

Letter Carriers' Uniform: Badges

1887-1922

Numbered badges to be worn on the hat, cap, or helmet were first prescribed for letter carriers in the 1887 *Postal Laws and Regulations*. From 1887 until 1922, regulations specified the wreath-style badge for letter carriers, but by the 1890s uniform companies had introduced additional badge styles. As with other variable uniform features, such as the style of jacket or color of shirt, while the exact style worn varied from city to city, all of the carriers within a city were to wear the same style.



Fig. 1: Badge, 1887-1922



Fig. 2: Badge, 1888 (patent date) - 1922



Fig. 3: Badge, 1888 (patent date) - 1922



Fig. 4: Badge, pre-1922, years of use unknown



Fig. 5: Badge, pre-1922, years of use unknown

The wreath-style badge shown in Figure 1 was the first authorized for letter carriers. From 1887 until 1922, this was the style described for carrier use in the *Postal Laws and Regulations*. The Heller Patent Badge, as seen in Figures 2 and 3, with a patent date of April 10, 1888, shows up in photographs of letter carriers in *The Postal Record* as early as 1891. The scalloped style badge (Fig. 4) first appeared in ads in the September 1894 issue of *The Postal Record*. A variation of the Heller Patent Badge (Fig. 5) appeared in an ad for a letter carrier's hat in the May 1911 issue of *The Postal Record*. The extent of its use is not known.

1922-1982



Fig. 6: Badges, 1922-1982

In 1922, the eagle badge replaced the earlier versions. The *Postal Laws and Regulations* initially specified that the words "U.S. POST OFFICE" would appear along the top of the badge and that the name of the Post Office and state would appear along the bottom. By 1960, the *Postal Manual* specified that the words "LETTER CARRIER" would appear along the bottom. The pin closure (top row, right) was replaced by a tack and screw post closure in 1968.

The 1975 *Postal Manual* specified that badges were to be displayed on the headgear when worn (headgear became optional in 1972). When no headgear was worn, the badge was to be placed over the left breast of the outside garment, or, if this was not practicable, in plain view on the belt or as directed. Photographs of letter carriers in the late 1970s show that a badge was not always worn. Since 1982, letter carriers have not been required to wear numbered badges.

Photograph Credits:

Figures 1, 5, 6: Artifacts in the collection of the USPS Historian

Figures 2 & 3: National Postal Museum, Smithsonian Institution™, 2001. Bill Lommel, photographer

Figure 4: *The Postal Record*, September 1894