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**THE EARLY UNITED STATES PONY EXPRESS MAILS**  
1836 - 1839 and 1845

By Dr. Carroll Chase, Honorary Member

**Editor's Note:** This article relating to the genesis of the express-mail service provides important background information for understanding the express-mail postal markings of the 1851-'60 period.

\*\*\*\*\*

Because of the general dissatisfaction with the slow mail service between the deep South and the North an Act of Congress of July 2, 1836, authorized the Postmaster General to establish the first of these two Express Mails.

The service was inaugurated November 15, 1836, between New Orleans and Washington, D.C., and was probably immediately extended to New York City. The mail was carried by boat between New Orleans and Mobile, Ala. (this taking approximately 24 hours), by Pony Express rider from Mobile to Philadelphia and by train from Philadelphia to New York. One exception is that it was also carried by train between Petersburg and Gaston, Va.

A branch from Charleston, S.C., to connect with the main route at Columbia in the same state was put into operation May 11, 1837. Two other long links - one from Washington, D.C. to Cincinnati, Ohio, and one from Dayton, Ohio, (on this route) to St. Louis, Mo., started operation October 1, 1837. On the same date a north-south route was established from Cincinnati, Ohio, to Montgomery, Ala., where it connected with the original route.

**SYMBOLS USED IN THIS ISSUE**

To conserve space the following symbols are sometimes used in this issue to designate the principal varieties. The symbol is at left of hyphen, and its Scott's U.S. Specialized Catalog number or other description is at right of hyphen. Postal markings described one in black unless otherwise specified.

One cent: R1-6; R16a; R3 (no lines distinct); R4-7 (pl 1); R5-8A (pl 1); R5-B (1992); R7-7 (pl 3); R8-A; R9 (pl 4); T-1 (C); R10-7 (pl 4); R11-8 (pl 4); R12-8A (pl 4); R13-7; R14-8 (L). If any of the preceding is perforated, affix post: R15-24; R16-T (star) 14 open pl 5; R17-20 (ly 2, pl 1) (R12); R18-22; R19-18.

Three cent: S1-10; S2-11 (incl pl 1) (L) ab; S3-25; S4-28A; S5-26. Note: S1, S2, and S3 types use 1-rail vertical inner lines left and right; (A) only at left; (B) only at right; (C) without such lines.

Five cent: V1-12; V2-27; V3-28; V4-28A; V5-29; V6-10; V7-10A.

Ten cent: X1-13; X2-14; X3-15; X4-16; X5-31; X6-32; X7-33; X8-34; X9-35 (one pearl); X10-35 (2 or 3 pearls).

Twelve cent: T1-17; T2-36 (pl 1); T3-36 (pl 3).

The 24, 10 and 90c stamps are designated as such.

# Table Of Contents

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

[Click here to view the entire Volume: 11 No: 3 Chronicle: 32](#)

Starting Page

<a href="#">Masthead</a> (1 page)	1
1851-61 Period	
<a href="#">The Early United States Pony Express Mails, 1836-1839 and 1845</a> (2 pages)	1
<i>Carroll Chase</i>	
<a href="#">Symbols Used in This Issue</a> (1 page)	1
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Railroad Route-Agent and Station-Agent Markings</a> (2 pages)	2
<i>W. W. Hicks</i>	
<a href="#">Colorado Territory</a> (2 pages)	3
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">College Townmarks</a> (1 page)	4
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Registered - Money Letter</a> (2 pages)	4
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Dead-Letter Office</a> (1 page)	5
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Straight Line, Oval, and Odd-Shaped Townmarks</a> (1 page)	5
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Industrial Towns</a> (1 page)	5
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Townmarks Containing "FREE"</a> (1 page)	5
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Townmarks Including "PAID" - and Other "PAIDs"</a> (1 page)	5
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Unusual Circular Townmarks</a> (2 pages)	5
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Obliterators</a> (1 page)	6
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Gidley's Station, Mich.</a> (1 page)	6
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">U.S. Stamps on Mail from Canada - Notes on Canadian Treaty</a> (2 pages)	6
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Scarcity of Transatlantic-Mail Markings</a> (1 page)	7
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">French Mail of San Francisco Origin</a> (1 page)	8
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Use of Ships of Foreign Registry for Carrying Transatlantic "American Packet" Mail</a> (2 pages)	8
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Continuation of Catalog of Postal Markings, R-22 Townmarks Showing Industrial Origin on Covers with Stamps or on Nesbitt Envelopes of the 1851-'60 Period</a> (2 pages)	10
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Rarity Premium Schedule for List R-22</a> (1 page)	11
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Addenda to Notes on Transatlantic - Mail Arrangements</a> (2 pages)	11
<a href="#">Other Addenda and Corrigenda</a> (1 page)	12
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	
<a href="#">Plate No. 1</a> (1 page)	13
<i>Tracy W. Simpson</i>	

At the beginning pre-payment of the postage, which was always three times the regular rate of that epoch no matter what the distance, was optional. But by Act of Congress of October 12, 1837, probably effective November 1, 1837, pre-payment was made obligatory. A very few letters have been seen in which only part of the postage was pre-paid. These are rare, as contrary to regulations. The rates allowed were single, double, triple and quadruple but no letter could weigh more than one-half ounce. A single letter was one sheet of paper, a double letter, two sheets of paper, and so on. Money was not allowed to be sent. Franked mail was prohibited but notwithstanding this a very few such pieces are known.

The service was daily in each direction. The scheduled time for the original route was six days, seventeen hours - southbound; and six days, twenty-three hours - northbound. This was between New York City and New Orleans and approximately twenty-four hours less between New York City and Mobile. The Express riders rode night and day and it is obvious that with the bad roads of the period the time made was really remarkable. Letters have been seen which covered the route on schedule, but others have been seen that required at least thirteen days en route from New Orleans to New York. Rates, single and multiple, of less than 75¢ to \$3.00 are rare and desirable. The earliest dates I have noted personally are December 1, 1836 (not prepaid), and December 7, 1836 (prepaid). The latest date noted was in the Ashbrook collection, being July 3, 1839. The exact date on which the service terminated is not known, but it was quite possibly in July, 1839.

Ordinarily these covers show "Express Mail" in manuscript but a few post offices used handstamps, among them being Augusta, Ga., Columbia, S.C., and Natchez, Miss. Strange to state, this last named office was not directly on any of the routes.

The service was resumed by order of the Postmaster General on January 29, 1845, from New York City and February 7, 1845, from New Orleans. During this period the regular rates of postage were charged so the only means of determining Express Mail covers is by the notation of the sender on the cover. It goes without saying that letters showing this service, which lasted only a bit over two months, are extremely rare. Of course multiple rates may be found. The earliest date I have noted personally is February 10, 1845, and the latest, March 2, 1845. The service was officially discontinued on March 10, 1845.

RAILROAD ROUTE-AGENT and STATION-AGENT POSTMARKS  
(Reported by W. W. Hicks, Contributing Editor)

Publication of the C.W. Remele book brought to light several additional unlisted markings as well as an example of a reported marking not illustrated.

Chron- icle No.		Remele No.
1	CHICAGO & ROCK ID. R.R. Ill. 30mm Red-1851-57 (Note that the last two letters are in lower-case style, not caps as stated in the book)	C13-a
2	BALTIMORE & OHIO R.R. 31½mm Black-1857-61	B2-i
3	NEW YORK & PHILA. R.R. 30mm Black-1857-61	N15-g
4	LITTLE MIAMI R.R. 31mm Red-1847-51 (Note the above three resemble certain listed markings, but the letter spacing is definitely different)	L6-b
5	NORTHERN RAIL ROAD N.Y. 32½mm Red-1847-51	N21-c

The following additional data apply to listed markings:

Il-d is in black; Ml-b is in black on cover with S2, probably 1857 use; N21-b is in red (1847-51); P6-a is in black (1847-51); P6-c is in blue (1851-57) with Sl.

A member who wishes to remain anonymous comments regarding the reference on page 37 of the book as to the steamboat connection between Alton and St. Louis of the Chicago & Mississippi R.R.:

"Some years ago I acquired two covers from St. Louis to Alton addressed to the railroad's office on company business. The first, dated June 5, 1854, carries on its face a red oval handstamp (28x38mm) STEAMER/REINDEER (probably Klein No.467). The second, dated Mar.9, 1855, has no handstamp but is addressed c/o Chi. Alton & St. Louis Rail Road. Among other items relating to this railroad, I have the Alton receiving clerk's way bill day book for the first year."

Mr. E. S. McConnell reports Remele R7-b RICHMOND Rail Road used in 1846 with "10" rating mark on letter originating in New York addressed to Suffolk, Va., via Norfolk, Va. He asks why the "10" was applied by the route agent when the single-rate was 5cts from any point on the Richmond Railroad to Suffolk, Va. Two answers suggest themselves: (1) the letter may have been double weight; (2), and the more likely, the route-agent noted origin at New York on letter probably carried by steamboat out-of-mails to Norfolk. He applied the rate mark covering the through rate for full distance traveled, as required by PL&R. It will be recalled, for example, that letters sent privately VIA NICARAGUA from San Francisco to the east through New York were rated on the basis of the "over 3000 miles" rate when entering the mails at New York.

Mr. A. S. Wardwell reports No. 6 B & O R.R. DUFFIELDS, probably 35x25 $\frac{1}{2}$ mm oval, but cannot be certain as marking incomplete. Mr. Wardwell also reports a similar CAMERON. The DUFFIELDS will be numbered B2S-i and the CAMERON B2S-j. Both are on cover with S5. Both Duffields and Cameron were in Virginia as was also Kerneysville. Correct the Remele report as respects Kerneysville.

Mr. J. E. Minor calls attention to an extremely interesting book relating to the difficulties encountered by the Michigan Central R.R. in its early days. The title is "The Great Railroad Conspiracy," and it is reading that can't be laid down until finished, writes Mr. Minor, who also reports that the book is still available paperbound from the Historical Society of Michigan, Lewis Cass Bldg., Lansing 13, Mich., price \$1.25. In ordering also request the June, 1952, issue of Michigan History. If a hard bound copy of the book is desired, same can be ordered from Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, Mich., price not known.

#### COLORADO TERRITORY

Uses of 1857-'60 issue stamps with townmarks of Colorado Territory are scarce because the territory was organized Feb. 28, 1861. By the time the C.T. handstamps arrived the 1861-issue stamps also had arrived, or nearly so.

Ye Editor was privileged to view the outstanding Colorado Territory collection of Mr. H. Parker Johnson who with our member Lt. Col. E. B. Murphy are noted as specialists in the postal history of that area.

Mr. Johnson's collection has examples of the following C.T. uses with stamps of the 1857-'60 issue (all 1861 uses):