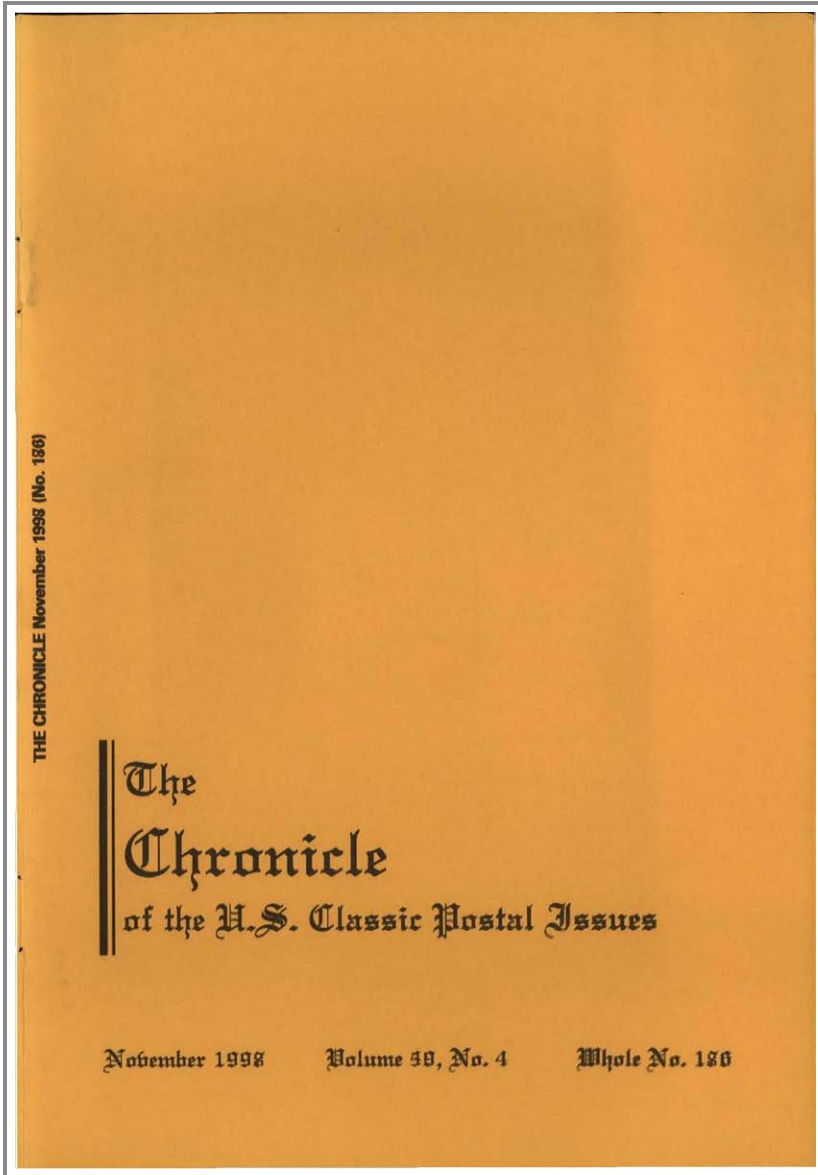




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Author(s): Leonard Piszkiwicz



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## **THE CHICAGO EXCHANGE OFFICE AND PRE-U.P.U. MAIL TO CANADA** **LEONARD PISZKIEWICZ**

In the last issue of the *Chronicle*, I discussed the Chicago exchange office handling of pre-U.P.U. transatlantic mail and presented the known markings found on such mail, both outgoing and incoming.<sup>1</sup> The present article will discuss what little is known about mail directly exchanged with Canada by the Chicago exchange office.

The first mention in official U.S. Post Office Department documents of Chicago being an exchange office for Canadian mail seems to be in the 1866 *Postal Laws & Regulations*, where Chicago was listed as exchanging with "Railway post office, Great Western railroad."<sup>2</sup> At that time, the Great Western railroad ran west from Toronto through London to Windsor, opposite Detroit. A reference to the direct exchange of mails between Canada and Chicago, however, appeared five years earlier in the *Chicago Tribune*:<sup>3</sup>

### CANADA EXCHANGE MAILS.

Through mails for the British Provinces close daily at 4:45 P.M. (See Supplementary Mails.)

### SUPPLEMENTARY MAILS.

For eastern cities (except Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington City) and Canada, close daily (except Saturdays and Sundays) at 5:15 P.M. Letters (and letters only) for these mails must be deposited in the chief clerk's room (up stairs) after 4:45 P.M.

A similar reference can be found in *Appleton's United States Postal Guide* of 1863 (p. 83), indicating daily exchange mails (including Supplementary Mails) for Canada. Mails from Chicago were transported on the Michigan Central railroad to Detroit, where they were exchanged at Windsor and placed on the Great Western railroad.<sup>4</sup> A sketch of the route is shown in Figure 1.

The Reports of the Postmaster General of Canada shed little light on the matter, other than in a negative sense. The 1860 report (for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 1860) stated, "Mails are exchanged daily with the United States Post Office at all the principal Frontier points; and closed mails are forwarded daily between the principal Cities of Canada and the Cities of New York and Boston."<sup>5</sup> Apparently, Chicago was not an exchange office as of Sept. 30, 1860. This is consistent with cover evidence (see below). The

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<sup>1</sup>Leonard Piszkiwicz, "The Chicago Exchange Office and Pre-U.P.U. Trans-Atlantic Mail," *Chronicle* 179:220-33.

<sup>2</sup>*Postal Laws and Regulations of the United States of America 1866*, Wierenga Reprint, p.36 of the *Regulations of the Post Office Department*.

<sup>3</sup>*Chicago Tribune*, November 4, 1861, p. 4; the same notice also appeared in the November 6, 1861 issue. Chicago Supplementary Mail markings are known on a few covers to Canada during the period 1861-63.

<sup>4</sup>See *Appleton's Railway Map of the United States and Canada*, published 1869 by D. Appleton & Co. of New York, reprinted by the United States 1869 Pictorial Research Associates, 1977.

<sup>5</sup>A pertinent excerpt of the 1860 report appears in Winthrop S. Boggs, *The Postage Stamps and Postal History of Canada* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Chambers Publishing Company, 1945), p. 20-M.

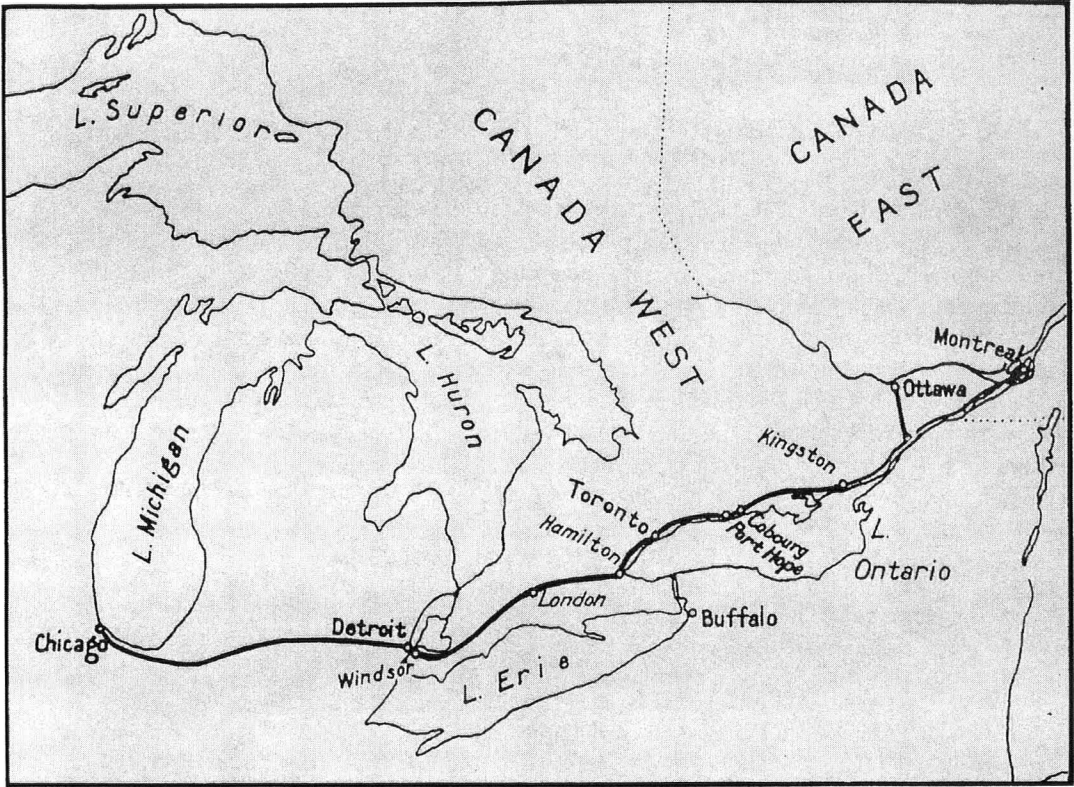


Figure 1. Sketch of 1860s railway links between Chicago, Detroit, and the Canadian Great Western Railway.



Figure 2. Red CHICAGO ILL./PAID 15, black SACRAMENTO/CAL. APR 20 1862 with black grids canceling 10¢ 1861 and strip of five 1¢ 1861 on single rate cover to Euphemia, Canada West. Backstamped G.W.R. [EAST] JU 26 62 (black), NEWBURY U.C. JU 26 62 (red), and FLORENCE U.C. JU 27 1862 (black). (Cover courtesy of James E. Lee)

reports of the PMG of Canada for the years 1861-65 do not contain any reference to specific U.S. cities.<sup>6</sup>

About a dozen recorded covers to Canada are readily identifiable as being handled by the Chicago exchange office (see Figure 2). These covers bear the CHICAGO ILL./PAID 15 marking illustrated in the previous article as marking No. 320. Observed dates of use range from July 16, 1861 to May 25, 1863. These covers all originated on the West Coast (California, Oregon and British Columbia) and were sent prepaid 15¢, the rate in effect April 6, 1851 to February 17, 1864 for single weight (1/2 ounce) letters from the West Coast to Canada. The several covers from British Columbia are prepaid appropriately for transport to California and also bear 15¢ in U.S. postage stamps postmarked at San Francisco. All these covers traveled the overland route to the Midwest and were addressed to Canada West. This route was shorter (in both time and distance) than the sea route via Panama or Nicaragua, but it was also less reliable than the sea route in the early 1860s. This problem has been written about, including originally in the 1861 Report of the Postmaster General.<sup>7</sup> From the lack of covers addressed to Canada East and the Maritime provinces, one could easily conclude that all West Coast mail to these destinations was sent by the sea route and never got near Chicago. There are no covers known to Canada from the Midwest through Chicago that show a corresponding marking reflecting the 10¢ rate from east of the Rockies, *i.e.*, a marking reading CHICAGO ILL. PAID 10.

Except as previously discussed, essentially all the United States markings on mail to Canada read "United States" or "U.States," in conformity with the agreement between the U.S. and Canada that mail be marked with the name of the country of origin.<sup>8</sup> None of these markings have been attributed to Chicago by the *American Stampless Cover Catalog* or *Simpson's U.S. Postal Markings 1851-61*. There is one marking, however, that appears from cover evidence to have been used by the Chicago exchange office in the same period that the CHICAGO ILL./PAID 15 was used on West Coast mail. Figure 3 shows a cover with this marking and a tracing is shown in Figure 4. The tracing has a complete rim while all recorded examples show breaks in the rim of the marking device. I have recorded the marking used on 13 covers, seven originating in Chicago, five in other Illinois towns (Byron, Florid, Morrison, Ottawa, Polo) and one from Decorah, Iowa. Observed dates of use range from September 12, 1861 to June 23, 1864. Before this time, mail from Chicago to Canada usually received exchange office markings at Detroit, as shown in Figure 5, postmarked JAN 29 (1861), or Buffalo, depending on the destination.

The reporting of the Figure 4 marking in the philatelic literature is varied and interesting. The marking was first illustrated by Boggs more than 50 years ago, and he attributed it to Port Huron, Michigan in 1853.<sup>9</sup> From cover evidence it appears that the year was a typographical error and 1863 was probably intended. Susan McDonald, writing in *Simpson's U.S. Postal Markings 1851-61* stated, "Past attribution to Port Huron is wrong."<sup>10</sup> McDonald assigned the marking to Detroit during the period 1861-64. In the *American Stampless Cover Catalog*, however, she was less confident, listing the marking as "Detroit, Mich?" The introduction to the B.N.A. section, which contains her listings, stated, "Tentative identification is shown by a question mark."<sup>11</sup> Thus, the Detroit attribution appears questionable at best.

<sup>6</sup>Reports for 1861-65 are available at the Library of Congress.

<sup>7</sup>*Report of the Postmaster General 1861*, Weirenga Reprint, pp. 560-61.

<sup>8</sup>A compendium of such markings can be found in Thomas J. Alexander, *Simpson's U.S. Postal Markings 1851-61* (Columbus, Ohio: U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, 1979), pp. 316-19.

<sup>9</sup>Winthrop S. Boggs, *The Postage Stamps and Postal History of Canada*, Volume I (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Chambers Publishing Company, 1945), p. 50.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas J. Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

<sup>11</sup>David G. Phillips, Editor-in-Chief, *American Stampless Cover Catalog*, 4th Edition, Volume II (North Miami, Florida: David G. Phillips Publishing Co., Inc., 1987), p. 283.





Figure 3. Red U.STATES/10/PAID, blue CHICAGO/llls OCT 28 (1861) with grid canceling 10¢ 1861 on single rate cover to Montreal, C. E. Backstamped MONTREAL C.E. AM OC 30 61.

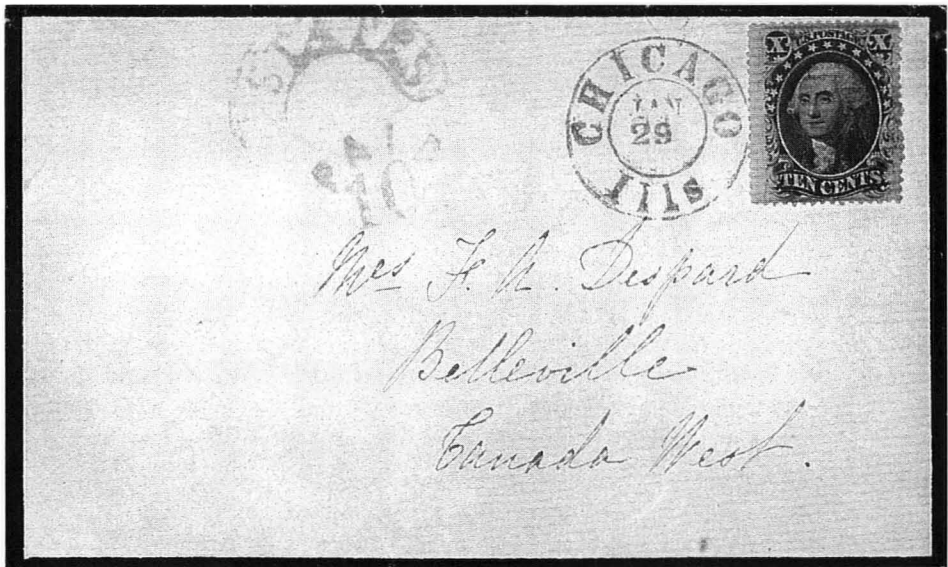


Figure 5. Red U.STATES in arc and red PAID/10 of Detroit, blue CHICAGO/llls/JAN 29 (1861) with grid canceling 10¢ 1857 on single rate mourning cover to Belleville, Canada West. Backstamped WINDSOR C.W. JAN 30 1861 and BELLEVILLE U.C. JA 31 1861.



**Figure 4. Idealized tracing of marking used by Chicago exchange office on paid mail from Illinois and Iowa to Canada, 1861-64.**



**Figure 6. Backstamp of the Great Western Railway RPO often found on mail received from the Chicago exchange office.**

Today available information seems to point to Chicago as the origin of the U.S. STATES 10 PAID marking (Figure 4). McDonald noted that the post office of origin for this marking "Exchanged with G.W.R. EAST." This is consistent with the 1866 PL&R indication that Chicago exchanged Canadian mails with "Railway post office, Great Western railroad," as noted above. Indeed, some covers bearing the U.S. STATES 10 PAID marking also are backstamped with the G.W.R. EAST marking shown as a tracing in Figure 6.<sup>12</sup> These covers are addressed to various towns in Canada West. The Figure 3 cover, however, addressed to Montreal, C. E. (Canada East), is only backstamped Montreal. The lack of a G.W.R. EAST backstamp probably indicates that the cover traveled in a closed bag between Chicago and Montreal. The Figure 6 backstamp was used on the line running east from Windsor, opposite Detroit. The branch from Sarnia used a similar backstamp with the words SARNIA BRANCH in the marking. Further evidence in support of this interpretation is the fact that the Figure 2 cover from the West Coast also bears a G.W.R. EAST backstamp.

In summary, several factors point to the U.S. STATES 10 PAID marking as having been applied by the Chicago post office:

- (1) The covers originated in Chicago and points west and south.
- (2) The reference in the *Chicago Tribune* that Chicago was an exchange office for mails to Canada by late 1861.
- (3) The 1866 PL&R reference to the Great Western Railroad and the presence of G.W.R. EAST backstamps on covers with the U.S. STATES 10 PAID and CHICAGO ILL./PAID 15 markings.
- (4) Contemporaneous usage with the CHICAGO ILL./PAID 15 marking on West Coast mail to Canada West.

During the time these markings were used on outgoing mail to Canada (1861-64), no covers from Canada to the United States have been observed with any marking indicating handling by the Chicago exchange office. After 1864 and during the remainder of the pre-U.P.U. period, no other markings have been observed from the Chicago exchange office on mail to or from Canada.

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<sup>12</sup>This marking is very well known to Canadian postal historians and is illustrated in Boggs, *op. cit.*, Volume I, p. 651 (from which the figure is taken), and Gillam, *op. cit.*, p. 69.





**Figure 7. Blue CHICAGO/III. SEP 27 1862 with target canceling 1¢ Star Die stamped envelope and black 1<sup>CT</sup> due marking of Toronto, Canada West, on circular rate cover to Port Hope, Canada West. Backstamped PORT HOPE C.W. SP 30 62.**

With regard to mails exchanged between Chicago and Canada, one additional cover is instructive in how printed circular mail was handled by the Chicago exchange office in the 1860s. Figure 7 illustrates a seldom seen printed circular usage originating in Chicago SEP 27 1862. By agreement between the United States and Canada, printed circulars were to be paid to the border and then rated due by the receiving country.<sup>13</sup> This cover was most likely sent in a closed bag from the Chicago exchange office to Toronto, rated due “1<sup>CT</sup>” at that point, and then forwarded to Port Hope, Canada West, on the north shore of Lake Ontario (backstamped, PORT HOPE, C.W., SP 30 1862). The black “1<sup>CT</sup>” marking is a good match for a marking recorded by Boggs as type H109c (Late), used by Toronto in the early 1860s.<sup>14</sup> Since the Chicago Post Office made up mails daily for Canada and the cover went as far as Toronto before being rated for collection from the addressee, closed bag handling between the two cities can be inferred. Also, since the postal agreement between the U.S. and Canada did not require rating circular mail as paid or unpaid to destination, as it did with letter mail, the absence of a separate exchange office marking by the despatching office is to be expected.

Thanks to Richard Graham, James E. Lee and Richard Winter for assistance in compiling data for this article. □

<sup>13</sup>Don L. Evans, *The United States 1¢ Franklin 1861-1867* (Sidney, Ohio: *Linn's Stamp News*, 1997), pp. 222- 23.

<sup>14</sup>Boggs, *op. cit.*, Volume I, p. 38.