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ANSWERS TO PROBLEM COVERS IN ISSUE 186

The Figure 3 cover from Brownsville, Pa. to a well known cashier in Hagerstown, MD was rated for a collection of "12½" (cents) as shown in black in upper right. But beneath this is a black manuscript "37 2" preceded by a scribble. What do these markings mean and where were they added? A multiple choice was provided, and the best answer was choice F) Add your own meaning.

Agents Milliard Mack, Greg Sutherland and Bernard Biales all concluded that when the cover reached Hagerstown it was checked for enclosures and it had at least three (corroborated by the text inside dated July 24, 1834). Since at this period postage was calculated on number of sheets and distance, the number is 37½, representing the short postage charge. Greg and Bernard both concluded that the scribble preceding the 37½ stands for "undercharged" and wondered why the numbers were not added to show the total due of 50 (cents).

MORE ANSWERS TO THE U.S. "STEAMBOAT" COVER PARADE

Thanks to Bernard Biales for his contributions to three problem cover topics in this issue! He provided a host of information about Steamboat postal regulations, improved the accuracy and scope of the Chart of Rates for "Ship and Steamboat Letters," and instructed your editor regarding the difference between the "Effective Date" (as published), and the "Lawful Effective Date" (as legally defined) for postal regulations. A new chart is provided - see Figure 4.

The revised Figure 4 incorporates:

- Two arcane rates to / from the U.S. Pacific coast, *viz.*, 42¢ in 1847, and 14½¢ in 1848 for within California.
- Reduced postage rates in 1851 for prepaid letters.
- Adjusted 1812 single war rates and some effective dates (but "Effective Date" column continues to show the common published dates rather than the more obscure legal lawful effective dates).

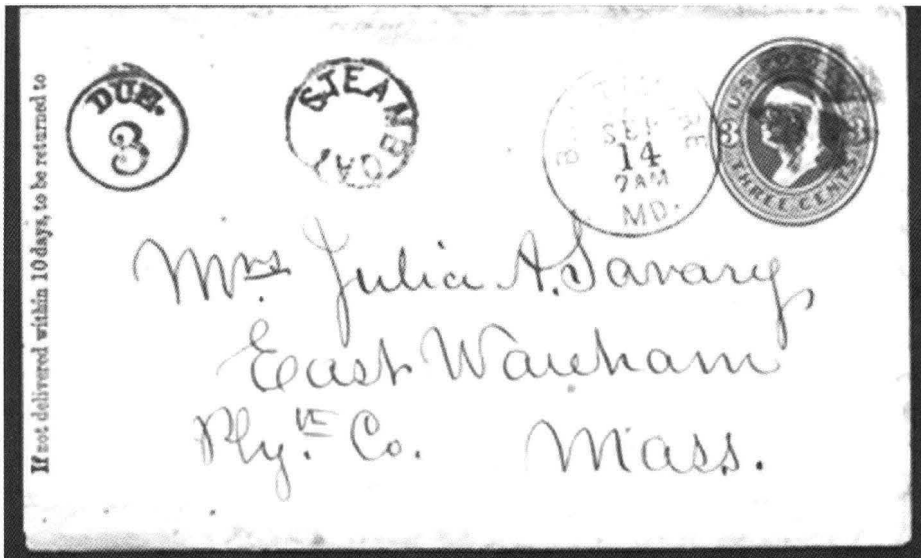


Figure 5. Cover with "STEAMBOAT" in circle to East Wareham, Mass.

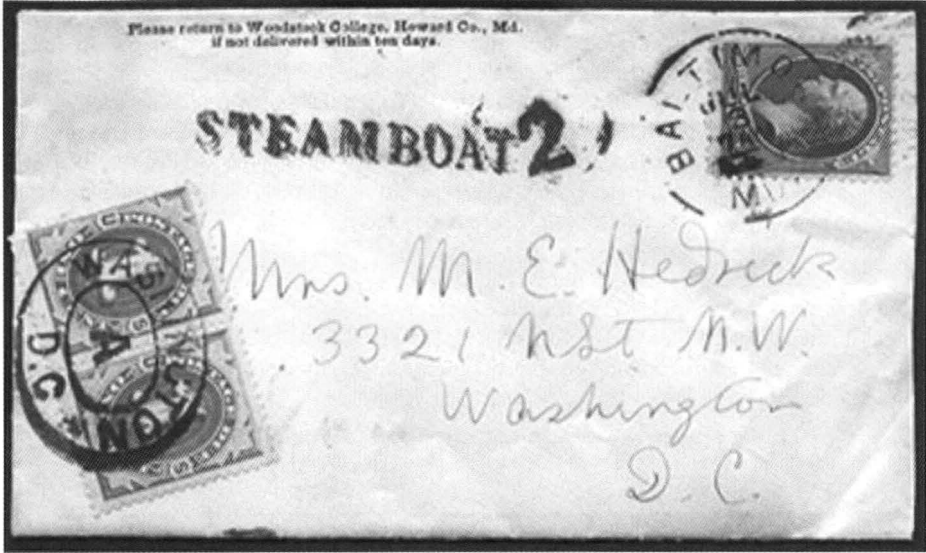


Figure 6. "STEAMBOAT" cover with two 1¢ postage due stamps to Washington



Figure 7. "STEAMBOAT" cover to Baltimore prepaid 5¢ in stamps

Additionally, Bob Stets and Cary Johnson have submitted other data and interpretations of Postal Regulations, Bob in the post-1874 period, and Cary with reference to the Great Lakes. Bob first:

Figure 5 [Figure 9 in *Chronicle* 186] shows an example of a double 3¢ rate to a point beyond the port of arrival. The date is probably after 1874, based on the 3¢ envelope. At some time between 1874 and July 1883, the charge for steamboat mail was changed from double regular postage (4¢ or 6¢) to regular postage plus 2¢ (4¢ or 5¢). The Official Postal Guide for January 1886, Section 577 specifies prepaid and unpaid rates based on regular postage plus 2¢ for the captain of the steamboat. Prior to October 1, 1883 this would result in a 4¢ (2¢ drop + 2¢ to captain) or 5¢ (3¢ regular postage plus 2¢ to captain) rate. Section 579, however, specifies double postage if mail is received from a non-contract vessel.

I believe that Figure 6 [Figure 11 in *Chronicle* 186] is a proper example of the 5¢ rate described in Section 577, and Figure 7 [Figure 12 in *Chronicle* 186] is an overpayment of the 4¢ rate. Figure 8 [Figure 10 in *Chronicle* 186] is an example of the 2¢ regular postage plus 2¢ to captain fee (not double postage) after postal rates were reduced on October 1, 1883.

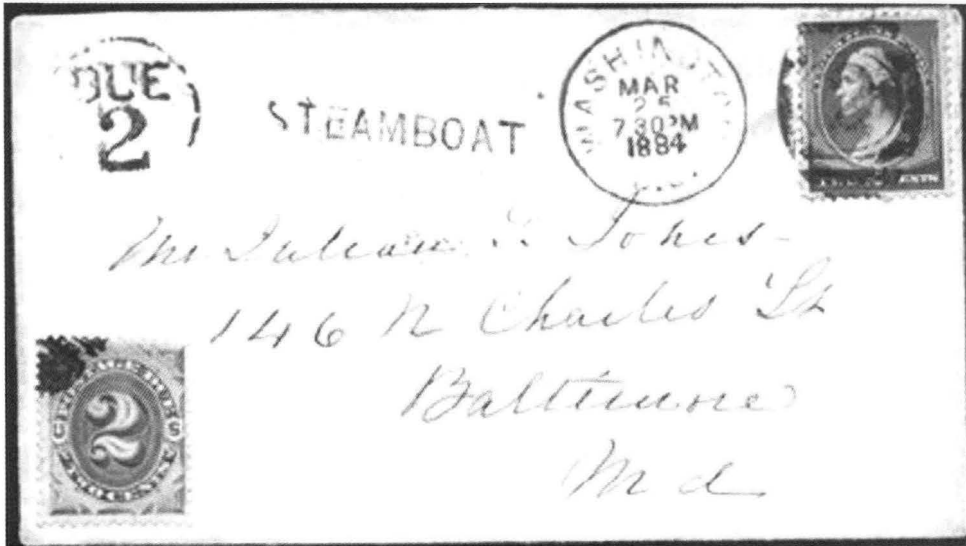


Figure 8. "STEAMBOAT" cover to Baltimore with a 2¢ postage due stamp

If I understand the regulations correctly, the last two lines of the Steamboat Rate Chart should be four lines:

Approval Date	Effective Date	Rate At Port	Rate Beyond Port	Remarks
??	??	4¢	5¢	2¢ + regular postage (From domestic steamboat)
??	??	4¢	6¢	Double regular postage (From non-mailboat)
Mar.3, 1883	Oct.1, 1883	4¢	4¢	2¢ + regular postage (From domestic steamboat)
Mar.3, 1883	Oct.1, 1883	4¢	4¢	Double regular postage (From non-mailboat)

Note that these changes have not yet been made to the Chart in Figure 4. Nor have penalty rates been entered for short paid Steamboat letters after the Act of 1855 became effective on April 1. Would someone like to take on this challenging and obscure topic?

Next, Cary discusses in some detail the application of Steamboat letter rates as applied to the Great Lakes. He writes:

My interest in Steamboat letters relates to mail on the Great Lakes from and through Michigan ports-of-call. My understanding of the rates has been abstracted from the PL&R, which information was confusing in some cases and the interpretation by various postmasters was probably different.

Until the early 1830s, the Great Lakes used the SHIP designation for Ship and Steamboat letters. The rate for letters delivered at the port of arrival (AP) was 6 cents, and beyond port of arrival was 2 cents plus regular postage (BP). From this point on the rating for Ship letters and for Steamboat letters is different. Ship letters related to mail received from ocean-going vessels and Steamboat letters related to mail received from domestic inland or coastal vessels.

About 1835, Detroit began using the designation STEAMBOAT and in the early 1840s, this was abbreviated to STEAM. There was no specific indication of additional postage due on these covers; however, the handstamped STEAMBOAT and STEAM markings were used as postal accounting marks for the Steamboat service to indicate that a 2 cents fee had been paid to the captain. The letter was rated for the total distance from the point the letter was picked up by the vessel to the point of delivery. Some post offices, such as Troy, New York show the 2 cents Steamboat fee added to the regular postage but this seems to be an exception rather than the general practice. By rating the postage based on the total mileage traveled, the post office more than recovered the fee paid to the captain.¹ This fee structure remained in effect until April 1, 1855. At this time, the captain continued to be paid 2 cents per letter and no added fee for Steamboat service was allowed on prepaid letters. However, unpaid Steamboat letters were to be treated as Ship letters; rated 6 cents (AP) and 2 cents plus regular postage (BP). I have not seen an example of this unpaid rate on the Great Lakes.

The Act that went into effect on May 1, 1861 again added the 2 cents fee to prepaid Steamboat letters such that the (AP) rate was 5 cents and the (BP) rate was 2 cents plus inland postage. Unpaid Steamboat letters were still rated as Ship letters but the rate was now the same. See Figures 9 and 10 for examples of Steamboat letters prepaid 3¢ and "DUE 2 CTS" for both delivered at port (AP) and beyond port (BP) via Detroit.

The Postal Act of July 1, 1863 really confused things and I cannot say that the postmasters uniformly understood it either. The rate applications on the Great Lakes are interesting as you will see. Although the 1866 PL & R do not indicate a penalty for underpayment, there are phrases in the Act with instructions to postmasters to specifically apply a double penalty. My interpretation of Instruction No. 31, Part 3, is that the rate for Steamboat letters was double regular postage, *i.e.*, (AP) rate 4 cents and (BP) rate 6 cents. However, if only partly prepaid by stamps, double the unpaid balance is charged and collected on delivery. For example, a 3 cents prepaid Steamboat cover for delivery at the port of arrival would be subject to postage due of 2 cents - double the unpaid balance of 1 cent for the 4 cents (AP) rate. See Figure 11, a cover prepaid 3¢ for delivery at Detroit, the port of arrival (AP). This was 1¢ short of the double regular postage at port rate and therefore charged 2 ¢ due, double the short payment. A three cents prepaid cover delivered beyond the port of arrival would be subject to postage due of 6 cents, double the unpaid balance of 3 cents. Dick Graham told me the double penalty was abolished on May 1, 1865, but I have an 1867 cover which still shows the Due 6 penalty.

¹Richard B. Graham, "Postal History, 'Steamboat' mail," *Linn's Stamp News*, October 25, 1999, p. 42.

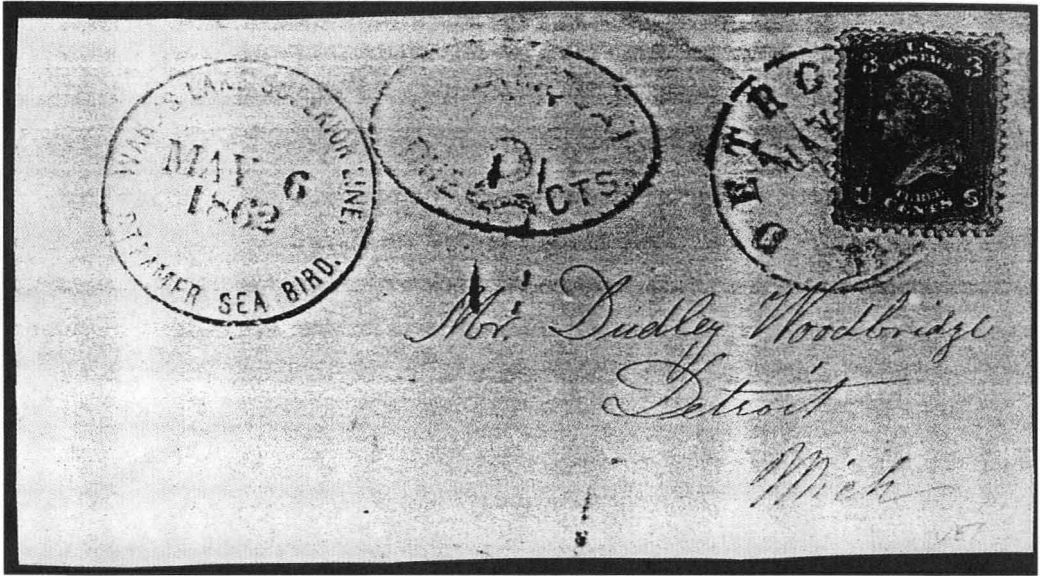


Figure 9. May 1862 Steamboat cover "DUE 2 CTS" at port of arrival (AP)



Figure 10. May 1862 Steamboat cover "DUE 2 CTS" beyond port of arrival (BP)



Figure 11. July 1864 Steamboat cover - 5¢ rate at port of arrival (AP)

I have one other postage due Great Lakes Steamboat cover from the early 1870s with a 3 cent Bank Note addressed for delivery beyond the port of call with a manuscript "Steamboat Letter Due 2." So there must be another rate change that needs to be documented in the PL&R to explain this cover.

We invite Route Agents to submit comments and examples of steamboat covers for the new periods described above by Agents Biales, Stets and Johnson. Those received will be featured in future issues of the *Chronicle*.

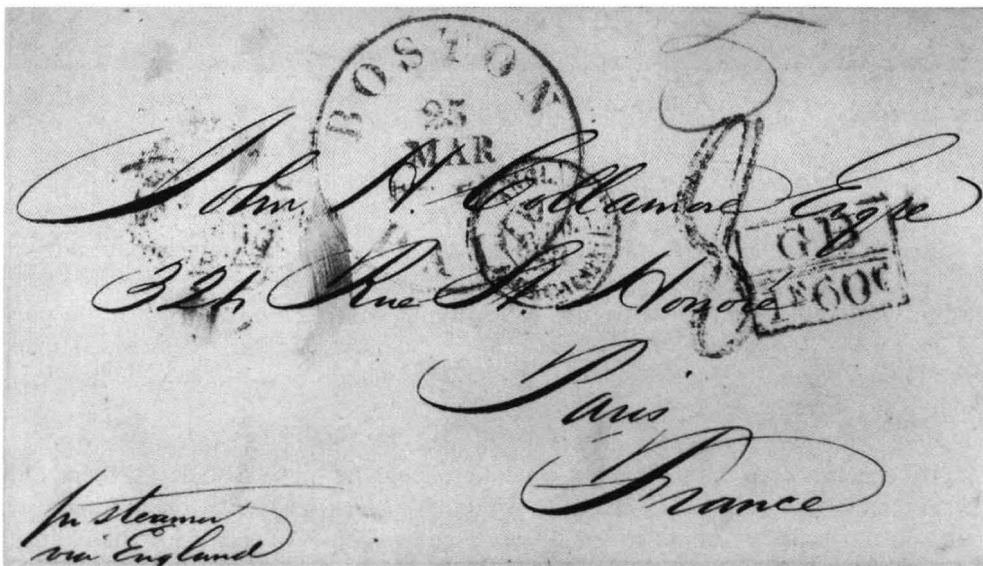


Figure 12. March 25, 1857 cover Boston to Paris