Postal History of the Pease Family

In America

This exhibit examines the postal history of the Pease family in the United States. Postal history examples illustrate the growth and range of the Pease family as it expanded from its early beginnings. Each item in this exhibit is examined based on its relation to the postal rates/regulations of the time, the author’s place in the Pease lineage, and the historical context during which the item was created.

In April, 1624 the sailing ship Francis left England for the new world bound for the port of Salem, Massachusetts. On board were the beginnings of the Pease family in America. In 1692, Robert Pease and his wife Sarah would face 18 months in jail during the Salem Witch Trials.

In 1797, Levi Pease would hold the first mail contract to deliver mail by stagecoach between Boston and Albany, New York.

In 1851, Herman Melville would model Captain Ahab after his real-life captain of the Acushent, Cpt. Valentine Pease.

For the next 16 generations the Pease family would flourish in America, following the westward expansion across the continent. Its members would spread to every state in the union and become part of the history of the United States.
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In 1797, Levi Pease would hold the first mail contract to deliver mail by stagecoach between Boston and Albany, New York. Later he established a tavern on the same route.

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Early Pease Postal History

Six Cent Rate, Collect

The period between 1792 and 1855 is called the “Stampless Era” in US Postal History. Postage stamps were not issued by the United States until 1847. Before 1847 postage was charged by the number of sheets or enclosures and the distance traveled.

This single letter traveling less than 30 miles from Middletown to New Haven, CT was charged 6 cents, payable by the person picking up the item, Obadiah Pease, in early April 1830.

Obadiah H. Pease was born on Dec 1, 1798 and lived until Dec 10, 1877. His first wife was Mary Brewster, a direct descendant of William Brewster, who arrived in America on the Mayflower. Together they had two children, Mary and Josephine Pease. Obadiah Pease was a banker in New Haven, CT. Mary and Obadiah were married on April 28, 1830, just weeks after this letter was posted.
Ten Cent Rate, Prepaid
Town cancel hand stamp struck in blue. Prepaid postage in Lee, Massachusetts is indicated by the additional PAID stamp also struck in blue. Manuscript 10 indicates the postal rate for transporting a single letter sheet weighing less than 1/2 ounce for a distance greater than 30 miles but less than 80 miles.

Cynthia Pease was born Nov. 22, 1821 in Somers, CT. These two letters, written by her sister Celestia Pease, talk of Cynthia and Celestia both teaching school children. Cynthia would later marry a wheelwright and settle in Iowa.

Ten Cent Rate, Collect
Indistinct (attributed to Westfield, MA) town hand stamp struck in red. Manuscript 10 indicates the postal rate for transporting a single letter sheet weighing less than 1/2 ounce for a distance greater than 30 miles but less than 80 miles. Postage would be paid by person picking up the letter at the post office.
Five Cent Rate, Collect

Town cancel hand stamp struck in red from Wilburham, Massachusetts on April 7th, 1847. Manuscript 5 indicates postage to be collected in Springfield when the letter was received. Postal Act of March 3, 1845 established the 5 cent rate for single letter sheets carried under 300 miles.

Letter from Olive Pease writing to her older sister Cynthia, now teaching in Springfield, MA. Olive Pease was born on Feb. 7, 1828 in Somers, CT.
Five Cent Rate, PrePaid

The Postal Act of March 3, 1845 established the 5 cent rate for single letter sheets carried under 300 miles.

Single line circular Lee, MA hand stamp struck in blue on February 20, 1848. Hand stamped 5 and “PAID” struck in blue indicates postage paid in Lee, MA when the letter was posted.

Horace (Harold) Pease writing to sister Cynthia, teaching in Ware Village, MA. Cynthia was the older sister by five years. Horace was born Feb. 10, 1825, just thirteen months after a younger Horace Pease died in infancy at 2 months old.
Ten Cent Rate, Collect
Additional 5 Cent Forwarding

South Mankin, Michigan February 25, 1847 to Ware, Massachusetts Forwarded to Somers, Connecticut

Manuscript 10 in blue ink indicates postage due for single letter sheet carried over 300 miles (Michigan to Massachusetts). Town cancel hand stamp struck in red at Ware, MA on March 12, 1847. Hand stamp 5 in red indicates additional 5 cent due for forwarding to Somers, Connecticut. Manuscript “For…” and sum calculation at Somers, CT post office at pickup.

F.W. Pease writing to “cousin” Cynthia Pease. “F.W.” is thought to be Flora Pease, her first cousin on her father’s side. Flora and Cynthia were part of the fifth Pease generation in America.
Three Cent Single Rate, Prepaid, not over 3000 miles
Postal Act of March 3, 1851

Postage stamps were not issued by the United States government until 1847. Using postage stamps on letters did not become mandatory until after 1855 (this letter could have been sent with or without a postage stamp).

Faint Somers, Ct. hand stamp struck in red. Red cancel on 3 cent Washington stamp issue of 1851, paying the postage from Somers, Ct. to Concord, Kentucky on June 24, 1853.

William Strong Pease (younger brother of Cynthia, Olive, and Celestia) was born on Jan. 6, 1832. He would move west at a young age (15 in this letter). William would serve in the Navy during the Civil War and fought on the Mississippi river. After the war he moved to the Chinese Camp in California to try his hand at mining. He and his father-in-law bought a claim for $3750, which included a four room house, where his wife Margret could watch the men at work mining gold.
Three Cent Prepaid Single Rate, not over 3000 miles  
Act of March 3, 1855  
Mandatory Prepayment, stamps compulsory after January 1, 1856  

Faint Wilburham, MA hand stamp struck in black on 3 cent Washington stamp of 1851 prepaying postage from Wilburham, MA to Amboy, Illinois on April 9, 1856.

Amboy, Illinois was laid out by the Illinois Central Railroad in 1854. Settlers gradually moved into the area until in early 1856 the population was just over 2000 people. In 1857 the State of Illinois recognized a charter for Amboy and declared it a city.

Manuscript Somers, Ct. cancel, dated Feb. 11, 1856. Franked with 3 cent Washington stamp of 1851, paying postage from Somers, Ct. to Amboy, Illinois.

William Strong Pease moving westward with the expansion of the railways. William is part of the fifth Pease generation in America.
Three Cent Prepaid Single Rate, not over 3000 miles
Act of March 3, 1855

South Glastonbury, CT hand stamp struck in black on 3 cent Washington stamp of 1851 design, posted circa 1858.

The original stamp designs started in 1851 were reprinted in 1857-61 by Toppan, Carpenter Co. and released with perforations.

Letter to Nancy Pease, daughter of Charles Pease of Glastonbury, Ct. Nancy was a member of the 6th Pease generation in America.
Ten Cent Prepaid Single Rate, over 3000 miles
Act of March 3, 1855
Mandatory Prepayment, stamps compulsory after January 1, 1856

Somers, Connecticut to Milpatas, California on December 16, 1858. Letter is franked with an early use of the ten cent Type III Washington stamp of 1857-61.

William Pease followed the westward expansion of the United States ahead of the transcontinental railway. Per the letter he is “trying is luck” in the gold fields of northern California after crossing overland rather than via the port of San Francisco. In 1859 William would marry Margret Billings, (from Somers, CT) in Toolomene, CA.
Ten Cent Prepaid Single Rate, over 3000 miles
Act of March 3, 1855

Somers, Connecticut to Coluso, California, March 30, 1858 Letter is franked with the ten cent Type III Washington stamp of 1855 (without perforations).

“The hordes attracted by the discovery of gold bypassed this area. As the work of mining gold increased, disgruntled miners sought other means of support. Some came to old Colusi and took up land along the River or in the foothills of the Coast Range Mountains. Small farms and ranches became common. Settlements became towns. The raising of cattle and sheep gave way to fields of barley and wheat. Steamboats on the Sacramento River brought cargo and passengers to Colusa. Oxen or mule drawn wagons carried supplies and food from there to the mines of Shasta and Trinity Counties”

Colusa Historical Society

William Strong Pease is part of the fifth Pease generation in America.
Three Cent Prepaid Single Rate, not over 3000 miles
Act of March 3, 1855

Issue of 1857-61
Martha’s Vineyard island usage (Edgartown, Dukes County MA) to Bristol, RI. Probably carried aboard packet boat to Woods Hole or New Bedford and then over-land to Bristol, probably in 1860-61.

Henrietta Harlow Pease lived only to the age of 14. Her mother had passed away when she was only 8 years old from complications during childbirth. Nancy (Sawyer) Pease and her newborn daughter Eliza were “buried in the same coffin, the child cradled in her mother’s arms”. Henrietta and her sister Lizzie may have been sent to Bristol, RI to live with their grandparents on the mainland. Their father Sylvanus L. Pease was a postmaster of Edgartown, MA.
Two Cent US Internal Revenue stamp used on Carte-De-Visite as payment for tax accessed on photographs.

Round private hand stamp cancel struck in blue from Beaver Dam, Wisconsin on November 9, 1865

The Civil War cost the US government close to 3 Billion dollars. To finance this effort Congress passed the Revenue Act of 1862 on July 1, 1862, that included a broad program of taxes to partially offset the rising cost of the war. The Revenue Act was amended regularly during the war as military expenditures escalated. Schedules B & C of the Act were amended in 1864 to include matches and photographs. The tax on photographs was rescinded 1866

“Aunt Jane Pease”, a member of a group of early settlers in Wisconsin from the family of David Pease in the area of Friendship, Wisconsin
Three Cent Prepaid Single Rate per half ounce rate
(regardless of distance)
Act of March 3, 1863, effective July 1, 1863

The Act of Congress of March 3, 1863 effective July 1, 1863 created a mail rate of three cents for each half ounce, first class domestic mail. This was the first law to establish a uniform rate, regardless of the distance traveled.

Benjamin F. Pease writing to “Father” Philo Pease in Charelon, Ohio from Titusville, PA regarding farm life and “the war being ended”. Philo was apprenticed to learn the tanning and curing trade. He went into a partnership at the age of 22, eventually purchasing the business.
Three Cent Prepaid Single Rate per half ounce rate
(regardless of distance)  Act of March 3, 1863, effective July 1, 1863

Advertising Cover

Printed advertising covers were very popular in the mid nineteenth century. This cover from a steel wool manufacturer bears a 3 cent rose colored Washington stamp and is cancelled with a seven bar circular grid cancel from China, New York.

F. S. Pease of Buffalo, NY was a merchant in Buffalo, New York and is often associated with a postcard and stationary business in that city.
Three Cent Prepaid Single Rate per Half Ounce

Pictorial Stamp Issue of 1869

The three cent locomotive stamp was the workhorse of the 1869 stamp issue, as it paid the basic domestic letter rate for one half ounce. The 1869 stamp issues were the first pictorial stamps issued by the US. Previous stamps were generally portraits of famous leaders.

William S. Pease returned from California to work with his brother, Phineaus Pease, a Brevet Brigadier General in the Civil War and later superintendent of the Midwest railroads in Centralia in 1875.
Three Cent Prepaid Single Rate per Half Ounce

Bank Note Issues of 1870 - 1881

Philo Pease was an Ohio farmer with seven children at the time of this letter. Weir Brothers, a wholesale distributor of vegetables, is looking asking to purchase skids of potatoes in this mailing from Warren, Ohio.

Two examples of “Ladies Covers” of the time. Written by women, these are generally smaller covers with better stationary. These examples are postmarked from Granby, CT and Cornish, Maine.

3 Cent Washington stamp of March 1870 printed on hard white paper by the National Bank Note Company.

Re-engraved 3 Cent Washington stamp of 1881 printed on soft porous paper by the American Bank Note Company.
One Cent Prepaid Card Rate May 1, 1883

Bank Note Issues of 1870 - 1881

Unsolicited advertising cover from 1883, offering a free horse feed bag holder and six dollars for being a sales agent for the bag holders and selling the bags to other farmers.

Alderman & Wright, Inc. patentees of the “Alderman Portable, Self Adjusting Bag Holder” offering special inducements to Philo Pease to sell it’s Holders. Holders recommended by Scientific American of New York!'
Two Cent Prepaid Single Rate per Half Ounce
Act of March 3, 1883

The Act of 1883 reduced the single domestic postage rate from 3 cents to 2 cents per one half ounce, regardless of distance traveled.

Seal Harbor, Maine is located near the Arcadia State Park on the coast of Maine. The enclosure on this cover was a love letter from the future Mrs. W. F. Pease.
Three Cent Domestic Rate per Ounce—Postal Stationary

Stamped envelopes were first issued on July 1, 1853. They have always been created by private contractors and sold to the public at the postage value plus the cost of production. These examples are from a single law firm to the same individual over a span of time.

Bust of G. Washington in Green on Amber envelope from the 1870-71 series (U83).

Bust of G. Washington in Green on Blue envelope from the 1874-86 series (U165).

Bust of G. Washington in Green on Cream envelope from the 1874-86 series (U166).

Albert Pease was born in Poughkeepsie, NY in 1815. He later married Sara Stephens in New Hampshire. They had four children. After her death in 1863, he returned to live in CT near his parents.
Two Cent Prepaid Letter Rate per Full Ounce

Two Cent Washington Stamp Issues of 1890

Printed by the American Bank Note Company in 1890 in two color variations. Domestic postage rate increased the weight allowance from 1/2 Oz. to 1 Oz in 1895 for the same two cent rate.

Love letter mailings from Wesley Pease to Ann Howley who was employed as a domestic servant for Rev. Lawrence of Seal Harbour, ME. She would become Mrs. Wesley Pease in 1894.
Two Cent Prepaid Letter Rate per Full Ounce

Advertising Cover

Two cent regular issue Washington stamp (Type 1) of 1894 used on an advertising cover for a W.H. Pease “Lions Head” hand press. Note the manuscript strike out of the return address from Joliet, Ill. to Los Angeles, CA.

Cover was sent from W.H. Pease, newly located to Los Angeles, to “the folks back home” in Joliet, Ill.
Two Cent Prepaid Single Rate per Half Ounce

2 Cent Stamped Envelope of 1887 – 1894

Pre-printed stamped envelopes were first issued in 1853 and were printed by private companies for the US postal service. The 1887-94 envelopes were printed in New England by the one of two printers in Hartford, CT or Holyoke, MA.

W.F. Pease drove eight-horse wagon teams for a freight company along some of the same Massachusetts roads that Levi Pease (his late cousin) traveled in 1797. He maintained a “lock box” in Williamstown along his route for personal mail. W.F. Pease was an eighth generation American Pease.
One Cent Prepaid Postcard Rate

Jamestown Exposition Stamp Issues of 1907
The turn of the 20th century heralded “the golden age of postcards”. These examples show the 1 cent Captain John Smith stamp on classic Christmas postcards of the era. Dual patriotic flag postmark and receiving cancellations.

Brothers Wesley and Benjamin Pease are 10 years old this for this 1907 Christmas. Both are members of the ninth Pease generation.
One Cent Prepaid Postcard Rate

Railway Post Office Markings

Railway Post Offices were specially constructed rail cars used to service mail while the trains were in motion and speed up mail processing.

Berlin Mills and White Junction Railway served to connect local towns and saw-mills in the “Lakes” region of New Hampshire.

Both examples show that these were “distant” cousins. Both the first and last names of Wesley Pease are mis-spelled!

1 Cent Franklin stamp, Series of 1908, also known as the Third Bureau Issue

1 Cent Franklin stamp, Series of 1902 (issued Feb, 1903)
One Cent Prepaid Card Rate May 1, 1883

Mexican Border / Punative Expedition, 1916

Washington stamp of 1912 pays the franking from a soldier from Company C of the 5th Massachusetts National Guard.

In May of 1916 President Wilson federalized the various state guard units and ordered them into active service on the Mexican border after several raids by forces loyal to Pancho Villa. This unit served in Texas and New Mexico and was part of several “cross border” firefights.

“Bill” Pease is actually Wesley F. Pease, Jr. and sends this postcard back to his brother John B. Pease. Both were members of the ninth Pease generation in America.
Two Cent Prepaid Domestic Single Rate per Half Ounce

Act of Oct. 3, Free Franking Privilege for Overseas Soldiers
WW1 American Expeditionary Force, Company C, 101st Infantry, 26th Yankee Division to Newton Center, Massachusetts. Struck with early use of registered mail postal marking A9200 (Money Order Branch) on October 12, 1917. Newton Center, MA receiving duplex cancel on October 25, 1917. Type C-2 unit censor #133 eagle hand stamp, struck in blue, with censor signature.

Unique stationary from the United Fruit Company Steamship Service. Attributed to the converted fruit steamer “Mallory” used to transport the 26th Yankee Division to St. Nazaire, France. The “Mallory” transported the 101st Infantry, 26th

Wesley F. Pease, Jr. returned from the Mexican Border in October, 1916 only to be returned to Federal Service in June of 1917 as part of the AEF in France in WW1.
Wartime Emergency Postal Rate

Act of November 2, 1917

Effective November 3, 1917 the domestic letter rate was increased to 3-cents per oz. The Postcard rate was increased from 1-cent to 2-cents to help raise funds for the war effort.

Christmas greetings postcard franked with two different printings of the 1 cent Washington Stamp. At left is the Regular Issue, flat plate printing of 1912 - 1914 and on the right is the Regular Issue, flat plate printing of 1917 - 1919.

Mary Pease was the wife of eight generation Wesley F. Pease and mother of ninth generation Wesley F. Pease Jr.
Two Cent Prepaid Domestic Single Rate

Two Cent Washington Stamp Issues were the workhorse of the postal service in the first half of the 20th century. Four different versions of this stamp on Pease mail are presented, ranging from 1929 - 1943

1929 Vertical Coil Stamp

1934 Rotary Press Stamp

1923 Flat Plate Stamp

1925 Horizontal Coil Stamp
Three Cent Domestic Rate per Ounce

Act of July 6, 1932

The act of July 6, 1932 raised the basic letter rate from two cents per ounce to three cents per ounce.

Two Cent Die III stamped envelop of 1915 illustrates the rate before 7/6/32.

Three Cent Die I stamped envelope of 1932 illustrates the rate after 7/6/32.

Mary Pease was the wife of eight generation Wesley F. Pease and mother of ninth generation Wesley F. Pease Jr.
One Cent Prepaid Letter Rate
Presidential Stamp Series

Buffalo, N.Y. pre-cancel

Pease Greeting Card company of Buffalo, New York printed envelope bearing a pre-cancelled one cent Washington stamp. Usage of the pre-cancelled stamp is cited with the abbreviation of Section 34.66 of the Postal Laws and Regulations. During the late 1930’s there were significant changes and expansions in the use of pre-cancelled stamps. The reference “Form 3547 Requested” at the lower right is attributed to being part of the requirements for the postal regulation of the day.

R.H. Pease of New York is attributed by some authors to have printed the first American Christmas cards.
Three Cent Domestic Rate per Ounce

Mothers of America Stamp Issue

Mother’s Day greetings cachet cover from 1934 with U.S. Frigate Constitution post-marked on Sunday on three cent Mothers of America stamp issue of May 2, 1934.

Mary Pease was the wife of eight generation Wesley F. Pease and mother of ninth generation Wesley F. Pease Jr.
One Cent Postcard Rate

Paid Reply Postal Card

Postal reply cards are two postal cards that are purchased from the US Postal Service attached to each other. The entire card set is sent to the addressee, and one half serves to pay the postage. When received, the customer severs the pair and returns the completed half to the sender, without having to attach additional postage.

Above is the card retained by the addressee. The reply card was sent back to the sender as a catalog request form.

After his military service on the Mexican Border, in France in WWI and domestic service in WWII, Wesley Pease worked to maintain the family farm in Massachusetts.
Three Cent Domestic Rate per Ounce

Free Franked Soldiers Mail, WWII

Mail from soldiers was not charged postage during WWII. Per regulations, these letters were to be franked with “Soldiers Mail”, but the requirements were loosely enforced.

John “Benjamin” Pease and Ralph Pease were members of the 9th Pease generation in America. They were distant cousins and never met. Howard would be a carpenter after the war.
Pease Air Force Base was named in honor of New Hampshire native Cpt. Harl Pease, a WWII bomber pilot. He was awarded the Medal of Honor, posthumously for service in the Pacific.

Three Cent Domestic Rate

Cold War Souvenir Cover

Lafayette Bicentenary Issue stamp cancelled on it’s second day of issue with a commemorative Pease Air Force Base Station Cancel. Cover commemorates the Formal Dedication of the Airbase on 7 September, 1957.
Seven Cent Airmail Rate of 1958

Cold War US Army Postal Service
APO 123, New York, NY

Seven Cent flat plate printing Jet Silhouette issued 7/31/58 pays postage for first ounce. Accessed seven cents for additional ounce over-weight, paid with 5 cent carmine postage due Stamp of 1931 and 2 cent Postage due stamp of 1959.

Betsy Pease is a member of the 10th American Pease generation.
Thirty-three cent Domestic Rate

Probing the Vastness of Space Issue

Sixty cent Optical Telescopes of Cerro Tololo, Chile issue of July 2000 overpays the postage on a handmade envelope to Seekonk, MA cancelled in Worcester, MA.

Art Cover Exchange (ACE) handmade envelope with “Star Wars” theme. The topic of the stamp ties the combination together, along with the color of the sky in the stamp and on the envelope. This is the reason for the overpayment of postage.

Ryan Pease is a member of the twelfth American Pease generation