Owney’s travels continue to enchant new generations and finally, 123 years after Owney rode his first mail car, his place in America’s postal history will be cemented with his appearance on a postage stamp. The stamp features a profile of Owney’s face against a backdrop of a few of his many tags. Now Owney’s fans can celebrate this most fascinating postal pup in a most postal way.

Postage Stamps in Owney’s Lifetime

During the years that Owney rode the rails, there were typically three types of postage that filled the bags he traveled on. It cost someone 2 cents to mail a letter. Almost all of the two-cent stamps that were used in those days were red and had a picture of George Washington on them. Owney would have seen (and smelled) billions of these stamps.

Postmaster General John Wanamaker was the man in charge of all of the post offices and mail trains in Owney’s day. He gave him the harness upon which the clerks hung his tags. Wanamaker also issued the U.S.’s first Commemorative stamps. Little did he or Owney know that Owney would get his own commemorative stamp in 2011.

In 1893, to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Columbus reaching America, he issued 16 large size, pictorial stamps, which are commonly called the first commemoratives. Here is the “two-cent Columbian” which was used millions of times to mail letters while Owney rode the rails.

In addition to stamps on letters, Owney’s trains carried thousands of penny postal cards. These were cards with a 1-cent stamp printed on them, so no licking was necessary. They could be used by people who had just a short message to send that did not require an envelope. Postal cards were half the price of letters, and moved just as fast in the same mail bags.