

Sorry, no mail today. Post Office on strike!

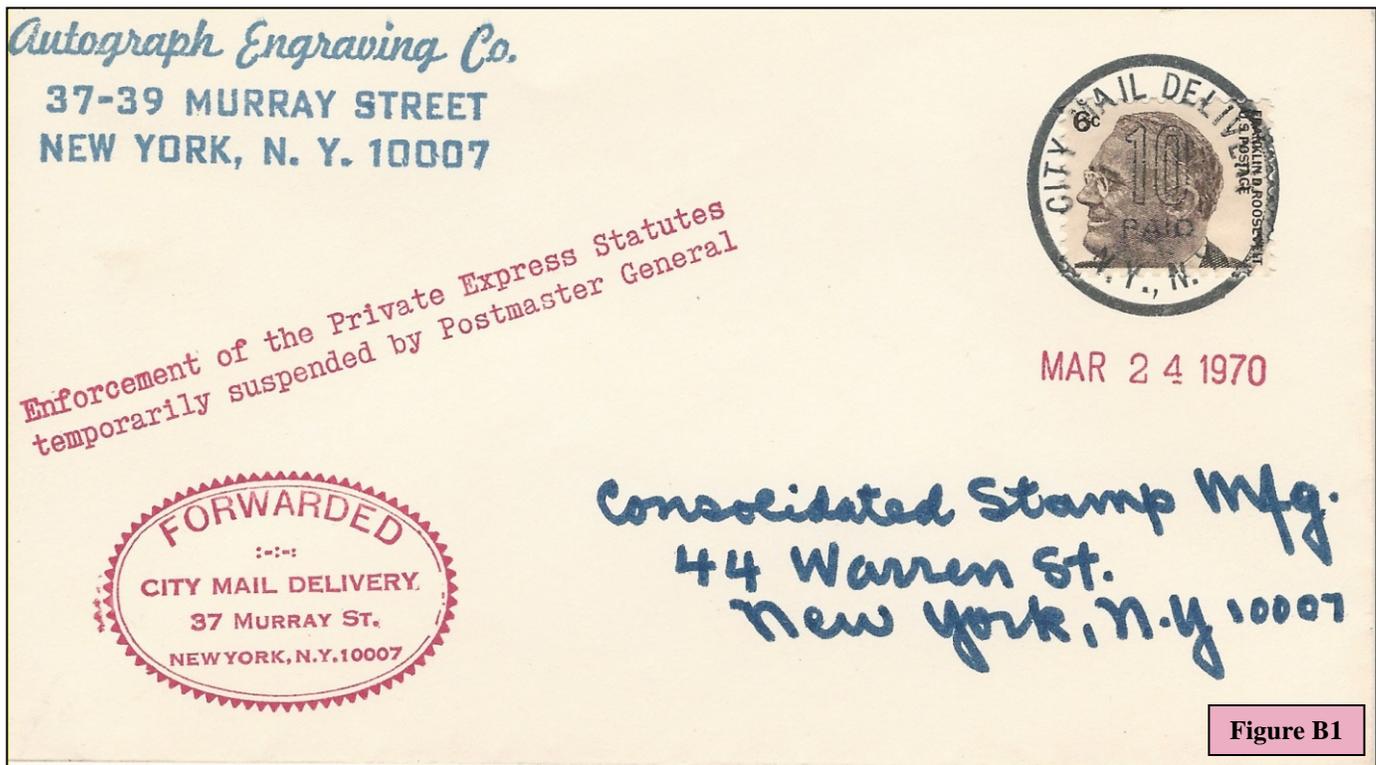
by Josh Furman

Did you think it couldn't happen? Well it did! March of 2018 marks the 48th anniversary of one of the most momentous events in postal history—the postal strike of 1970.

Then, as now, our Congress members looked after themselves with little regard for the common worker. Postal workers in New York voted to go out on strike in protest of a House committee vote to limit their wage increase that year to 5.4 percent, while raising Congress's own pay by 41 percent! The wildcat strike and picketing were effective in shutting down postal operations in New York and quickly spread to other cities. Within days about 152,000 workers in 671 locations were on strike. The strike shut down New York's financial industry, kept 9,000 youths from receiving draft notices, delayed the mailing of census forms and tax refunds, and generally disrupted the country's communications.¹

There's a lot more to the story of this strike and how it was finally settled, and the pay increases eventually gained by postal workers.

But is there philatelic evidence of this tumultuous happening? Yes. See Figure B1.



Here we have a cover mailed from one New York enterprise to another, but with some unusual markings. Let's look first at the two-line announcement, "Enforcement of the Private Express Statutes/temporarily suspended by Postmaster General". What are the 'Private Express Statutes'?

The Private Express Statutes are a group of laws under which the U. S. Postal Service has the exclusive right, with certain limited exceptions to carry letters for compensation. The Statutes are based on the provision in the U. S. Constitution that empowers Congress "to establish Post Offices." Congress enacted the Statutes to protect the USPS and thereby enable it to fulfill its mission of providing mail service to all parts of the country at

uniform rates. The Statutes enable the USPS to fulfill its responsibilities by preventing private courier services from competing selectively with the USPS on its most profitable routes.^{2 & 3}

So, with the Postal Service basically disabled by this strike, the Postmaster General, in order to allow mail to move at all, temporarily suspended the enforcement of this law. This allowed private carriers to deliver mail, and avoid the disturbance caused by the shut-down of the Post Office.

Now look again at the cover. We see two references to “City Mail Delivery”, clearly a private enterprise created to allow the sender to deliver its correspondence outside of the USPS. The cancel shows that it charged an extra 10 cents for the privilege.

This strike influenced the contents of the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970 which transformed the post office into the more corporate United States Postal Service and guaranteed collective bargaining rights (though not the right to strike).⁴

Isn't postal history fun?

Commercial: This cover is for sale. See me. Author.

¹ <https://www.uspsoidg.gov/blog/postal-strike-1970>

² <https://pe.usps.com/text/qsg300/Q608.htm>

³ For more on the Private Express Statutes, see DMM ©USPS, January 2006

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._postal_strike_of_1970

New Member Profile: Greg Priewe



I was born June, 18th, 1960 in Orlando, Florida. I started collecting when I was about ten years old. After attending Lake Como, Howard and Boone, I went into the Air Force in 1982. I retired proudly from the military in 2002, after twenty years of service. After working at various positions, I decided that I wanted something more than working for someone else and in 2006 I formed Complete Auto Repair Service, “Fast and Friendly -- We Come to You!”, a mobile auto repair business.

I enjoy collecting both mint and used US and world-wide stamp singles. I look forward to my new membership into the Central Florida Stamp Club.

[Editor's note: Yes he is holding a black cat.]