

POSTAL CARDS and HIRAM E. DEATS

By Larry T. Nix

I became aware of Hiram E. Deats (1870-1963), the famous New Jersey philatelist and collector and member of the American Philatelic Society Hall of Fame, through my interest in postal items related to libraries. Deats had a number of significant connections with philatelic and non-philatelic libraries. In going through thousands of dealer covers and searching eBay for library related items I kept coming across postal items related to Deats. Eventually I started collecting these even if they weren't library related. The more I learned about Deats the more fascinated I became with his extraordinary life, and this led me to get more serious about researching his life and in collecting artifacts related to that life. Because libraries used pre-stamped government issued postal cards for a variety of tasks, I have developed a special appreciation of these postal items for the information they convey about both sender and recipient. Deats was a tremendous user and recipient of postal cards, and those cards are a reflection of his life and many varied interests. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of postal items including a large percentage of postal cards either sent or received by Deats that are still in existence. John N. Lupia, a New Jersey student and collector of Deats material, has a collection of over 1,500 items. My own collection consists of about two hundred items, mostly postal cards. In this article I will be focusing on a few of the more interesting Deats postal cards in my collection.

Deats became a philatelic collector at age six and he had regular dealings with stamp dealers at an early age. One of those dealers was Edward Boker Sterling of Trenton, NJ. Sterling was a dealer in U.S. stamps of all kinds and publisher of the *Standard Descriptive Revenue Catalogue*. The postal card shown below was sent by Sterling to Deats on April 28, 1883 in Pittstown, NJ less than a month before Deats turned 13 years old. In the postal card Sterling offers Deats 15 cents each for nine unused 1861 6 cent envelopes. This early relationship between Deats and Sterling led to significant philatelic dealings and a lifelong friendship.

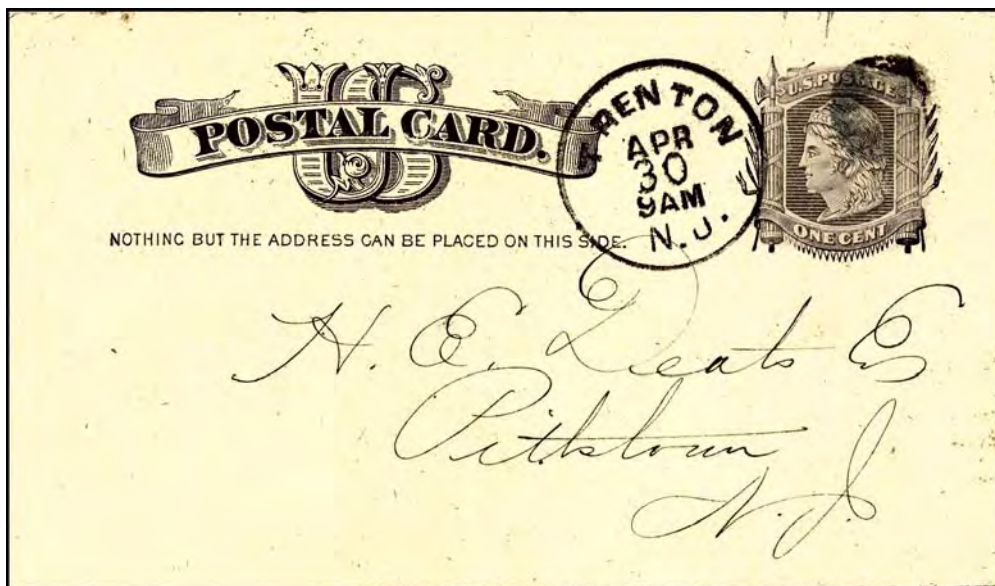


Fig. 1a: UX 7 postal card mailed by Sterling to Deats in Pittstown in 1883.

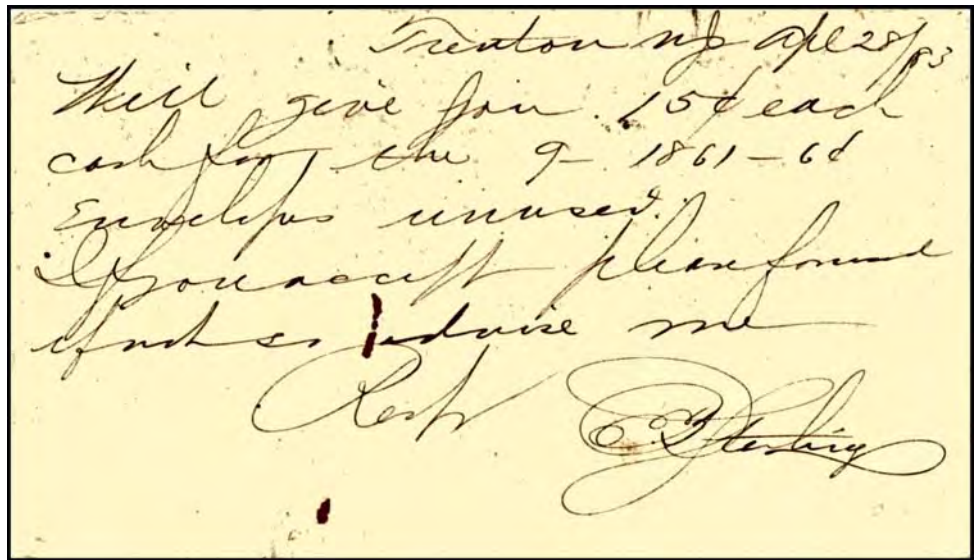


Fig. 1b: Message side of postal card.

The shared interests of Deats and Sterling outside of philately is demonstrated by the reply postal card shown in *Figures 2a* and *2b* which was mailed by Sterling to Deats on November 4 just prior to the election in 1892. Sterling writes, “We expect to carry the full Republican Ticket in Mercer Co. & shall most certainly elect John Kean Governor” Sterling’s prediction in regard to the governor’s race turned out to be too optimistic. The Democratic candidate won the election.



Fig. 2a: UY3 message reply postal card mailed by Sterling to Deats in 1892 with the purple received stamp routinely used by Deats.

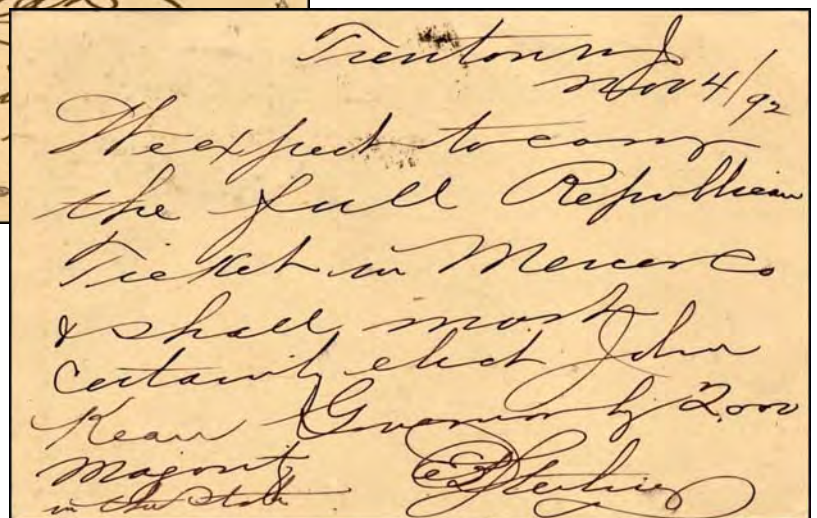


Fig. 2b: Message side of reply postal card.

POSTAL CARDS & HIRAM E. DEATS ~ Larry T. Nix

From 1891 to 1905 Deats edited and published a magazine called *The Jerseyman*. Deats described it as “An Amateur Journal devoted to airing the pet opinions of the Editor and others.”

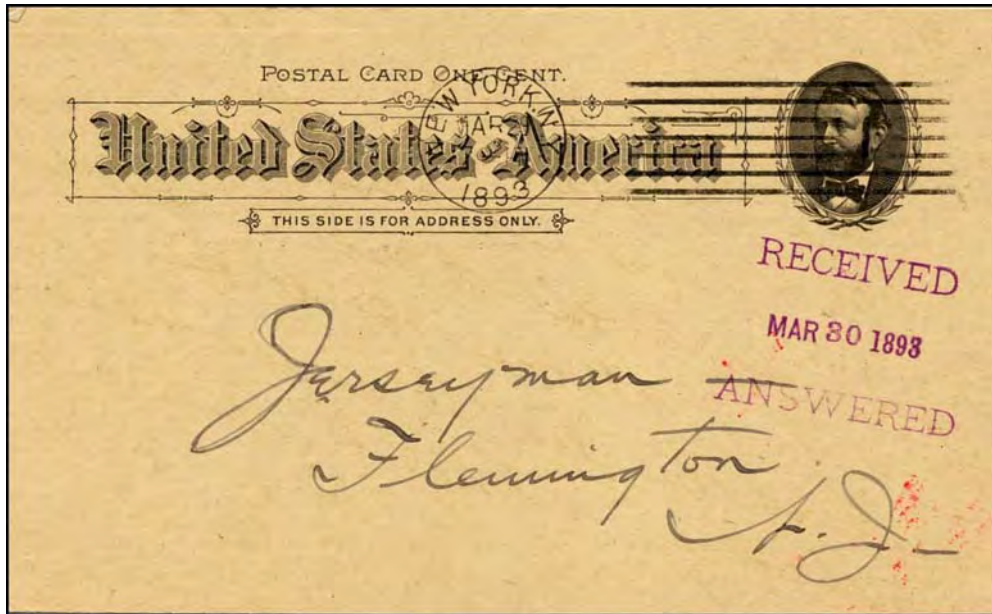


Fig. 3: UX 10 postal card mailed to *The Jerseyman* in Flemington by the publisher of the *American Newspaper Directory* in 1893, with Deats purple received stamp.

Deats was a collector of bookplates or “ex libris.” He compiled one of the most extensive

collections of bookplates in the world. The Great Britain post card below was mailed to Deats by W. H. K. Wright, Secretary of the Ex Libris Society in London, England. The message on the card mentions 1800 bookplate examples which Wright has sent to Deats in “three packets securely fastened and sealed.”

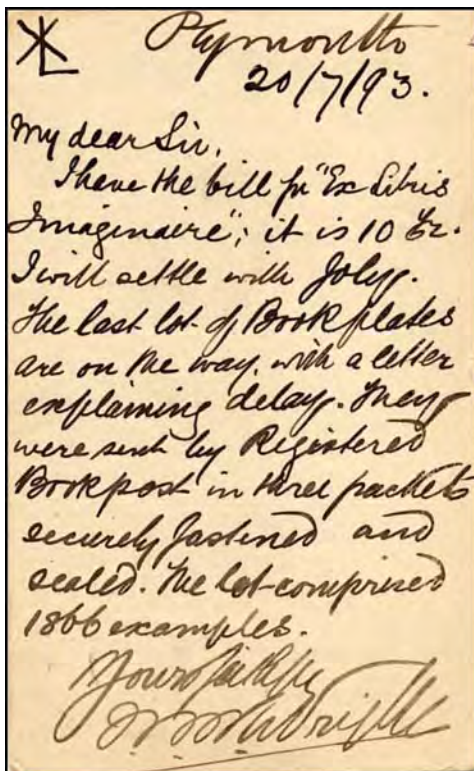


Fig. 4b: Message side of post card.

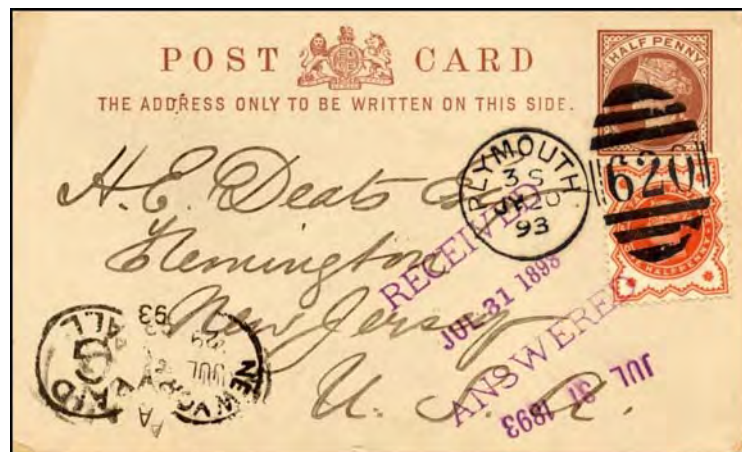


Fig. 4a: Great Britain post card uprated to one penny international rate and mailed from Plymouth, England to Deats in 1893.

Deats was an avid student of the history of New Jersey and specifically of Hunterdon County. He personally facilitated the publishing of a number of historical documents related to the history of Hunterdon County, and often these documents were donated to historical organizations and libraries. The postal card below is an acknowledgement from the State Historical Society of Wisconsin of a donation of several of these publications.

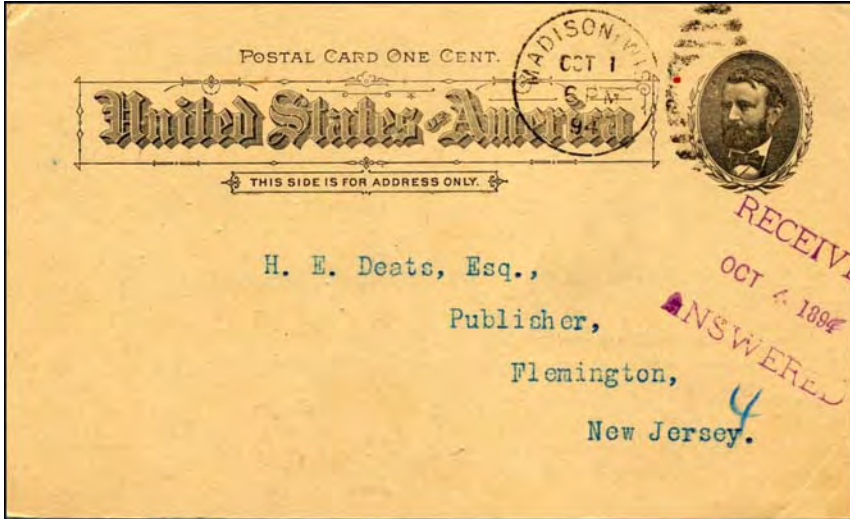


Fig. 5a: UX 10 postal card mailed to Deats as “Publisher” in 1894.

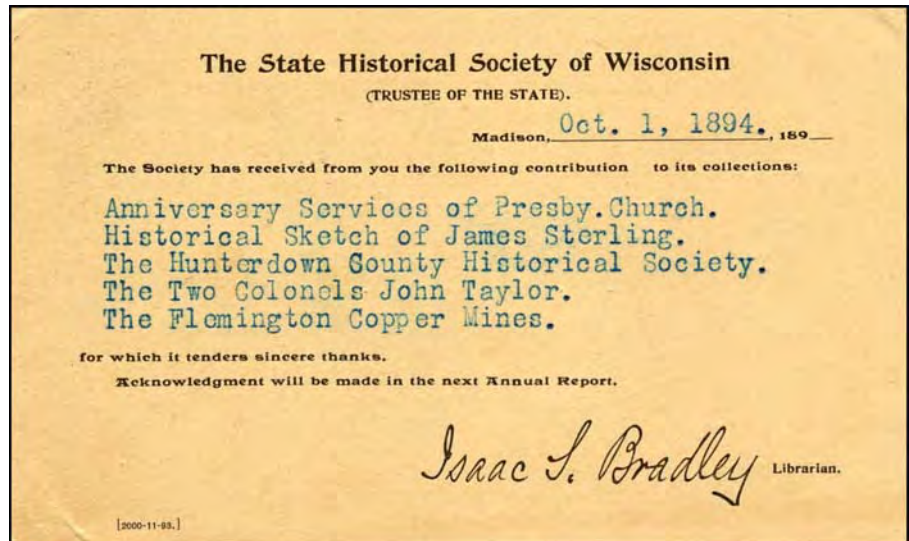


Fig. 5b: Message side of postal card with list of publications.

I have a couple of postal cards in my collection addressed to Deats in Pasadena, CA. Curious about what he was doing in California, I contacted the Hiram E. Deats Memorial Library of the Hunterdon County Historical Society where his personal archives are located. In checking through his diaries they found that beginning on October 21, 1895 he undertook a major trip to California that lasted until May 25, 1896. While in California he stayed with relatives, and spent time visiting, “loafing,” attending Knights Templar meetings and working on his stamp collection.

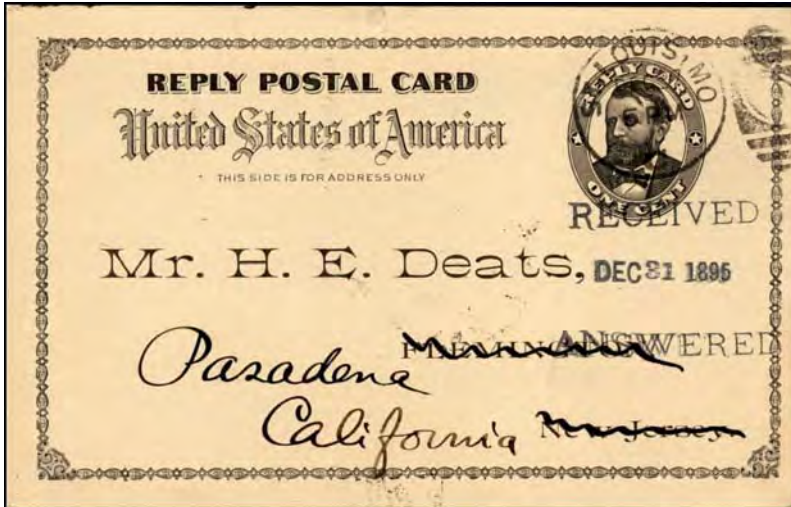
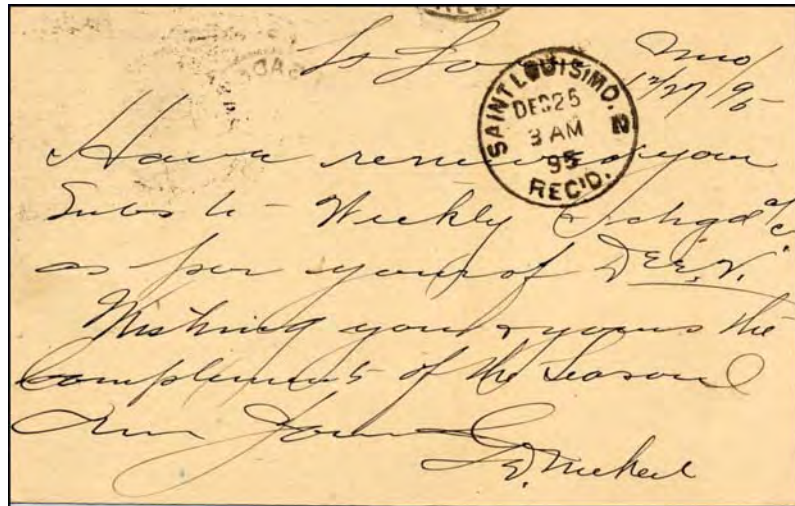
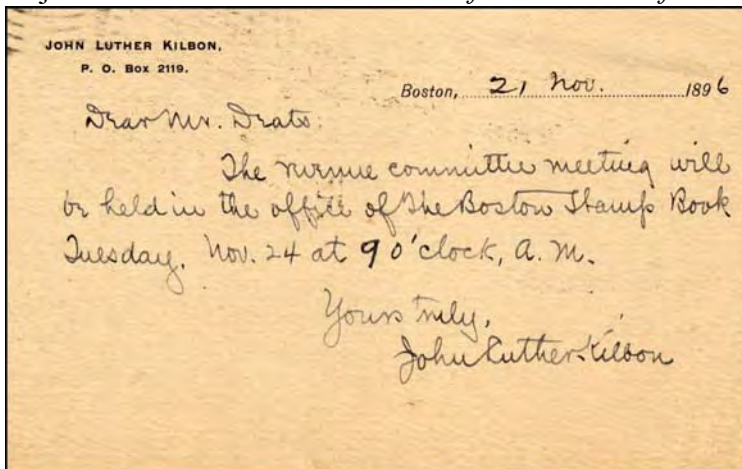


Fig. 6a: Address side of the reply portion of a UY3 reply postal card. It was pre-addressed to Deats but the address was probably changed by Deats from Flemington to Pasadena before he mailed the original postal card. It was received by Deats on December 31, 1895.

Fig. 6b: Message side of the postal card. The message is from George D. Mekeel. He indicates that the subscription to "Weekly" has been renewed and changed per Deats' instruction.



One of the greatest philatelic interests of Deats was revenue stamps and paper. Deats was a joint author of *An Historical Reference List Of The Revenue Stamps Of The United States*,



Including The Private Die Proprietary Stamps published by the Boston Philatelic Society in 1899. This work is commonly known as *The Boston Revenue Book* and has been reprinted. The postal card in Figure 7 is a notification of a meeting of the revenue committee of the Boston Philatelic Society in the office of The Boston Stamp Book.

Fig. 7: Message side of a UX 12 postal card mailed to Deats in 1896 by John Luther Kilbon of Boston.

Deats was founding member No. 36 of the American Philatelic Association (now the American Philatelic Society), joining in 1886 at the age of 16. He served the association in several elected positions including Librarian. While Librarian he mailed the postal card below to Stanley Gibbons in London.



Fig. 8a: UX 10 postal card mailed by Deats to Stanley Gibbons in London in 1897. Although it was uprated the postage was still insufficient because of the size of the postal card and it was refused and returned.

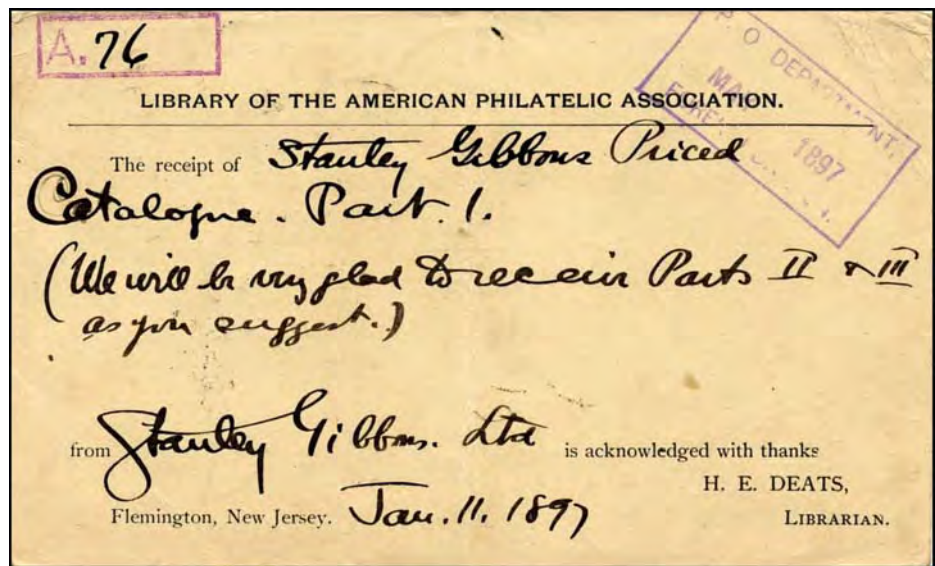


Fig. 8b: Message side of postal card.

Deats was the first president of the Flemington Library Association, a predecessor to the Flemington Free Public Library. The postal card below is an acknowledgement for his payment to *The Publishers' Weekly* for subscriptions (including *Library Journal*) for himself and for Elizabeth Van Liew, the first librarian of the Flemington Library Association. It was good that Deats paid for Liew's \$2 subscription to *Library Journal* since she only received \$1 per week as salary.

POSTAL CARDS & HIRAM E. DEATS ~ Larry T. Nix



Fig. 9a: UX 18 postal card mailed to Deats from New York City in 1905.

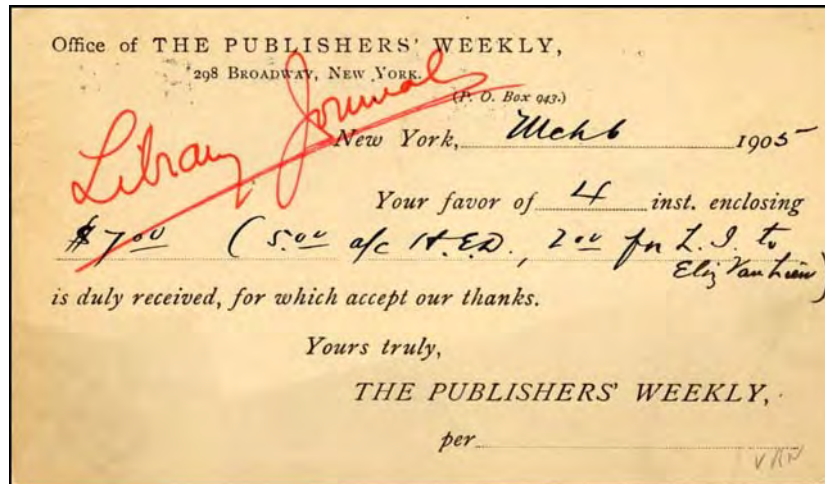


Fig. 9b: Message side of postal card.

A major indication of the serious interest that Deats had for libraries was his election as President of the New Jersey Library Association in 1909-1910.



Fig. 10: UX 19 postal card mailed by the New York State Library in 1910.

Deats served as Librarian of the Hunterdon County Historical Society (HCHS) for 67 years. The postal card below was mailed to Deats at the HCHS on June 3, 1918. Deats bequeathed much of his historical collection to the HCHS and its reference library.

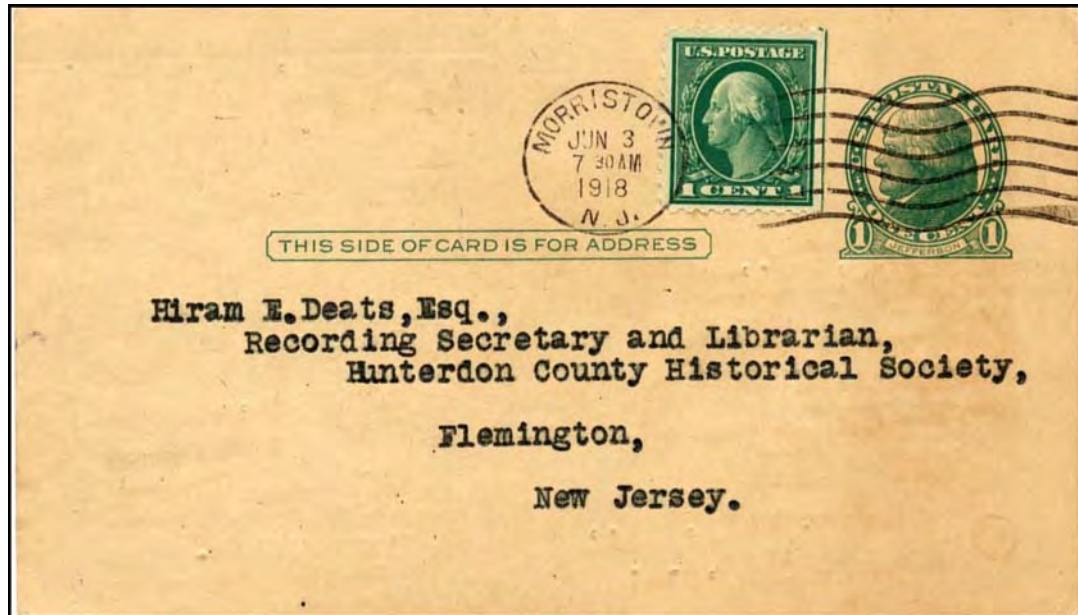


Fig. 11: UX 27 postal card uprated to the 2 cent World War I temporary rate.

Deats was a founder and member of the Collectors Club of New York and served as librarian of the Club from 1896 to 1900. The postal card below is a reminder of the upcoming 27th Annual Dinner of the Club.

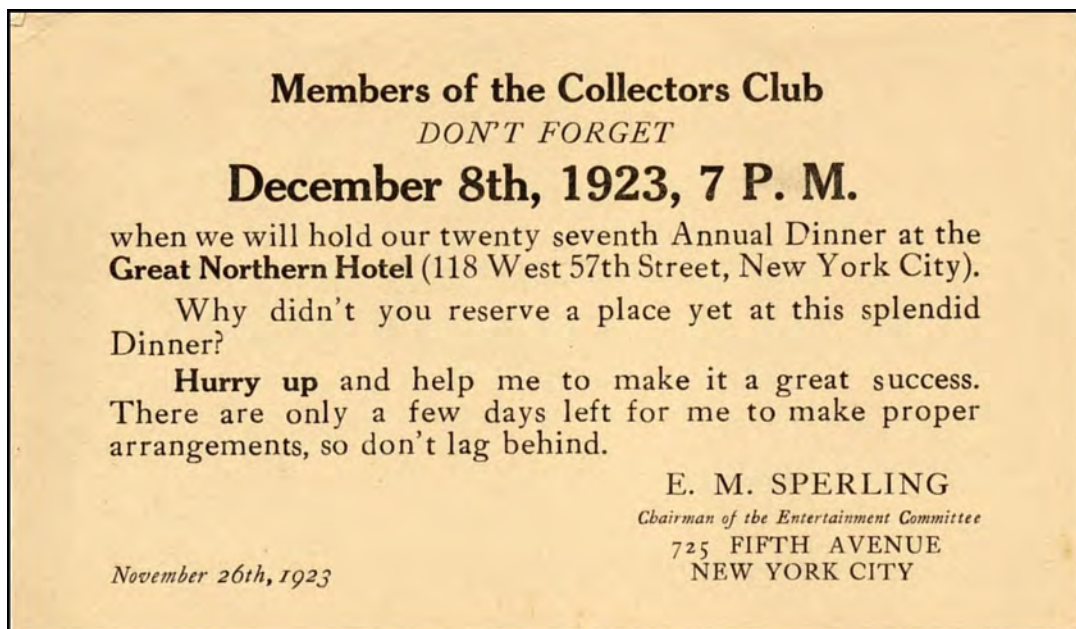


Fig. 12: Message side of a UX 27 postal card mailed to Deats by the Collectors Club of NY in 1923.

POSTAL CARDS & HIRAM E. DEATS ~ Larry T. Nix

My interest in Hiram Deats has resulted in my compilation of a two frame philatelic exhibit about Deats which I have shown in several World Series of Philately shows and which I hope to expand further. In my research into the life of Hiram Deats I am grateful for two earlier articles in *NJPH*, the journal of the New Jersey Postal History Society. They are Jim Walker's "Hiram E. Deats: Hunterdon's Farmer-Philatelist" in the November 2006 issue and Gene Fricks' "Hiram E. Deats: Further Thoughts" in the February 2007 issue.

I have a blog called The Library History Buff Blog in which I have published several posts about Deats. Visit the links to those posts below for a different view of this extraordinary New Jersey philatelist.

"Hiram E. Deats, Philatelic Bibliophile"

<http://libraryhistorybuff.blogspot.com/2011/03/hiram-e-deats-philatelic-bibliophile.html>

"Bookplates and Hiram E. Deats"

<http://libraryhistorybuff.blogspot.com/2013/05/bookplates-and-hiram-e-deats.html>

"Hiram E. Deats (1870-1963) of New Jersey Revisited"

<http://libraryhistorybuff.blogspot.com/2014/01/hiram-e-deats-1870-1963-of-new-jersey.html>



Hiram E. Deats

Birth: May 20, 1870

Death: Mar. 16, 1963

FLEMINGTON, NJ