

THE CHRONICLE February 1990 (No. 145)

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Chronicle  
of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues

February 1990

Volume 42, No. 1

Whole No. 145

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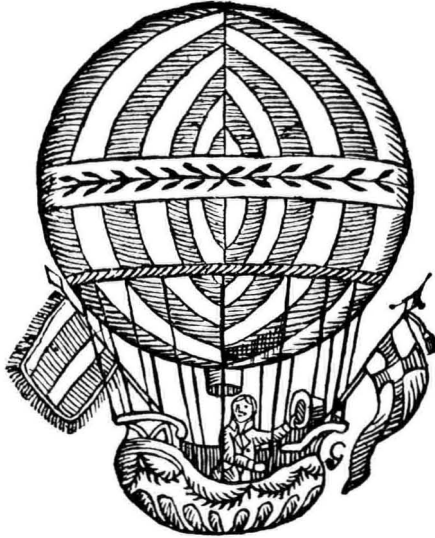
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# The Chronicle

## of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues

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## THE 1847-51 PERIOD

**Review: United States Letter Rates to Foreign Destinations, 1847 to GPU-UPU.** Revised edition. By Charles J. Starnes. Hardbound, 176 8" x 9 1/2" pages. Published by Leonard H. Hartmann, Box 36006, Louisville, Ky. 40233. Available from the publisher: \$37.50 postpaid anywhere in the world, or \$45 by air mail anywhere.

The new edition of this indispensable handbook will be welcomed by all collectors of U.S. foreign mails. The format of the original edition has been followed while revisions and additions improve the book's usefulness.

Updates and changes have been provided in the rate listings for over 30 countries. Significant changes and additions appear in the tables for China, India, Spain, Paraguay, Turkey, the Danish West Indies, and several other locations. In some instances further research has established more precise dates for the limits of specific rate periods. Entirely new tables for Java, Madagascar, and St. Helena have been furnished. The listings for several countries which entered UPU at a late date have been extended until UPU entrance. These include Ascension Island, Australia, Cape of Good Hope, Siam, and Tunis among others. The only exception I have noted is China (which did not join UPU until the 20th century), and here the tabulation is brought up to 1892.

The first edition included ten very helpful appendices: A, rate progression, British treaty mail via France (Marseilles); B, partial list of foreign post offices in Turkey before 1875; C, postage rates from Hawaii to U.S.; D, French postage charges on mail to and from U.S., 6/43-4/57; E, French postage to U.S. and collect from U.S., 1/70-8/74; F, foreign currency equivalents; G, GPU/UPU entrance dates; H, Nova Scotia charges on British packet mail; I, charges on unpaid and part paid international letters, 1868 to GPU/UPU entry; J, Bremen transit charges under first (1847) Bremen treaty. All are retained in this edition, and additions appear in Appendices F, G, and J.

Six more appendices — all very useful — supplement the new edition: K, credits and debits on Bremen mail international rates; L, postage charges on BOM letters U.S.-Germany, 1849-68; M, U.S.-Holland postal charges in BOM, 1849-66; N, U.S.-Belgian postal charges in BOM, 1849-68; O, observed depreciation ratios, notes to gold; P, U.S.-India postal charges by BOM, 1857-68. These will be helpful in deciphering rates, credits, and debits.

The book concludes with an extensive bibliography. Here again the references are updated by the inclusion of important articles and books published since 1982.

Increases in cross references make information easier to find.

This review is based on unbound signatures. The finished book will be bound in dark red buckram with gold stamping and sewn signatures. All the Hartmann publications have been distinguished by the excellence of their bindings and I am confident this one will be as good or better than its predecessors. The paper is substantial and will give many years of service.

An excellent feature of the new edition is the addition of over 50 appropriate cover photos, enhancing the value and interest for the average collector. A bonus is a charming informal portrait of the author. The original edition contained 57 photographs of covers illustrating rates in the tables. Of these all but one were from Starnes's collection, stolen about seven years ago. Some 55 cover photos have been added to the second edition, again examples of some of the rates and services listed. Over half the new illustrations are from the author's collection; the balance come from various sources. The stolen material has not

yet been recovered. I take the opportunity to urge all members to become familiar with these items and to be on watch for them.

If you already have the 1982 edition, you will still need this for the changes and additions, especially if you have a serious interest in U.S. foreign mails. If you don't own the first edition, this is a must for any collector or student of 19th century U.S. postal history, even if your interest in foreign mails is just peripheral. Knowledge is power. Unreservedly recommended.

Susan M. McDonald



### **A REMINDER**

Society members wishing to make nominations for the 1990 Cup Awards should mail their nominations to the Chairman of the U.S.P.C.S. Cup Selection Committee, Chairman Alfred E. Staubus at 1015 Kenway Court, Columbus, OH 43220 as soon as possible. The other members of this committee are the 1989 award winners, Theron Wierenga, Richard Winter, Rollin Huggins, Jr., and Creighton Hart. Previous winners of the Cup Awards can be found in the "Chairman's Chatter" issues #119, #120, #125, #129 and #133.

The criteria to be considered for the various Cup Awards are as follows:

The Chase Cup is awarded to authors of articles, books or other studies concerning any United States postage stamp issued from 1842 to 1893 including Postmaster's, locals, carriers, and general issues including back-of-the-book material.

The Ashbrook Cup is awarded to authors of articles, books, or other studies concerning United States postal history from the colonial period to 1893.

The Perry Cup is to be awarded to authors of articles, books, or other studies concerning either United States stamps or postal history prior to 1893. In selecting recipients for this award, the Cup Committee shall give particular weight to new discoveries reported by the nominee and to the use by nominee of original sources of newly found manuscript material or materials presently held by the United States Archives or any public or private institution.

Recipients of the Chase, Ashbrook, and Perry Awards need not be members of the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society. Recipients may receive these awards more than once provided the different awards are for different and separate achievements within the field specified for these cups. These awards may be awarded posthumously under exceptional circumstances.

The Brookman Cup may be awarded only to a member of U.S.P.C.S. for outstanding service to the Society. Any recipient may receive this cup more than once provided the awards are for different and separate services to the society. It may be awarded posthumously under unusual circumstances.

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VIGNETTES OF EARLY UNITED STATES TRANSATLANTIC MAIL

J.C. ARNELL

10. William F. Harnden — The Original Transatlantic Forwarding Agent

In the previous vignette, a passing note was taken of William F. Harnden of Boston. As one of the major contributors to the development of a disciplined transatlantic mail service from the United States through his “express” service within the country and across the Atlantic in Great Britain and Europe, he deserves a vignette of his own.

In the 1830s, while in his early twenties, William Harnden was first a train conductor and later a Boston ticket agent of the fledgling Boston & Worcester Railroad. Recognizing the potential of the growing railway system, he made an agreement with his company, which permitted him in 1839 to provide a personal service of carrying drafts, bills, notes, packages, etc., between Boston and New York using the train. In that year, he was listed in the Boston Directory as “Express Package Carrier, 8 Court Street, Boston.” He established an express office in Boston and a subsidiary one in New York the following year. At the start, “a medium sized valise” was sufficient to carry what was entrusted to him.

In 1841, Nathaniel Greene, the Boston postmaster, described the earlier situation existing in the sending of letters overseas from Boston, and the part Harnden played in resolving the difficulties, in a report for S.R. Hobbie, First Assistant Postmaster General, which was subsequently included in the *USPMG 1841 Report* (pp. 452 ff.):

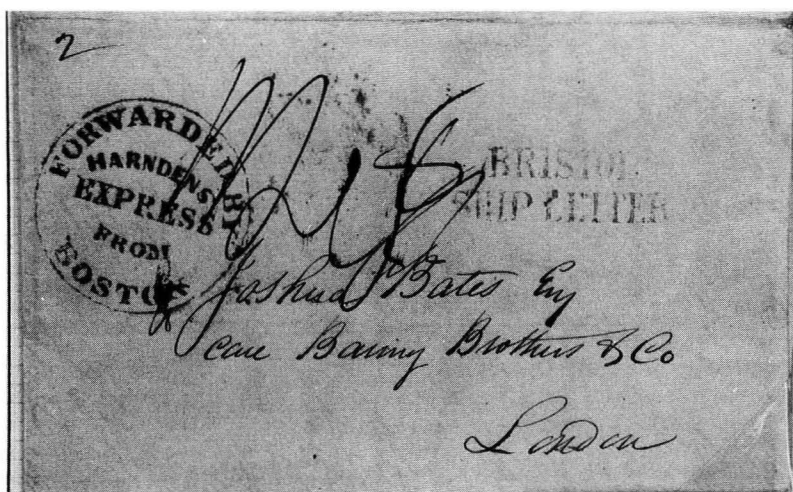
From a time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, there have existed in Boston, New York, and probably other maritime cities, what have usually been called *foreign letter offices*, generally kept by the keepers of news rooms in the respective cities, who assumed the business of receiving letters to be forwarded to foreign countries by sea. These letters were despatched by a vessel sailing directly from the port where the letter was originally deposited, or sent by mail to some other port, whence a packet or other ship was about to sail. When such a letter was to be sent direct from the same port, a small compensation was charged for the trouble. When to be sent by mail to another port for despatch, then the amount of postage was charged in addition, and paid into the *post office* by the keeper of the *foreign letter office*. This is the system which has always been practised, and from which no detriment to the revenues of the Department has ever arisen; but there was a defect in this system, detrimental to the merchants. The packages of letters sent by the keepers of the foreign letter offices (say from Boston) would be sent by the very last mail previous to the sailing of the foreign packet from New York, and would arrive there but a few hours previous to the sailing of the packet; and it would often happen that the mail would not be assorted in season for the letters to be put on board, or that the packet agents (to whose care they were directed) would forget to send to the post office at the last minute; so that, from one or other of these causes, the whole budget would often have to lie over



Figure 1. William F. Harnden and the medium-sized valise.

until the sailing of the next packet. The frequency of these occurrences led many of the merchants to send their letters by such of their friends and acquaintances as happened to be going to New York on the day, and thus a large portion of the foreign-letter business was gradually withdrawn from the mail. On the establishment of Harnden's express, a sure means of securing the forwarding of these letters presented itself, in the person of his agent, who could immediately, on his arrival in New York, repair on board the ship and deposit the letters in the hands of the captain; and Harnden was constantly importuned to take them. Under these circumstances, Harnden communicated the facts (through me) to the Department, and the final result was an arrangement, by which he was appointed a mail carrier, gave bonds, and took the oath. By this arrangement he received the foreign letters from the merchants, put them in parcels directed to himself in New York, brought them to the office and paid the postage on them; they were then mailed for New York, put in a separate bag, with a separate way bill, locked with the post office lock, and the bag confided to the hands of Harnden, to be conveyed to the New York Post office. On his arrival there, the bag was immediately opened, its contents delivered to Mr. H., according to the direction, and he immediately repaired on board the packet ship with the same.

By this arrangement the objects of all parties were accomplished. The Department got the postage; the merchants were assured of the certain conveyance of their letters, even into the cabin of the ship; and Mr. Harnden got a reasonable compensation for his trouble. This arrangement was originally one of my suggestions; it has brought thousands of dollars into the treasury of the Department, which otherwise would never have found their way there; and, to this day, I can see no objection to it. The establishment of the English mail, by the Cunard line, has since somewhat modified the details of this business, and partially changed its direction; but, were it not for wearying you with a letter too long to permit a hope of its being read, I could show you, conclusively, that Mr. Harnden's services are now as conducive to the interests of the Department, and to the public accommodation, as they previously were.



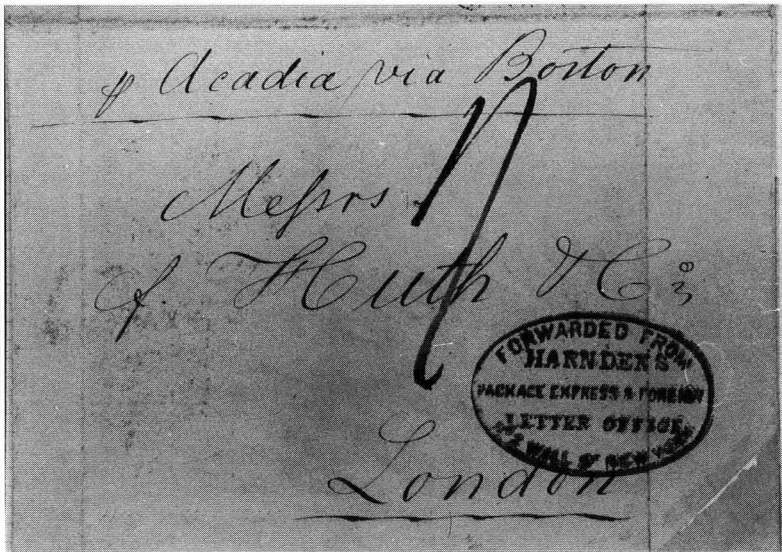
**Figure 2. Letter from J.J. Dixwell, Boston, dated 6 May 1840, which was taken to New York by Harnden's Express (first type of handstamp) and delivered to the *Great Western*. Carried from New York on 14 May and arrived at Bristol on 24 May, where struck with "BRISTOL/SHIP LETTER" and rated 1/4 Stg. postage due as a double weight letter.**

Greene also explained that with the establishment of the Cunard service, as a result of his reputation for reliability and honesty, Harnden was offered the exclusive agency for managing the Cunard freighting business, consisting of light goods and small packages. This was quite large in volume and produced a lot of revenue, of which Harnden received ten percent. To carry out this responsibility, a Liverpool office was set up, which permitted

an expansion of activities into that of a merchant banker. In this latter role, emigrants and others could obtain bills of exchange, which began with small amounts provided as a convenience to his customers, but soon grew to totals of \$10-20,000 per voyage, as merchants also took advantage of his service.

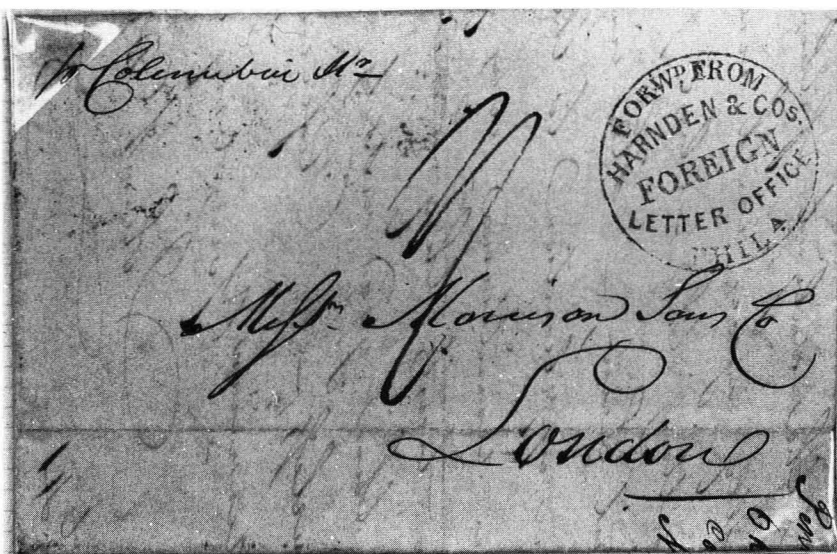
From the point of view of the transatlantic mail, the Liverpool office was more important for another reason, as explained by Greene:

The postmasters cannot receive money for European postage; they have no means of transmitting the money to Europe, and of sending a letter as a *paid* letter. Now, many people who write, *on their own business*, to persons in England and on the Continent, being unwilling to tax their correspondents with the expense of postage, desire to pay through; and many who write to friends or poor relations desire to do the same thing. Mr. Harnden enables them to do this. A person in Philadelphia, wishing to pay the American, English, French and German postage on a letter to Vienna, can pay the same to Mr. Harnden, and the letter will go free of expense to the recipient. Mr. Harnden will pay the postage from Philadelphia to Boston; at Boston he will enclose it, with others of the same kind, to his partner in Liverpool, and that partner will pay at Liverpool the postage to its destination. This arrangement has already been found to be of great public convenience, and to deny him the privilege of doing so would be to deny to the public a facility for which it is not in the power of the Department to furnish a substitute.



**Figure 3.** Letter from E. Kaupé, New York, dated 30 January 1841. Collected and taken to Boston by Harnden's Express and delivered to the *Acadia*. Carried from Boston on 1 February and arrived at Liverpool on 15 February, where backstamped with a double oval "AMERICA/L" and rated 1/- Stg. postage due.

It is clear from the context of this report that the Post Office was seriously considering whether to renew Harnden's contract. One of the arguments was that he collected postage on letters singly and paid for them in aggregate by weight done up in packages, pocketing the difference. Greene argued that this was not very great and was balanced by the labour saved by the post office, having to handle packages of letters instead of individual ones. Objection was also made to the fact that Harnden charged twenty-five cents for a letter from New York to Boston, or a twenty-five percent commission, in addition. To this, Greene argued that by paying the post office, which other agents did not, thousands of dollars went into the treasury of the Department. An advantage Harnden offered was that of keeping his bag open until within five minutes of the actual departure of a mail, while the post office closed the same mail half an hour earlier.



**Figure 4. Letter from John A. Brown, Philadelphia, dated 30 August 1841. Collected by Harnden and taken to Boston and delivered to the *Columbia*. Carried from Boston on 1 September and arrived at Liverpool on 14 September, where backstamped with a double oval "AMERICA/L" and rated 1/-Stg. postage due.**

That his contract was renewed is reflected in two notices in a 21 July 1842 Boston paper:

**UNITED STATES EXPRESS MAIL FROM BOSTON TO NEW YORK**

*Post Office, Boston.* July 20, 1842. The Postmaster General, with a view to the accommodation of the public, and to increase despatch and security, has established an Express Mail, to expedite which, messengers will be employed under the immediate supervision and direction of Messrs. Harnden & Co., for carrying the Mail, between this city and New York, and the important intermediate places, with directions to cause the delivery at the earliest possible time. Letters will be received at the Mail Car Depot of the Boston and Providence Railroad, from half past 3 o'clock until the time of departure, during which time postage can be paid.

GEO. WM. GORDON, Postmaster.

and immediately below:

**UNITED STATES EXPRESS MAIL FROM BOSTON TO NEW YORK.**

With the view to give the greatest possible convenience, despatch and security, to the increasing communication between New York and this city, the Postmaster-General has established regularly sworn Messengers attached to the Department from this city to New York, under the immediate superintendent of the undersigned, to commence on the 20th inst.

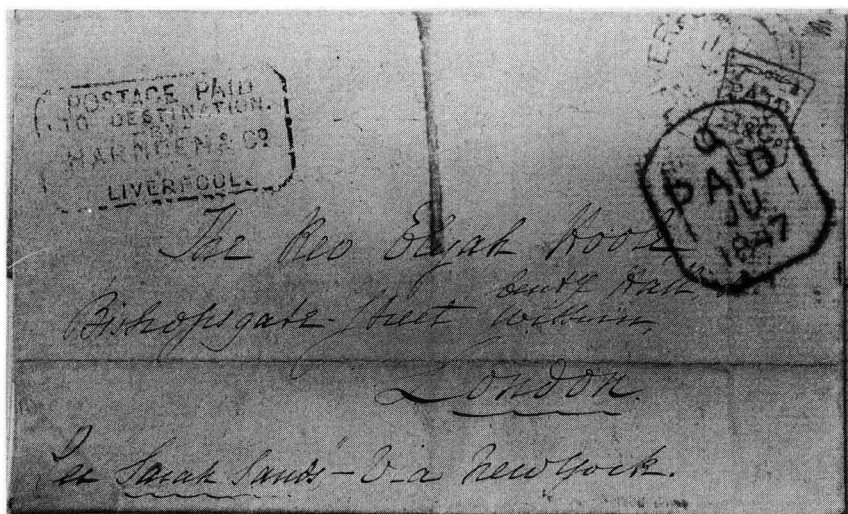
To carry out in the fullest possible extent these views of the Postmaster-General, letters for New York, Providence and New Bedford, will be received at the regular 4 o'clock Mail Train of Cars, (and if desired postage can be paid) from half-past 3 o'clock up to the time of its departure for New York.

Public notice is therefore hereby given of the above arrangement, and all persons may rely upon the diligence with which all mail matter will be forwarded as above, in the shortest possible space of time and with the greatest security.

HARDEN & CO.  
General Mail Agents.

Boston, July 21, 1842.





**Figure 5. Letter from E. Wood, Boston, dated 8 May 1847, and marked "Per Sarah Sands - Via New York." Collected by Harnden & Co., who backstamped the letter "FORWARDED BY HARNDEN & CO. BOSTON" and sent it to New York in a package addressed to the Harnden Liverpool office for delivery to the steamer *Sarah Sands*, which was under charter to the Red Cross (St. George) Line of sailing packets. Carried from New York on 11 May and arrived at Liverpool on 30 May. Struck with "POSTAGE PAID TO DESTINATION BY HARNDEN & CO. of LIVERPOOL" and with "PAID H & Co." in a shield, and mailed on 31 May with 1d Stg. inland postage paid.**

During this period, the Postmaster General continued to be concerned over the amount of revenue being lost to the private expresses, which were carrying large numbers of letters outside the postal service. Possibly in an attempt to get at these, a P.O. notice in New York dated 24 February 1844 stated that Harnden no longer acted as a postal courier, and a month later the following threat against Harnden and the other companies was published.

POST OFFICE,  
New York, March 26, 1844.

**English Mail.** - Letter Bags per Royal Mail Steamer *Caledonia*, which leaves Boston on Monday next, the first day of April, will be closed at the Upper and Lower Post Offices in this city, on Saturday next, the 30th inst., at 45 minutes past 4 o'clock, P.M. After that time, letters can be paid to the Mail Agent on board the *Stonington* boat until 5 o'clock, at which time she leaves the wharf. As the Post Office Department is determined to exert all its energies to prevent the lawless transportation of letters on the mail routes by private expresses, companies and individuals, and as no letters are received on board the British steamer unless through the Boston Post Office, the public is cautioned that there will be no certainty in any mode of transmission *except through the mail*. The contract which formerly existed between Messrs. Harnden & Co. and the Department, by which the former were authorized to receive postage on letters from this city to Boston, has been cancelled. A special agent of the Department has been employed to accompany the mail from this city, and deliver it in due season to the Boston Post Office.

JOHN LORIMER GRAHAM, P.M.

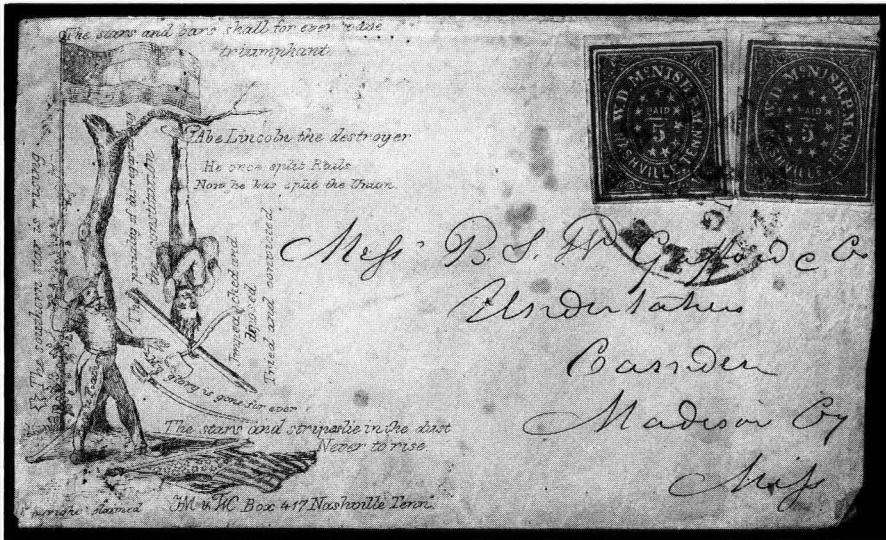
These threats appear to have had no effect on Harnden, for the company continued to advertise its service immediately below the P.O. Notices of the successive Cunard mails. Now that it no longer had any obligation to collect inland postage, it offered to carry letters for 12½ cents prepaid, against the regular postage of 18¾ cents.





# United States Classics at Christie's in March

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## United States Stamps March 13

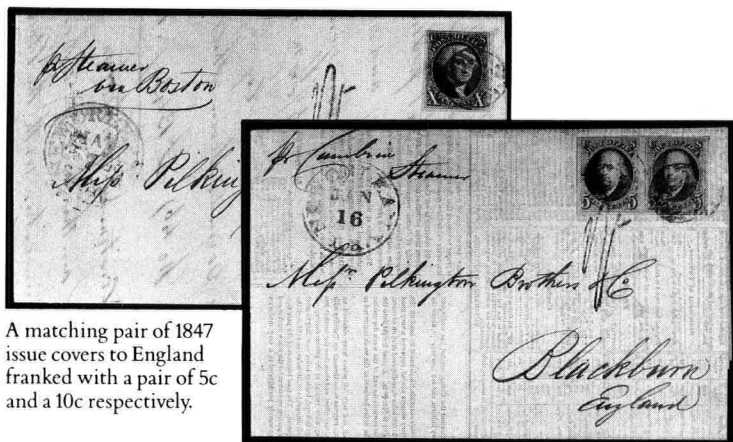
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**THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE UNTIL 1851****RICHARD B. GRAHAM**

This is the first section of a study of the activities of the Post Office Department relative to handling of dead letters. Subsequent parts will be found, as worked up by T.J. Alexander, in the 1851 section and by this writer in the 1861 section.

The story here is far from complete, being based upon material in the writer's collection and photographs and photocopies accumulated both by Mr. Alexander and myself. I also should acknowledge a debt from looking through the Dead Letter Office collections of Thomas R. Wegner and Dr. Alfred E. Staubus. The D.L.O. has had a very large number of markings through the years, many being far from common, and also its activities have always been behind the scenes, and details of the internal part of its operations are thus, in almost any era, largely a matter of conjecture.

Actually, just when the title "Dead Letter Office" came on the scene is, to me at least, somewhat uncertain, but handling of those undeliverable letters returned by postmasters to the General Post Office at Washington or earlier capitals was part of the postal duties from the beginning of the existence of the Post Office Department. Also, from the beginning, and probably a carry-over from the British, postmasters and clerks were not permitted to open such letters (or, for that matter, any other) by law; that task was reserved for duly appointed and properly supervised clerks at the Department.

A paragraph of the postal act of 1799 recognized the need to handle letters not called for and which had to be sent to the General Post Office (it wasn't called the "department" until some years later) as follows:

*And be it further enacted*, That the deputy postmasters shall, respectively, publish at the expiration of every three months, in one of the newspapers published at, or nearest the place of his residence, for three consecutive weeks, a list of all the letters remaining in their respective offices; at the expiration of the next three months, shall send such letters as then remain on hand, as dead letters, to the general post-office, where the same shall be opened and inspected; and if any valuable papers or matter of consequence, shall be found therein, it shall be the duty of the Postmaster-General, to cause a descriptive list thereof to be inserted in one of the newspapers published at the place most convenient to where the owner may be supposed to reside, if within the United States, and such letters and the contents shall be preserved, to be delivered to the person, to whom the same shall be addressed upon payment of postage, and the expense of publication.

The requirement that valuable letters be retained and an attempt made to deliver them to their "owners" — here considered the addressee, but later, the primary attempt was to return them to the senders — also implied that no such attempt was required to be made for other than valuable letters. This concept remained in being until the early days of the Civil War. Each subsequent postal act, as given in the succeeding *Postal Laws & Instructions* (not called *P.L. & Regulations* until 1843) repeated this requirement. The postal act of 1810 quoted the 1799 act almost verbatim, but added,

...And if such letter, with its contents, be not demanded by the person to whom it is addressed, or his lawful agent, within two years after the advertisement thereof as aforesaid, the said contents shall be applied to the use of the United States, until the same shall be reclaimed by the proprietor thereof. The manner of such application to be specially stated by the Postmaster General to the Secretary of the Treasury.

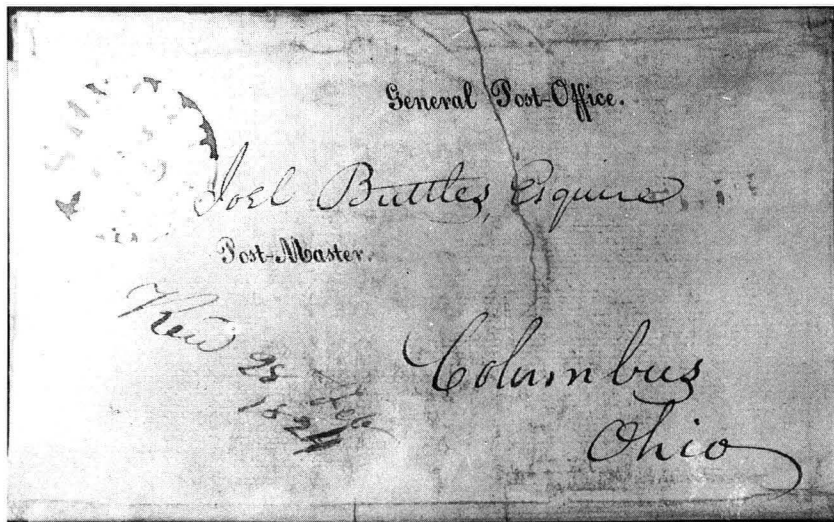
Instruction X (p. 83) of the 1817 *P.L. & I.* simply consisted of a short paragraph saying: "Such letters as have remained on hand, for three months or longer, are, at the end of

every quarter, to be sent to the General Post-Office with the quarterly accounts. These are called *Dead Letters*...."

The paragraph also included instructions about making out the letter bill and being credited with the postage uncollected but charged on the letters.

The postal act approved March 3, 1825, which was to be the basic act governing handling of dead letters until 1862, summed up the previous acts, and since it was to remain on the books for the next 36 years, it is quoted as follows:

Sec. 26. *And be it further enacted*, That the postmasters shall, respectively, publish, at the expiration of every three months or oftener, when the Postmaster general shall so direct, in one of the newspapers published at or nearest the place of his residence, for three successive weeks, a list of all letters remaining in their respective offices, or, instead thereof, shall make out a number of such lists, and cause them to be posted at such public places in their vicinity, as shall appear to them best adapted for the information of the parties concerned; and, at the expiration of the next three months, shall send such of the said letters as then remain on hand, as dead letters to the General Post-office, where the same shall be opened and inspected; and if any valuable papers or matters of consequence, shall be found therein, it shall be the duty of the Postmaster General to return such letter to the writer thereof, or cause a descriptive list thereof to be inserted in one of the newspapers published at the place most convenient to the supposed residence of the owner, if within the United States; and such letter, and the contents, shall be preserved, to be delivered to the person to whom the same shall be addressed, upon payment of the postage, and the expense of publication. And if such letter contain money, the Postmaster General may appropriate it to the use of the department, keeping the account thereof, and the amount shall be paid by the department to the rightful claimant as soon as he shall be found.



**Figure 1. From the General Post-Office at Washington in Feb. 1824, this letter conveyed to the Columbus, Ohio, postmaster under that official's right to receive his mail free, contained a returned valuable letter and a printed instruction for handling it.**

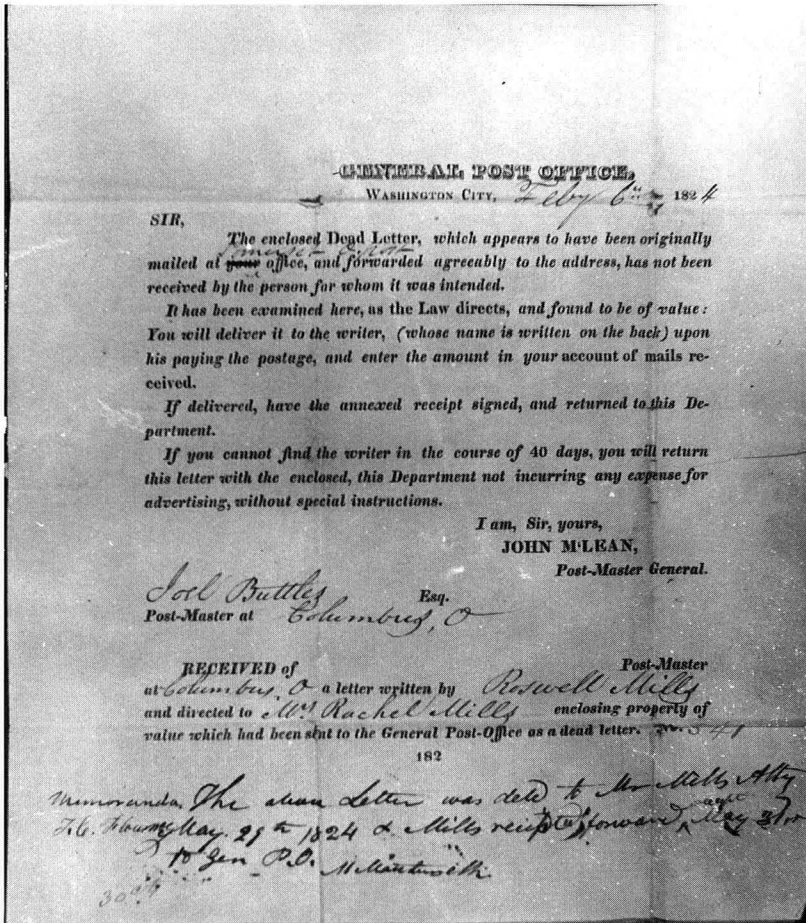
Instruction X of the 1825 *P.L. & I.* exactly duplicated that of 1817, cited previously.

The 1832 *P.L. & I.* repeated both section 26 of the laws of 1825 and the paragraph of Instructions, here given as Sec. 150. However, the Instructions added two more sections, Sec. 151 instructing how to handle more dead letters than could be included in one bundle, and Sec. 152 requiring that any undelivered letters from the Post Office Department be returned direct to that department after one month, rather than to be sent to the Dead Letter Office after three months.

The 1843 *P.L. & R.* also repeated Section 26 of the act of 1825 verbatim, as did that



of 1847, nor did the Instructions and, in 1847, Regulations, add much to our knowledge of what went on within the Dead Letter Office as to how dead letters actually were received, opened and recorded if valuable, and then either disposed of or returned to the post offices of origin in an attempt to return them to their senders.



**Figure 2.** The printed letter (with blanks filled-in) enclosed in the cover in Figure 1. The instructions indicate that a valuable (details not given) letter was being returned and the receipt at the bottom, signed by postal clerk Matthew Matthews, states this was done on May 29, 1824.

The documents and forms and the letters themselves, however, do tell us something about the D.L.O. in the early years. In this respect, the cover and enclosure shown in Figures 1 and 2 display one of the earliest printed instructions to postmasters relative to dead letters that I've seen, although undoubtedly earlier examples exist.

This cover, sent from the General Post Office at Washington to Columbus, Ohio, postmaster Joel Buttles in 1824, is largely a printed form with blanks filled in for both cover and content. It contained a valuable letter, details not stated, although the blanks filled into the printed form, shown in Figure 2, show it had been mailed at Somerset, Ohio, but by a Columbus resident, possibly, as the letter was sent to Columbus after it had been opened by the D.L.O. and found to have valuable content.

Against this, is that the 1817 P.L. & R. still was current and noted that dead letters were to be "delivered to the person to whom the same shall be addressed." However, the form shown in Figure 2, mailed in 1824 prior to the enactment of 1825, indicates that the norm was to return valuable dead letters to the office from which they were sent. In any

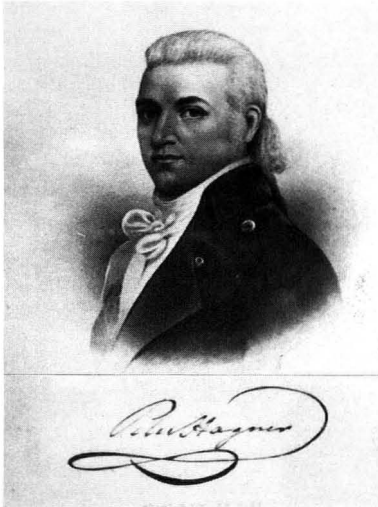


case, it was returned to Columbus to be delivered to the writer, one Roswell Mills, and the letter was directed to Mrs. Rachel Mills, according to the receipt at the bottom.



**Figure 3.** Franked letter of the 3rd Auditor of the Treasury, Peter Hagner, to Capt. Delafield of the Army Engineers, who moved too fast for the letter to overtake him. Thus, it was returned through the Dead Letter Office.

Figure 3 shows a cover sent under the frank of Peter Hagner (Figure 4), 3rd Auditor of the Treasury for many years, to Capt. Delafield of the Army Engineers at Fort Delaware, Del., but forwarded to Cumberland, Tenn., where it still didn't catch him and so was finally sent to the D.L.O. The letter was mailed at Washington on Aug. 29, 1833, and bears a faint D.L.O. handstamp (traced in Figure 5) dated Apr. 5, (probably) 1834, when the letter was returned to the office of the 3rd Auditor and probably again sent out to Capt. Delafield's updated address.



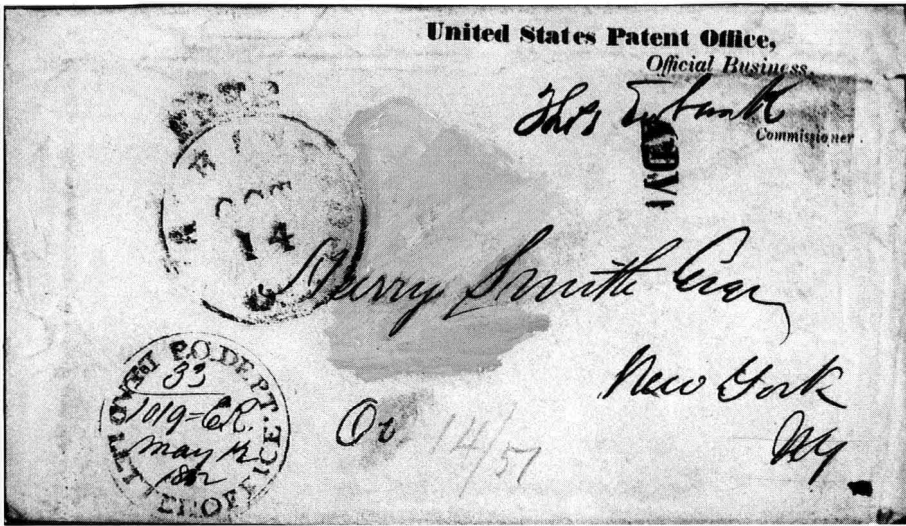
**Figure 4.** Peter Hagner, the "Watchdog of the Treasury."



**Figure 5.** The D.L.O. marking on the cover shown in Figure 3.

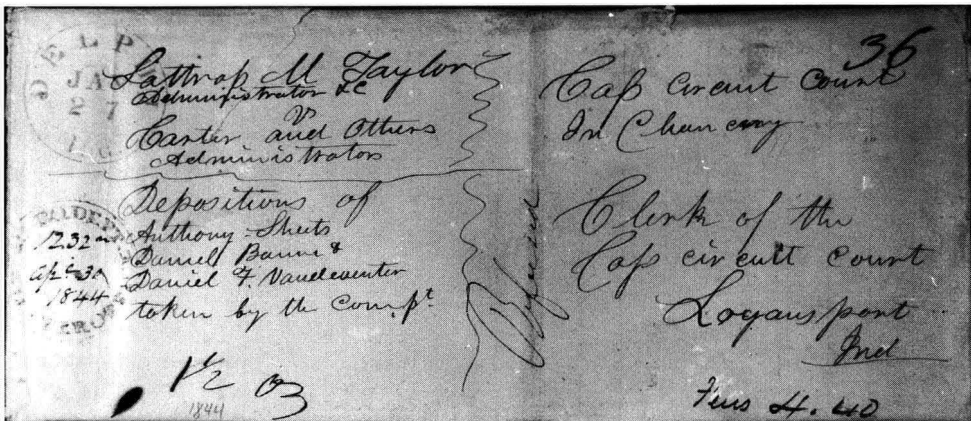
The 1832 *P.L. & I.* had required undelivered letters from the Post Office Department to be returned directly to the department rather than wait to be included with the rest of the dead letters as much as two months later. When the cover shown in Figure 3 was sent, this provision didn't apply to other departments, but the regulations of 1843 were altered to include two sections making clear that any official letters from any department, not deliv-

ered in one month, were immediately to be returned direct to that department. Also, if the person addressed "was known to have removed or that the letter was misdirected," the postmaster was to immediately notify the sender.



**Figure 6. A franked letter of the U.S. Patent Office (informing the addressee his patent application was denied), but the letter not being called for at New York, was advertised and returned through the Dead Letter Office in May 1852.**

This provision was repeated in the 1847 *P.L. & R.*, but the cover shown in Figure 6, sent from the U.S. Patent Office under the free frank of Commissioner Thomas Eubank on Oct. 14, 1851, and evidently advertised unsuccessfully at New York, to where it is addressed, was also returned to the sender through the D.L.O. The marking on the cover is dated May 12, 1852, when, presumably, the letter was received, recorded (probably as a valuable letter, which may explain why it was returned through the D.L.O.) and returned to the Patent Office.



**Figure 7. A courthouse cover of 1844, sent collect (36¢ postage for 1½ oz.) but, as marked vertically on the cover to the left of the address, "refused" by the clerk of the circuit court at Logansport, Indiana. Thus, the letter had to be returned through the Dead Letter Office, after being opened, to its place of origin, Delphi, Indiana, almost exactly three months after it was originally sent. Presumably, it was then remailed in another enclosure, as the back is marked that the enclosed deposition was "Filed May 20, 1844." Courtesy, Bob Baldrige.**

The 1847 *P.L. & R.*, as noted previously, repeated Sec. 26 of the law of 1825, under "Laws," nor were there any important alterations under the regulations. However, the cov-

er shown in Figure 7, sent in 1844, again demonstrates that it was the laws and regulations that followed the actual practice of the Dead Letter Office, rather than, as might be supposed, vice versa. This cover, weighing 1½ ounces per endorsement, was sent from Delphi to Logansport, Indiana, on Jan. 27, 1844, with 36¢ postage collect.

Evidently the clerk of the circuit court at Logansport declined to pay the collect postage, as the letter is marked "Refused" vertically just to the left of the address, so that it was sent to the D.L.O. There, of course, the letter was opened and evidently sent under separate cover to Delphi on Apr. 30, 1844. Obviously, the D.L.O. considered the contents valuable. Just how it got back to Logansport to be finally filed (on May 20, 1844, per an endorsement on the back) isn't evident, but it may have been sent under a separate cover to a local attorney or simply prepaid.

The 1852 P.L. & R., in which the regulations were substantially revised and updated, mentioned refused letters, requiring them to be sent to the D.L.O. monthly without being advertised, even though other letters not called for were still to be held three months.

Obviously, the P.L. & R. of those years didn't tell local postmasters much about what really went on at the D.L.O. but then there wasn't any reason the D.L.O. processes needed publicity. However, journalists and even those in the Department evidently found the D.L.O. operations of considerable interest.

Pages 18-19 of Eli Bowen's *The United States Postal Guide*, dated 1851, give a graphic description of the D.L.O. operations, and those follow as an appendix to display the processes used at the D.L.O. just as the country entered the era of the 1851 stamps with a discount for prepaid letters leading to required use of postage stamps within five years. Bowen's account, obviously written from personal familiarity, probably portrays a great deal more activity in the D.L.O. than even ten years before, but it is undoubtedly a much smaller operation than during the early Civil War years. In 1851, only valuable letters had to be returned, but in 1861, all but circulars and letters with "worthless content" or where writers couldn't be identified had to be returned to the post offices where they had been mailed.

As the next section, written by Mr. Alexander, will show, the D.L.O. continued to grow in the ensuing decade.

## APPENDIX I

Extract from Eli Bowen's *The United States Post-Office Guide*, D. Appleton & Co., New York, 1851 (Reprint Edition 1976 by Arno Press Ltd.), Part II, "The United States General Post-Office," pp. 18-19.

***Dead-Letter Office.***—This office, although a subordinate branch of the Inspection office, is under the direction of the third assistant postmaster-general. It occupies four rooms of the building, and employs thirteen clerks in its service. Any sealed package, for which the postmaster cannot find the proper claimant, after remaining in the post-office three months, and after having been, in the meantime, duly advertised, is a dead letter, and must thereupon be forwarded to this office. When received here, as they are in countless thousands, they are emptied into a large trough, where a proper person separates them from the post-bills and accounts of

postmasters accompanying them, which latter he examines to detect the errors, if any, of the postmaster. He also separates the letters originating in foreign countries from those of our own country, of which a separate account is kept. This duty performed, the letters are sent to an adjoining room, where three clerks are employed to open them. If they contain no valuable remittances, as money, jewelry, &c., they are cast aside without a glance at their written contents. They are thus opened and thrown aside with extraordinary dispatch, and such is the pressure of duty devolving upon the opening clerks, that scarcely a moment could be spared to note the contents of any letter particularly, except, as we have stated, in cases where they contain remittances. If they contain money or other valuable inclosures, they are sent to another set of clerks, who register all the particulars of their history in the mail, and then take steps to find out the sender or rightful claimant. The direction on the outside having failed to secure the delivery of the letter, of course the written contents of the inside must be carefully read. If the amount inclosed is less than one dollar, no effort will be made to ascertain the party to whom addressed, nor the party sending—the money will be appropriated to the dead-letter service, and the letter destroyed. But if the contents exceed one dollar, then the letter will again be forwarded to the post-office from which it was returned, with instructions to the postmaster to use all diligent means within his power to ascertain the rightful claimant; and, upon information that he is dead, or has removed to parts unknown, the letter with its contents will then be forwarded to the party originally sending it, the postmaster taking his receipt therefor. But if he, also, cannot be found, the letter is returned a second time to the dead-letter office, the particulars registered, and the money placed to the credit of the original sender, who may draw it at any future time by making the proper representations of identity.

The systematic means used in this office to ascertain the proper owners of effects coming into its possession, and respond to inquiries for letters, is

almost incredible to one unacquainted with the operations of the office. They have printed forms of inquiry respecting persons, circulars to postmasters whose omission to send up dead letters has been detected, with reproof for the same, and directions as to the right mode of procedure; circulars to postmasters, inclosing letters of value, with general directions, form of receipts to be taken and returned to the department, &c.; circulars in response to applications for letters not received at the dead-letter office; and many others, adapted to almost every case that can arise.

When any letter from the post-office department, or any other department or subordinate branch of the Government, is not called for within *one month* from the time of its receipt, or when the person addressed is *known* to have removed, such letter should be returned to the proper department, and must not be retained to accompany the dead letters. If the person addressed is known to have removed, or if a postmaster have any other reason to believe that the letter is *misdirected*, he will immediately notify the proper department or office of the fact, and either be governed by its direction, or return the letters at the end of the month, as the case may be.

The whole number of dead letters returned to the department can only be vaguely estimated. During the last quarter of the late postage law, there were received about 6000 bushels, which, supposing nine hundred letters to the bushel, would give about 5,400,000, or at least 20,000,000 per annum! Under the present rates of postage, this number will not be likely to increase in proportion to the increase of correspondence, inasmuch as dead letters are generally unpaid, while, under the existing law, a large drawback is made for prepayment. The number of dead letters received from Cincinnati, for example, not prepaid, is about 9000 per quarter, while the number of prepaid is only about 1500. From Boston the number of unpaid letters per quarter is about 10,000, and of prepaid about 2000.

Drafts, deeds, and other papers of value, and also jewelry, mementoes, &c., are preserved in the dead-letter office. These are often recovered by



their owners with much delight. In one instance, not a great while since, a gentleman, for want of certain documents believed to have been lost from the mail, found himself in the power of an unscrupulous person, in a matter in which property to the amount of ten thousand dollars (all the gentleman was worth) was involved. As a possible means of obtaining the papers, he applied to the dead-letter office, and in about three minutes they were produced! The package had been improperly addressed, and this is one of the principal sources in the origin of dead letters, as well as in the miscarriages and other indirections attending the transmission of letters in the mail. Persons sending letters, and especially letters of value, if they would have the proper claimant receive it in due course of mail, should not overlook the absolute necessity of correctly spelling and legibly writing the name of the individual, the post-office, the county, and the state. All this should be done explicitly, plainly, and in full, and cannot fail to secure promptness in its transmission.

The amount of money received from dead letters, and lodged in the treasury to the credit of the parties sending, is not generally very considerable. During the year 1850 the whole amount did not exceed \$2000. The amount is sometimes greatly increased by the detection of fraudulent and fictitious parties in the large cities operating upon people in distant quarters of the Union, by means of printed circulars, and inviting remittances. A party of this description was arrested about the time the author of this work was connected with the general post office. His office purported to be in New-York, and he advertised a geological and mineral apparatus, simple in its form and cheap in cost, by which any one might determine the presence of minerals in land, and recommended as especially useful in detecting deposits of gold. He also professed to have been the original discoverer of the gold formations of California, and the excitement attending the astonishing developments of the mineral resources of that prolific region, attracted extraordinary attention to the advertisements of the impostor. Thousands and thousands of letters poured



in to his address from all quarters of the Union, and when he was finally arrested for the swindle, and the letters returned to the dead-letter office, something like four thousand dollars, in remittances of three dollars each, were deposited as the fruits of his imposture! All this money, of course, was returned to the parties remitting, in the usual manner and form prescribed by law.

The celebration of St. Valentine's day is another prolific source of dead letters. Thousands and thousands of the most beautiful *billets-doux* that the hands of art and genius could produce, are returned every year to the dead-letter office, and there consigned to the common fate of things earthly. Here you see the delicate tribute of love to beauty, and the coarse caricature of the fool and the villain mingled together! Here is the tender effusion of a fond Irish girl to her mother in Ireland, detailing the bright prospects of the new world, and sending a soul-full of love to her brothers and sisters. Here is the anonymous threat of the assassin and the robber—the insidious note of the libertine—the abbreviated bill and duplicate letter of the merchant! Here is poetry and prose—lines to eyes that are black, and to creditors that owe—all, all consigned to one common grave, where, alas, their authors may have preceded them, or soon must follow!

*Inquiries and Answers.*—1. Should a post-bill containing dead letters, be entered with the account of mails sent? Answer—No. As we understand the question, the amount of the bill, or rather of the three monthly bills, supposing letters are returned to the dead-letter office at the end of each month, should be entered only in the account current, article 10.

2. The postmaster at P., inquires in what way a postmaster gets credit for letters returned to the department *before* the end of the quarter; meaning the *refused* letters, and letters which cannot be delivered, which may be returned at the end of each month. Answer, in the same way as letters returned at the end of the quarter—namely, by sending a dead-letter bill, and charging at the end of the quarter the amount of the three monthly

bills, in his quarterly return.

3. What is to be done with drop letters? No direction is given for the final disposition of drop letters, nor of letters which may be received into a post-office, and cannot be mailed for defect of direction, or any other cause. These letters are not to be advertised. They are not, strictly speaking, *dead letters*; but nevertheless, they cannot be opened by the postmaster, and must in the end be sent to the dead-letter office, whenever there shall appear no other way, than opening them, and ascertaining the writer, of restoring them or their contents to the rightful owner.

4. Several postmasters have inquired in what way, and when they must return dead letters to the department. Answer; the 26th section of the act 3d of March, 1825, is not wholly, but only in part repealed by the act of the 3d of March, 1849. Dead letters are to be treated generally as required by the former act and returned at the end of the quarter. But letters refused or which cannot be delivered—are according to the latter to be returned at the end of the month. What is to constitute an incapacity to be delivered, must be decided by each postmaster for himself. With the parcel for the 1st and 2d months of the quarter send, each, a bill to the department and retain a duplicate. With the parcel of the third month, which will contain as well the dead letters, strictly so called, of the quarter as the letters refused and which cannot be delivered for the month, also send a bill, and from the aggregate of this last bill and the duplicates retained of your two former bills, take your proper credit in the account current for the quarter.

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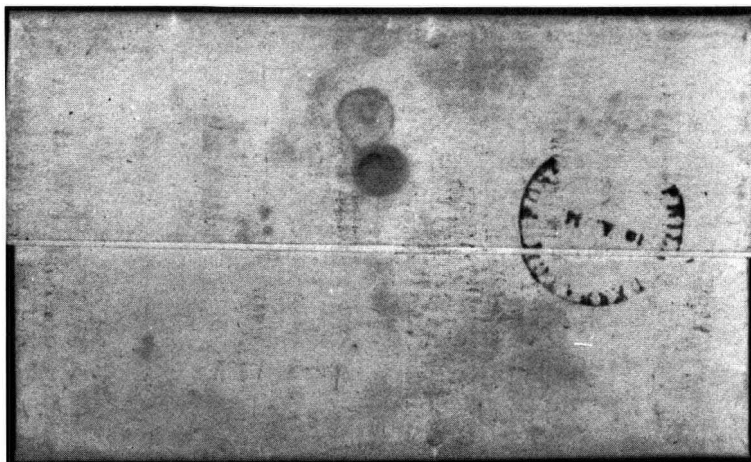
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### **CORRECTION**

The caption for Figure 7 on page 237, *Chronicle* 144 (Nov. 1989) should read: "...handstamped on reverse with 28mm red..." The Figure actually shows the front of the cover with a red 33mm postmark. A picture of the reverse is shown here.



Now for a few section editor's comments.

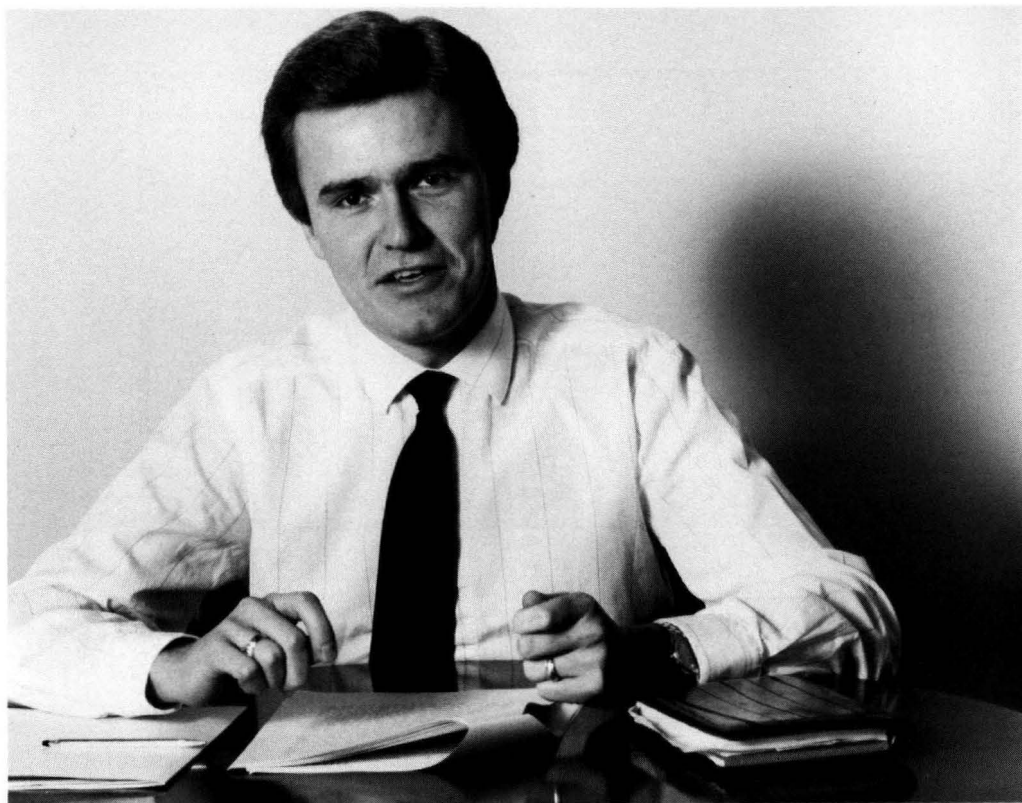
The inflow to this column of new information has just about dried up. I am convinced that there is a lot of it out there among the readership; and I guess it's my job as editor to break it loose. But how? (and I'm aiming not only at carrier aficionados but the general classic collectors as well). Having dabbled in carriers for more years than I like to admit, I have developed some suspicions in areas unsupported by fact, but involving some "circumstantial evidence." In order to illuminate some of these dark areas, here are a few outrageous suggestions which I hope will stimulate some constructive comments:

1. None of those 250,000 Franklin carriers were ever placed on sale in the New York post office.
2. One cent postage stamps prepaid city mail fees (and some collection fees) in New York prior to 1856.
3. Cincinnati had carrier service continuously throughout the fee period.
4. The Boston circular PENNY POST PAID handstamp was used, among other things, to produce prepaid stamped envelopes.
5. More of those Philadelphia oval USPO DESPATCH handstamp strikes produced "stamps" than the present catalogues admit.

Please feel free to make your own outrageous suggestions in additional areas if it will lead to constructive debate.

I would also like to dedicate one or more future columns to illustrate some of the rare and fascinating carrier items some of you have locked in your closets. Their exposure to the collecting world, fully protected by anonymity if you so desire, will broaden knowledge and stimulate interest in carrier collecting; so please send me reproduceable black and white glossies of your candidates. I will be glad to make the photos myself if that would help.

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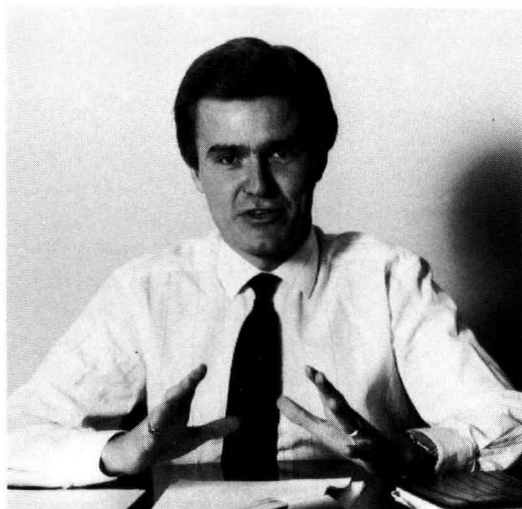
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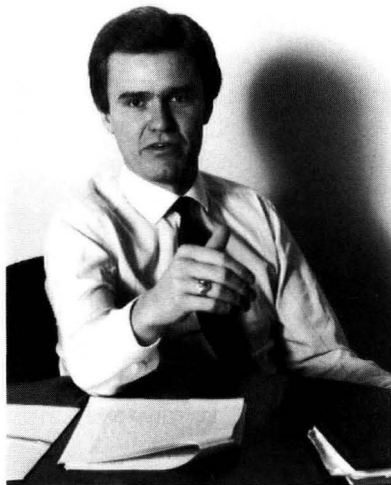
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### REINVENTING THE WHEEL

SUSAN M. MCDONALD

Last fall, beginning in late September, a story appeared concerning the certification by the Philatelic Foundation of a 10¢ 1847 cover postmarked New York July 2 (1847) as the earliest known use of the 1847 issue. The announcement did not come from the Foundation itself but broke first in Indianapolis, where the attorney for the estate of one of the owners must have informed one of the newspapers. The story was picked up by a wire service and printed in many papers.

The next wave of hyperbole began appearing in the philatelic press in October. *Stamps* for October 14, 1989, published a partial illustration of the cover on p. 3 with a short article entitled “‘Earliest’ 10¢ Cover Discovered.” In it the PF is quoted as follows: “The discovery of this historic rarity is the stuff philatelic lore is made of and rivals the greatest finds in the history of stamp collecting.” Remarks attributed to Foundation Chairman Dr. Roberto Rosende stated, “It may well be the closest philatelists will get to an actual first day cover.”

A week later *Stamps* devoted its entire front page to “Foundation Certifies Earliest 1847 Cover” by Michael Zelenak, the PF’s recently appointed director of education. The same discussion, “An 1847 First Day Cover?” by Zelenak, with some additional remarks omitted by *Stamps* occupies two and one-half pages in the *Philatelic Foundation Bulletin* for July-Dec. 1989. More on this later.

A slightly abridged version of the account was published in *Mekeel’s* for October 20 1989, on an inside page. *Mekeel’s* also reported an interview with the attorney previously mentioned, in which he suggested the cover might be sold through a philatelic auction, or perhaps through the probate court by auction.

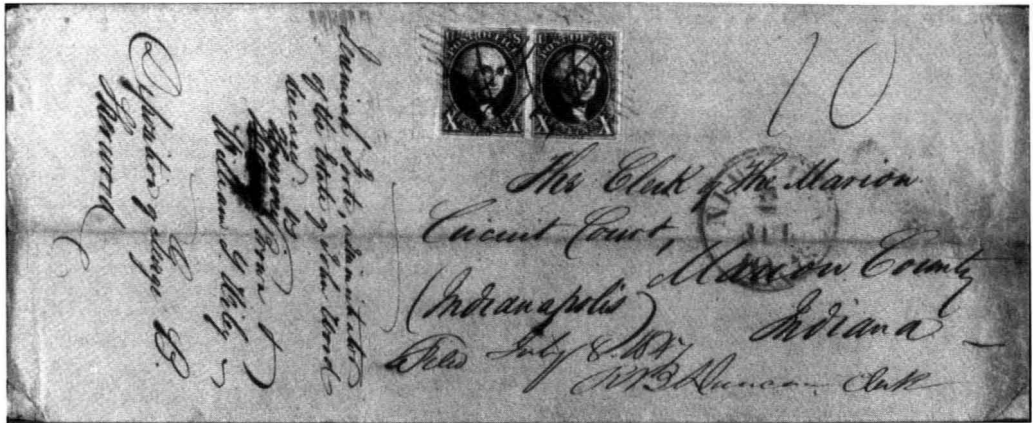
Although the date 1972 was noted in the Zelenak piece, failure to acknowledge earlier writings about this cover might lead the casual reader to conclude that this is a recently discovered cover previously unknown to the public, and that its significance was not realized until it was examined by the PF. Not so. As Richard B. Graham pointed out in a distinctly restrained analysis in his November 6, 1989, column in *Linn’s*, the cover became known early in 1972.

The first published reference to the cover was — with appropriate irony — an article in *Stamps* for March 14, 1972, by the late J. David Baker, “Where Has this 1847 Cover Been for 124½ Years? An Amazing Find in Indianapolis.” Baker described how the cover was found, in an old law book, and reviewed comments on the date of issue by Ashbrook, Ward, and others. Baker was a resident of Indianapolis and knew Harry Mark, the discoverer of the cover. Mark, whom Dave described to me as “an accumulator,” being aware of Baker’s interest and expertise in U.S. classics, consulted him soon after finding the cover. Baker in turn notified Creighton C. Hart, who prepared an article for the May 1972 *Chronicle* (#74), titled “A 2nd Day 1847 Cover.” Intrigued by the questions raised, I researched information on the date of issue in “A Day to Remember: July 1, 1847,” published in the same issue.

At the time, Mr. Mark attempted to present the cover as a first day use, advancing some ingenious but convoluted arguments. Because an effort is apparently now being made to revive that claim, I am here summarizing Creighton’s and my conclusions, which I believe are still valid.

Hart’s analysis was that the sender probably purchased the stamps on July 1 at the





Cover postmarked NEW-YORK 2 JUL 10cts (1847), addressed to Indianapolis, a distance of over 300 miles. Just over 1 oz., thus incurring a 30¢ rate: 20¢ paid by stamps, 10¢ due marked in blue ink.

New York City post office. The stamps plate 61-62L so presumably 60 or more had already been sold. The letter itself was mailed late on July 1, after post office hours, or dropped into the mail slot on July 2. Either circumstance explains why it was not presented to the clerk to be weighed. It was slightly over the one ounce for which the stamps paid, and was rated an additional 10¢ due in blue ink.

In my investigation of the issue date, I established the following:

The 3rd Assistant Postmaster General, John Marron, acted as Stamp Agent in accepting the stamps from the printers, Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson of New York City. Marron arrived in New York on June 29 in response to a letter dated June 26 from the printers to the Postmaster General, Cave Johnson, notifying him that the stamps were ready. Marron picked up the first order, \$50,000 worth of stamps (600,000 5¢, 200,000 10¢), from Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson on June 29 or 30.

Marron delivered the stamp supplies *in person* to the post offices at New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, and returned to Washington with the balance on July 9. Thereafter shipments, in much smaller quantities, were *by mail*.

Marron must have delivered the New York City supply of 60,000 5¢ and 20,000 10¢ on July 1 — almost certainly very early on that day — in order to make the journey to Boston in time to deliver stamps there on July 2, per the official record.

Robert Morris, the New York City postmaster, who was responsible for the New York Postmaster Provisionals, was a keen supporter of adhesive stamp use and familiar with necessary procedures for its implementation. He knew the stamps were ready for delivery and would surely have made them available to the public within hours of their receipt at the post office.

It follows that 1847 stamps were on sale at the New York City post office on July 1, 1847, and therefore the July 2 cover, spectacular and important though it is, does not represent a first day of use.

To return to some statements in the *Philatelic Foundation Bulletin*: Much is made of the use of a New York postmark with “10cts” at the base as indicating postage due. In a cursory inspection of my records of covers in July 1847, where illustrations are readily available, I find the “10cts” postmark (also the comparable “5cts” on 5¢ covers) in use on covers fully paid by stamp until mid July or later. The postage due on the July 2 cover is established instead by the ms. “10.” These “5cts” and “10cts” postmarks were in common use on covers franked by New York Postmaster Provisionals.

The Philatelic Foundation found that the cover and enclosures weighed exactly one ounce on a modern scale and quoted Bill Crowe as noting “Our modern computerized scales are much more accurate than anything they had back then. To the postal clerk of 150 years ago this cover...probably would have appeared to have weighed just over an ounce and was charged for three half ounces...” I would like to suggest that in the course of 142 years, including up to 46 in those “dusty law books” Joel Hyatt is so fond of mentioning, enough moisture may have evaporated to reduce the weight.

In the next paragraph, the question asked is why the cover was underpaid 10¢, if the sender bought the stamps and gave it to the clerk, who should have weighed it at the same time. Peter Robertson’s explanation is that New York had only one post office and “At that one post office, the people who took your mail and cancelled it were not the same ones who sold the stamps. This would have been done at different locations.” A plausible suggestion, but has it been established as a fact? Not that I’m aware of.

The following paragraph begins “Is this a first-day cover?” An unpaid stampless cover postmarked NEW YORK/10cts/1/JUL (1847), which was submitted as collateral, is illustrated with the following commentary:

Although this might imply that the new 1847 stamps were not yet on sale on July 1, it is the opinion of the Expert Committee that it does not provide conclusive proof that the original cover (Figure A) is a first day cover of the 1847 issue. There are numerous possibilities, the most likely including: a) the Post Office did not have the stamps on sale on July 1, in which case the July 2 usage would be a first day cover; b) only a limited number were put on sale on July 1, which were sold out; c) the Post Office had the new stamps on sale on July 1, but only sold them or used them on mail when they were specifically requested by the person posting the letter. If customers did not request them, they continued to use the current procedure, which meant that some mail could still go out on stampless covers. Unless new evidence is unearthed, we will not know for sure if the stamps were on sale in New York on July 1.

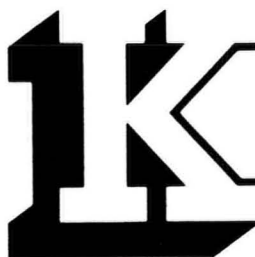
In my opinion, hypotheses a and b are ill-conceived. As already demonstrated, stamps were available on July 1. Had the post office sold out of 60,000 5¢ and 20,000 10¢ stamps, we surely would have some genuine first day covers surviving. As for proposition c, we know the preponderance of mail — not merely “some mail” — continued to be stampless throughout the four years the 1847 issue was current, and indeed much later until use of stamps became compulsory in 1856. The estimate of one stamped cover to one hundred stampless is commonly given for the 1847 period. The time-honored practice of sending mail *unpaid* remained in favor with the public. The argument that the absence of a stamp on the July 1, 1847, stampless cover means that no stamps were available at the post office on that date is completely ludicrous.

When this July 2 cover surfaced in 1972, its genuineness was not questioned, nor should it be now, but estimates of its monetary value have varied greatly. Dick Graham recalls that the owners priced it at \$100,000 in 1972; my recollection is a \$50,000 figure. It will be interesting to follow the further adventures of this cover, as the attorney for one of the estates involved flogs its value to giddy heights. The latest update is in the January 5, 1990, *Mekeel’s*, commenting on the attorney’s press release about contacting various auction houses (of the five names mentioned, three are misspelled), and giving his estimate as “at least” \$1 million. Stay tuned.

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I once received a call from a woman who told me she had a small boxful of New Jersey covers used in the 1860's and 70's and a cover to China with three 10 cent stamps and one 3 cent stamp. By now I'm pretty blasé about "boxfuls of old covers" but the China cover intrigued me, especially since she told me the stamps were imperforate, I went to see the covers the next day. When I got there I wasn't surprised to find the New Jersey covers to be the garden variety. But the China cover... it was from the famous "Blodgett" correspondence. I couldn't imagine how this woman acquired a cover from such a famous correspondence since she obviously wasn't a collector. I asked her about that. She told me that her late husband's mother's maiden name was Blodgett and that she had kept this cover for sentimental reasons but that there had been dozens of these covers which her husband had sold in the early 1960's to a New York dealer. Now anyone who collects classic Trans-Atlantic rate covers remembers the great sale of these "Blodgett" covers in the early 1960's. Many of them bore 10 cent Type I's and IV's and there were many combinations of types. It was a fabulous group. One recently sold in the Grunin Collection and fetched a five figure price. When I examined this remaining cover I found that all the 10 cent stamps were Type I's. I told her that they were better stamps than any in her "old box" and made an appropriate offer. I came away happy. While I wasn't the beneficiary of the original find of the 1860's, I did hold in my hand this lonely echo of that bonanza. What happened to her "box of old covers"? Honestly, I don't remember.



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**DEAD LETTER OFFICE**  
**THOMAS J. ALEXANDER**

The first *Report* of the Postmaster General during this period (1851) explained the current state of the Dead Letter Office:

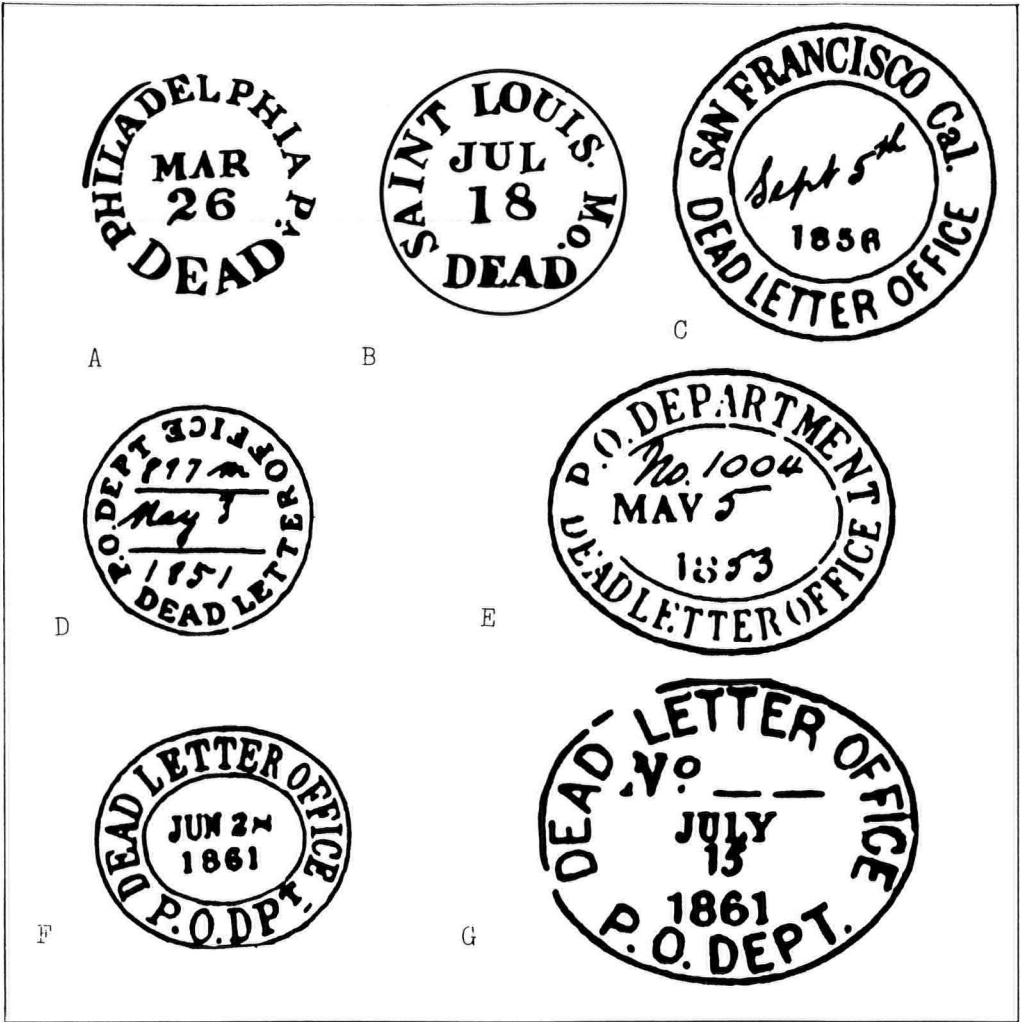
In consequence of the want of clerical force in the dead-letter office, my efficient Third Assistant had been compelled, for several years, to allow an accumulation, in the dead-letter office, of letters containing promissory notes, drafts, and other papers of value. This class of letters had been accumulating from 1837, and was rapidly increasing. Upon examination into the general character of their enclosures, I deemed it my duty to cause extraordinary efforts to be made to send these letters and their enclosures to the parties entitled thereto. For this purpose several clerks, whose duties might during the recess of Congress be temporarily thrown upon others in the same divisions, were detached from their respective desks and employed in this service. In order to accomplish the object in view, several persons not in the service of the department were permitted to labor in the office, with the understanding that they would be paid when Congress should specially appropriate for that purpose a sum sufficient for their compensation. This course was the more necessary, as, during the last summer, some 2,400 pounds of dead letters, which had been suffered to accumulate in California since the extension of our mail service to San Francisco, in the hope that Congress would authorize them to be opened and examined there, were returned to the department. The amount equitably due to the persons thus allowed to labor in the department is estimated at \$505.42. As the increased labor thrown upon the department by the new postage act of the 3d of March last, rendered it impossible to register and send out the letters referred to without some such arrangement, and as by it the letters accumulated during the previous years, and most of those received during the present year, have been properly disposed of, it is believed Congress will not hesitate to make the necessary appropriation...

The Postmaster General should also be empowered to authorize the special agents in California and Oregon, respectively, ...in the presence and with the aid of such postmaster as the department shall designate, to open the dead letters accumulated from time to time within their districts, to destroy those found to be of no value, and to return to the department those containing valuables, under such regulations and instructions as may be deemed proper.

The problem of the very substantial additional burden placed on the office by the extension of the mail service to the West Coast was a recurring theme throughout the decade. Much of it arose because of the extremely slow pace of the Department in extending mail routes to the gold mining regions, resulting in floods of dead letters addressed to the miners.

The Third Assistant Postmaster General was in charge of the Dead Letter Office. According to the *PL&R* dead letters were those that had been advertised and had remained in the post office for three months or longer, refused letters, those held up for the payment of postage after prepayment was required in 1855, and those where prepayment had been fraudulently attempted by previously used stamps or cut-out stamped envelopes.

The Act of 1852 (substantially restating the Act of 1825) provided: "...and at the expiration of the next three months, shall send such of said letters as then remain on hand, as dead letters, to the General Post Office, where the same shall be opened and inspected; and if any valuable papers, or matters of consequence, shall be found therein, it shall be the duty of the Postmaster General to return such letter to the writer thereof, or cause a descriptive list thereof to be inserted in one of the newspapers published at the place most convenient to the supposed residence of the owner, if within the United States; and such



D.L.O. markings in use during the 1851-61 period.

letter, and the contents, shall be preserved, to be delivered to the person to whom the same shall be addressed, upon payment of the postage, and the expense of publication. And if the letter contain money, the Postmaster General may appropriate it to the use of the Department, keeping an account thereof, and the amount shall be paid by the Department to the rightful claimant as soon as he shall be found." It should be noted that this appears to require a double publication in the case of a valuable letter where the address of the writer is not readily ascertainable: once at to point of nondelivery and once at the point of origin. The reason we never see a double advertising fee charged to a recipient where a valuable letter was eventually delivered is explained in the document noted in the next paragraph. Although this act does not specifically authorize it, worthless and "junk" mail was destroyed. Note also that we can now have in our possession only those covers that were eventually delivered to the addressee or returned to the sender.

In the 7 March 1988 issue of *Linn's*, Everett Erle published a very interesting and rare letter from the Dead Letter Office which sets out the method of returning a dead letter to its point of origin in an attempt to locate the sender:

The enclosed DEAD LETTER, which appears to have been originally mailed at your office and forwarded agreeably to its address, has not been received by the person



for whom it was intended.

Having been examined here, as the law directs, and found to be of value, it is sent to you to be delivered to the writer or person addressed upon payment of the postage, with which you will charge yourself in your Account of Mails Received. You will date and carefully fill up the annexed receipt, and having caused it to be signed by the person authorized to receive the letter, you will forthwith return it to the Third Assistant Postmaster General.

If the writer or person addressed cannot be found in thirty days, you will return this letter, with the dead letter which it encloses, accompanied with any information you may have obtained touching the present location of the writer or of the person addressed.

If either of them live within the delivery of another office, you are not permitted to forward the dead letter to that office, but must return it here with the residence of the party noted.

The use or exchange of the money or other article of value enclosed in a dead letter is prohibited; nor is the separation of any part of the dead letter permitted under any circumstances. The dead letter and enclosure must be kept together just as received, and if not delivered, must be returned to the Department in its original, entire condition.

You are particularly requested to carefully read the dead letter enclosed, in order to facilitate its proper delivery; and in case you return it to this office, you will explain why it is returned.

The Department will not pay any expense for advertising dead letters sent to Postmasters for delivery.

The question of undeliverable newspapers was addressed in the *PL&R* of 1857. If a newspaper could not be delivered, the publisher was notified; if the publisher continued to send the paper three months after such notification, the postmaster was authorized to sell it for the postage due. Similarly, any printed material that could not be delivered and remained in the post office for more than one quarter could be sold by the postmaster for credit on his quarterly accounts.

An Act of 27 July 1854 finally addressed the problem of dead letters on the West Coast:

Sec. 3. *And be it further enacted*, That the Postmaster General be and he is hereby authorized to cause the dead letters which may accumulate in the post offices in said State and Territories [California, Oregon and Washington] after the Thirtieth day of June, in the year Eighteen Hundred Fifty Four, to be returned in periods not less than quarter-yearly to the post office at San Francisco, to be there opened and examined under the direction of the postmaster at that office, who shall, according to such regulations as the Postmaster General may prescribe, return to the Post Office Department such of said letters as shall be found to contain money, valuable papers, or matters of consequence, to be disposed of according to law, and destroy such letters as shall be found to contain nothing of value: *Provided, however*, That no dead letter shall be opened which the postal arrangements of the United States with foreign countries require to be returned unopened to such countries respectively.

Even though the Act required the San Francisco postmaster to destroy letters containing matter of no value, his instructions from the POD apparently required advertising, just as was done at the Washington office. If the addressee appeared and paid the postage, it was delivered to him, even though it was of no value. Tracing C is an example of the handstamp used at the San Francisco Dead Letter Office in forwarding such mail.

An exception to the general regulations was made in the case of dead letters sent by federal offices in Washington. In those cases, the postmaster at the point of destination was required to return the letter direct to the sender within one month of its receipt at that office.

One peculiar regulation (Sec. 195, revoked in 1855) stated : "...but if the writer of a letter not containing an enclosure of value desire to have his letter preserved, it will be

## Post Office Department,

Pursuant to the provisions of the Act of Congress approved July 27th, 1854, the following regulations are prescribed for the government of Postmasters in the State of California, and in the Territories of Oregon and Washington, in returning Dead Letters from their respective offices:

1. All letters becoming "Dead" in the Post Offices of California, Oregon, and Washington, are to be returned to the Postmaster of San Francisco, Cal.

2. Dead Letters are such as have been advertised and have remained in hand three months; including letters refused or held for postage; letters for foreign countries which cannot be forwarded without prepayment of postage; letters not addressed, or so badly directed that their destinations cannot be ascertained; and letters addressed to places which are not Post Offices.

3. Refused letters; dropped letters; letters from foreign countries, including the British possessions in North America; letters for foreign countries which cannot be forwarded; and letters not directed, or addressed to places unknown, will be returned to San Francisco semi-quarterly—that is to say, at the middle and end of each Post Office quarter.

All other Dead Letters are to be returned to San Francisco at the end of each Post Office quarter. Refused and dropped letters are not to be advertised.

4. Upon returning Dead Letters to San Francisco at the middle or end of a quarter, every Postmaster must forward with them to San Francisco duplicate Dead Letter bills; one of which is to be kept by the Postmaster of San Francisco, and the other to be forwarded to the Third Assistant Postmaster General, at Washington. A third bill, or copy of the duplicates, should always be kept by the Postmaster returning the Dead Letters.

5. The Dead Letter bill can be made upon an ordinary post bill; and should always be so made up as to show the number of unpaid letters of each rate; the number of each rate paid by stamps and envelopes; the number of each rate paid in money; the number of drop letters; the number of unpaid foreign letters of each rate; the number of paid foreign letters of each rate; and each description of letters here mentioned should be carefully tied up in their separate rates, and the whole then put up securely in one bundle, with the duplicate bills inside.

6. If the Dead Letters at any office be so numerous as to make it necessary to put them in several bundles, the bundles must be numbered consecutively, beginning with number 1, and the duplicate bills must be put in the last number, which should be plainly marked "Bill."

7. No allowance will be made for Dead Letters returned unless they are accompanied by the duplicate bills required by regulation No. 4.

8. When refused letters and letters held for postage; drop letters, letters from foreign countries, including the British possessions of Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, or any such letters, as are mentioned in section No. 3, are returned to San Francisco semi-quarterly, care should be taken to note on the Dead Letter bills rendered at the end of the quarter, the amount of the bills previously rendered, so as to give a complete Dead Letter bill, for the quarter, corresponding in amount with the credit claimed for Dead Letters in the quarterly Account Current.

9. At the end of every quarter, which is on the last day of March, June, September, and December, each Postmaster should return his Dead Letters, without delay, to San Francisco.

10. Every Dead Letter, before its return to San Francisco, must be stamped or postmarked on the sealed side with the name of the office and the date of its return.

11. When a letter is refused, the word "refused" should at once be written or stamped upon it; and if the seal of a letter be broken by accident, or by being delivered to the wrong person, the fact and circumstances should be noted upon it.

12. When any letter from this Department, or from any other Department or public office at the seat of the General Government, is not called for within thirty days from the time of its receipt, or when the person addressed is known to be dead or to have moved away, such letter must not be sent to San Francisco, but returned under cover direct to the Department or public office in which it originated.

13. Postmasters in California, Oregon and Washington, will continue to send their quarterly returns of postage to the Third Assistant Postmaster General, Post Office Department, as heretofore, and embrace in their Quarterly Accounts Current the amount of Dead Letters returned to San Francisco.

A. V. BROWN,  
Postmaster General.

**Post Office Notice concerning handling of dead letters on the West Coast.**

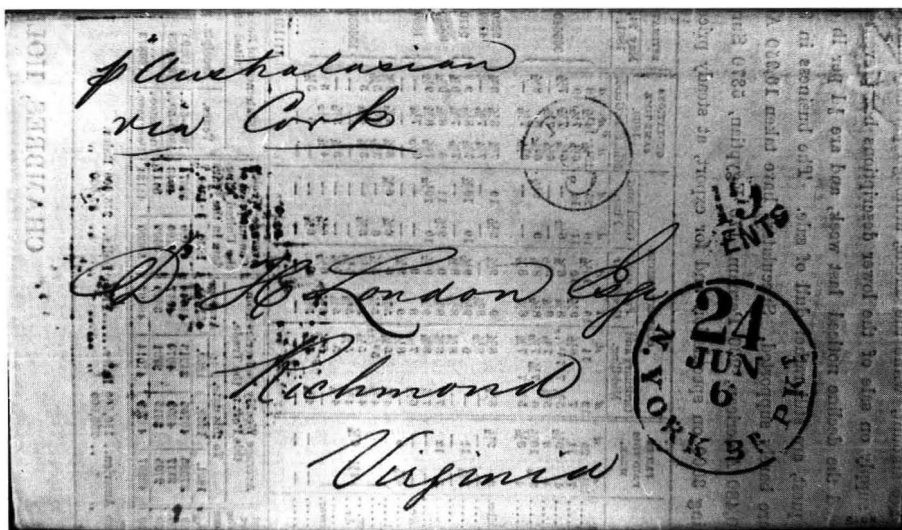
done if he prepay the letter and mark the words "to be preserved," in large characters, on the sealed side. Upon the return of his letter he will be required to pay the postage from Washington." Has anyone ever seen a cover with this notation?

On 2 June 1859 Postmaster General Holt sent a circular to all postmasters seeking their advice as to how to cut down on the number of dead letters being sent to Washington. In it he states: "The number of dead letters is about 2,250,000 a year; of which about 20,000, containing money or other valuables, are preserved, and, for the most part, returned to the writers. In cases where the writers are not found the letters are retained, subject to a restoration whenever satisfactory proof of ownership is received. All dead letters which do not contain valuable enclosures are destroyed quarterly, and they are so numerous that it is great importance to consider what measures, if any, can be adopted to diminish the number or restore a larger proportion to the writers..."

One result of this effort appears to have been the adoption of the plan for free returned letters which was discussed at *Chronicle* 143:177 and 144:250. That plan was embodied in the Act of 6 April 1860:

*Be it enacted...* That When any person shall endorse on any letter his or her name and place of residence, as writer thereof, the same after remaining uncalled for at the office to which it is directed for 30 days, or the time the writer may direct, shall be returned by mail to said writer; and no such letter shall be advertised, nor shall they be treated as dead letters, until so returned to the post office of the writer and there remain uncalled for, one quarter.

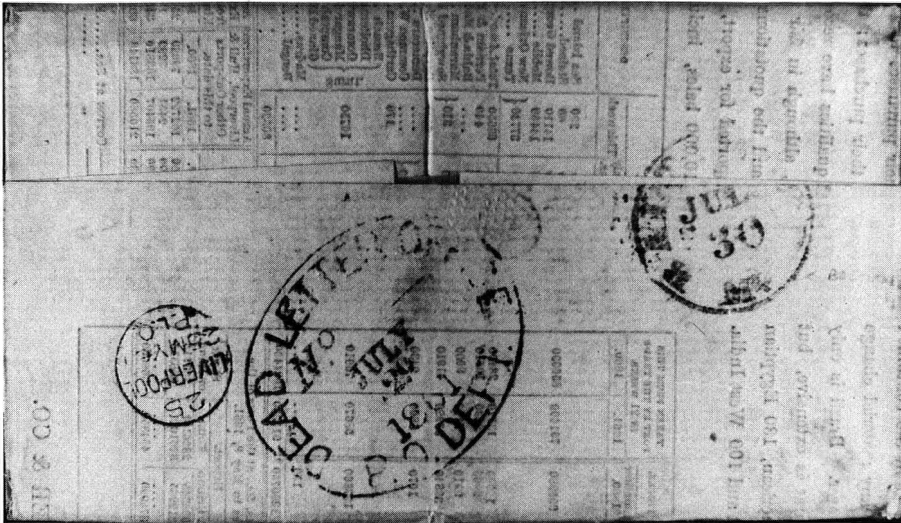
Both Philadelphia and St. Louis used specialized townmarks to identify dead letters sent from their offices to the Dead Letter Office. They are shown in Tracings A and B, and are normally struck on the sealed side of a cover. During this period the POD at Washington used four different markings to identify dead letters, being Tracings D through G.



**Figure 1. An unpaid letter from Liverpool, 25 May 1861, addressed to Richmond, Va., after Virginia had seceded.**

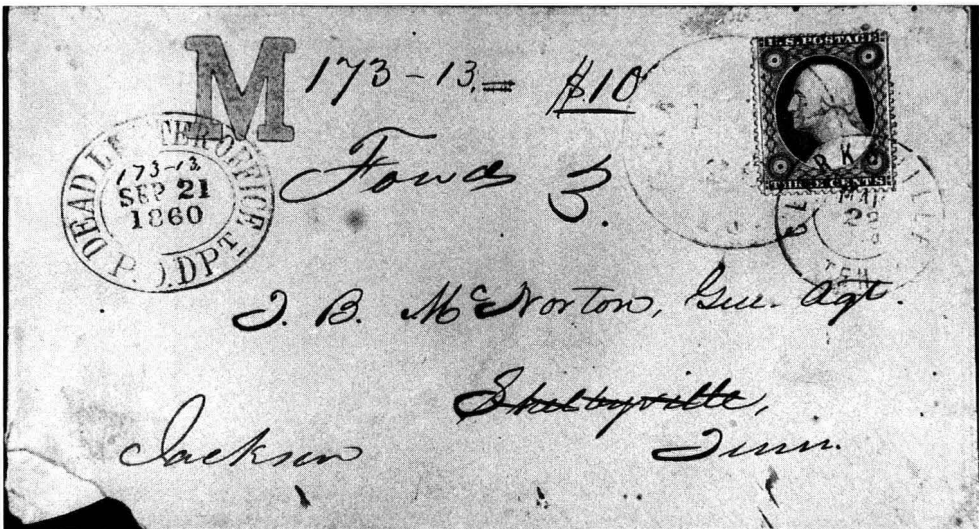
Undeliverable letters arriving from foreign countries under the terms of a treaty or convention were normally not destroyed, even though they contained nothing of value, since the treaties usually provided for the return of undeliverable letters, with appropriate credit to the country of destination. The *PMG Report* of 1854 states that \$15,587.73 was received from Great Britain during the previous year for dead letters returned to that country, while we paid \$2,086.02 to Great Britain on dead letters returned to Washington.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the front and back of a letter from Liverpool to Richmond. It bears the last Dead Letter Office marking used in the decade, Tracing G. At first glance



**Figure 2. Reverse of Figure 1, showing Liverpool postmark of the P.L.O. (Packet Letter Office), D.L.O. marking dated July 29, 1861, and a blue Baltimore postmark JUL 30. The handling is uncertain, but this price current probably reached the addressee in the end.**

it may appear that this letter was handled under treaty terms. There is, however, no evidence in the form of a backstamp that it was returned to England, and it is more likely that the letter was detained because it was addressed to a seceded state. It probably eventually reached its destination. Some letters in the early days of the Civil War show such anomalies; their exact handling remains unclear.



**Figure 3. Valuable letter from Clarksville, Ten., 1860, with D.L.O. control, markings.**

Figure 3 gives a good insight into the internal workings of the Dead Letter Office. When this valuable letter could not be delivered even after forwarding from Shelbyville to Jackson, Tennessee, it was sent to the D.L.O. in Washington. There, it received that office's handstamp M (the first initial of the addressee's last name) and a file number, as well as a notation that the letter contained \$10. When finally sent to the addressee or the writer, it was stamped with the DLO marking shown in Tracing F (six months after having been mailed from Clarksville).

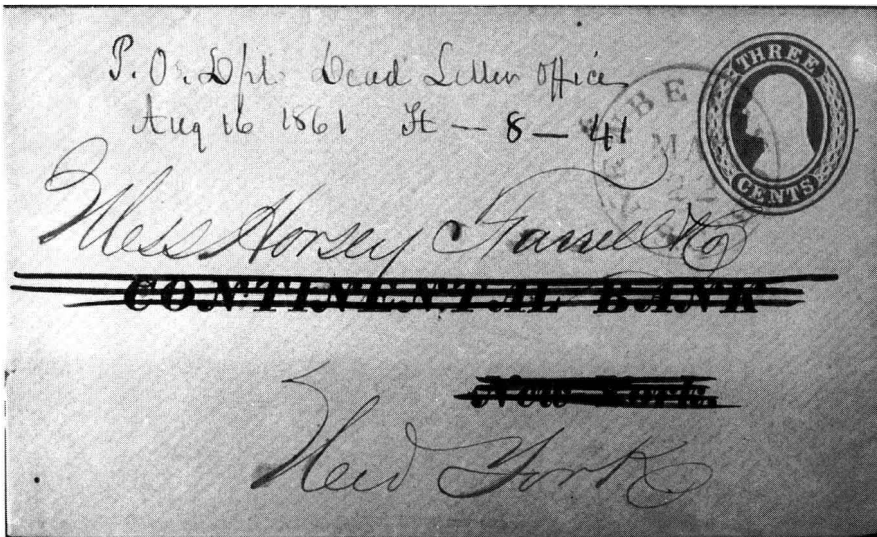
A new category of dead letters was created with the beginning of the Civil War. On





**Figure 4.** This letter became "dead" because of the suspension of mails between the North and the South at the beginning of the Civil War.

27 May 1861 PMG Blair suspended mail deliveries to the seceded states and directed that letters addressed to those states be returned to their writers as dead letters. An example is shown in Figure 4. Originating in New York, it was addressed to South Carolina. Sent to the D.L.O. where the name and address of the sender were ascertained and noted on the cover. It was then marked DUE 3 cts, stamped with the Office's double oval handstamp, and returned to the sender.



**Figure 5.** Manuscript Confederate Dead Letter Office marking occasioned by the suspension of mails at the start of the Civil War.

Finally, it should be noted that things occasionally are not what they seem. Figure 5 is a cover from South Carolina to New York, just the opposite of the cover in Figure 4. The manuscript across the top of the cover is not a notation from the U.S. Dead Letter Office, but rather from the Confederate Dead Letter Office, since mails from the South to the North had also been suspended.



## ONE IN A THOUSAND

EUGENE C. REED

About 1983 this writer acquired 49 plated 1¢ stamps from the left pane of Plate 5. The knowledge that this pane contains both Type V and Type Va designs fascinated me. Through trades and purchases, this partial reconstruction grew to 76. My endeavors required a positioning of all the 1¢ Type V (and Type Va) stamps that could be found. Some of the Type V items found places elsewhere in the collection. While occupied in these efforts, I chanced upon the pair illustrated: the bottom stamp being position 65L7, which had not been officially identified at that time. The item had to be confirmed. After confirmation, its position and its plating marks had to be published in the *Chronicle* (see #125, February 1985). A call was made to the Philatelic Foundation. Mortimer Neinken asked me to bring the pair in on the following Wednesday so that he might inspect it.

On that occasion Mr. Neinken had all his Type V platings on hand (Plates 5, 7, 8, 9, & 10). Within a few moments he opened his pages of Plate 7 and picked out one stamp on the reverse of which he had pencilled 65L7. My item agreed in every particular (every plating mark)! Thusly, my pair merely confirmed his plating of his single stamp.

While it would seem that Mr. Neinken had eliminated all but one of a thousand possibilities, this was not exactly the case. Or was it? At an early glance what he had done was to eliminate all the “c” relief positions: all but one of 200 positions. The “c” reliefs are found in the 3rd and 6th horizontal rows from the above mentioned five plates. The “f” relief of the upper stamp of the pair quickly placed my stamp in the 6th row.

Stanley Ashbrook had identified the six reliefs of the Type V 1¢ stamps, but had not proceeded with the plate reconstructions when his two volume work, *The United States One Cent Stamp of 1851-1857* was published in 1938.

Ashbrook, Morris Fortgang, and Mortimer Neinken continued this work. After the deaths of Ashbrook and Fortgang, Neinken carried on alone. This culminated in his great work, *The United States One Cent Stamp of 1851 to 1861*, published in 1972.

Other students have since contributed approximately three amplifications to the plating diagrams of this group of 1¢ plates. Only three positions — all from plate 5 — remain uncertain. Two of these appeared in Neinken’s collection even though they were unconfirmed (positions 71L and 84R5).

The writer dedicates this article to the memory of Mortimer Neinken, premier plater, who passed from us five years ago last November.



## **THE U.S. DEAD LETTER OFFICE IN THE 1861 ERA**

**RICHARD B. GRAHAM**

The *P.L.&R.*, as it dealt with dead letters entering the Autumn of 1861 when use of the new 1861 issue of stamps started, had many provisions of varying ages in effect. The *P.L.&R.* of 1859 was still valid; it wasn't to be wholly replaced until 1866, after the Civil War ended, but there were two major postal enactments by Congress which were covered by pamphlets issued by the Post Office Department to all postmasters. These were issued May 1, 1861, covering the Act of Congress of Feb. 27, 1861, and a 16 page bulletin covering the Act approved Mar. 3, 1863, before it became effective on July 1, 1863. There were also numerous other one-to-four-page bulletins issued revising the laws or regulations. Most of these were also covered in *USM & POA (U.S. Mail & Post Office Assistant)* as we call that monthly semi-official four page publication sent to postmasters by subscription, 1860-75.

The basic laws on dead letters were in Chapter IV of the 1859 *P.L.&R.*, which was based upon the Act of 1825, Section 26, plus subsequent enactments. The regulations were in Chapter XIV, which also parroted most of the sections of previous years.

The laws and regulations governing the handling of dead letters necessarily had to be used with the similar laws and regulations covering the advertising of letters. This is because all letters advertised and not called for were sent to the Dead Letter Office after a period of three months, although certain classes of letters were not to be advertised, and were sent monthly, such as "refused" letters, as per the Regulations. However, the Act of Feb. 27, 1861, changed the holding period for advertised but not called for dead letters from three to two months, and it also made a rather radical change for postmasters in that the dead letters were to be sent separately rather than with the quarterly reports as had been the case since the early days.

First class (then the smallest) post offices were to make returns every six weeks; 2nd class, monthly; 3rd class, twice a month, and the 4th class or largest post offices were to send their dead letters weekly.

The only effect that this had on evaluating our covers is that dates between mailing and backstamps were somewhat diminished. Backstamps were to be applied the date each letter was returned to the Department, as per the Regulations since 1852.

Figure 1 shows the front of a cover returned and obviously reclaimed by the owner through the Dead Letter Office. Both the rate and mode of handling were carryovers from the previous years, although, as we shall see, just about everything else within the Dead Letter Office procedures had been changed by the time this cover was mailed in 1863.

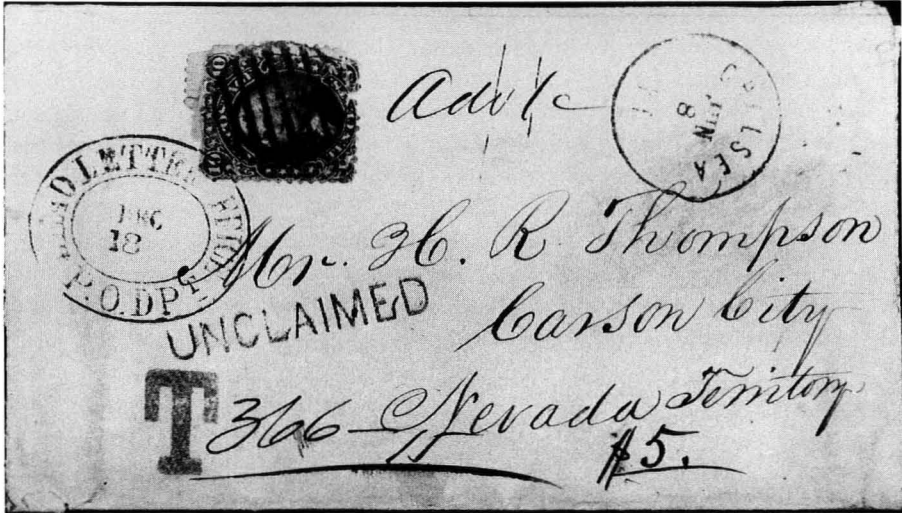
The cover was mailed from Chelsea, Vt., on June 8, 1863, addressed to one H.R. Thompson at Carson City, Nevada Territory, but, although advertised, wasn't claimed as per the straight line handstamp in black on the front. It was held at Carson City until, as per the backstamp, it was sent to the D.L.O. on Oct. 1, 1863. The cover was thus mailed in the last month of the "over the Rockies" rate of 10¢, which was superseded on July 1, 1863, with the 3¢ domestic rate applicable throughout the country.

The cover, probably received in mid or late June, was held for three months to be picked up at Carson City, but was sent to the D.L.O. with the return of Oct. 1. The cover was opened at the D.L.O. and found to contain, as is pencilled on both front and back, \$5.00, and thus was considered a valuable letter. I presume it was then sent to the post office of origin, Chelsea, Vt., held there a while, and either the sender was found and the letter restored to him, or the cover was again sent back to the Dead Letter Office to be restored later when someone wrote and inquired about it. If we assume the large "T" and file

number, 366-15, were placed on the cover when it first reached the D.L.O., then it passed through the D.L.O. only once.

This, I believe, is probably the case, but I have left this matter open because I consider the Dec. 18 date in the large double circle Dead Letter Office stamp to show considerable delay between the date of its probable arrival from Carson City and the application of the marking. However, as we'll see later, the Dead Letter Office was really loaded down at this time with returned letters and could have been running a few months behind.

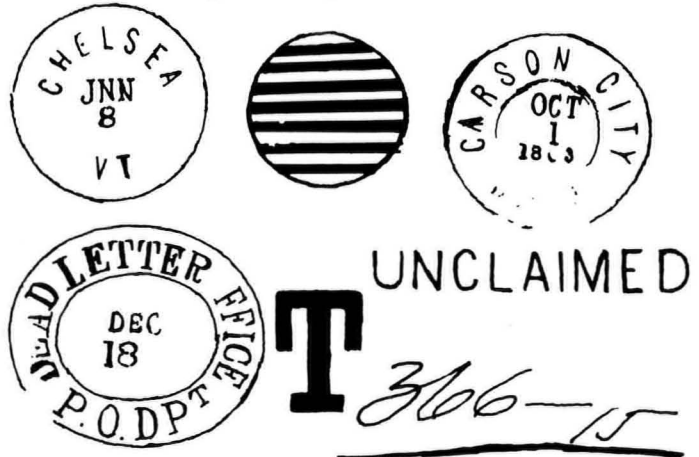
The one thing that is obvious is that the letter was returned to someone, as it still survives.



**Figure 1.** This cover, containing \$5.00, was sent from Chelsea, Vt., to Carson City, Nevada Territory, in June, 1863, the last month of the 10¢ over-the-Rockies rate. After being advertised and unclaimed, it was sent by the Carson City post office, per its backstamp, on Oct. 1, 1863, to the Dead Letter Office. The D.L.O. marked the cover with a red "T" and a file number, and sent it to Chelsea to be restored to the original writer.

As noted earlier, the internal operations of the D.L.O., other than what was relayed to the postmasters, Congress, and in the *P.L. & R.*, and which had to have been a constantly changing framework, are not on record. The best evidence we have available in any given period is the record of the covers available within the structure of the *P.L. & R.* and the few copies we have of directives sent to postmasters.

Figure 2 shows tracings of the markings on the cover in Figure 1, front and back. All but the large red "T" are in black. The killer grid belongs with the Chelsea c.d.s., but



**Figure 2.** The postmarks on the cover shown in Figure 1.

wasn't duplexed, and the "Adv." and "UNCLAIMED" goes with the Carson City c.d.s. The "T" and the file number, 366-15 go with the D.L.O. handstamp, the "T" obviously standing for the first initial of the addressee's name, "Thompson."

In the classic period, most postal legislation was enacted upon the recommendations of the Post Office Department, presumably appearing before the Post Office Committees of the Congress. Sometimes, we are quite certain, even the exact wordings of the acts stemmed from the Post Office Department officials' suggestions. This situation, of course, also gave the Post Office Department bigwigs a very good idea of what enactments were to be passed, long before they were even introduced, and also what the effect would be on the operations of the Department.

Thus, when Congress passed an enactment of January 21, 1862, "to promote the efficiency of the Dead Letter Office," by requiring that all dead letters be returned to their writers, "except for circulars and other worthless matter," the Post Office Department must have been aware of the increased work load that would be required. The current work load was already rather heavy, because the mailing of many unpaid and improperly directed letters by troops in the early days of the Civil War resulted in a large number of dead letters. A similar situation occurred when letters to them then were not forwardable because they had moved or couldn't be located. It should be recollected that at that time, per the order of former Postmaster General Joseph Holt on Oct. 8, 1860, all unpaid letters found in the mail were to be sent to the Dead Letter Office.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE.**—Special attention is called to the following official notice of an important change respecting the treatment of letters heretofore held for postage. Careless correspondents will, no doubt, hold a jollification meeting in view of this timely evidence of consideration on the part of the Department :

**POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, NOV. 26, 1861.**

In view of the increased number of letters held for postage and returned to the dead letter office, it is ordered that the order of the Department dated 8th October, 1860, be rescinded, and the prior practice be restored. Postmasters will therefore notify the person addressed that such letter is held for postage, and that upon his writing therefor, prepaying the postage of his letter and enclosing a stamp to be placed on the letter held for postage, the same will be forwarded to his address. By order of the Postmaster-General.

**JOHN A. KASSON, First Assistant P. M. G.**

**Figure 3. From the U.S. Mail & Post Office Assistant, December 1861.**

Figure 3 shows a notice dated Nov. 26, 1861, that appeared in the December 1861 *U.S.M.&P.O.A.*, rescinding Holt's order and restoring the old system of notifying addressees of unpaid letters found in the mail to send postage for such letters. The letters would then be forwarded to them without them being sent through the D.L.O.

The notice bears the name of First Assistant Postmaster General John A. Kasson of Iowa, but also notes, in the best military manner, that the notice is "by order of the Postmaster General." The restoration of the old method, with its "held for postage" handstamps and backstamps, while undoubtedly taking some of the burden off the Dead Letter Office, also added to that of the postmasters and of the free mails being sent. It should be recognized that if postage wasn't forthcoming from an addressee, however, such letters, held for postage markings and all, were still sent on to the D.L.O.

Figure 4 shows one of the notices, with 3rd Ass't PMG A.N. Zevely's name, that was sent out with valuable letters under the Act and accompanying regulations of January 21, 1862. The January 1862 issue of *USM & POA* contained the essence of the Act in the

An act to promote the efficiency of the Dead Letter Office, approved 21st January, 1862, provides—

That the Postmaster General be authorized to return all dead letters, except those containing circulars and other worthless matter, to their writers, whenever their names can be ascertained. *All valuable letters to be charged treble, and all others double, the ordinary rate of postage, to be collected from the writers.*

Under this law treble postage is to be collected on the valuable letter returned herewith.

A. N. ZEVELY,

*Third Assistant Postmaster General.*

**Figure 4. Slip enclosed with a valuable letter returned to a postmaster from the D.L.O., advising of the details of the law of Jan. 21, 1862, and requiring that "treble" postage be collected on the returned valuable letter.**

Postmaster General's report of December 1861, with reference to valuable letters. He suggested that the treble rate be comprised of "one rate for return transportation to the dead letter office, one rate for registration there, and one rate for return transportation to the writers or owners." He went on to say that "unregistered letters thus returned might be charged with double postage."

Congress responded promptly, and in the very next issue of *USM & POA*, the new law was announced, authorizing the Postmaster General to return all but circulars and other worthless matter, and providing that valuable letters be charged treble postage for their return and ordinary letters, double postage. The new act also authorized the Postmaster General to employ "twenty five additional clerks at salaries not exceeding an average of \$800 per year and no one to receive over \$1200 per year."

It was at this time, I believe, that the especially imprinted envelopes that were later called "return letter envelopes" were introduced, although a form of them with an imprinted back flag had been used some years previously.

Figure 5 shows one of the early versions of the envelopes used to return ordinary letters during this period. Figure 6 shows the backstamp on this cover, indicating that the Dead Letter Office had a reason to note that the postage was not paid. Whether this refers to the postage on the original letter enclosed which had to be collected in addition to the 6¢ fee indicated by the envelope, or whether there was some other reason, I don't know, but in any event, since the cover still exists, it wasn't returned to the D.L.O. and destroyed.

The printed return envelopes for returning ordinary letters were rated with 6¢ due postage to be collected, and those for valuable letters were rated at 9¢. Both applied to single weight letters, nor did they include postage for letters rated at 10¢ which were sent across the Rocky Mountains. The return envelope in which it is assumed the cover shown in Figure 1 was sent isn't with the cover, but it would be interesting to learn whether it was rated at 9¢ or with an added amount to cover the transmission of the letter from Carson City, Nev., to the D.L.O. As the law simply said, "treble postage," the amount, however, was probably either 9¢ or 30¢.



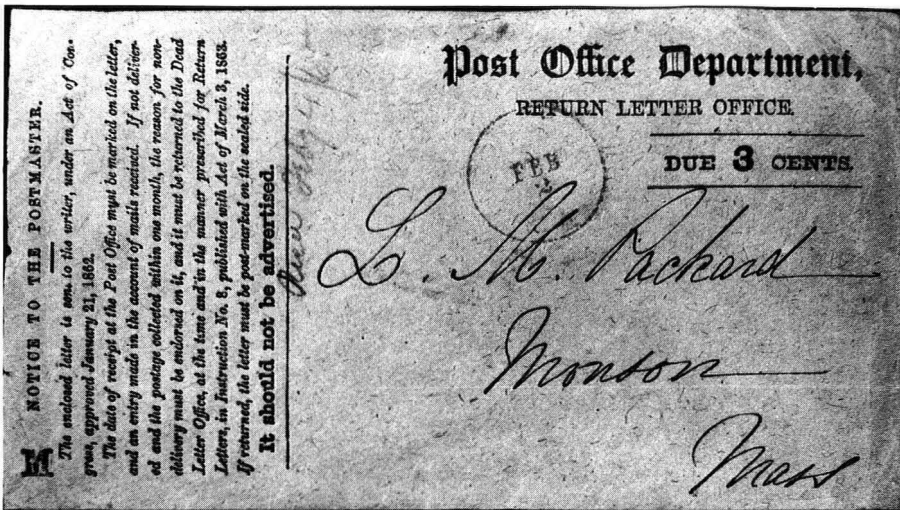


Figure 5. A printed return letter type envelope sent under the Act of Jan. 21, 1862, authorizing "ordinary" (other than valuable) letters be returned to senders by the Dead Letter Office.

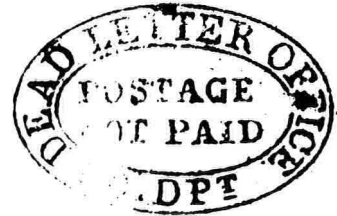


Figure 6. Backstamp on the cover shown in Figure 5.

Noted previously was the increased number of letters sent to the D.L.O. in connection with the Civil War. While the addition, by Congress, to the mustering Act of 1861 of the section enabling soldiers to send their letters collect was seen to sanction the mailing of such letters without penalty when duly certified, this didn't entirely relieve that part of the problem. Several articles have appeared in this section about soldiers' and naval letters to which readers are referred for details of this kind of mail (see *Chronicles* 116 and 117; Nov. 1982 and Feb. 1983, and 133 and 135, Feb. and Aug. 1987). Large numbers of improperly certified soldiers' letters and the like still continued to be sent to the D.L.O. as the Civil War progressed. The eventual solution to the problem was to simply permit unpaid letters, regardless of source, to be mailed collect at double postage due, except that properly certified soldiers' or naval letters continued to be charged single rates due.

Figure 7. "Soldier's Letter" version of the returned letter envelope imprint, with "Due 3 cents," apparently used to forward improperly certified collect soldier's letters of the Civil War which had been sent to the D.L.O.

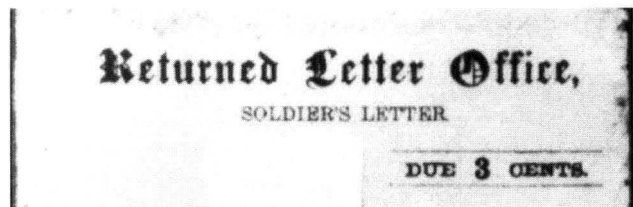


Figure 7 shows a portion of a Dead Letter Office return envelope which I hadn't seen when the article in *Chronicle* 117 appeared. That article quoted at length from the *U.S.M. & P.O.A.* for November 1862 concerning a decision made by 3rd Ass't PMG Zevely, under whom the D.L.O. was administered, to send on soldiers' letters regardless. The large oval handstamped "soldiers' letter" marking was discussed in that respect, and I imagine that the return envelope style shown in Figure 7, reading "Soldier's Letter/Due 3 cents" also stemmed from this time and course of events.

(No. 7 b.)

Post Office Department,

DEAD LETTER OFFICE.

The inclosed DEAD LETTER OR PACKAGE, which appears not to have been received by the person for whom it was intended, having been examined here, as the law directs, and found to be of value, is sent to you to be delivered to the writer or person addressed upon payment of the postage, with which, WHEN PAID, you will charge yourself in your "Account of Mails Received" and "in No. 2a of the account current; but when postage is NOT COLLECTED, and the letters or packages are sent back to the Department, NO ENTRY should be made, for it is nowhere charged against your office."

*By an act of Congress approved March 3, 1863, "all valuable dead letters sent from this office for delivery to the owners thereof, are to be charged DOUBLE the ordinary rate of postage."*

If the proper owner cannot be found in THIRTY DAYS, you will then RETURN the inclosed letter or package with this circular, to the THIRD ASSISTANT POSTMASTER GENERAL, "DEAD LETTER OFFICE," noting on the back of the circular any information you may have in reference to the present location of the writer or person addresssd.

☞ Letters of this class are not required to be registered, when returned.

☞ You are particularly requested to carefully examine the inclosed, in order to facilitate its proper delivery, A PROFOUND SECRECY BEING REQUIRED AS TO ITS CONTENTS.

The Department will pay NO expense for advertising dead letters or packages sent to Postmasters for delivery.

Very respectfully,

A. N. ZEVELY,

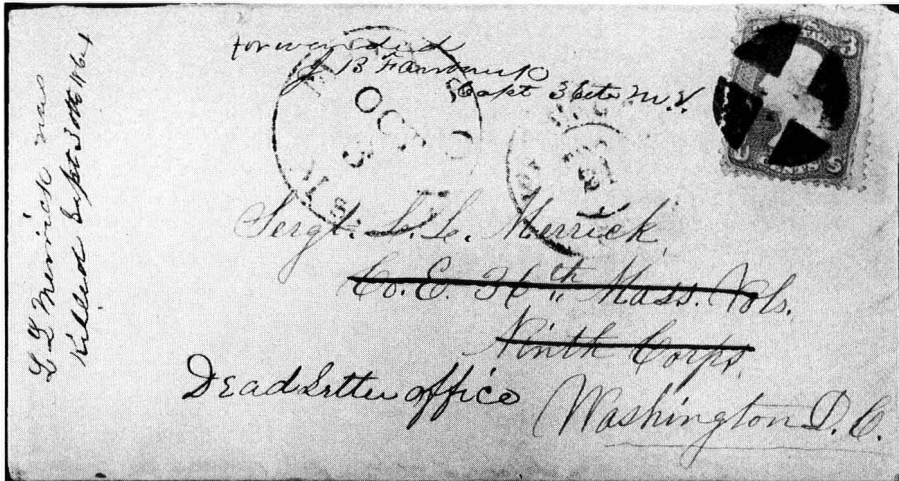
Third Assistant Postmaster General.

☞ Return Letter Postage 6 cents.

Figure 8. A form enclosed with valuable letters sent back to postmasters after the Act of 1863 became effective, July 1st.

The Act effective July 1, 1863, not only permitted sending letters collect with double postage due, but it also reduced the rates charged for return letters to 6¢ for valuable letters and just normal postage, 3¢ for other returned letters. Figure 8 shows a form, labeled "7b," giving instructions for the handling of a returned valuable letter, sent after the law of 1863 was in effect. I have seen another form, labeled "7a" and dated November 1863 which is worded the same but has additional wording (and much finer print) regarding dating and returning a receipt and also forbidding forwarding of returned valuable letters to other offices, even if the postmaster knows the owner has moved there. Rather, they were to "return it with the residence of the party noted on it."

Both forms, that illustrated in Figure 8 and its similar (earlier?) counterpart, state that the Department won't pay for advertising these returned letters. It was part of the regulations with the law of 1863 that "return letters were never to be advertised," and the regulations of that issuance completely revised and restated all the procedures with which the postmasters were concerned in the handling of dead letters.



**Figure 9. Cover mailed from Monson, Ms. (faint c.d.s.) on Oct. 3, 1864, to a sergeant with the 36th Mass. Volunteers before Petersburg, Va. The sergeant had been killed in late Sept. 1864, so the letter had to be sent to the D.L.O. to be opened and returned to the sender, if identifiable.**

Figure 9 shows a cover with a rather faint Monson, Mass., postmark dated Oct. 3, 1863, addressed to a Sgt. Merrick of the 36th Mass. volunteers, via Washington. This regiment was then near Petersburg, Va., and when the letter was sent to the regiment, it was endorsed, "L.L. Merrick was killed Sept. 30th, 1861," and "Forwarded" by a captain of the 36th Mass. Volunteers. Either he or someone else also wrote "Dead letter office".

At the D.L.O., the letter was opened and then placed in a return letter envelope with 3¢ due, addressed to the sender. The front and back of this cover are shown in Figures 10 and 11. The legend printed on the front instructs the postmaster how the letter is to be handled and those on the back actually have nothing to do with dead letters, being propaganda intended to induce people to address mail properly for city carrier service, then being introduced, and instruct correspondents about delivery of letters to street addresses.

The Postal Act of 1863, charging double postage for valuable returned letters and regular postage for others, presumably all single rates regardless of the actual character of the letter, continued until 1866 when return of letters was made free. During the 1861 period, there were a large number of postmarks and some variants on the printed legends of the return envelopes.

Collectors have also been intrigued with the symbols and letters imprinted and hand-stamped upon some of the return envelopes during this period, and many versions of their meaning have been offered. Most of this, it appears, is conjecture, based upon later notations in the *P.L.&R.* or other offerings of the Post Office Department. For the moment, however, it appears that about all we can be sure of is that the letters such as the "M" in the lower left corner of the cover shown in Figure 5 — and many other such envelopes with other letters exist — were for purposes of expediting handling in the event the letter was again returned to the Dead Letter Office. Speculation on my part that these were the initials of senders' last names have proven unfounded, and some have speculated they are initials of clerks handling the letters in the D.L.O. The symbols, such as stars, triangles, etc., that began to appear later in the 1861 period but really flourished in later years, prob-

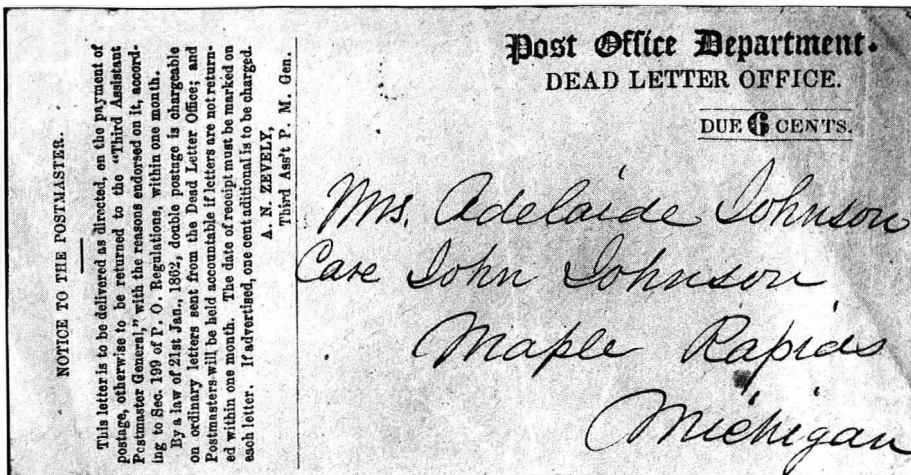


Figure 10. The return letter envelope in which the cover in Figure 9 was enclosed, addressed to its sender, L.M. Packard of Monson, Mass.

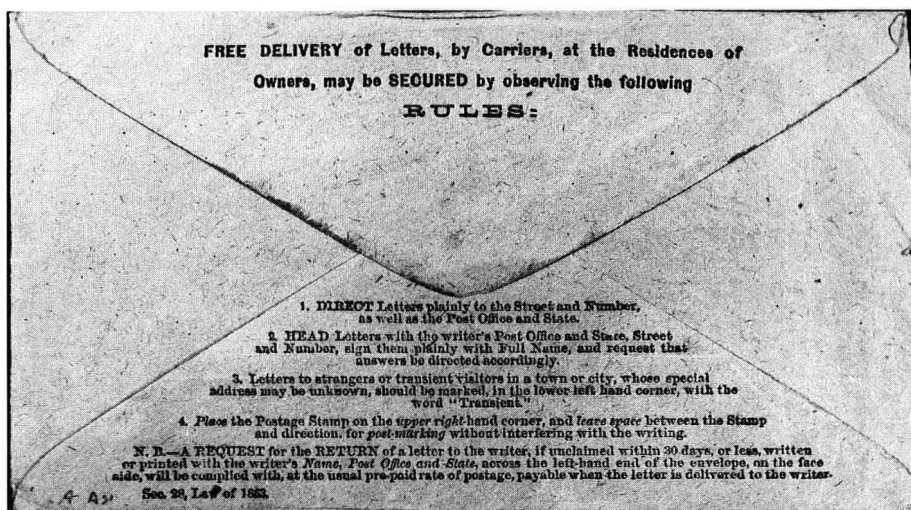


Figure 11. Back of the return envelope shown in Figure 10. The legend deals with instructing correspondents to address letters properly so that they might be delivered to street addresses by carrier service.

ably also were for that purpose although some wish to assign more exotic meanings as to classes of letters to them. It's my opinion that while certain classes of letters may be associated with the preponderance of covers bearing each such marking, this is because the clerk or section that handled the letters at the D.L.O. normally handled such mail — but also may have handled other classes, too.

A great many different types of D.L.O. markings also exist, many with dates and some with the word "sent" as part of the legend. At this time, I've made no effort to record and date these, but hope that someone else has made it a project. If so, I'd like to see such a record appear in the *Chronicle*, and, in fact, can make some contributions to it in the form of tracings and photos.

If there is interest, the latter part of the 1860s with regard to Dead Letter Office activities will be reviewed in a subsequent issue of the *Chronicle*, but this will need some pulling together, as my interest has, until a few years ago, been mostly confined to the Civil War years and the succeeding year when correspondence between north and south was resumed. So, help will be welcome.



**From the editor:**

This is the final installment of the series on the low valued Columbian stamps by author George Arfken. At this time, I wish to express my appreciation and thanks for all the work and effort that George put into this series. Thank you, George.

For the remaining dollar values, your editor will attempt to continue the series with some selected postal uses and a preliminary census of the surviving postal uses bearing the high value stamps. If anyone has a particular cover that they feel should be shown in this series, please send a photo and the particulars to the editor as soon as possible.

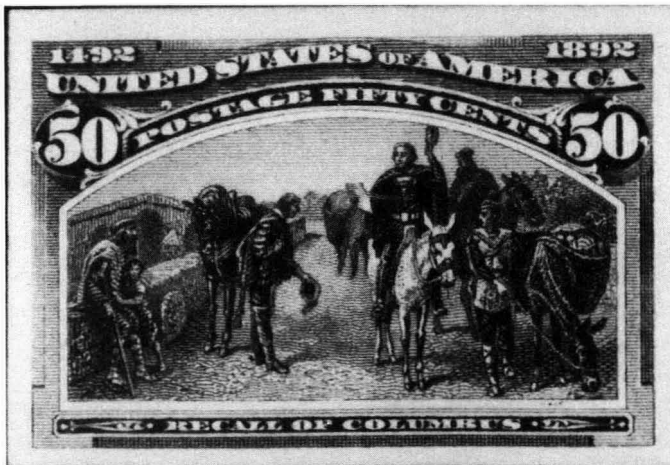
**THE FIFTY CENT COLUMBIAN STAMP**

**GEORGE B. ARFKEN**

The December 5, 1892, Post Office Circular that announced the Columbian stamps described the 50¢ Columbian as "'Recall of Columbus,' after the painting by A.G. Heaton, now in the Capitol at Washington. Color, carbon blue." The painter was Augustus G. Heaton (1833-1920) and the picture hangs in the Senate wing of the Capitol.<sup>1</sup> The scene shows Columbus astride a mule that had been purchased with funds sent by Queen Isabella. Columbus had been leaving Spain, on his way to France (for the second time) when he was recalled to the court. The carbon blue color is now generally called slate blue.

With this 50¢ Columbian, Postmaster General John Wanamaker broke new ground and set a precedent. This was the first U.S. 50¢ postage stamp. Starting with the 1894 Bureau issue, the 50¢ denomination became a standard part of U.S. definitive series.

In his classic study, *Essays for U.S. Adhesive Postage Stamps*, the late Clarence Brazer lists a single nearly complete engraving of the adopted design in the issued color. However, later in the Third Addenda at the back of the book, he lists a second essay of the incomplete die engraving on india paper mounted on a card and in the issued color of slate blue.



**Figure 1. Plate proof of final design. (Courtesy Richard Searing.)**

Figure 1 shows a plate proof of the final design. The vignette was engraved by Charles Skinner. The frame and the lettering were engraved by Douglas S. Ronaldson.<sup>2</sup>

1. John F. O'Brien, "Basis of the Design of the U.S. Columbian Exposition Issue of 1893," *The American Philatelist*, vol. 98, pp. 895-900 (September 1984).

2. Craig J. Turner, "The Early United States Bank Note Companies," *38th American Philatelic Congress*, pp. 11-47, 1972.



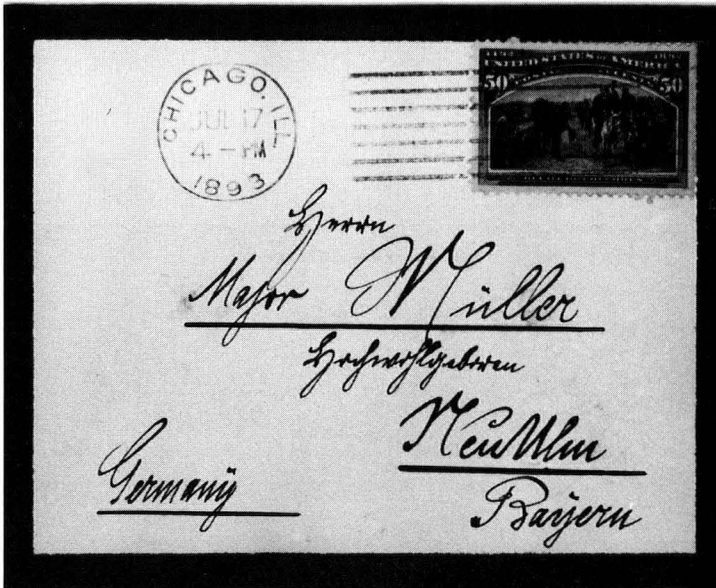
**Figure 2. Plate imprint block. (Courtesy Richard Searing.)**



Readers of this series of articles have seen Ronaldson's name frequently. He engraved both the frame and the lettering on ten of the Columbians (1¢, 2¢, 5¢, 8¢, 10¢, 15¢, 50¢, \$2, \$3, and \$5) and engraved the frame only on five other Columbians (3¢, 4¢, 6¢, 30¢, and \$1).

The 1894 *Report of the Postmaster General* stated that 243,750 50¢ Columbians had been issued. This was a relatively small number, about one 50¢ Columbian for every 6,000 2¢ Columbians. (The numbers issued for the dollar value Columbians are even smaller.) One plate of 100 subjects was used to print the 50¢ Columbians—plate S77.<sup>3</sup> As varieties, Brookman listed color shades and double and triple transfers.<sup>4</sup> Figure 2 pictures a plate imprint block of the 50¢ Columbian.

The new 50¢ stamps did not pay any particular rate but saw limited use in helping to pay high total postal charges. Most of the use of this stamp was on overseas mail where the UPU rate (per oz.) was five times higher than the domestic rate; 5¢ per ½ oz. or 10¢ per oz. compared to 2¢ per oz.



**Figure 3. A 50¢ Columbian paid the 5¢ UPU rate to Germany. From Chicago, July 17, 1893.**

The cover of Figure 3 went to Germany but actually the per ounce postal rate was ir-

3. F.L. Ellis, "Columbian Plate Numbers," *The Bureau Specialist*, vol. 35, pp. 232-234 (June 1964).

4. Lester G. Brookman, *The United States Postage Stamps of the 19th Century*, vol. III, pp. 76-77, 1967.

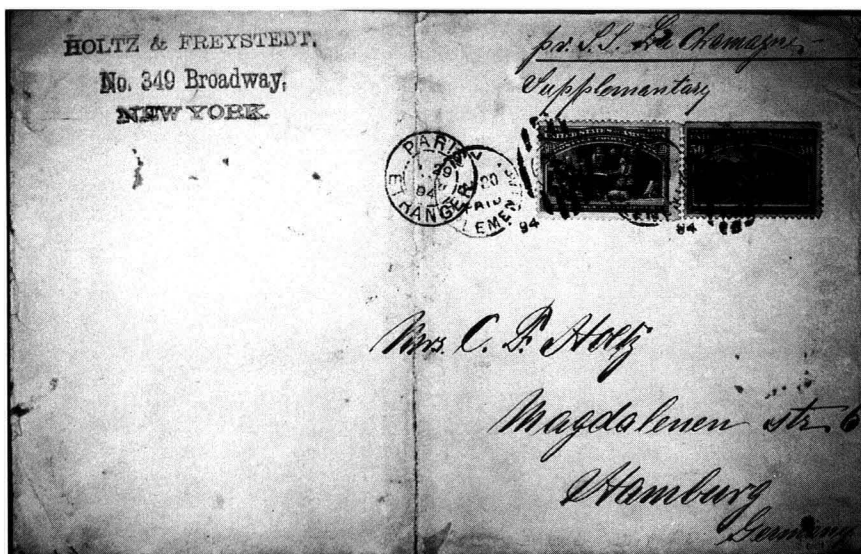
relevant. The cover is a mourning cover from Chicago, July 17, 1893. The postage could probably have been paid with a single 5¢ Columbian. The 50¢ Columbian is a massive overpayment. Clearly the cover is philatelic rather than normal, commercial use. It is just possible that the 50¢ Columbian was affixed in order to provide someone in Germany with a copy of a postally used Columbian. Some collectors at that time actually preferred a lightly canceled stamp to a pristine mint copy.



**Figure 4. Registered to England. At the 5¢ per 1/2 oz. rate, 85¢ paid for up to 8 1/2 oz.**

The “cover” of Figure 4 is a portion of a heavy, cloth-reinforced envelope or package wrapping. From Philadelphia to England, no date is shown. The franking included both the 50¢ and the 30¢ Columbians as well as the 8¢, 3¢, and 2¢ values. If we interpret the franking as paying the registered, first class rate, this covered 8 1/2 oz. of mail matter.

Figure 5 shows a very large, heavy envelope, posted in New York, addressed to Germany and franked with a 50¢ Columbian and a 30¢ Columbian. The 1894 date stamp shows a partial “LEMEN.” The entire word, Supplementary, is written out above the 30¢ stamp. This was supplementary mail, a special service offered by the Post Office to the



**Figure 5. From New York, January 20, 1894, to Germany by supplementary mail. The 50¢ and 30¢ Columbians paid for 4 oz. at 10¢ per 1/2 oz.**

New York merchants.<sup>5</sup> Regular mail to go on a given ship was closed several hours before the sailing time in order to give the postal employees time to process the mail. Under the supplementary mail service letters were accepted at the dockside right up to the minute of the ship's departure. This gave the New York merchants some additional hours to respond to overseas correspondence that might have arrived on the same ship. Of course the special service came at a special price: 10¢ per oz., double the regular UPU rate. The 80¢ postage here paid for 4 oz., easily contained in the large (about 5½"x9") envelope.

This is the final article on the low value Columbians in this series. I want to express my appreciation to Period Editor Richard Searing for his advice and for providing all of the plate proof figures and all of the plate imprint block figures.

5. Henry Stollnitz, "N.Y. Supplementary Mail Markings," *42nd American Philatelic Congress*, pp. 97-117, 1976.

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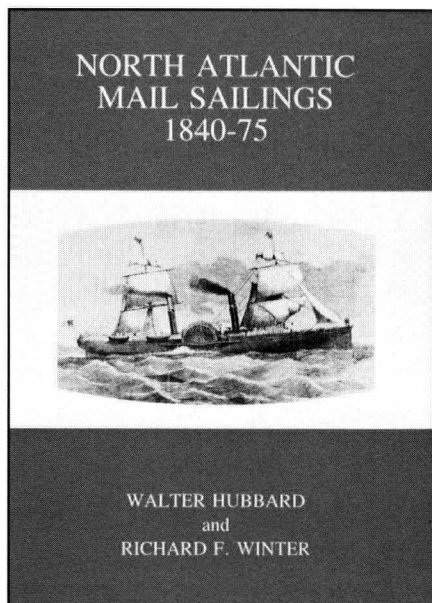
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## PHILADELPHIA OCTAGONAL RATE MARKINGS

RICHARD F. WINTER

In 1850, Philadelphia's population was 409,352, less than two percent of the country's 23 million.<sup>1</sup> Located between the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers and 120 miles on navigable waterways from the Atlantic Ocean, Philadelphia was an important seaport. While less than three percent of the total shipping which cleared U.S. ports sailed from Philadelphia, only the East Coast ports of New York, Boston, and Portsmouth had more activity.<sup>2</sup> A substantial commerce and the related business correspondence were a direct product of this activity. The Philadelphia Post Office produced a wide variety of interesting markings which are well recognized and popular with collectors. This article will discuss and illustrate one series of these markings, the octagonal rate markings, which were used on mails to and from foreign countries. Some variations of these markings are not well known and are seldom seen on covers.



Figure 1. Red "PHILA 5 PAID" marking believed to be the experimental predecessor of the Philadelphia octagonal rate markings.

A scarce handstamp, recently discovered, appears to be the predecessor of the octagonal rate markings.<sup>3</sup> A tracing of this marking is shown in Figure 1. Figure 2 illustrates its



Figure 2. Philadelphia to Cassel, Hesse, 5 Jan 50, by *Cambria* from Boston 9 Jan; 5 cent B.O.M. rate paid, 18 1/4 sgr. due (1/4 Br. debit to Prussia).

1. John, Hayward, *Gazetteer of the United States* (New York: Leavitt and Allen, 1853), pp. 516-523, 723.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 836-837.

3. This marking was first reported in the monograph, *An Illustrated Catalog of Philadelphia Railroad and Maritime Markings 1792-1882* compiled by John L. Kay and Robert J. Stets, published by The Associated Stamp Clubs of Southeastern Pennsylvania & Delaware, Inc., at SEPAD in 1984. Since that time, two additional examples have been reported.

use on a folded letter to Cassel, Hessen Electorate, German States. Posted in Philadelphia on 5 January 1850, this folded letter was prepaid 5 cents for the British Open Mail rate by British packet. Note that the *PHILA 5 PAID* octagonal handstamp in red lacked the “Cts.,” the distinctive feature of the regular handstamp which would appear later. The letter was sent to Boston for the 9 January 1850 sailing of the Cunard steamer *Cambria* which arrived in Liverpool on 22 January. A backstamp shows arrival at London on the same date. London sent the letter in the closed mails to Aachen, Prussia, under the Anglo-Prussian Treaty of 1849. At Aachen the mail bags were opened, the letter marked on the reverse with a black boxed handstamp reading *AMERICA per ENGLAND*, and then was sent to Cassel. London debited Prussia 1 shilling 4 pence (8d sea postage, 6d British transit, and 2d Belgium transit fees). Aachen showed a debit to the Thurn & Taxis postal system of 17 silbergroschen, which included a 4d Prussian transit fee, or a total of 20d which rounded to 17 silbergroschen. At Cassel the letter was marked for a final postage due of 18¼ silbergroschen. The three recorded uses of this octagonal handstamp, all in red, span the very short period of 17 December 1849 to 7 January 1850. Since the regular handstamps were introduced in February 1850, it is theorized that this marking’s use was “provisional.” Its replacement would be used for the next seven years.



Figure 3. Regular “PHILA 5 Cts. PAID” octagonal marking used on B.O.M. rate letters to Europe.



Figure 4. “PHILA 24 Cts. PAID” octagonal marking in red used on letters to or from G.B. to show total postage paid under U.S.-G.B. Treaty of 1848.

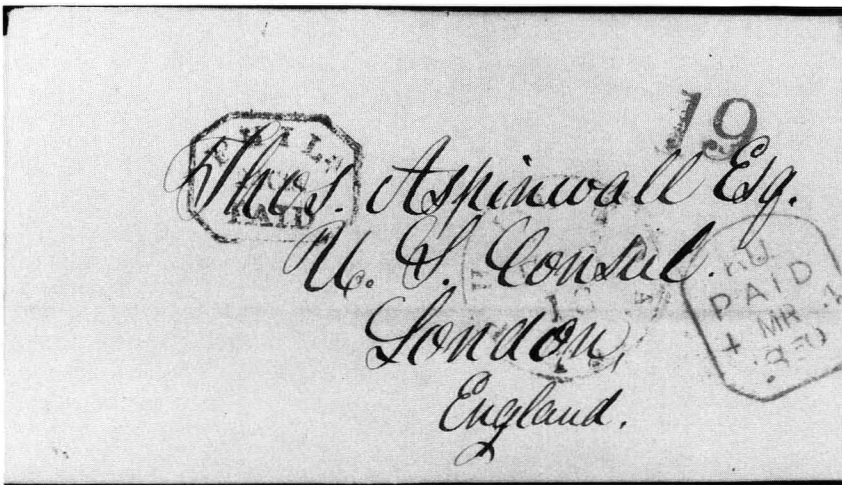
Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the two most common of the octagonal rate markings. Notice that both of these octagonal rate markings show “Cts.” after the denomination. These markings were introduced in early 1850 to be used on mails conveyed under the U.S.-British Treaty of 1848. The 5 cent handstamp was used on letters sent in the British Open Mails by British packet to destinations beyond Great Britain where only 5 cents had to be



Figure 5. Philadelphia 26 Jun 50 to Crailsheim, Würtemberg, by *Cambria* from N.Y. 3 Jul 50. Five cents paid, 63 kreuzer (1 florin 3 kr) postage due.

paid and the remainder of the transit fees would be collected at destination. The 24 cent handstamp was used to show prepayment of the 24 cent rate by the same Treaty for mails to Great Britain.

The "5 Cts. PAID" octagonal rate stamp is illustrated in Figure 5 on an envelope to Crailsheim, Württemberg, in June 1850. A partial strike of *PHILADA Pa. Jun 26* in blue shows the date the letter was forwarded from Philadelphia. The letter departed New York on the Cunard steamer *Cambria* on 3 July and arrived at Liverpool on 16 July. London arrival on 17 July is shown with a backstamp and Paris arrival on 18 July with the *ANGL 2 CALAIS 2* entry marking. London struck the red *COLONIES &c ART .13* boxed handstamp to show France was being debited under letter bill accounting article 13 at the rate of 3 shilling 4 pence per 30 grams. Manuscript rating by Württemberg in red ink of 57/6 shows the amount due to France and the local Württemberg charges in kreuzer totaling 63 kreuzer or 1 florin 3 kreuzer, restated at the top of the letter in red crayon as 1f3.



**Figure 6. "PHILA 24 Cts. PAID" red octagonal rate marking on letter to London, 18 Feb 50 by *Europa* from N.Y. 20 Feb. Credit 19 cents to G.B.**

Figure 6 illustrates the other regular octagonal rate handstamp, the "24 Cts. PAID" version used on paid mails to Great Britain. This very early use is on a letter dated 18 February 1850 from Philadelphia to London. A single international rate of 24 cents had been paid as confirmed by the octagonal rate handstamp in red. The New York Exchange Office credited 19 cents to Great Britain and sent the letter in the mails carried by the Cunard steamer *Europa* on 20 February from New York, arriving at Liverpool on 4 March 1850. The letter reached London later the same day, shown with the red London PAID date stamp. Most of the uses of this octagonal rate marking are on outgoing letters showing full prepayment. A few examples have been recorded on incoming letters to Philadelphia where the marking is used as a restatement of the rate already paid in Great Britain. The 1848 Treaty with Great Britain required the receiving Exchange Post Office to mark incoming paid letters "... with its own office stamp, in all cases, and with the 'paid' stamp in red ink ...."<sup>4</sup> New York often neglected to do so and a few examples have been seen where Philadelphia used this octagonal rate handstamp for this purpose.

It is interesting to note that Philadelphia never made an octagonal rate stamp to show 21 cents was paid, the proper rate by British Open Mail and American packet. As with a few other examples of rates for which there was no rate stamp, the "5 Cts. PAID" and "24 Cts. PAID" octagonal handstamps were altered by manuscript re-rating to show other rates. All of these re-rated markings are difficult to find with a few being quite scarce.

4. *Report of the Postmaster General*, 1849, Wierenga Reprint, p. 841.

With two exceptions, all re-ratings were of the "5 Cts. PAID" octagonal handstamp. A sampling of re-rated octagonal handstamps will be illustrated followed by a table of recorded uses.



**Figure 7. Philadelphia to Würtemberg, 23 Sep 51, by sailing ship from N.Y. to Havre. "PHILA 5 Cts. PAID" re-rated to 10 cents B.O.M. rate. One florin 37 kr due.**

Figure 7 shows an envelope from Philadelphia on 23 September 1851 rated for a 2 x 5 cent British Open Mail rate to Würtemberg. A red "5 Cts. PAID" octagonal handstamp has been re-rated in black pen to 10 cents. Apparently, the letter was intended for the 24 September 1851 sailing from New York of the Cunard steamer *Niagara* but missed that sailing and was placed by the New York Postmaster on the next sailing ship for Havre. Since the prepayment was only the U.S. inland portion of the British Treaty rate, there was no loss to the Post Office Department by sending this letter on a sailing ship to France. On 27 September 1851, the Hurlbut Line sailing ship *Rhine* departed New York two days late on a regular trip to Havre. The red *OUTRE-MER LE HAVRE* entry marking shows the letter arrived at Havre on 25 October 1851 and a small postman's delivery datestamp on the reverse shows destination arrival on 28 October 1851. The letter was marked in Würtemberg for a postage due of 1 florin 37 kreuzer with 1 florin 25 kreuzer due to France and 12 kreuzer to Würtemberg. The letter was sent to the small town of Gerlingen which had no post office. In these instances, letters were addressed to the "Oberamt" or mayor of the nearest town with a post office, in this case, Leonberg.



**Figure 8. "PHILA 5 Cts. PAID" re-rated to 20 cents on letter to Paris by Ocean line Hermann, 1 Nov 51. One cent underpayment accepted at N.Y., 8 decimes due.**



A 20 cent re-rating is illustrated in Figure 8 on an envelope to Paris which was forwarded from Philadelphia on 31 October 1851. Again, the re-rating is on the "5 Cts. PAID" octagonal handstamp. The letter was endorsed "Per Steamer Hermann from N.Y. Nov 1st," an American packet of the Ocean Steam Navigation Company. The letter should have been paid 21 cents, the British Open Mail rate by American Packet, but Philadelphia collected only 20 cents, the rate for an American packet directly to France. New York allowed the letter to go through one cent underpaid and put it in the mails carried by *Hermann* which departed New York as scheduled on 1 November. The French mails were sent ashore while the steamer stopped in the Solent off Southampton on 18 November 1851 and travelled to London, Dover, Calais, and Paris, arriving there on 19 November. Paris marked the letter for a postage due of 8 decimes. Note the absence of the red *COLONIES &c ART .13* marking of London which was discontinued on 1 September 1851 when the French introduced the black *ETATS-UNIS PAQ.AM. B.A.CALAIS* entry marking to show the letter was from the United States by American Packet to England and entered France at the Bureau Ambulant of Calais or railway mail train to Paris.



**Figure 9. Philadelphia to Cognac, France, 18 Mar 51, by Collins Line *Pacific* from N.Y. 19 Mar. "PHILA 24 Cts. PAID" re-rated 21 cents. Due 15 decimes.**

A 21 cent re-rating is shown in Figure 9. While a handful of 21 cent re-rated "5 Cts. PAID" octagonal handstamps are recorded, this is the only one seen by the author re-rating the "24 Cts. PAID" handstamp. This folded letter originated in Philadelphia on 18 March 1851 and is addressed to Cognac, France. The 21 cent prepayment is proper for British Open Mail service by an American packet, in this case the Collins Line steamer *Pacific* from New York on 19 March which arrived in Liverpool on 30 March 1851. London arrival on 31 March is shown by a red backstamp and Paris arrival via Calais is shown by the red *ANGL 2 CALAIS 2 1 AVRIL 51* datestamp. Paris marked the letter for 15 decimes postage due with a black handstamp over the red *COLONIES &c ART .13* accountancy marking applied at London.

The 29 cent re-rating of the "5 Cts. PAID" octagonal handstamp is one of the more difficult to find with only two examples on the author's listing. It is scarce because the 29 cent rate was used only on letters carried by American packets in either the Bremen mails or the direct mail to France prior to July 1851, 29 cents being the American packet rate on letters from Philadelphia via New York. On 1 July 1851, this rate was reduced to 20 cents, leaving approximately 16 months and 22 voyages by two steamship lines when the octagonal rate handstamps were available to show this rating. A tracing of this marking is shown in Figure 10.





Figure 10. Red "PHILA 5 Cts. PAID" re-rated to 29 cents with black manuscript marking.

Another scarce marking is the 48 cent re-rating of the "5 Cts. PAID" octagonal handstamp. Figure 11 illustrates the only example of this marking seen by the author, an 8 June 1850 folded letter to London. Here the re-rating shows prepayment of 2 x 24 cents, the double rate to Great Britain. Philadelphia sent the letter to Boston for the 12 June 1850 sailing of the Cunard steamer *Asia*. Boston struck the red hollow "38" (Blake & Davis No. 726) to show the credit to Great Britain of 2 x 19 cents. *Asia* arrived in Liverpool on 22 June 1850 and the letter reached London the next day.

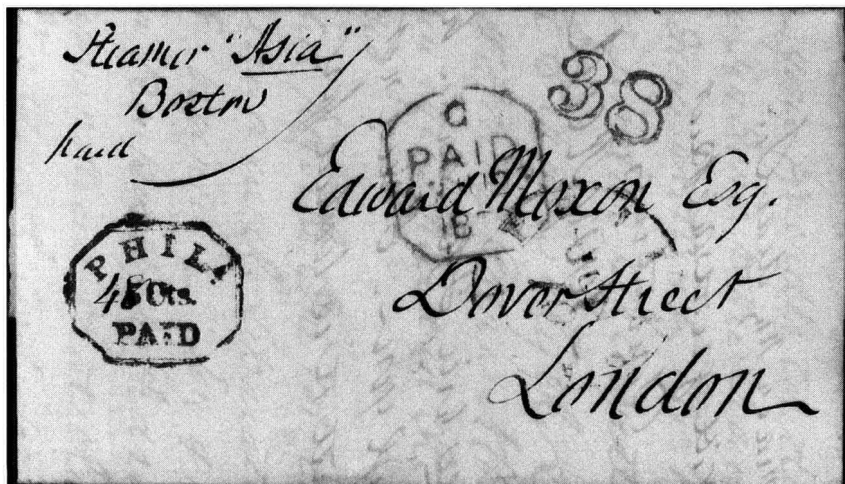


Figure 11. Philadelphia to London, 8 Jun 50, by Cunard *Asia* from Boston 12 Jun. "PHILA 5 Cts. PAID" re-rated to 48 cents. Credit 38 cents to G.B.

Finally, the cover pictured in Figure 12 shows the only example recorded of a "24 Cts. PAID" octagonal handstamp re-rated to 5 cents! This envelope was posted in Philadelphia on 6 March 1851 and addressed to Brunswick, Germany. The 5 cent prepayment for British Open Mail by British packet is shown by the manuscript re-rating of the Philadelphia octagonal rate handstamp. The letter was included in the mails which departed Boston on 12 March 1851 on the Cunard steamship *Europa* and arrived at Liverpool on 23 March. London arrival is shown on a red backstamp dated 22 March, either a datestamp error or the mails arrived at Liverpool one day earlier than reported. London placed the letter in the mails for Bremen under the Anglo-Bremen Treaty of 1841. Bremen arrival on 28 March is shown by a partial datestamp strike on the reverse. London marked a debit to Bremen of 1 shilling 2 pence in manuscript to the center right of the cover. A red 9 4/12 ENGLAND/UBER BREMEN handstamp was struck at Bremen to show the debit to the Hannover post in gutegroschen. Brunswick marked the letter in red crayon for 11 1/3 gutegroschen postage due. The Bremen entry marking is a seldom seen marking and scarce on mails from the U.S. exchanged under the Anglo-Bremen treaty.

Table I provides a summary of the octagonal rate markings of Philadelphia discussed in this article along with the author's recorded dates of use. Portions of this Table originally appeared in the 1984 SEPAD monograph.<sup>5</sup> All markings are in red ink. While this can

5. Kay and Stets, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

TABLE I



Red  
28x22 mm.  
17 Dec 49  
7 Jan 50



Red  
27x22 mm.  
Black ms. "29"  
19 Aug 50  
7 Feb 51



Red  
27x22 mm.  
19 Feb 50  
23 Mar 57



Red  
27x22 mm.  
Black ms. "48"  
10 Jun 50



Red  
27x22 mm.  
Black ms. "10"  
21 May 50  
4 Nov 51



Red  
26x20 mm.  
18 Feb 50  
23 Mar 53



Red  
27x22 mm.  
Black ms. "20"  
8 Aug 51  
14 Jun 52



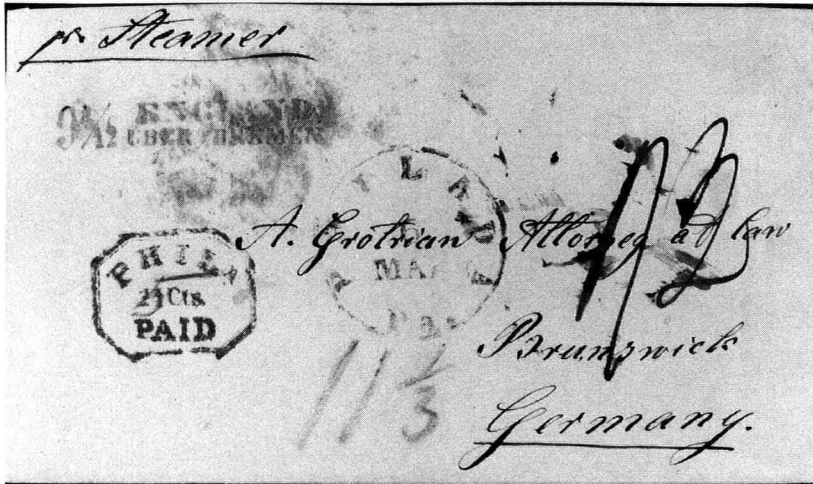
Red  
26x20 mm.  
Black ms. "21"  
18 Mar 51



Red  
27x22 mm.  
Black ms. "21"  
4 Feb 51  
9 Jul 52



Red  
26x20 mm.  
Black ms. "5"  
6 Mar 51



**Figure 12. Rare re-rating of "PHILA 24 Cts. PAID" to 5 cents for B.O.M. rate on 6 Mar 51 letter to Brunswick, Germany. Due 11 1/3 gutegroschen. British debit 1/2 to Bremen under Anglo-Bremen Treaty of 1841.**

not be considered an exhaustive census, information has been solicited from a number of large collections of transatlantic material and from the membership of the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society. The small number of recorded covers of the re-rated octagonal markings is a measure of their relative scarcity. The most common of the octagonal rate markings is the regular "5 Cts. PAID" marking which was in use for at least seven years. Surprisingly, the regular "24 Cts. PAID" marking, which was used for a very common rating to Great Britain, is not as widely seen and the author has recorded examples over a much shorter period of only three years.

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**ANSWER TO PROBLEM COVERS IN ISSUE NO. 144**



**Figure 1. Tahiti to France, 1855.**

Figure 1 shows a cover from Tahiti in 1855. Many of us may have only a vague idea of where Tahiti is, and our knowledge of it based on art, music or expeditions (Heyerdahl's Kon-Tiki). The November 1989 *National Geographic* included an excellent map of the Pacific, showing Tahiti to the SE of Hawaii and SW of Panama. It is just about dead west from Chile with Easter Island and then Pitcairn Island on the way. The November *Chronicle* listed the many markings on this stampless cover. It is complicated and a number of philatelists attempted explanations, including Jeff Bohn, Andrew Holtz, Madeleine Jamet, Bertrand Sinais, Robert Stone, and Richard Winter. Here is a composite of their comments and answers:

- 25 Jan 55 Written at Papeete.
- 27 Jan 55 Mailed at Papeete, Tahiti.
- 24 Feb 55 Processed at Honolulu, Hawaii.
- 26 Feb 55 Left Hawaii on Sailing ship *E. L. Frost* bound for Calif.
- 15 Mar 55 Arrived at San Francisco on same ship.
- 31 Mar 55 Departed from S.F. on Pacific Mail Steam Ship Co. steamer *John L. Stephens* for Panama City.
- ? Apr 55 Arrived at Panama City on same steamer.
- 15 Apr 55 Left Aspinwall on steamer *George Law*.
- 24 Apr 55 Arrived at New York City on same steamer.
- 2 May 55 Left N.Y. on Collins Line steamer *Pacific*.
- 13 May 55 Arrived at Paris having entered France at Calais.
- ? May 55 Arrived at Cognac.

A French law of 3 May 53 permitted prepayment of mail between France and its colonies.

A convention between Tahiti and Hawaii dated 24 Nov 53 set a 5 centimes rate for single weight letters between the islands. This gave access to U.S. ships bound for San Francisco, more convenient than French ones from Tahiti to Chile.

The marking of 1855/1 shows year of sending, and single weight of 7½ grams or less.

Regarding the rates, here is the consensus: Letter prepaid 5 centimes Tahiti to Hawaii, plus 5 cents charge by Hawaii, plus 28 cents (2 cents ship fee plus 26 cents Br. Open Mail by Amer. Pkt. rate from west coast of U.S.). Due 8 decimes, rated at Paris and collected from recipient at Cognac.

Our thanks to all concerned for helping to analyze this rare (two known) and complicated cover.



Figure 2a. Venezuela to Delaware in 1879.

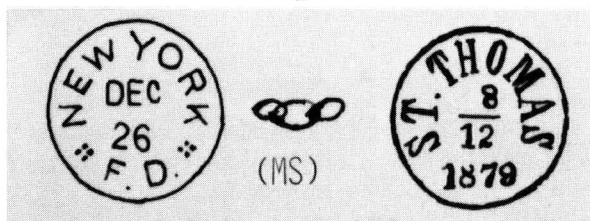


Figure 2b. Markings on reverse of Figure 2a.

Figure 2a shows the front of a cover from Venezuela to the U.S. in 1879, and Figure 2b shows the markings on the back. Not shown is a “16” under the stamps. Several answers were received, and are appreciated. Roger G. Stone, Warren R. Bower, George B. Arfken, and others all gave cogent answers and a very detailed explanation was submitted by Richard B. Graham who wrote:

Venezuela did not become a member of the Universal Postal Union until an effective date of Jan. 1, 1880, the month after the cover was sent.

The 1879 *P. L. & R.* of the United States, the first issue to appear after the creation of the General Postal Union in 1875, which had become the Universal Postal Union by 1878, contains the articles of the Convention of Paris of 1878, and also the “final protocol” of agreement and the Regulations of Detail and Order that provided how mail was to be handled, both between countries within the UPU and mail to or from countries outside the UPU but through UPU member countries to other countries within the UPU.

The provisions apparently pertinent to this cover may be summarized as follows:



From the Convention:

1. Article 5 provided that the rate was to be 25 centimes "in case of prepayment and double that in the contrary case," for each letter and for every weight of 15 grammes or fraction of 15 grammes. (Under the terms of the Convention and Regulations of detail, although an ounce was about 28½ grammes, it was considered to be 30 grammes, so that 15 grammes and one half ounce were the basic single letter equivalent weights.)

2. Article 12 covered exchanges of letters to and from non-UPU countries through UPU countries to or from other UPU countries. The rates consisted of two elements, the UPU rate and the rate between the intermediate UPU country and the non-UPU country.

While the language is complex, it considers the fact that the intermediate UPU country would have had accounting procedures with the non-UPU country and it was necessary therefore to transfer funds between the sending or receiving UPU country and the non-UPU country through the intermediate UPU country.

It should be noted that two UPU countries had to be involved, at least one being an intermediate country.

From the Regulations of Detail:

1. From the table of equivalent monetary units of countries in the UPU not using the Swiss franc, or its equivalent, it may be noted that both the United States and the Danish West Indian colonies used a rate of 5¢ equal to 25 centimes as the UPU postal rate.

2. Under Regulation V, "Correspondence with Countries foreign to the Union," the offices of the Union with treaties or postal relationships with non-UPU countries were to furnish to the UPU countries a table of their rates, prepaid or unpaid, with those countries to the other UPU countries. In addition to those rates, five centimes per single rate of letters could be added.

In addition, according to Regulation V, the UPU postage would be added to rates, just as if such letters had originated in the intermediate nation.

3. Page 268 is the start of a table giving details of exchange of mails with various foreign countries, whether UPU or not, from the United States, and the seeming corollary is that mails from that country to the U.S. would normally be carried in the same manner. Although this table, page 271, lists irregular direct service and twice monthly service to Venezuela via Jamaica, Venezuela is also listed as one of many countries to which mail could be sent via St. Thomas.

4. The first chapter of the foreign mails section of the 1879 *P. L. & R.* concerns UPU mails; Chapter Two concerns correspondence with countries not in the Universal Postal Union. This includes a section on mails to Venezuela by direct mail, which had to be prepaid, at 10¢ per half ounce for letters. The section also says, "domestic rates of postage are chargeable on all correspondence received from Venezuela, and correspondence sent is liable on delivery in Venezuela to the inland postage there chargeable."

5. Postage due stamps were authorized by Congress to be placed in use effective July 1, 1879, so this cover represents an early use of such stamps.

Per Sections 270, et seq., page 89, of the 1879 *P. L. & R.* postage due stamps were never to be affixed anywhere but at the office of delivery. This was because of accounting problems on undelivered mail. When a mailing office found postage was due but that a letter was still mailable, the letter was to be marked with the amount due, but no due stamps were to be applied.

This same situation would have applied to letters received unpaid from abroad.

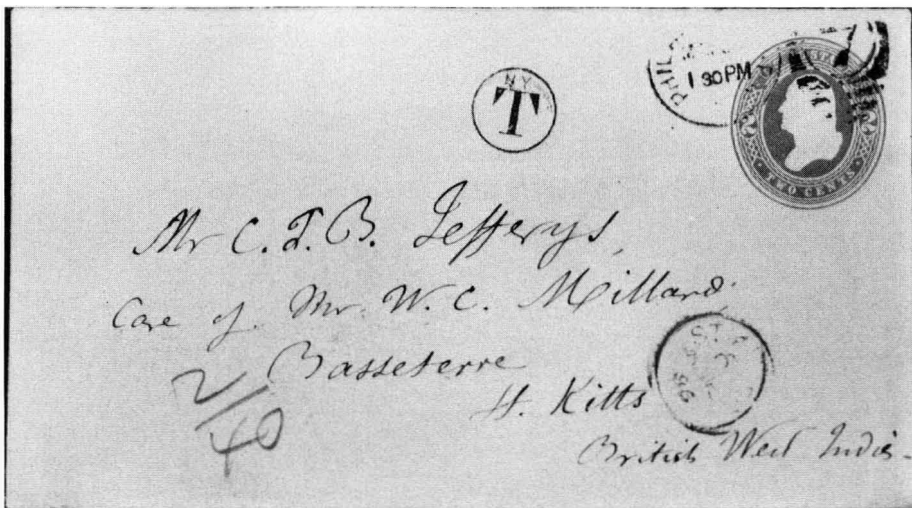
From the above, it would seem that the collect postage consisted of two segments, the postage from Venezuela to St. Thomas, non-UPU, and from St. Thomas to the United States, under the 5¢ UPU rate, but doubled because it was collect.

Thus, if the total collect postage was 16¢ and 10¢ of this was UPU-rate, then the remaining 6¢ jibes nicely with the "30" on the cover if expressed in centimes, at 5 centimes per cent, for either U.S. or St. Thomas money.

This suggests that the "30" is a debit marking from the St. Thomas P.O. rather than a due marking in correlation with the "T," the debit being to the U.S. for the postage from Venezuela to St. Thomas, probably the equivalent of 5¢ plus the extra 5 centimes that intermediate countries were permitted to charge in such situations.

The equivalent of 16¢ in postage in Swiss francs, the monetary unit in which all UPU due postage charges were to be expressed, would have been 80¢, thus consisting of, if the above suggestions are correct, of 2 x 25¢ plus 30 centimes indicated by the St. Thomas post office.

The New York Foreign desk should have marked this incoming collect letter with 16¢ due, and I suspect that the "T" in a circle is their marking. The 16¢ due marking is present, covered by the stamps, as disclosed by holding the opened envelope to a strong light.



**Figure 3. Philadelphia to St. Kitts, 1886.**


Figure 3 shows a U.S. envelope, Scott #277, intended for the domestic rate, but used by the sender in 1886 to St. Kitts in the Caribbean. St. Christopher (AKA) joined the U.P.U. in 1879, as several responders commented. One opined that a circular was sent, but the New York "T" (for "Taxe") marking indicates otherwise. The best and most complete answer came from Warren R. Bower whose decision is that this was double weight letter for which the rate should have been 10¢ U.S. The "2/40" marking means double weight and short paid 40 centimes, or 8¢. The collect charge, although not shown, would have been double the deficiency, which Bower points out would have been 16¢, 80 centimes, or 8 pence, and the recipient at St. Kitts probably paid with British coins.

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PROBLEM COVERS FOR THIS ISSUE

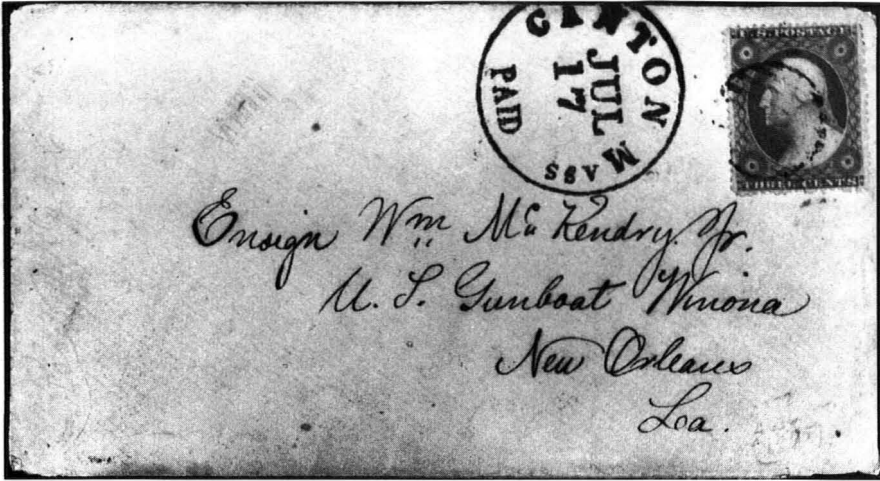


Figure 4a. Mass. to New Orleans, with 3¢ 1857.

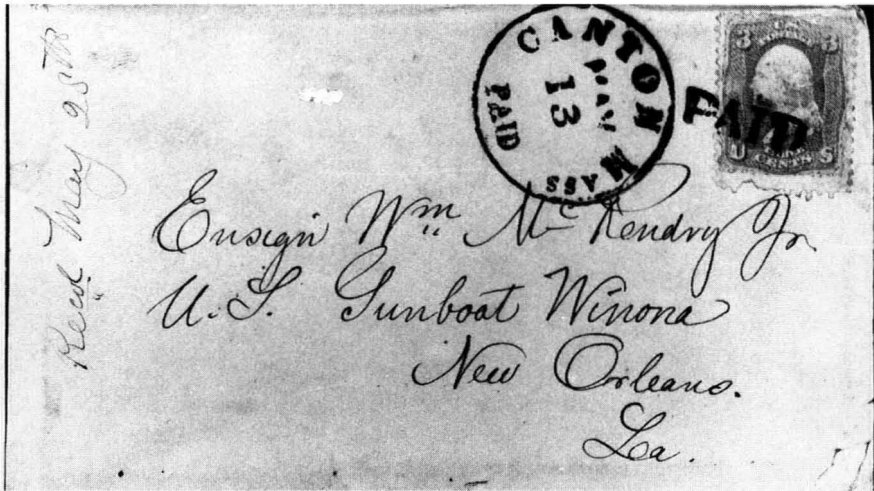


Figure 4b. Mass. to New Orleans, with 3¢ 1861.



Figure 5. New Orleans to Guadeloupe in 1873.

One reader asked for a “simple” U.S. cover instead of “complicated” foreign ones. Thus we’ve picked a pair of covers, shown in Figures 4a and 4b. Both are addressed to Ensign McKendry, U.S. gunboat *Winona*, New Orleans, La. One bears a 3¢ '57 and the other a 3¢ '61 stamp, and both show the same c.d.s. of Canton, Mass. Question — what are the years of usage? Beware, the answers are “tricky” and might best be answered by someone who was in the Navy.

Figure 5 shows a cover from the U.S. to Guadeloupe in the Caribbean in 1873 (backstamped “St. Thomas Oct 29 73”). The New York marking is in red, and the crayoned “35” is in blue. The Banknote 3¢ and 15¢ stamps are killed with what looks like a cut cork. Because they were not tied, the cover was submitted to the Philatelic Foundation, where it received a good certificate. Will several readers explain the 18¢ rate and the “30” and “35” figures? Why did the sender in New Orleans send the letter via New York?

Please send your comments (no publicity is given to incorrect answers — they are all solicited) and ideas for new items to Cincinnati within two weeks of reading this.



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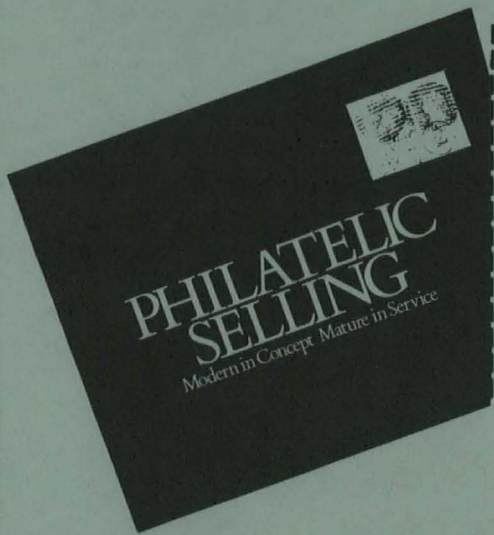
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