



U.S. Philatelic Classics Society

Volume: 35 Number: 2 Year: 1983 Chronicle: 118

Article: More on 16¢ Credit Covers

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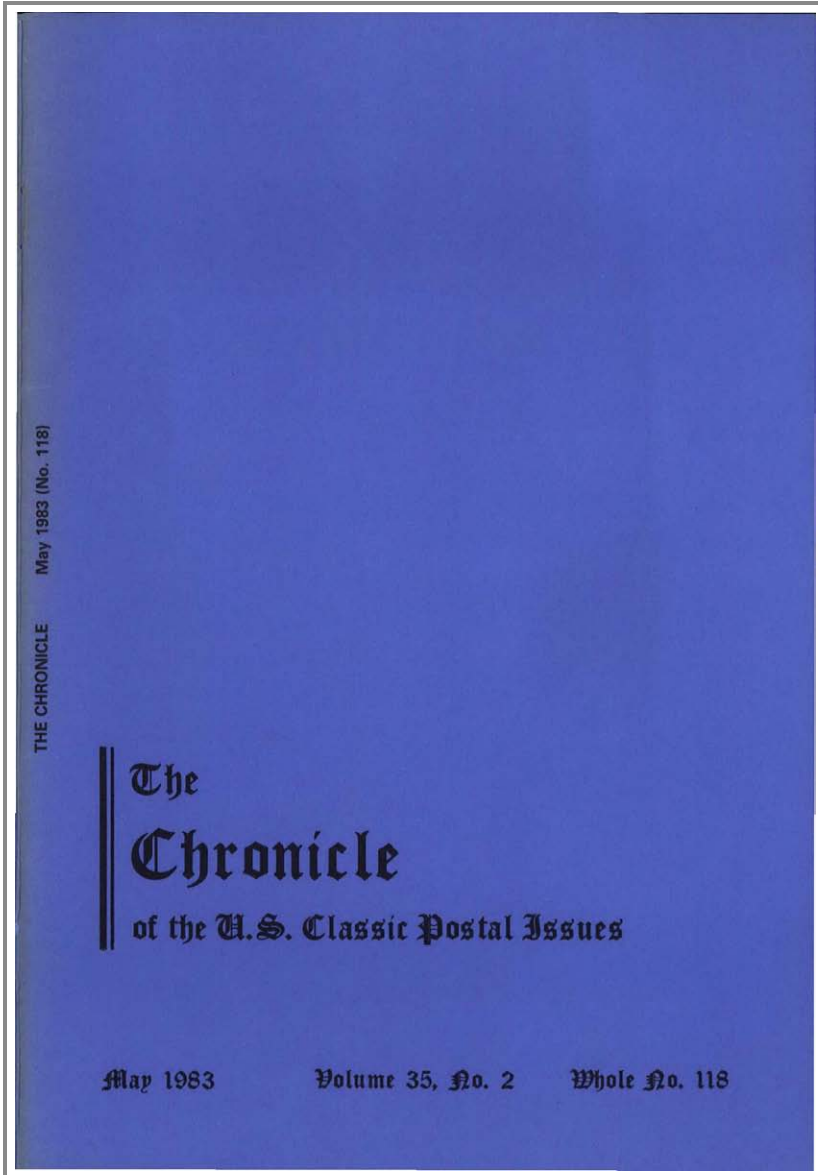


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THE FOREIGN MAILS

CHARLES J. STARNES, Assoc. Editor

WALTER HUBBARD, Assoc. Editor

MORE ON 16¢ CREDIT COVERS

JAMES C. PRATT

Several early 16¢ credit covers have surfaced since "British Mail 16¢ Credit Covers" appeared in *Chronicle* 113. Susan McDonald, Theron Wierenga and Richard Winter have provided a total of five 1853 examples. The earliest, from Rotterdam 5 February, credited two days later and rated 5¢ due in New York on 21 February, antedates the *Chronicle* 113 cover from Amsterdam by two weeks and stands as the earliest recorded 16¢ credit cover from Europe. Covers from Rotterdam 23 July and Ghent 19 August are the first recorded from any of the periods when the U.S.P.O. audit reports suggest that only a few such letters were carried. The Rotterdam letter is shown in Figure 1. The calculation in *Chronicle* 113 suggests that only 21 single rates were carried in the 3rd quarter of 1853, which would make survival of even two quite notable.

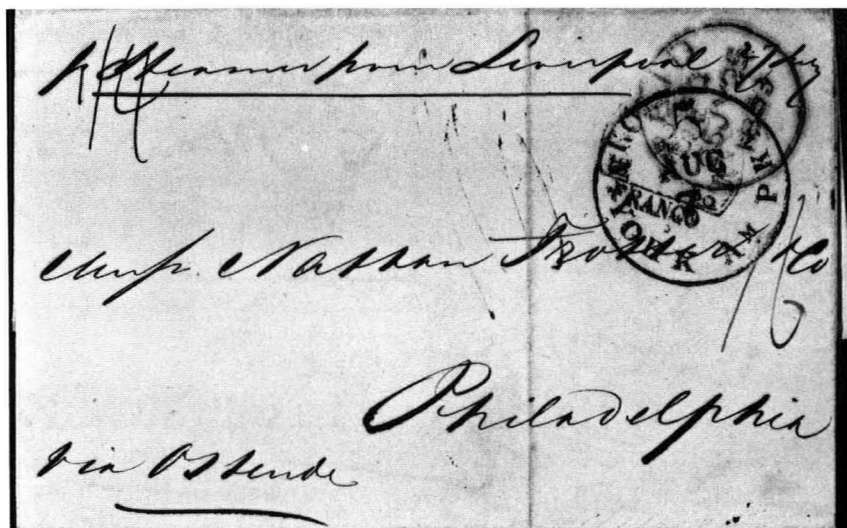


Figure 1. Rotterdam, 23 July 1853. Prepaid 100 Dutch cents (reverse, equal to 40¢ U.S.) to U.S. port. British share 1/4. Carried by American packet, Collins Baltic—therefore red ms. 16¢ credit to U.S.

With respect to the general refusal of the British P.O. to allow 16¢ credits on letters from France, Spain, and perhaps certain other countries, the *Chronicle* 113 article offered no specific explanation beyond closed mail arrangements. An additional, better explanation has now come to mind. Anglo-French and Anglo-Spanish mails were based on a single rate of about a quarter ounce, and this could make 16¢ credits a losing proposition for the British. For example, Anglo-French treaties compensated the British for sea postage on a bulk mail basis which was equated to 10¢ (1851-56) or 6¢ (1857-74) on a single rate letter. To collect 6¢ and pay 16¢ would lose money, especially compared to keeping the 6¢ and letting the Americans pay for sea carriage. In this connection, Charles Starnes has furnished data on paid to U.S. port letters from Tuscany and France, each carried in the British mails by American Packets but nevertheless lacking 16¢ credit markings. The French letter, rated only 5¢ due, has the added distinction of a "Baltimore Am. Pkt." exchange marking dated 19 July 1867. Proving that generalizations are dangerous in this area, however, Richard Winter has furnished data on a cover from Bastia, Corsica, to the U.S., prepaid 80 centimes by French stamps, which carried a 16¢ credit marking applied in London on 6 July 1861.



Figure 2. Letter from Canton, China, 28 Dec. 1850, prepaid 1/8 (40¢). By Collins *Pacific* from Liverpool 22 Feb. 1851, hence ms. 16¢ credit to U.S. Earliest reported example of 16¢ credit.

Perhaps the most important of the 16¢ credit covers unearthed since *Chronicle* 113 was published is illustrated as Figure 2. Mailed in Canton, China,¹ on 28 December 1850, its 1/8 (40¢) prepayment covered the half ounce rate to U.S. port via Southampton. Postmarked in London on 21 February 1851 and bearing a red manuscript "16," this folded letter was presumably carried by *Collins Pacific*, which left Liverpool the next day and arrived in New York on 6 March. If so, it antedates the 1852 cover illustrated in *Chronicle* 113 by a full year and expands considerably the known existence of the 16¢ credit procedure.

1. The red double circle "CANTON PAID" postmark appears to be scarce. F. W. Webb, in *Hong Kong & The Treaty Ports of China & Japan* (1961), pp. 259-60, stated that "about half a dozen" examples were recorded. First known used in September 1850, this was the only preadhesive stamp supplied to Canton for use on prepaid correspondence.

Review: United States Incoming Steamship Mail 1847-1875. By Theron Wierenga. Published by the author, P.O. Box 595, Muskegon, Mich. 49443. 242 pages. Available from the author at \$30 postpaid.

This book is the result of a decade of study, but, as the author freely admits, it is, in many areas, only a beginning. The subject matter is complex with many ramifications and stretches the boundaries the author originally intended.

Theron Wierenga begins with a discussion of ship letters and the rates and markings applicable to them, in order to distinguish them from steamship mail. These distinctions are clearly stated and illustrated by well chosen examples. The steamship rates are next discussed, with reference to the original acts and regulations, and their implementation demonstrated in a select group of cover photographs.

Another chapter is devoted to the routes over which steamship mail as a class was carried, the contracts governing them, and the steamship companies involved. A discussion of letters carried along the Atlantic coast, some of which received steamship markings, follows.

Succeeding chapters deal with the steamship lines, British and American, particularly those serving the South American coast and the Caribbean, and touching U.S. ports. The information therein is certain to lend fascination to rather ordinary-appearing covers and stimulate interest in their study and collection. The 15¢ steamship rate on letters to Canada (once the subject of a Cover Corner query) is well explained and illustrated. Another chapter