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Author(s): David L. Jarrett

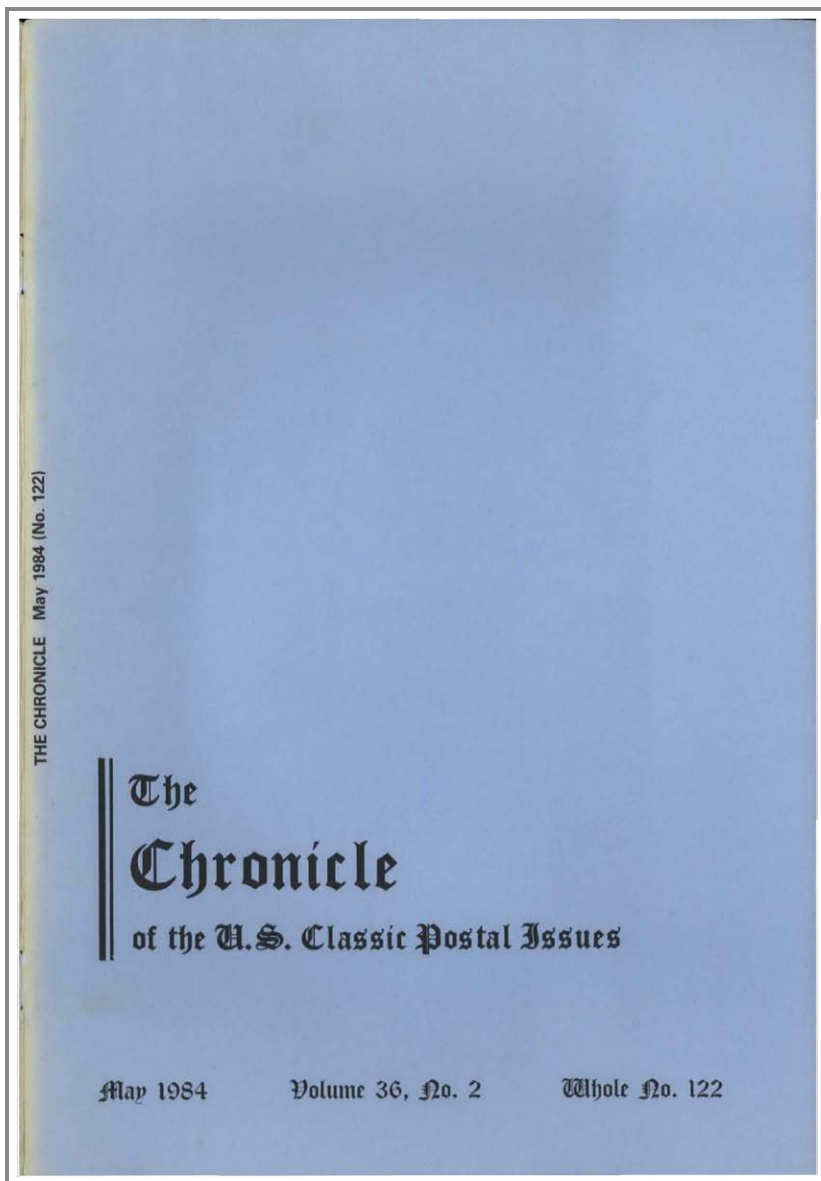


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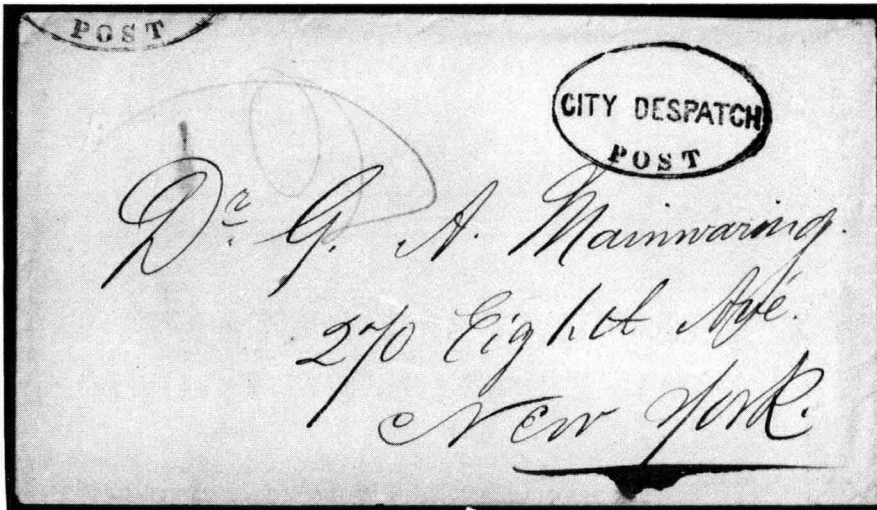
CHARLES I. BALL, Assoc. Editor

CITY DESPATCH POST DISCOVERY

DAVID L. JARRETT

The surfacing of a City Despatch Post oval handstamped cover — apparently the second one known¹ and the only one year-dated — will require philatelists to reexamine previous knowledge. This writer recently acquired a CITY DESPATCH POST oval handstamp with pencilled “2” collect rate on an 1858 New York City printed letter.

The late Elliott Perry, authority on private local posts, challenged quotations that appeared in the June 1874 *Journal of Philately* by Charles Coster, an early cataloger of local posts, and *The Philatelic Gazette* in 1917 by Henry C. Needham, a discredited philatelist, that the City Despatch Post was operated by Edward N. Barry from about 1851 to 1859.² To support his challenge, Perry cited the lack of any documentary evidence that Barry was connected with the post, even though he was listed in New York City directories between 1852 and 1854 as “postman” and “letter carrier.”³



Newly discovered example of oval City Despatch Post handstamp.

With this second cover, it can be verified that a City Despatch Post operated in New York City as late as 1858 and that this very well could have been operated by Edward Barry. Barry, according to Needham, purchased the business from Charles Coles prior to 1852. It is known that Coles had acquired the post in late 1847 or early 1848 from its founder, Abraham Mead, who established it in November 1846.⁴ It is quite possible Coster learned of Barry's ownership by word of mouth since knowledgeable people certainly were living in 1874, when the article appeared — only fifteen or so years after the post reportedly terminated.

It is also possible that this City Despatch Post was not a legal successor to the Mead/Coles operation but a new one established sometime after the Mead/Coles post had

1. The discovery copy of the City Despatch Post oval handstamp is illustrated on p. 65 of *One Hundred Years Ago* by Perry and Hall.

2. Elliott Perry, *Pat Paragraphs*, Bureau Issue Association, 1981, p. 399.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 400.

4. Donald S. Patton, *The Private Local Posts of the United States*, Robson Lowe, Ltd., London, 1967, I, 120.

discontinued business. Mead's City Despatch Post itself was a new venture,⁵ and probably not a legal successor to the original one established by Alexander M. Greig in February 1842 since Greig sold out in August 1842 to the U.S. government.⁶ The U.S. government then operated it as a New York City carrier under the name United States City Despatch Post for the next four years, discontinuing operations in November 1846.⁷

All known operators of the City Despatch Post — from Greig to Coles, including the U.S. government — issued their own adhesive stamps, which are almost identical in design; the same basic die had been used for each engraved stamp. The unofficial U.S. carrier postage stamps issued by the United States City Despatch Post from 1842 to 1846 are Scott's #6LB1-7. Greig's stamp is Scott's #40L1; Meads stamps are #40L2-3, and Coles's stamps are #40L4-8.

Since none of these private local post stamps are known used after 1850⁸ and no City Despatch Post handstamp recorded between 1850 and 1858, this writer believes that the oval City Despatch Post handstamp probably comes from an independent, perhaps short-lived local post with the same name but not legally connected with the predecessor posts.

More information on the subject is sought. This writer would appreciate hearing from other collectors who can shed additional light on the City Despatch Post of New York. His address is P.O. Box 1486 Grand Central, New York, N.Y. 10163.

5. Elliott Perry and Arthur G. Hall, *One Hundred Years Ago*, American Philatelic Society, 1942, pp. 41-42.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-21.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

8. *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps*.

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