

The Library of Congress 1800-1974

The Library of Congress has the largest collection and the most extensive services of any library in the world. It serves the dual role of being the legislative library for the United States Congress and the national library of the United States of America. **Using a variety of philatelic and non-philatelic items this exhibit tells the story of the Library of Congress during the period 1800 to 1974.** The exhibit is organized chronologically around significant periods in the library's history determined by who served as Librarian of Congress during those periods. Each period is arranged according to activities and events, collections, services, and copyright during those periods. The postal history of the library is an integral part of the exhibit. **More interesting/significant individual items in the exhibit have been highlighted by a bold red border.**

Exhibit Plan

Early Years 1800-1864

Spofford/Young Years 1865-1899

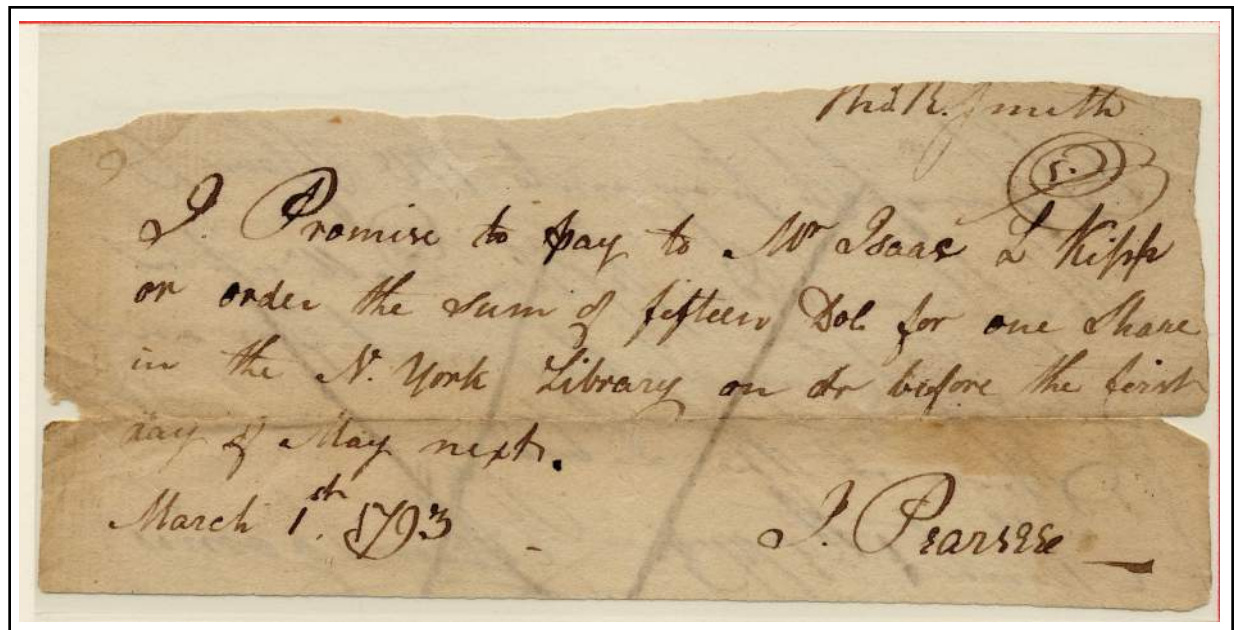
Putnam Years 1899-1939

McLeish/Evans/Mumford Years 1939-1974

Epilogue

The New York Society Library is a membership library supported by the purchase of shares and annual dues. In **1789** the library was located in the New York City Hall where the first session of the U.S. Congress took place. The library's collection was made available freely to the members of Congress. Thus for a brief period it served as the **first library of congress.**

Note dated
March 1, 1793, is
from I. Pearsee to
Isaac L. Kipp. It
promises to pay
the sum of \$15
for one share in
the **New York
Society Library.**



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Synopsis

Using a variety of philatelic and non-philatelic items this exhibit tells the story of the Library of Congress during the period 1800 to 1974. The postal history of the Library of Congress is a significant aspect of the exhibit. It is a complete revision of a 9 frame exhibit titled "America's Library: The Library of Congress" which was last shown in an APS show in 2017. A major difference in the two exhibits is the time-period. The 2017 exhibit covered the period 1800 to the present. The decision to end the coverage of the current exhibit in 1974 was based on the fact that it concludes 175 years of the Library's history and ends with the tenure of one of the Library's greatest librarians (L. Quincy Mumford).

Treatment

The exhibit is organized chronologically around significant periods in the library's history determined by who served as Librarian of Congress during those periods. The exhibit ends with an Epilogue that features more recent Librarians of Congress. Each period is arranged by sections dealing with: activities and events; collections; services; and copyright. Some overlap between sections was unavoidable. The postal history of the Library of Congress is integrated into all sections of the exhibit. The entry for each item in the exhibit includes thematic information first in regular type. It is followed by philatelic information in italics, and for some items such as postcards information is provided in small bold type.

Importance

The overall importance of the exhibit is that it provides an integration of a thematic and a postal history approach to telling the story of a prominent American institution - the Library of Congress. **The philatelic importance of this exhibit is that it constitutes the only comprehensive treatment of the postal history of the Library of Congress.** I have been aggressively collecting postal artifacts related to the Library of Congress for more than 40 years. The exhibit documents the sequence of postal use for outgoing mail by the Library of Congress for the first time. The challenge factor in compiling this exhibit is extremely high and it would be impossible to replicate it.

Knowledge & Research

I have undertaken extensive research on the history of the Library of Congress and how it has used the mail throughout that history. I have more than 2 dozen books related to the Library's history in my personal library. I have written more than 50 blog posts about the Library in my [Library History Buff Blog](#). My collection of Library of Congress postal artifacts accumulated over a 40 year period constitutes a unique research collection. It is the largest such collection in the world. I'm a 25 year member of the American Philatelic Society and a life member of the American Philatelic Research Library. I received the APS Research Award for the previous version of this exhibit. I have also received the AAPE Diamond Award.

Condition & Rarity

Because of my 40 year history of collecting in this specialized area, I am the primary arbiter of rarity for items in the exhibit. Covers actually sent to and from the Library of Congress are extremely difficult to find. On a recent search of eBay there were 290,000 US postal history covers listed. Of those less than two dozen had actually been mailed or received by the Library of Congress. 19th century material included in the exhibit was more difficult to acquire especially material before 1890.

There are some especially strong non-philatelic items in the exhibit used to advance the story. The postcards featuring the 1897 Jefferson Building are scarce. I have included material in the exhibit in the best condition available. Historical and/or postal significance trumps condition.

Presentation

Presentation is straight forward. I continue to primarily use single pages. The exhibit uses scans which vary in size but are easily distinguished from the real items.

Resources for Study

There are numerous online resources about the history of the Library of Congress. A Library of Congress history link: <https://www.loc.gov/about/history-of-the-library/>

There are over 50 posts about the Library of Congress on my Library History Buff Blog: <https://libraryhistorybuff.blogspot.com/search/label/Library%20of%20Congress> .

There are pages from a much earlier version of this exhibit on my website (no longer active): <https://www.libraryhistorybuff.org/philatelicexhibit-loc.htm> .