for the conductor, who was in charge of the train. He could see the length of the train from the cupola on top to detect problems. The rest of the crew also used it, and non-stop trains carried a relief crew there as well.

1985

Phosphor Tagged



The Stutz Bearcat, with the 1933 model shown, was a two-seat high-powered roadster favored by the well-to-do of the period. It was a large vehicle, and was an ancestor of later sports cars like the MG-TC which were scaled-down Stutz look-alikes.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1985

Phosphor Tagged



Type I - 18 mm wide "Stanley Steamer 1909"

Type II - 17 2/3 mm wide "Stanley Steamer 1909"



The Stanley Steamer is the best known of a class of automobiles which have disappeared from the scene. They were powerful and efficient and had many believers in steam-powered vehicles, but had two major faults: The owner had to build a fire beneath the boiler to generate steam for power, but this was time-consuming and one could not just get in and go, and the steam was exhausted after use instead of recovered as water, making refills frequent.

1985

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged



Pushcarts like the example shown for the 1880s were a common sight on city streets. Street vendors used them for all sorts of fast food. They have not changed much through the years, and still can be seen in many places. Most of the changes have been in construction materials and the addition of heaters and refrigeration.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1988

Untagged



The police patrol wagon largely fulfilled the role of today's squad car. In addition to routine patrol, the benches along the sides could be used to seat persons arrested to be brought to the station. Later versions were closed to prevent the escape of prisoners,

1988

Untagged



This coal car probably was in use earlier than the 1870s date on the stamp. Due to the weight of coal, the size was quite small in order not to overstress the primarily wooden construction of the car.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1985

Phosphor Tagged

Overall Tagging



Block Tagging



Iceboats were prely recreational vehicles and were largely confined to our northern tier of states, where winter temperatures remained low enough to allow ice to thicken sufficiently to support their weight. They usually held only one person and were steered like a sailboat. Speeds of up to 60 miles per hour could be obtained by a skilled rider.

1988

Large Block Tagging



Overall Tagging



Untagged Error



Even before the advent of large steamships, tugboats appeared in major ports to safely bring sailing ships to their berths, as these were not easily maneuverable in the close quarters of a harbor. Types very similar to this one were still in use into the 1950s, when diesel powered boats became common. Though appearing small, they required huge engines for their duties, and many drew as much as 40 feet of water as a result. Other than guiding ships, they were used to tow barges on rivers, in harbors and along the coast where the rough ocean waters would not be a hazard.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1988

Untagged



The popcorn wagon from the turn of the century was a vehicle most often found at carnivals, fairs and similar events where large crowds could be found. Usually quite ornate in design, it carried on board all the necessities for serving this treat, such as a heater to pop the kernels and another to melt butter. Popcorn itself was not a novelty. Archaeologists have discovered ears of popcorn dating back to the 36th century in the American southwest, and pans for heating kernels over an open fire were common use in colonial times.

1986

Phosphor Tagged



The dogsled in North America seldom appeared outside Alaska and the Canadian provinces, where snow and ice precluded the use of other types of transportation. Usually drawn by a team of eight or more dogs such as Huskies or Malamutes, they could carry large loads and sometimes the driver, who usually walked behind. They are a used in the annual Iditarod race in Alaska, an 1150 mile dogsled race from Anchorage to Nome using two routes which alternate in successive years.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

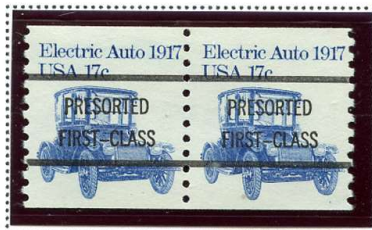
1981

Phosphor Tagged

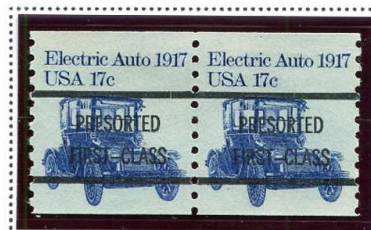


Untagged Precanceled

"PRESORTED" 11.3 mm wide



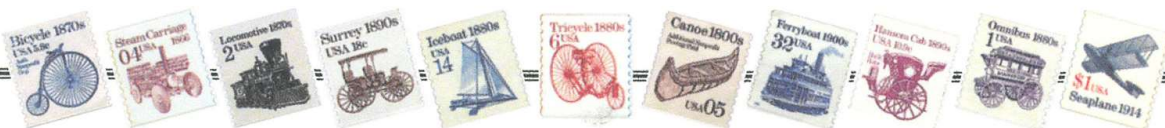
"PRESORTED" 12.8 mm wide



"PRESORTED" > 13 mm wide



The electric automobile of the World War I era was an efficient, pollutionless vehicle, which did not have to be cranked to start it. However, it had two significant limitations: first, batteries were not as efficient as modern ones, and were large and very heavy. This led to the second difficulty, which was the short useful range of a battery charge. Non-urban usage was impractical. Electric delivery trucks were much more practical, and persisted into the 1950s because they were larger, only used in daylight, and thereby could be left to charge overnight.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1987

Phosphor Tagged



Untagged Precanceled



Racing cars in 1911 were sometimes standard automobiles stripped of all unneeded parts in order to reduce weight. They basically consisted of a large engine, driver's seat and a fuel tank mounted on a chassis with large wheels. In 1911, the rear view mirror was invented because a driver couldn't find a mechanic to ride with him during the Indianapolis 500 race, and so he installed a mirror. Normally, checking traffic behind was part of the mechanic's duties in addition to making repairs. Eliminating him lightened the car further, and the car won the race.

1981

Phosphor Tagged



The surrey was the family sedan of the nineteenth century, and usually carried four to five people. It was light in weight, and could be drawn by a single horse. It was covered by canvas, with a fringe on top like the one in the song from Oklahoma, and separate side curtains could be put on in inclement weather to protect the passengers from the elements.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1981

Phosphor Tagged



The fire pumper of the 1860s was the primary means of fighting building fires in that period. The large boiler provided the heat to operate a steam-driven pump mounted on the body. The globular object on the pump is an air chamber which served the purpose of converting the irregular pulse of the pump into a steady stream. Water was not carried on the vehicle, but drawn from a stream or lake if available, or from a tank wagon brought to supply it. The wagon was usually drawn by two or four horses.

1988

Block Tagged



Overall Tagged



Cable cars were a solution to providing public transportation in cities with steep hills, such as San Francisco. While light weight, they were still incapable of being pulled up steep grades by horses, and beneath the street level, a cable in a continuous loop driven by a steam engine was accessible through a slot between the rails. The cable car driver operated a device which clamped onto the cable, pulling the car along the rails, stopping it by releasing the cable. They still operate in San Francisco, where they are a popular tourist attraction.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1995

Phosphor Tagged



A cog railway was a specialized form of rail transport, used only where highly inclined routes required a means of moving a vehicle on the tracks with no slippage. The locomotive for such a railway drove a gear beneath its body which engaged with a continuous rail with teeth on its surface to match. Generally, the cab and load-carrying compartments were tilted so they had flat floors even when the chassis was tilted. This applied particularly to the boiler so the water level remained even and did not expose the piping carrying heat to the air. Mt. Washington in New Hampshire has one, and so does Mt. Vesuvius near Naples, Italy.

Another name for a cog railway is funicular, and the song *Funiculi-funicula* was written to celebrate the grand opening of the one on Vesuvius.

1988

Untagged Precanceled



The fire engine shown on this stamp is known as a hook-and-ladder engine, those being the type of rescue equipment carried aboard. Through the years, not much has changed except the driver's cab has been enlarged and enclosed, and more modern chassis carry a similar body.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1988

Untagged Precanceled



This stamp is one of the few devoted to mail-related operations in this series. Mail cars were part of the make-up of many passenger trains, and had a crew aboard which sorted mail so it could be dropped off along the route at the proper city. Some had a mechanical arm which could be operated to pull mail bags aboard without the train having to stop.

1991

Overall Tagging & Dull Gum



Mottled Tagging & Dull Gum



Mottled Tagging & Shiny Gum



Lunch wagons were stationed on streets where people on the streets at lunch time could purchase something to eat, such as sandwiches or soup, without having to bring something to work where it could spoil by the time it could be eaten. They have evolved into similar vehicles on truck bodies and serve the same purpose, and are increasing in popularity



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1988

Untagged Precanceled



The tandem bicycle of the 1890s was a popular vehicle for couples and bears a great resemblance to those manufactured today, which have fatter tires for a softer ride and a lower frame for better balance. The high frame was designed to accommodate the ankle-length skirts of the period without them brushing the ground. Many are still seen today on boardwalks at the beach, but they will probably never again be popular enough to inspire a song such as *A Bicycle Built for Two*.

1995

Untagged Precanceled



The bread wagon was in most respects almost identical to the milk wagon seen earlier, and filled the same role, which was daily or almost daily delivery of bakery products to households on a regular basis. Light enough to be drawn by a single horse, its size permitted easy navigation through narrow city streets.



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1995

Blue - Shiny Gum



Blue - Low Gloss Gum



Bright Blue



Ferry boats were an essential part of the environment in locations where there was a large amount of passenger and vehicle traffic between two cities on opposite sides of a body of water, an example being New York Harbor. They carried large loads, and were double-ended, so the captain simply walked to another wheelhouse at the other end of the boat for the return trip, and the ferry did not have to turn around. This type was in use well into the 1950s.

The bright blue variety was not an intentional change. It's also called "Bronx Blue."



THE TRANSPORTATION SERIES

1990

Overall Tagging - Dull Gum



Mottled Tagging - Shiny Gum



Overall Tagging - Low Gloss Gum



The airplane shown on this stamp is dated 1914, but appears to be a somewhat earlier type of seaplane, as evidenced by the boat-like bottom of the fuselage. The wingtip floats gave it stability on the surface, but the frailty of the construction would have limited its use to very calm water.



The End