



U.S. Philatelic Classics Society

Volume: 57 Number: 3 Year: 2005 Chronicle: 207

Article: Review: "Hale & Co. Independent Mail Company"

Author(s): Gordon Stimmell

THE CHRONICLE August 2005 (No. 207)

The Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues

August 2005

Volume 57, No. 3

Whole No. 207

Table Of Contents

items marked with * cannot be viewed as an individual PDF document

[Click here to view the entire Volume: 57 No: 3 Chronicle: 207](#)

Starting Page

Front Cover (1 page)	Front Cover
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Jack E. Molesworth, Inc.	Inside Front Cover
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Shreves Philatelic Galleries, Inc.	161
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Spink	162
Masthead (1 page)	163
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Matthew Bennett Inc.	164
Table of Contents (1 page)	165
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions	166
Carriers and Independent Mails	
Mercantile Library Association Stamps (14 pages) <i>Gordon Stimmell, John D. Bowman, Larry Nix</i>	167
Book Review	
Review: "Hale & Co. Independent Mail Company" (2 pages) <i>Gordon Stimmell</i>	181
1851-61 Period	
Newly Reported Double Transfer on the 1851 1¢ Blue Type II (2 pages) <i>Don Tocher</i>	183
Color Study of the 3¢ Stamp of the United States 1851 - 57 Issue: Corrigenda (2 pages) <i>W. Wilson Hulme II, Wilbur F. Amonette M.D.</i>	184
1869 Period	
Precancels on the 1869 Pictorial Issue (4 pages) <i>Jeffrey M. Forster</i>	186
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: U.S. Philatelic Classics Society	190
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Collectors Club	190
Confederate States of America	
Census of CSA Stone 2 Misplaced Transfers, with a Touch on Stone A - B (7 pages) <i>Leonard H. Hartmann</i>	191
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Stephen T. Taylor	197
Special Printings 1875-84	
Preparation of Sets of the 1875 Special Printings (4 pages) <i>William E. Mooz</i>	198
Display Advertisement (2 pages) Advertiser: Nutmeg Stamp Sales, Inc.	202
Officials	
The Officials Trial Color Die Proofs of April 1873: Are They Essays? War Department 2¢ Jackson, Department of Agriculture 3¢ Washington (6 pages) <i>George G. Sayers</i>	204
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.	210
Officials	
Registration of Official Mail to 1900 (14 pages) <i>James W. Milgram M.D., Lester C. Lanphear III</i>	211
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Kristal Kare, Inc.	224
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Leonard H. Hartmann	224
Foreign Mails	
The Steamer Sir John Harvey (13 pages) <i>David D'Alessandris</i>	225
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: United States Stamp Society	236
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Charles G. Firby	238
In This Issue (1 page)	239
Classified (1 page)	239
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: H.R. Harmer, Inc.	240
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: James E. Lee	Inside Back Cover
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.	Back Cover

REVIEW: HALE & CO. INDEPENDENT MAIL COMPANY

A watershed book of postal history, *Hale & Co. Independent Mail Company 1843-1845*, has just been published by Michael S. Gutman. The author, 68, a retired electrical engineer, is the leading authority and collector of Hale & Co. stamps and covers and he has used his considerable holding to illuminate hitherto dark areas of that inter-city post's history. As well, a number of important collectors opened their collections to Gutman so he could incorporate new data in his book.

The Independent Mail Companies, riding on public fury over excessive U.S. postal rates, launched their competing mail carrying services between cities and for 18 months ran the gauntlet of government opposition to their operations until Congress outlawed them on July 1, 1845. It was a colorful period of fierce free enterprise. While some companies only lasted a few months, others cooperated with each other to form a massive web of cheap postage from Maine to Illinois to Maryland.

James W. Hale began with package and parcel delivery and he was a forwarder of letters to foreign ports before he became the earliest to jump into the intercity letter delivery game in early December 1843. By January 1844, the American Letter Mail Company was in the fray. By summer 1844 several other outfits sprang to life carrying letters between cities and their stamps pioneered designs that were firsts in philately.

Gutman charts both stampless and adhesive covers. In raw numbers, his census indicate Hale surviving covers dwarf the competitors. My own census of Wyman covers bearing stamps stands at 36; Pomeroy may number about 120; Hartford Mail Company is said to stand at 60 covers. American Letter Mail is the only other Independent Mail Company with big numbers but I know of no census. A guess would be 160 or so with adhesives. Gutman's compilation of data reveals a staggering 1,377 total for Hale covers, 507 of which carry adhesives.

What makes Hale such fertile ground for research is the staggering number of cities his operation spanned. One of Gutman's tables, based on advertisements of the day, show Hale had saturated the northeast U.S., with service in 139 cities during the span of the post and with major offices in eight states. Gutman illustrates the 47 different city handstamps this spawned, plus dozens of rate, paid and collect handstamps. Another area he analyzes and illustrates is the manuscript markings used on the stamps themselves, which include initials of cities of origin and local agents or their agencies.

Gutman was originally attracted to Hale stamps because they provide the first precancels in philately. These are often crude straight lines inked across the stamps before sale, likely meant to prevent soaking and reuse of adhesives. More sophisticated were the precancels of Portsmouth, New Hampshire which included "P/ N.H." in manuscript, harbingers by five decades of later U.S. precancels showing names of cities. Hartford Mail Company also used precancels in the summer of 1844, showing "Hartford" or "S" (South) and other letters for directions to destination.

Unlike most of the other Independent Mails, actual correspondence survives of James Hale's comments regarding his post. These are incorporated in Gutman's book. Included also is a fascinating recitation of the two major mystery overprints of the post, listed in Scott as 75L3 and 75L4, which surfaced in a portable writing desk after the death of a pastor in 1893. Mystery still shrouds these overprints, once listed as a surcharge, then as overprints, and now as a handstamp. So few examples survive that even Gutman doubts the mystery will ever be dispelled.

The bulk of Gutman's book is a breakdown of surviving covers by state, and specific towns, concluding with international usages (pp. 63-335). This is the first time I have seen a comprehensive overview of usages in the small towns, plus wrap-ups of postal

history from the major cities of usage. Each state chapter is well illustrated by existing covers, and at the end of each state is a tabulation of earliest (EKU) and latest (LKU) known usages in each town of that state.

One of my own favorite areas is conjunctive usage, or cooperative covers between two or more Independent Mail Companies. These are not broken out in Gutman's book, so one is forced to wade through each city or state to ferret out multiple company usages. A table would have helped tabulating these, at a minimum, or a separate chapter at best. (I find a parallel problem in the masterful and monumental census of US #1 and #2 covers in Thomas J. Alexander's *The United States 1847 Issues: A Cover Census*. There, one is forced to wade through hundreds of pages to ferret out conjunctive usages by local and carrier posts used on covers with U.S. #1s and #2s.)

Despite this observation, Gutman's book is a goldmine of never before published information on Hale stamps and their sometimes complex uses in the web of northeast cities. Included are overall discussions, maps, observations on competing operators and a rundown of the more egregious covers, with 325 illustrations including a color central section showing some of the rarer and more fascinating usages.

Of the three major stamps, 102 covers survive of 75L1, 67 covers of the red 75L2 and 338 covers bearing 75L5s. Certainly one of the most useful tables is Appendix 2, a census of 75L2, including a breakout of cut-to-shape-octagonally and cut square stamps on cover, origin and destination and, where possible, dates of usage. I wish Gutman had created a similar table for the two blue stamps on cover, 75L1 with address and 75L5 without address.

Other highlights include a plating study on the stamps and printings, carrying forward Elliott Perry's pioneer research; a chronology of Hale advertisements as the post mushroomed into a major concern carrying up to 60,000 letters a day at its height; a brief excursus into the common counterfeits; and the intriguing possibility that a recently discovered overprint may some day be classified as a sixth Hale stamp.

The feistiness of James Hale is evident in Appendix 1, which replicates a letter of 1887 from Hale to the editor of the *Ledger* recounting his brief but valiant struggle with postal authorities in 1843-45 and one plea in one case brought by federal authorities against him:

"You will find that the (postal) law of 1795 reads that 'no person shall establish a horse or foot post'; and when Mr. Hale brought his mails to Boston by steamboat and railroad, he certainly did not come on horseback or foot."

The judge in 1844 dismissed the case against Hale. But it would not be long before the US changed outdated postal laws and brought the Independent Mails to their knees.

Now, I am holding my breath for a Pomeroy book, and an American Letter Mail book, and a Wyman book, and all the others which would be distant legacies of the original Arthur Hall-Elliott Perry manuscript from the 1950s that was the jumping off point for this tome. So much remains to be done. All these other chapters await someone with a great deal of knowledge and passion to be forged into reality. Someone willing, as Gutman has done, to turn their lives upside down for six years.

The book is offered by the author for \$75 postpaid via media mail in the U.S. For international rates inquire. Payment with order to: Michael S. Gutman PO Box 1108, Mashpee MA 02649 Phone: 508-477-6206; fax: 253-484-1709. Payment may be made using PayPal via email to mikeg94@comcast.net.

- Reviewed by Gordon Stimmell ☐