

July 2026

Volume 26 Number 7

Newsletter of the Lake County (IL)

Philatelic Society - Established 1933

Website: LCPSHOME.ORG

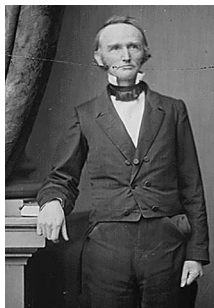
Perforations



Last month was the clubs Annual Swap Meet with an extra presentation by Gary Olson on the Boson 2026 World Stamp Show.

This month Gary will again be speaking on the many varieties of **"Swedish Booklets."**

Future presentations, include **"Is It Russian or Suomi (Finnish)?"** by Dave Schenkel (August 25) before he escapes back to Florida for the winter and on September 22, Ed Pieklo will continue with his **"Century of Progress (1933-34)"** series.



Of the 76 Postmaster Generals/ US Postal Service Heads how many can you recall — other than **Benjamin Franklin** and **James Farley** probably none (OK — maybe **Louis DeJoy**).

How about **Montgomery Blair** ... The name **Montgomery Blair** is usually forgotten by the general population. However, as postmaster general under Abraham Lincoln during the American Civil War, he was very much in the public eye during a very tumultuous time in United States history and did much to reform the nations postal system..

Montgomery Blair was the oldest son of Francis Preston Blair, a **Jacksonian Democrat** who was best known as editor of the Globe, a newspaper founded at the request of President Jackson to allow the public insight into the work of **HIS** administration.

Born Franklin County KY in 1813 he graduated from **West Point** in 1836. After serving in the **Seminole-Indian War**, he returned to school to study law at Transylvania University in Kentucky; graduating and then relocated to Missouri in the late 1830's to begin a law practice. In Missouri, he served as a United States District Attorney for the Missouri from 1839-1841 and the mayor of St. Louis from 1842-1843.

In 1853 he moved to Washington DC, where he served as counsel to *Dred Scott* in the 1856 Supreme Court case **Dred Scott vs. Sanford**.

Though Blair's family were Democrats, they left the party in the late 1850's because of its pro-slavery leanings and joined the new, anti-slavery Republican Party. In 1860, Montgomery Blair was appointed and served as the president of the 1860 Republican state convention in Maryland. Once Lincoln won the Republican presidential ticket for the 1860 election, the Blair's put all their support into his campaign. Because of the Blair family's prominence in politics and the immense support that they gave to Lincoln during his campaign, there were expectations of a cabinet appointment for one of the Montgomery two sons.

In the end, Montgomery Blair was ultimately chosen as a voice from the Border States who, as a former Democrat, would hopefully appease southerners.) Furthermore, Blair's strong abolitionist tendencies were in line with Lincoln's. Blair began on 1861 March 05 — about a month before the bombardment of Ft Sumter (12 April), with an seemingly insurmountable road ahead of him. The state of the Post Office Department was in near shambles financially and the public was not wholly satisfied with the services. However, Blair took on the challenge; despite setbacks and the fact that he had already made many enemies in the political sphere. Blair's many accomplishments in that post are still relevant to the postal system today.

The chief problem that Blair encountered when he became postmaster general was the postal debt. When he entered office at the beginning of 1861, the postal deficit was almost \$6 million. The Department had experienced similar deficits since 1855 when prepayment of postage had been made compulsory. Confusion over the demands of pre-paid postage along with consumer reluctance to comply with the rules was a contributing factor to the deficit. Congress was reluctant to sufficiently increase the nation's postal budget. To combat this issue, Blair enforced prepayment of postage across the nation.

Next Show							Next Meeting						
September 26							July 26						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
		1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30				27	28	29	30	31		
September 25 - 26 MILCOPEX 2026							Swedish Booklets						
Brookfield Conf Ctr 325 S Moorland Rd Brookfield WI													

In the midst of this changing postal world Blair argued that the Department could not serve the public to its fullest extent until it was functioning internally to the best of its ability. In that instance he argued, although lowering postage rates would benefit the public, to ensure optimal internal operations the department had to turn the red ink black. One of the best ways to accomplish this was to keep postage at its then-current rate, until the department could afford to lower it.

Blair didn't just look at the American public for his cost-cutting measures. He looked at the expensive process of "franking mail." The franking system allows government officials to substitute their signature for postage. But in need of Congressional support for his reforms, he left their franking system alone. But a group using the frank that was well under Blair's control was the nation's postmasters. It had been given to postmasters making above a certain salary for use in the mailing of official government materials. However, due to a lack of supervision and organization, this privilege began to be used for personal mail; in some cases, family members were also benefitting from the frank. The worst offenders were those postmasters who had careers in addition to their postmaster position and would also use their frank for business purposes. In 1863, he reported:

Next Meeting:

2:00-PM on Tuesday, 28 July 2026

Grayslake Historical Society — Any Changes will
be posted on: lcpshome.org



Tom Willer - Presidents
Officers: Bill Schultz – Vice President
Dave Sadler – Secretary
Gary Olson – Treasurer

"The personal privilege of franking travels with the person possessing it and can be exercised in but one place at the same time. The postmaster cannot leave his frank behind him for the usage of his family when he is traveling on pleasure or business. Therefore, if a person enjoying the privilege of a frank, is known not to be in the vicinity, the frank is to be disregarded, the letter rated, and postage marked due."

That same year the rules regarding the frank were tightened further and now applicable to all executive departments

Money Orders - Inspired by the success Great Britain had already achieved in instituting a money order system. By May 1864, the U.S. system became a reality when Congress passed the money order bill into law.

The program became quite popular. In the early years of the service, it found the anticipated audience among soldiers receiving money from family during the Civil War and later was widely used by immigrants who used the service to send money back to family in their native countries.

Free Delivery - Another program initiated under Blair was the system of free mail delivery in cities. The service provided for letter carriers, employed by city post offices, to deliver mail directly to residents' homes and even pick up outgoing mail. Prior to its inception, the process of obtaining mail from the post office could be a tedious or costly affair. People had to walk to their post office to retrieve or send mail, which took a considerable time out of the day, especially if they lived far from their post office. For those who could afford it, there was another option. Decades earlier, Congress had approved the use of private carriers, giving patrons the option of paying couriers to retrieve their mail. The system was out of the reach of most Americans and only available in the 188 large cities (over 5,000 population – starting with congressional approval for 49 cities in 1863 (Chicago and Peoria in Illinois). As a result, the Boston Daily reported that the system had been progressing very well: *"Everyone understands how great a convenience it is to be spared the necessity of going or sending to a distance...for a letter, which may just as well be brought to his door."* Free city delivery was a revolutionary step forward for the Post Office Department. It was a crucial stepping stone in transforming the Post Office Department from simply an information-based transportation system to one based on public needs, making it a better-used and more efficient system.

Railway Mail - In the mid-nineteenth century, the fastest way to distribute mail across the country was via railroads. When Blair entered office in 1861, the system in place was simple. Mail was organized for distribution by postal clerks and then piled by bags into trains and then off them again for redistribution multiple times before finally making it to its destination.

Using the Canadian model established in Canada in 1859, which used railway post offices—in effect, fully functioning post offices situated in a train car, where postal clerks sorted mail while the train was in motion, Blair implemented the first organized Railway Mail system in the US with a first test run with a fully functioning mail car—a car designed specifically for sorting mail—ran from Chicago to Clinton, Iowa on 1864 August 28.

International Mail - In 1861, when Blair entered office as the Postmaster General, the system of sending mail to countries outside of the United States was complicated and unorganized. Different countries charged different postage rates, so the cost of sending a letter to Great Britain was different than sending a letter of the same size to Costa Rica. Additional difficulties arose when mail had to be transported through multiple countries prior to reaching its destination; each country that a given piece of mail went through would charge for postage. This meant that the cost of a letter sent to Greece from the United States varied depending on the six possible routes it could be sent through. This situation led to grossly unequal postage rates and a growing amount of frustration and confusion regarding the issue of international postage.

In response to this growing need for a more universalized system, the Paris Congress assembled in the summer of 1863; representatives from fifteen countries came together to discuss the possibility of universalizing postage. While nothing permanent was established at the Paris Congress, certain rules were agreed upon. However, despite the fact that some progress was made in Paris, Blair's pursuit for a Universal Postal Union was not realized until 1874, ten years after he had resigned from office.

Politics and Reconstruction - Montgomery Blair was recognized throughout his political career as a **very outspoken** man. He stood up for what he believed in and was unafraid to make enemies, even in a political atmosphere where all of the odds were against him.

Radical Republicans believed that once the war ended, the Southern states had no right to rejoin the Union in their pre-war status; the South was a region of traitorous conspirators who had, in effect committed "state suicide."

Conservative Republicans, by contrast, generally believed that the insurrection of the southern states was mounted by a few powerful and wealthy politicians and plantation owners who coerced the majority of the southern population—loyal Union citizens—into joining the rebellion. The states as a whole should not be punished for the acts of the insurrection's leaders; conservative Republicans believed that those leaders would be punished in due time and that the southern states should be readmitted into the Union as soon as possible.

As a devout abolitionist who disagreed with the Radical Republicans on many aspects of their politics, particularly reconstruction, the outspoken Blair continued to make enemies. He spoke openly, and bluntly, about his opponents, and as he had little toleration for any beliefs that weren't in line with his own.

Resignation - The Radical Republicans gave Lincoln an ultimatum—they would not support him in his bid for reelection unless he removed Blair from his cabinet; if Blair was not removed, they would vote for their third-party radical Republican nominee, John Frémont. Blair, aware of the radical faction's hatred for

him, had tried to resign twice in 1864, but Lincoln refused both times. In early September 1864, the president was warned by Senator Henry Wilson of MA that *"Tens of thousands of men will be lost to you or will give a reluctant vote on account of the Blairs."*

On 1864 September 23 Lincoln sent a letter to Blair in which he asked Blair to resign from the position of Postmaster General. While the President stated that he always appreciated Blair's friendship and his

hard work, citing, ***"...in the three years and a half during which you have administered the General Post Office, I remember no single complaint against you ..."***

Montgomery Blair resigned the next day and Fremont dropped out of the Presidential race ...

Source: Mostly from the Postal Museum, Smithsonian - <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/research-article/montgomery-blair>

New Issue
July 2026



Barbie

Since debuting in 1959, Barbie has empowered generations to believe you can be anything. From surgeon to firefighter, judge to soccer player, Barbie has represented over 250 careers and counting. Today, Barbie continues to inspire the limitless potential in every girl.



You can be anything

