

Subsidiary Page 26

Paper and Wax Seals

Postal historians are interested in the wax and/or paper seals on the backs of many of their older covers. There are two types of seals: gummed paper seals and wax seals.

The wafer or gummed paper seal is much like a postage stamp and should be looked upon in the same way. The adhesives used in affixing them to a cover vary widely. They are generally marked in ink with a printed monogram or initial. Some of the larger wafer seals are sensitive to moisture.

Very occasionally, the chemicals in wax seals will migrate and can present a threat to the face of the cover. In such cases, it is often best to place a piece of plastics film such as polypropylene or polyester inside the cover to act as a barrier to migrating materials from the seal. Such papers placed inside the cover should be examined periodically and changed, if necessary.

Wax seals contain bee's wax, shellac, and often a pigment. They are hard, brittle, and adhere to the surface of the paper. Care should be taken to prevent them from being broken or crushed. Otherwise, they present little problem in conservation.