

THE CHRONICLE November 2002 (No. 196)

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November 2002

Volume 54, No. 4

Whole No. 196

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THE CHRONICLE of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues, published quarterly in Feb., May, Aug. and Nov. by the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, Inc. at Briarwood, Lisbon, MD 21765. Second class postage paid at Canton, Ohio 44711 and additional mailing office. Subscription price \$24.00. Printed in the U.S.A. POSTMASTER send address changes to Briarwood, Lisbon, MD 21765.

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The Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues

ISSN 0009-6008

November 2002

Published Quarterly, in
February, May, August and November

Vol. 54, No. 4
Whole No. 196

\$4.50 Members
\$6.00 Non-Members

Official publication of the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, Inc.
(Unit 11, A. P. S.) www.uspcs.org

Annual Dues
\$22.50

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Address changes should be sent to Secretary, back issue orders to Publication Sales Chairman, other correspondence to Editor-in Chief. Reports of new items or articles should be submitted to appropriate Section Editor or Editor-in-Chief. Do not send stamps or covers unless requested. Any items sent will be carefully guarded but no liability attaches to an editor.

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REVIEW: MOSHER'S CATALOG OF PRIVATE EXPRESS LABELS AND STAMPS

The largely unsung labels and corner cards adorning packages and letters sent by express companies are the major focus of a new book, *Catalog of Private Express Labels and Stamps (United States 1839-1918, Canada 1841-1926)*, by Bruce Mosher. This comprehensive work may be overdue by a century, but it could not be more timely for avid collectors of philatelic marginalia.

Such labels, unlike government stamps, form an amazing patchwork quilt of places in America. Many bore the names of small towns on the frontier fringe as populations and the railways surged westward in waves in the mid and late 19th century.

As such, many act today as historical beacons for small newly formed communities, each of which had its "expressman" as any check of the censuses of the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s will reveal. Of course, the major cities had dozens of express companies all competing for parcels, money letters, company mail matter and newspapers with the U.S. government postal operations.

Mosher lists 3,000 labels and adhesives in his catalog, the result of gargantuan efforts on his part, adding to the knowledge earlier compiled by Harry Konwiser in his *Stampless Cover Catalog* and by Sherwood Springer in his 1962 through 1985 series of handbooks on cinderellas, fantasies, taxpays and express labels.

Despite the seeming comprehensiveness of this catalog, Mosher admits it is still very much a work in progress—thousands more labels exist out there, hidden in cigarboxes, glassines and in attics.

In his preface, the author estimates that as many as 10,000 private expresses and parcel delivery companies existed in North America from their inception in the late 1830s to the end of the "classic express" period around 1918. Relatively few companies actually issued adhesives, and many more, especially in the pioneer phase, only survive as manuscript notations on envelopes. New labels and issues are found virtually on a weekly basis and Mosher readily admits his mission "is a continuing task that may never be completed."

With more than 2,100 illustrations, the catalog is a magnificent start. A brief description launches each listing with a thumbnail history of the company, followed by illustrations of the labels or corner cards with a special numbering system, date of known use, color and size and a conservatively estimated price.

The prices given are rather subjective of necessity, as some labels have only two or three examples known, while others simply are seldom encountered on the open market. For instance, the Gray & Co Boston embossed label is listed as \$35, but a cover bearing the circular embossed just sold for \$2,000. Mosher has deliberately not included prices on cover, as they can be astronomically rarer than the off-cover examples that survive. So the price guide is a solid, if tentative, beginning.

The inclusion of many U.S. local stamps simply because they included "express" in their wording engenders a bit of confusion. Of course, many of the local posts and independent mail companies listed in the Scott specialized U.S. catalog also did deliver packages, so the crossover complexity existed before Mosher's catalog.

A listing of cinderellas and bogus fabrications, however, is most useful, including fantasies by Allan Taylor based on names of existing expresses of his day, because these often show up in express label lots and are a mystery to many collectors without such a guide. These bogus emissions are also listed in Larry Lyons' recent three-volume *Identifier for Carriers, Locals, Fakes, Forgeries and Bogus Posts of the United States*.

Readers will discover realms few know about detailed in Mosher's catalog as well—for instance, detailed information about Complimentary Franks and Passes which allowed free passage of personal baggage and packages for government and railway officials over major express company lines beginning in the 1870s.

Another unexplored universe still waiting for more discoveries are the elusive stamps issued by private store merchants to ship their merchandise to customers. For instance, the classic rare Concord N.H. Bicycle Messenger Service stamp of the 1890s, that is not in this edition, would be welcome in future versions of the catalog. Some similar usages are already in the catalog, such as Acker Company, Jeweler's Parcel Delivery Co., Kirschbaum Special Delivery and Mercantile Library Association. It is a wonderful beginning to a long ignored and mysterious category.

The separate 15-page breakout section for Canadian express emissions is equally ground breaking and provides the first comprehensive gathering of such issues that I have seen, including many cross-border companies. The adhesives are eagerly collected and command premium prices—much higher than Mosher's estimates—in Canadian auction houses on the rare occasions when they show up.

Mosher eagerly solicits contact with philatelists who can supply new material, corrections or data updates to his catalog. He can be reached at P.O. Box 033236, Indialantic FL 32903. The 223-page softbound catalog is available at the same address for \$35 plus \$2 S&H in the U.S. and \$5 elsewhere.

-Reviewed by Gordon Stimmell □

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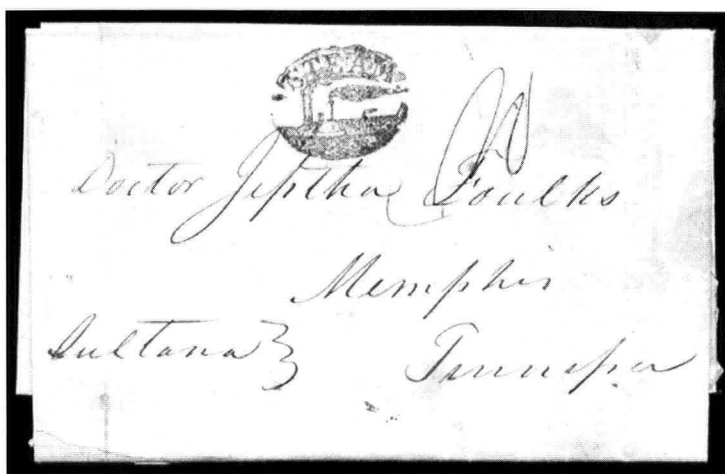
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**THE RECTANGULAR DIAGONALLY SCORED PAID OBLITERATORS
USED ON CROSS BORDER MAIL FROM CANADA TO THE USA**

HORACE W. HARRISON

I was out at Balpex on Friday, August 30, 2002 and had worked my way around to Guy Dillaway's table. Looking through his Canadian covers, I came across the one shown in Figure 1.

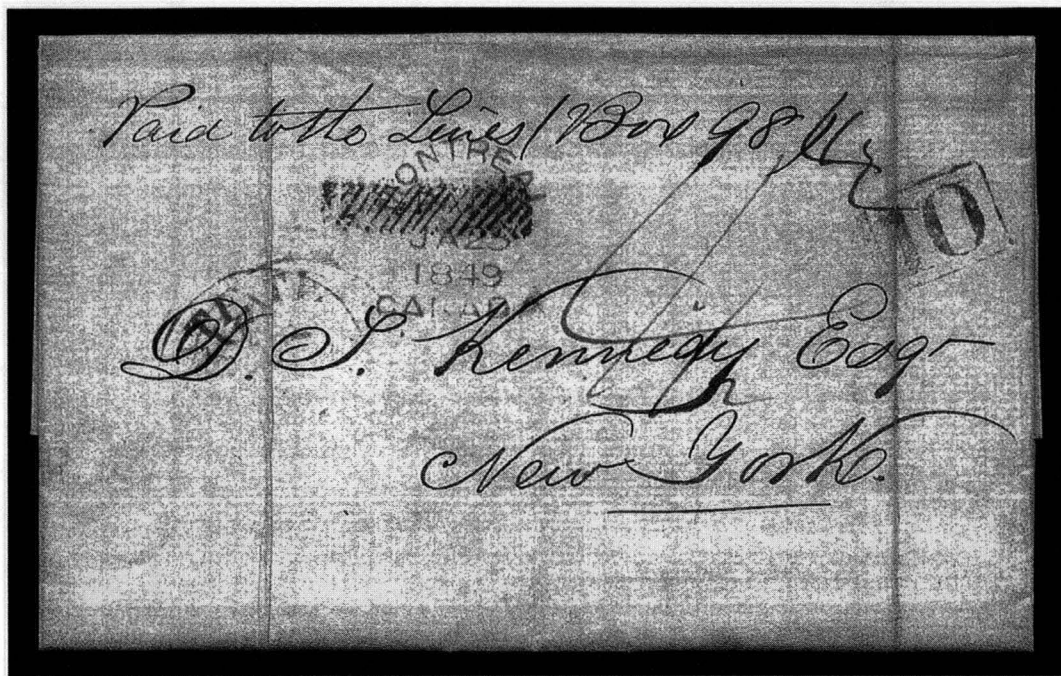


Figure 1. Letter from Montreal to New York. January 25, 1849

I wouldn't expect another Kennedy correspondence cover from Canada to New York to move my blood pressure at all, but this one was exciting. The Montreal tombstone date stamp for January 25, 1849 had its **PAID** canceled by a rectangle of diagonally scored bars which I had only seen once before in over 40 years of looking at cross border covers and, moreover, it was rated with a handstamp boxed **10** in red ink, the U.S. rate for the over 300 miles from the border to NYC.

That first cover, shown in Figure 2, has been in my collection for quite awhile. However, it has a boxed **5** for the less than 300 miles from the border to Boston, and the **PAID** in the Quebec Crowned Circle had been canceled by a similar to, but not exact duplicate of, the scored rectangular obliterator on the cover to New York. With a year between usages, one of which was in the Kennedy correspondence, why was this marking so scarce?

Out at the show, I didn't know that they were not exact duplicates. See Figure 3, which has the obliterator for the second cover considerably enhanced. Because of the similarity of the rate markings, my original thought was that the boxed **5** had been struck on arrival at Boston where, I assumed, the rectangular obliterator had been applied. With the



Figure 2. Money Letter from Quebec via Montreal to Boston, dated JA 29 1848



Figure 3. Two differently scored obliterations, the left one from the cover in Figure 1, the right (from the cover in Figure 2) considerably enhanced

different destinations, it was obvious to me that these two markings had to have been applied prior to arrival, but where?

Since they had both passed through Montreal which was an exchange office for both New York and Boston as well as Albany, I jumped to the conclusion that it had been done at Montreal, but Canadian Deputy Postmaster General T.A. Stayner had issued the following order on

25 October 1847: - From and after the 16th of next month., no American postage is to be collected in Canada, either upon letters and newspapers coming from or going to the United States. All letters for the United States must continue to be prepaid [to the border].

T.A.Stayner.D.P.M. General.

In effect, this canceled the status of the Postmasters at Quebec, Toronto and Montreal as U.S. Postmasters and made it unlikely that the Montreal postmaster would have applied any U.S. markings. Guy had a fairly steep price on the Kennedy cover so I asked to take cover No.1 home for further examination, to which he courteously agreed.

Upon close examination I was able to make out part of a circular date stamp in red ink similar to that of the boxed 10. The letters I could make out were ATE, beginning under the "D." of the address. Highgate, Vt. immediately sprang to mind. It was the exchange office in the U.S. for the Canadian Exchange Office at Stanstead, L.C. But mail for Boston and New York from Montreal would have been directly exchanged in closed bags without

being handled at Highgate. Looking to solve the apparent discrepancy I began by searching the sources available to me at home:

The Earl E. Palmer Collection of "Upper and Lower Canada Cross Border Mail to 1851," published in 1985 as No.2 in Hennok's Series of Postal History Collections, contained no examples of either of these markings.

Photocopies of Susan McDonald's Cross Border Exhibit, published by the U.S. Philatelic Classic Society in 1988, contained no examples of either of these markings.

Photocopies of Dorothy Sanderson's Cross Border Exhibit, published by the British North America Philatelic Society in 1998, contained no examples of either of these markings.

The "Como" Collection of Cross Border Mail, sold at auction by Matthew Bennett on March 23, 2002 contained no examples of these markings.

I finally came to the photocopies that the late Allen Steinhart had made for me from his collection of Cross Border mail and I hit the nail on the head. Here was confirmation of the application of the boxed rate markings at Highgate, Vt. (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. Soldier's Letter in the concession rate format from Montreal, L.C., FE 4,1848 via Highgate to Burlington, rated one penny to the border and 5¢ due in the U.S.

Upon very close examination of cover 2, I was able to make out a very faint rim of a red circular date stamp diagonally between the Quebec Paid Crowned Circle and the Montreal broken circle date stamp. I concluded that this marking was made at the Highgate Post Office.

The question now became, "Why are these markings so scarce?" The answer lies in the vagaries of mail transportation. One explanation: whenever post office employees saw an opportunity to decrease the delivery time, they seized it. After the bags for New York and Boston had been closed, occasionally a letter arrived which could be forwarded through the border exchange offices to catch a train which would get the letter to its destination before the next closed bag would. Another, equally good, explanation: the letters for Albany, Boston and New York were sorted to the wrong bag, going into the closed bag

sent to Stanstead for Highgate instead of for Albany, Boston or New York. The letter for Burlington was placed in the proper bag but there was no Canadian PAID handstamp to be obliterated.

When I paid Guy for the cover to New York, his comment was "You only collect money letters and registered mail. I fully expected that after you had made all the notes and color photocopies you wanted, you would return the cover to me." I regret that my reputation as a cheapskate, well earned in my youth, is still with me. □

Editor-in Chief's Note: The above is very likely the last philatelic article Horace Harrison submitted for publication. He sent it on September 4, 2002, with the following brief comments:

Dear Charlie,

Enclosed herewith is a short article which your membership and readers may find interesting. If you would like to use it, please email or telephone me your acceptance as I would like to submit it to a Canadian or English publication if you think it unusable for your fine publication. At age 82, when I write something, I hope to see it in print. If you do accept it, as copyright holder, with proper acknowledgment to the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, I would give permission for appropriate Canadian and U.K. Societies to reprint it in their publications.

With kindest regards, s/ Horace

I called Horace to acknowledge acceptance of the article, and followed with an edited copy of the manuscript. But in spite of the best of hopes, Horace never saw it in print: he died on October 4, 2002.

United States Postal Service
Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. Publication Title: **THE CHRONICLE OF U.S. CLASSIC SPECIAL ISSUES**

2. Publication Number: **05601680**

3. Filing Date: **1 OCTOBER 2002**

4. Issue Frequency: **QUARTERLY**

5. Number of Issues Published Annually: **4**

6. Annual Subscription Price: **\$24.00**

7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4):
**c/o PATRICIA STUBBINS LAUMER
 BRIDLEWOOD, LISBON MD 21765**

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13. Publication Title

14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation

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i. Total (Sum of 15g and h)		217	291
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PS Form 3526, October 1999 (Reverse)

"PLATING" BALTIMORE POSTMARKS 1851-1861

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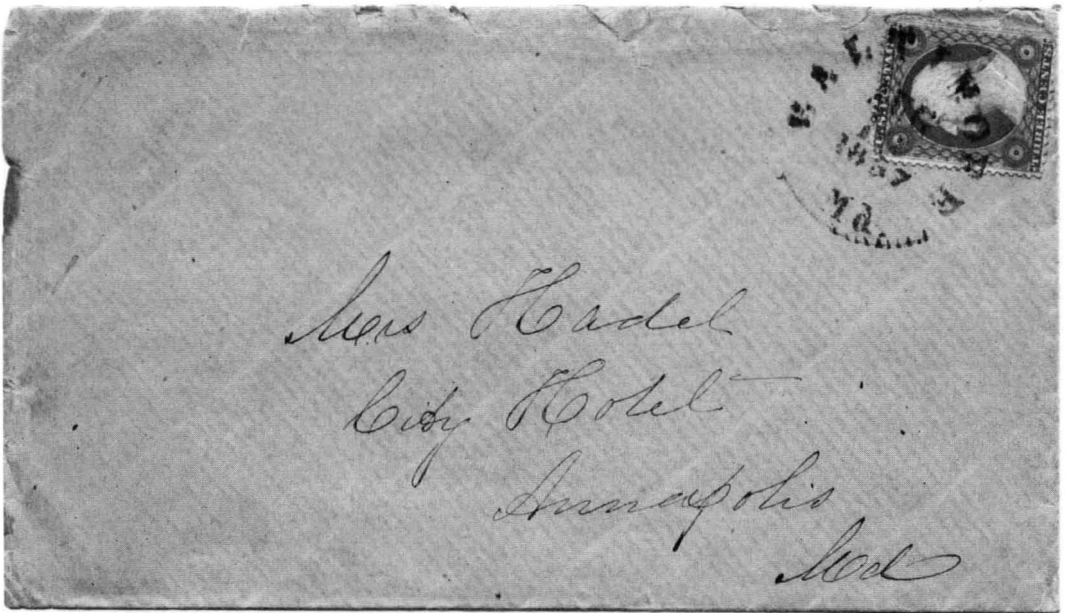
Introduction

This article provides an analysis of a cover submitted for expertizing to the American Philatelic Society. This cover bears a perforated Type II 3¢ stamp, Scott #26, canceled with a Baltimore, Maryland town postmark dated August 17, 1857. As such this cover would move the earliest known use (EKU) of Scott #26 from the current date of September 14, 1857,¹ back to August 17, 1857. By recording deterioration of the postmarking device, I was able to determine this was not an EKU, and the year of use was actually 1859.

This article will focus on this "August 17, 1857" cover, the particular postmarking device used to cancel the stamp, and the technique applied to establish the year of use. However, the methodology and database discussed potentially allows establishing the year of use of other Baltimore postmarks, which can be invaluable when a cover cannot otherwise be year-dated.

Initial Inspection

This project began when I saw this cover listed in a recent auction catalog.²



3¢ Dull Red, Ty. II (26). Tied by "Baltimore Md. Aug. 17, 1857" cds on orange cover to Annapolis Md., this is the new **earliest known usage**, stamp with rounded bottom right corner and cover with small edge faults at top and left, Fine.

¹Wilson Hulme, Keiji Taira, Richard Celler, Elliot Omiya and Mark Rogers, "Earliest Known Uses of the 1851-1857 Era," *The Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (August 1996), pp. 160-165.

²Robert A. Siegel Sale #845, May 15, 2002, Lot 616.

I am a collector of the U.S. 1851-1857 issue with particular interest in early usages, thus the prospect of a new EKU was intriguing. I had this cover sent to me for viewing prior to the auction. Before inspecting it I thought it was possible that the stamp might prove to be a Scott #26A, which is known used as early as July 11, 1857. The two stamps, Scott #26 and Scott #26A, are frequently confused with one another. When the cover arrived, I asked Dick Celler for help with the examination hoping that the stamp could be plated. We have a very good idea of when the various plates that printed Scott #26 were made, so knowing the plate might help with determining the possible year of use. For example, if the stamp was from a plate made in 1858, the cover obviously could not have been mailed in 1857.

My conclusion was that the stamp was a Scott #26 but it was not possible to plate it. The postmark was indeed dated August 17, 1857. The cover and stamp did not appear to have been altered in any way.

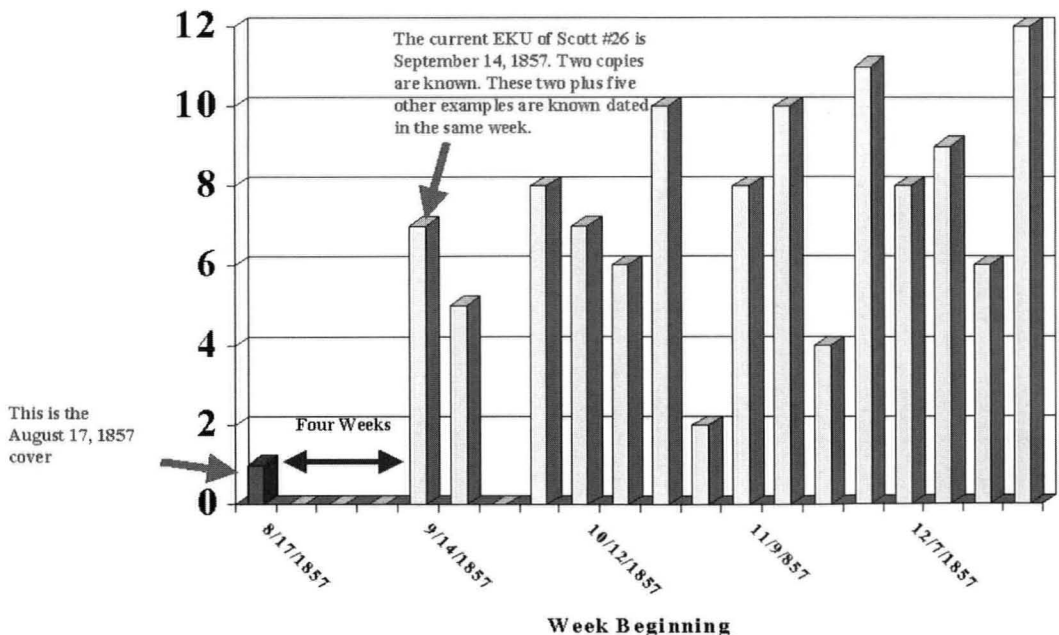
Concerns

However, I saw several “red flags” which gave me doubts whether the cover was really used on the date shown in the postmark:

- The four-week time interval between this use and the currently accepted EKU for Scott #26 was unusually long.
- The color shade of the stamp did not match the color of September and October 1857 printings of Scott #26.
- Baltimore is known to have occasionally used the wrong year slug in its postmarks.
- Most Baltimore covers I have seen from this period have a blue postmark, this one was black.

Recorded Usages of Scott #26 By Week

Number of Recorded Usages



Source: Database of 1851-1857 usages maintained by W. Hulme

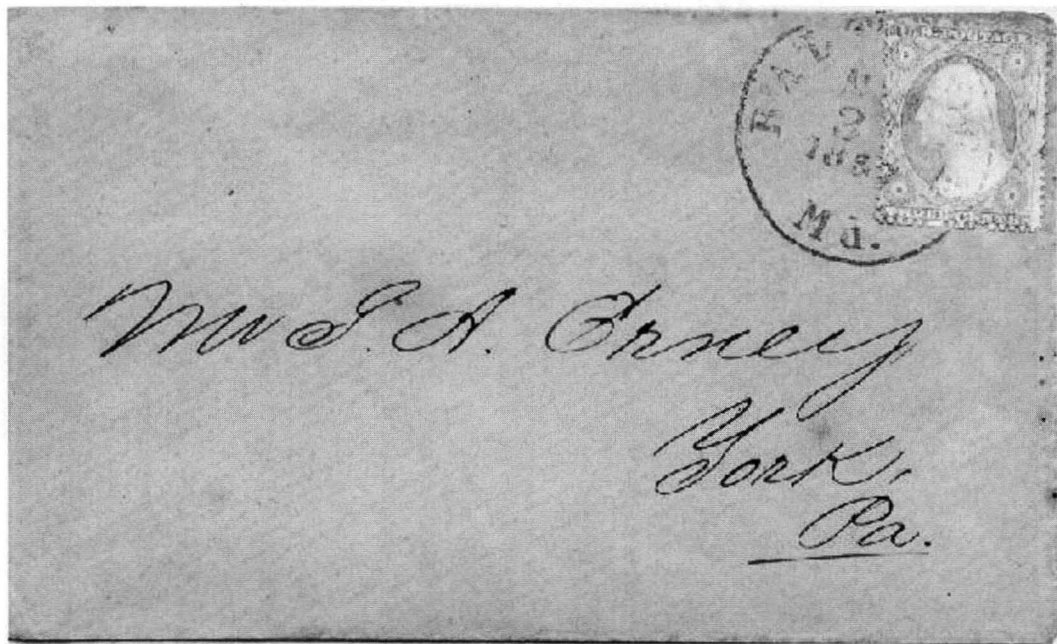
Concern #1: *The four-week time interval between this use (August 17, 1857) and the currently accepted EKU for Scott #26 (September 14, 1857) was significantly longer than I would have expected.* There are numerous collectors who have for many years been looking for earlier dates on major Scott Catalogue numbers, thus my first concern was the four-week “improvement.” Typically new EKUs move up the date of use by only a few days, *i.e.*, in small steps. This one seemed to be taking giant steps, almost a month earlier than the present EKU.

Concern #2: *The stamp on the “August 17, 1857” cover is a pale to medium shade of brownish carmine.* The usual color of September and October 1857 printings of Scott #26 is deep brownish carmine. However, I did not have enough data to prove this shade difference was other than normal variability.

Concern #3: *Baltimore is known to have occasionally used the wrong year slug in its postmarks.* Generally, I have found that the use of the wrong year slug in a canceling device occurs in early January, when a postal clerk forgets to change the year slug. The Baltimore year-date errors, however, are quite different.

On page 129 of his book,³ Dr. Chase tells us:

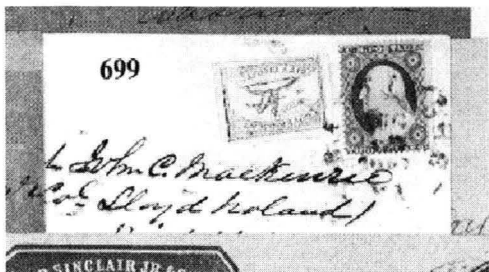
While speaking on early dates I may add that I had two entire envelopes in my collection, each bearing a 3c 1857 type II stamp, cancelled “Baltimore, Md.” The dates on both are fairly clear, and read, on one stamp (which by the way is a typical 1858 shade) “Mar 31 1857” and on the other (which does not resemble the 1857 printings) “Aug 13 1857.” In spite of the evidence on the face of these I feel sure that neither of these cancellations was applied in the year 1857. Whether the clerk in the post office inserted an 1857 year date by mistake or not is difficult to tell, but it seems at least possible.



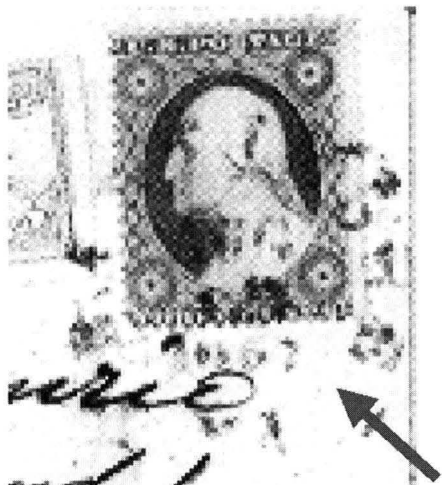
Scott #26 dated March 31, 1857

³Carroll Chase, *The 3c Stamp of the United States 1851-1857 Issue*, revised ed. (Lawrence, Massachusetts: Quarterman Publications, Inc., 1975).

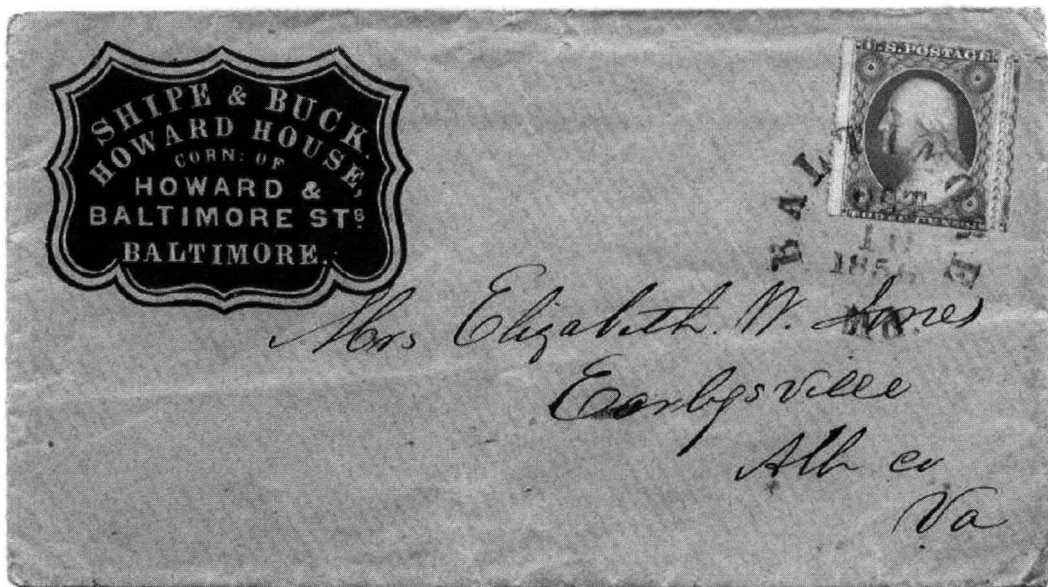
I was particularly intrigued by Dr. Chase's statement that he had seen another Baltimore cover with a Type II stamp dated **August 13, 1857**. While I was wondering where it might be today, I found a similar one in an old auction catalog.⁴ It was described as Scott #26, with a black **August 15, 1857** Baltimore postmark. The cover is ex-Waterhouse and I subsequently found this same cover listed in three additional auction catalogs. None of the catalogs listed it as a potential EKU.



Scott #26 dated August 15, 1857



As I kept looking I found an even earlier one. This cover has a Scott #26 in addition to a Baltimore carrier stamp, and is canceled "October 26, 1856." This cover predates any other known use of a perforated stamp in the United States by four months. The 3¢ stamp



Scott #26 on cover dated October 10, 1856

⁴Richard Frajola, sale dated September 19, 1982, Lot #699.

had not been plated, but turned out to be position 60L15. Thus the date on this cover is more than a year earlier than other recorded usage of a stamp from Plate 15.⁵

Other misdated Baltimore covers of this era (besides Scott #26) are known. Three of them have Scott #26A stamps, and are postmarked **March 29 or March 31, 1857**.

Scott #26A dated March 29, 1857



Scott #26A dated March 31, 1857

Scott #26A dated March 31, 1857

Despite the existence of these covers, the recognized EKU of Scott #26A is July 11, 1857.

To summarize this section on misdated covers from Baltimore: There exist at least seven covers from Baltimore that collectors know are misdated and therefore they are not considered EKUs. Four are dated March 1857, two are dated August 1857, and one is dated October 1856. Three of these seven bear Scott #26As. The other four bear Scott #26s and have dates that are earlier than August 17, 1857.

Concern #4: The "August 17, 1857" cover has a black postmark. Most Baltimore covers I have seen from this period have a blue postmark. In addition to studying early usages I study early perforations. Perforated stamps were first distributed in the U.S. starting in late February 1857. Because of my interest, I have spent considerable time studying cities such as Baltimore for perforated stamps used in the first year or so. Sure enough, when I checked my notes they confirmed I had never recorded a Baltimore cancel in black ink used from 1857 or 1858.

Subsequent to my initial viewing of the cover, I gathered more data on the color of Baltimore postmarks. This data showed several intervals from 1851 through 1856 when Baltimore used black ink (mid-July 1851 through late October 1852; January through April 1853; January through March 1855; January through March 1856). During the years 1857 through 1861 there was only one interval when black ink was used, June 1859 through March 1860. I had not recorded a single black Baltimore postmark in 1857. This inconsistency will be discussed in more detail in the "Results of the Investigation" section below.

⁵The EKU for plate 15 of Scott #26 is October 30, 1857.

Investigative Framework

To summarize my dilemma: On one hand the cover in question appeared to be genuine in the sense it did not appear doctored or altered. On the other hand, I had some significant red flags telling me that the stamp may not really have been used in 1857. I wanted to bring this whole matter to closure and to see if I could replace opinion with facts.

I believed the canceling device might provide the key. Based on a recommendation from Patricia Stilwell Walker, I followed the classification system developed by Delf Norona and Michael Miller⁶ as the framework for the analysis. Norona-Miller listed three types of year-dated cancels from Baltimore in this era.

Baltimore Year-Dated Town Postmarks



Norona Type 20
33 mm Diameter
"Md."



Norona Type 22
30-31 mm Diameter
"Md."



Norona Type 24
30 mm Diameter
Outer Circle Omitted
"MD."

The "August 17, 1857" cover has a Type 20 postmark. It took some careful measurements to verify which type it was, as most of the rim of the postmark did not show clearly on the cover. I was not sure if the absence of the rim was due to insufficient inking or some other reason.

It is easy to confuse Types 20 and 22 with one another. They have similar lettering and the primary difference is that the Type 20 device is 2 mm larger in diameter than the Type 22. In contrast, the Type 24 device has "MD." instead of "Md." for the state abbreviation and is rimless.

When I started my research I did not know whether multiple Type 20 devices were in use at the Baltimore Post Office, and it would not have surprised me to find out that they used more than one. However, the data I have recorded shows there was only one Type 20 canceling device. As will be discussed, I was able to reach this conclusion by reconstructing a picture of the deterioration of the Type 20 device during the time it was used.

To give some background, I have been studying and recording usages of the U.S. 1851-57 issue for about 25 years. Today my database contains about ten thousand entries from the 1851-1861 era. The information on Baltimore is just a small portion of the total data recorded. Several years ago a large correspondence addressed to a merchant named George S. Groshon, in Frederick City, Maryland, was sold. It contained hundreds of 19th

⁶Delf Norona, "Baltimore Townmarks (1773 to 1866)," *Cyclopedia of United States Postmarks and Postal History*, reprinted (Lawrence, Massachusetts: Quarterman Publications, Inc., 1975), pp.224-231.

century covers postmarked from Baltimore. In many respects it was a gold mine. A number of these covers had year-dated cancels, but what made this correspondence particularly helpful was that virtually all of the covers had been docketed by Groshon with a date that included the year. Caj Brejtfus, a collector and dealer living in California, acquired most of the “Groshon correspondence” as a large lot. Shortly thereafter, Caj sent the 1857-1861 portion of this correspondence to Dick Celler, who plated all the 3¢ stamps he could. I identified the color shades of the stamps and recorded the information in my database. The end result was that the Groshon correspondence provided me with a dated chronology of Baltimore usages from 1857-1861, including both the stamps and the markings on the covers.

As I progressed with the cancellation device study I soon found that I needed even more information than was already in my database, so I imposed on a number of collectors for access to their Baltimore material. *My thanks to all these contributors.* Besides making me aware of Norona’s article, Pat Walker made her entire collection plus her reference files available to me for study. I could not have done this work without her help. In addition I borrowed covers and reference material from John Bowman, Dick Celler, Bill Crowe, Bob Hegland, Don Johnstone, Van Koppersmith, Dwayne Littauer, Rob Lund and Roy Weber. In addition I searched through a large number of auction catalogs going back roughly thirty years. I recorded every Baltimore cover during the period from 1851 to 1861, where I could establish the item’s date of usage, color of postmark, and Norona Type.

This effort resulted in classifying and analyzing over eight hundred Baltimore postmarks from the period 1851 through 1861. This information proved to be the key in understanding the “August 17, 1857” cover.

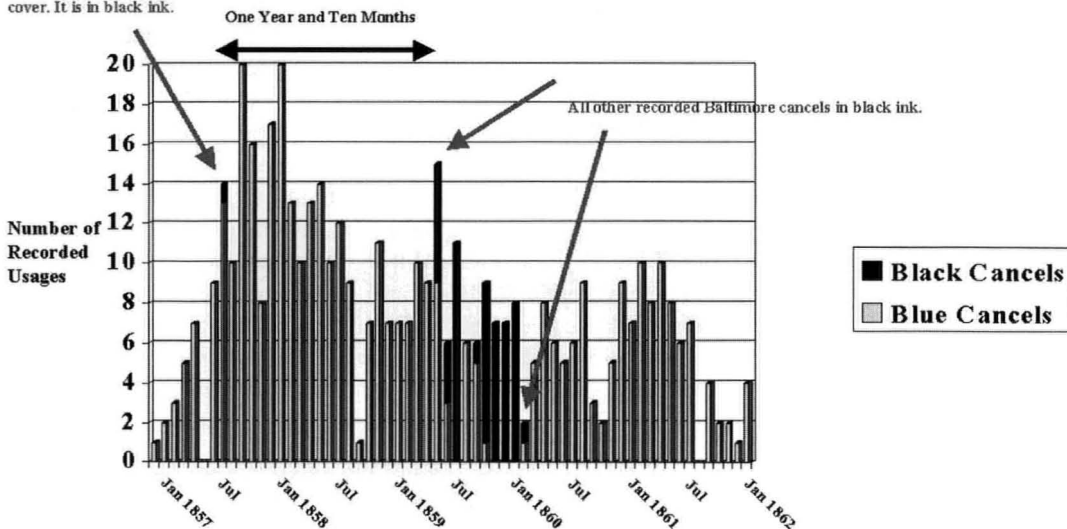
Results of the Investigation

For the years from 1857 to 1861, the only time my data indicated that black postmarks were used (instead of the usual blue) was during the nine-month period June 17, 1859, to March 7, 1860. The “August 17, 1857” cover has a black postmark, but is outside that time window by one year and ten months.

Color of Baltimore Postmarks on Recorded Usages 1857-1861

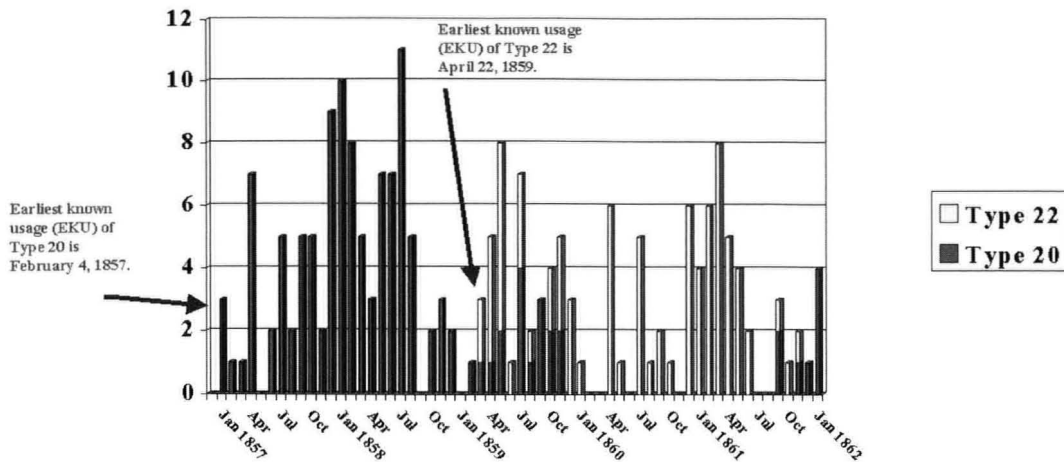
This Chart Includes All Cancels Recorded, Regardless of NoronaType
By Month

This is the August 17, 1857 cover. It is in black ink.



The Norona Type 20 canceling device used on the “August 17, 1857” cover was in service from February 1857 until at least February 1862 (perhaps later).

Number of Recorded Usages



As I recorded data for this research, no examples of the Type 24 cancel were found.

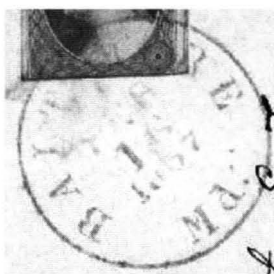
The outer circular rim of the Norona Type 20 device deteriorated over time, and I was able to develop a time-line of this deterioration. This proved to be the breakthrough needed, as any Norona Type 20 cancel could be compared or “plated” against this time-line to determine its year of use.

- The rim of the canceling device was fully intact from February 1857 until early October 1857.

2/4/1857



2/16/1857



3/13/1857



5/1/1857



5/22/1857



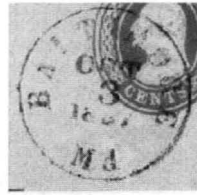
7/28/1857



8/6/1857



9/22/1857



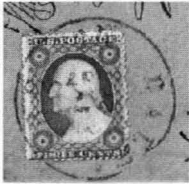
10/03/1857



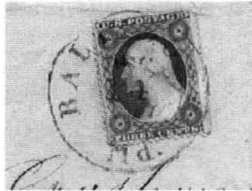
10/08/1857

• In October 1857 the rim was dented at about 11 o'clock (over the letters "LT" in "BALTIMORE"). Other than this rim damage the device remained fully intact until about August 1858.

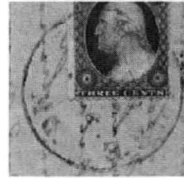
11/27/1857



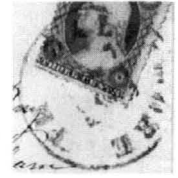
12/14/1857



2/1/1858



2/12/1858



3/14/1858



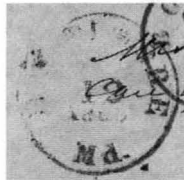
4/15/1858



6/18/1858



7/4/1858



7/12/1858



7/16/1858

• In August 1858 about 30% of the rim disappeared, i.e., a section of the rim apparently broke off. The missing section spanned from 8 to 12 o'clock (over the letters "ALT"). This section that broke off included the dented section of the rim above "LT."

8/12/1858



8/20/1858



8/31/1858



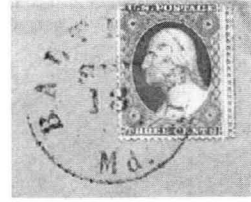
Approximately 30% of Outer Rim is gone.



Approximately
35% of Outer
Rim is gone.



9/8/1858



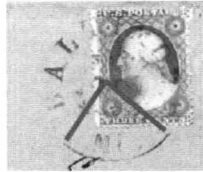
9/18/1858

• By December 1858 75% of the rim was gone. Only a small section from 4 to 7 o'clock remained.

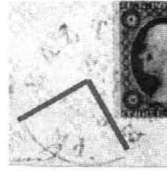
Note: heavy lines have been added to these pictures to emphasize the remaining section of the outer rim.



12/10/1858



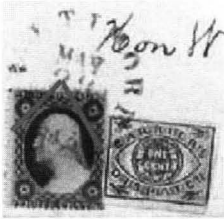
1/10/1859



03/13/1859



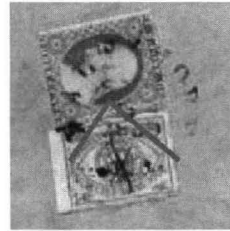
4/14/1859



5/28/1859

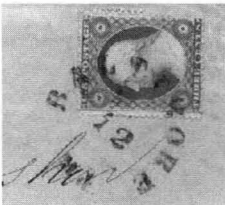


06/06/1859



9/7/1859

• By October 1859 the entire rim was gone. In addition, the year date was now only partially visible. By late December 1861 the year-slug was plugged. The device continued in use at least as late as February 7, 1862.



11/12/1859
[This cover is doctored.
The year is only partially visible.]



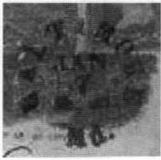
10/10/186x
[The year is not visible. The stamp is
Scott #64 and the year is possibly 1861]



10/10/186x
[The year is only partially visible.]



12/31/1861
[The year slug is plugged.
The year is based on the contents.]



1/7/186x

[The year slug is plugged. The year of this example must be 1862 or later as these stamps were not issued until August 1861.]



2/7/186x

[The year slug is plugged. The year of this example is must be 1862 or later as these stamps were not issued until August 1861.]



[Not legible]

[The year slug is plugged. The date of use of this example is not known. These stamps were not issued until August 1861.]



[Not legible]

[The year slug is plugged. The date of use of this example is not known. These stamps were not issued until August 1861.]

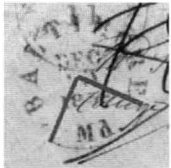
To summarize the time-line:

- February 1857 to October 1857 - Rim complete
- October 1857 to August 1858 - Rim dented
- August 1858 to September 1858 - 30% - 35% of rim missing
- December 1858 to September 1859 - 75% of rim missing
- October 1859 to February 1862 - 100% of rim missing

Conclusion

After establishing this time-line it was then easy to compare the postmark on the "August 17, 1857" cover to see where it fit in. The section of outer rim remaining (4 to 7 o'clock) matches the seven examples with dates ranging from December 1858 through September 1859. Thus, by "plating" the Baltimore postmark it was possible to demonstrate that this cover was used in 1859 and not in 1857.

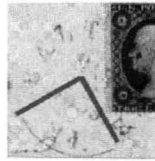
Note: heavy lines have been added to these pictures to emphasize the remaining section of the outer rim.



12/10/1858



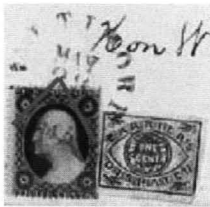
1/10/1859



03/13/1859



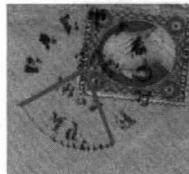
4/14/1859



5/28/1859

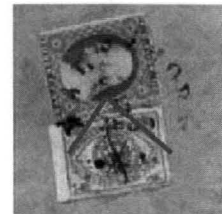


06/06/1859



8/17/1859

[This item is misdated as 8/17/1857.]



9/7/1859

Once the cover has been correctly dated as “August 17, 1859” rather than “August 17, 1857,” all the red flags (inconsistencies) disappear:

- The four-week gap, of course, goes away. This cover is no longer an early use.
- The pale brownish carmine shade is common in 1859. It is no longer necessary to consider the shade difference as being due to variability.
- The cover becomes just another known misdated cover from Baltimore. (See the Appendix concerning the other previously mentioned misdated covers, where their correct dates are resolved in the same manner.)
- The black postmark is no longer inconsistent, as it falls within the nine-month black postmark period from June 17, 1859, to March 7, 1860.

In closing I should reemphasize that the information that has been developed has applicability beyond the expertization of this one cover. In addition to the Norona Type 20 canceling device examined in this article, I am gathering data on the wear patterns for other Norona Type devices used in Baltimore. As part of this project, I now have recorded in my database over 150 dated covers that have Baltimore Carrier stamps affixed. Analysis of these covers has developed new information on the use of these stamps, including the identification of several covers where the Carrier stamp was fraudulently added. A subsequent article is planned to discuss the findings. I would appreciate readers sending me a photocopy or scan of any Baltimore cancel from the 1851 to 1861 era that can be year-dated by an enclosure, docketing, or year-dated cancel.

Acknowledgment

In addition to the previously mentioned collectors who provided material for this study, I extend my special thanks to Dick Celler who was a tremendous sounding board for the article’s many drafts.

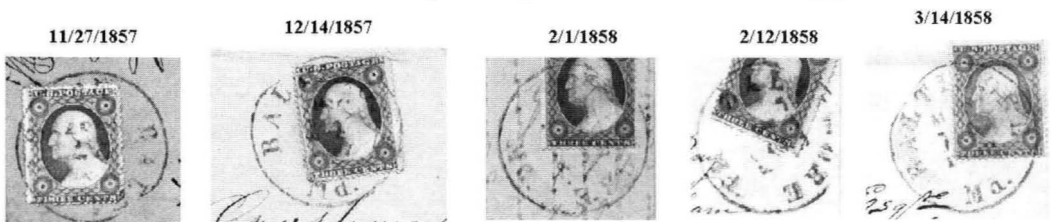
Appendix

The time-line showing the deterioration of the postmark permits the other misdated covers discussed in this article to be correctly year-dated. They all fall into three short periods where the use of the wrong year in the Norona Type 20 device apparently was not noticed for one or more days:

- 1857 for 1858: March 29, 1858 to March 31, 1858
- 1857 for 1859: August 15, 1859 to August 17, 1859 (and probably Chase’s August 13)
- 1856 for 1859: October 10, 1859

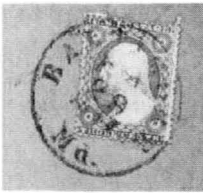
1857 for 1858: The four previously discussed “March 1857” covers fit perfectly with “March 1858” because the rim of postmarks are intact, and all have the dent in the rim about 11 o’clock.

Reference illustrations showing the damage to the out rim above the letters “LT.”



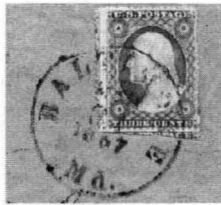


“March 1857” misdated covers.



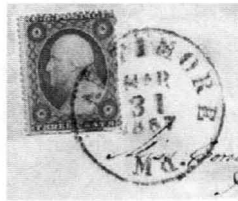
3/29/1858

[This item is misdated as 3/29/1857. See text for discussion.]



3/31/1858

[This item is misdated as 3/31/1857. See text for discussion.]



3/31/1858

[This item is misdated as 3/31/1857. See text for discussion.]

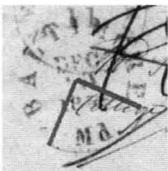


3/31/1858

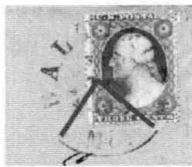
[This item is misdated as 3/31/1857. See text for discussion.]

1857 for 1859: The outer rim on the “August 15, 1857” cover is intact only between 4 to 7 o’clock, which matches the examples dated December 1858 through September 1859. Therefore the correct date is August 15, 1859, and it is a companion piece with the “August 17, 1857” cover. The August 13, 1857, cover mentioned by Chase probably fits in here as well, but an illustration of that cover has not been seen.

Note: heavy lines have been added to these pictures to emphasize the remaining section of the outer rim.



12/10/1858



1/10/1859



5/28/1859



4/14/1859

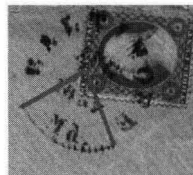


06/06/1859



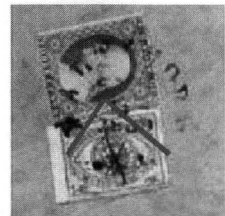
8/15/1859

[This item is misdated as 8/15/1857.]

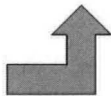


8/17/1859

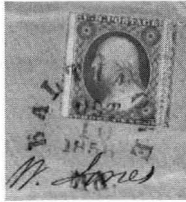
[This item is misdated as 8/17/1857.]



9/7/1859



1856 for 1859: The postmark on the “October 10, 1856” cover fits with the period when the canceling device became rimless. Its correct date is October 10, 1859.



10/10/1859
 [This item is misdated as 10/10/1856. See text for discussion.]



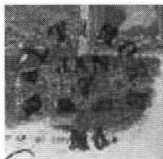
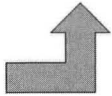
11/12/1859
 [This cover is doctored. The year is only partially visible.]



10/10/186x
 [The year is only partially visible.]



12/31/1861
 [The year slug is plugged. The year is based on the contents.]



1/7/186x
 [The year slug is plugged. The year of this example must be 1862 or later as these stamps were not issued until August 1861.]



2/7/186x
 [The year slug is plugged. The year of this example is must be 1862 or later as these stamps were not issued until August 1861.]



[Not legible]
 [The year slug is plugged. The date of use of this example is not known. These stamps were not issued until August 1861.]



[Not legible]
 [The year slug is plugged. The date of use of this example is not known. These stamps were not issued until August 1861.]

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A COVER AND LETTER FROM A FEDERAL PRISON IN ATLANTA
MICHAEL C. McCLUNG

General William Tecumseh Sherman began his famous (or infamous, depending on your point of view) march to the sea by attacking and seizing Atlanta, Georgia in the first few days of September 1864. In defeating the out-manned Southern troops, Sherman's army captured about 1,500 Confederate soldiers; nearly 1,000 of these prisoners were taken on September 1, after heavy fighting near Jonesboro, a small town south of the city. Most of these prisoners were exchanged within a few weeks. During the time of their captivity, the Rebel POWs were held in a former slave pen just south of Atlanta. This structure was made of wood planks and was known as The Barracks. The Barracks was also used by the Confederates as a prison for Union soldiers in 1862, '63 and '65.

Both Earl Antrim and Galen Harrison, in their outstanding works on Civil War prisons, wrote about The Barracks and its use as a prison for federal troops. Harrison also wrote that this same former slave pen temporarily housed Southern troops right after the fall of Atlanta in September 1864, and he noted that no covers were known from The Barracks during this period. Thanks to a recent discovery, we now know of one such cover.

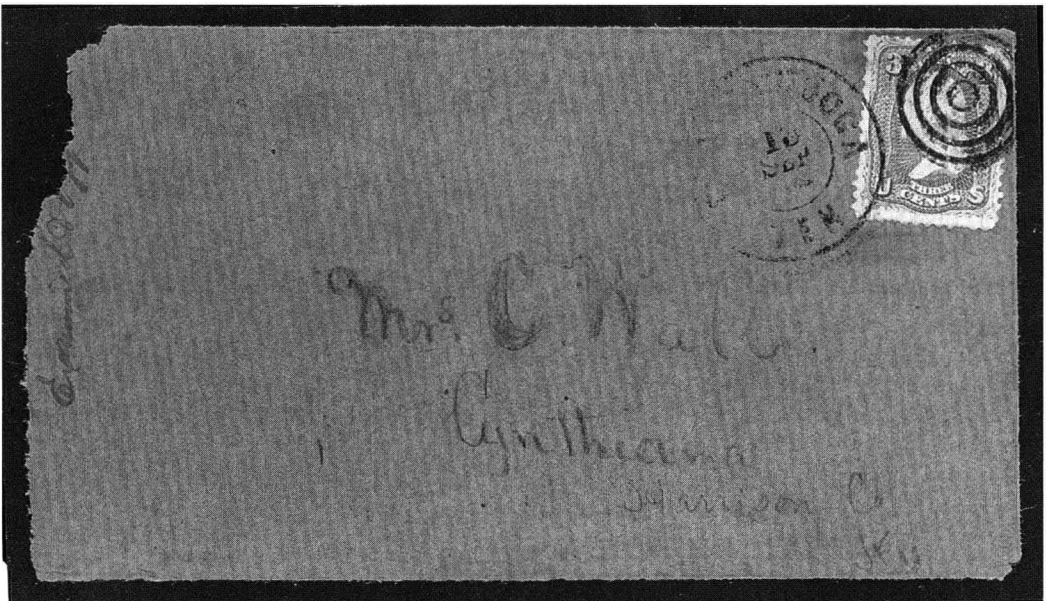


Figure 1. The POW cover

Figure 1 shows an envelope addressed to Mrs. C. Wall in Cynthiana, Kentucky. The cover bears a 3¢ U.S. stamp canceled by a Chattanooga, Tennessee duplex handstamp on September 13, 1864. On the left side of the cover is the endorsement “Examined &” followed by part of the word “Approved” which may have been followed by the initials of the examiner. It appears that rodents may have deprived us of the full endorsement. Figure 2 is a blow-up of the endorsement. Inside this envelope was a pencil written letter (Figure 3) which would not copy or photograph well, but which is transcribed below.

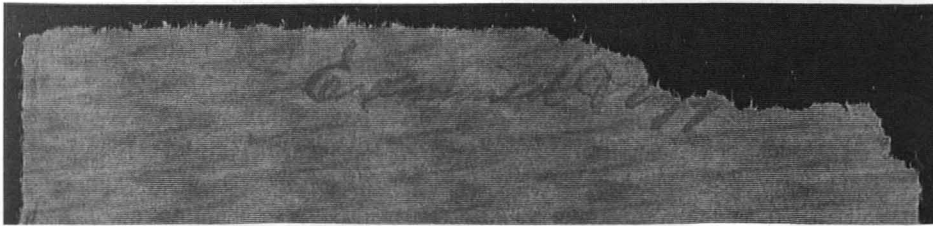


Figure 2. Enlargement of the endorsement

Atlanta, Ga Sep. 1864

My Dear Mother,

I am very sorry to inform you that I am a prisoner in Atlanta. We were captured Sept. 1st at Jonesboro. Kenn and Jno Webb, Jno Hogg, Dick Remington and myself from Cynthiana. Jno Webb was wounded in the head not very seriously the ball just cut the scalp and came out. He is in the hospital doing very well. Major Deshar was wounded in the shoulder on August 31. His shoulder blade is broken his wound is a very dangerous one though perhaps he will recover. He was not captured. Major McDowell was captured Aug 31 he is here in the barracks with us. Killan Anderson was also captured Sept 2nd! Our Company lost 12 men captured. McDowell company lost 5 captured. We had a very hard fight but were overpowered. I am in very good health & spirits. I do not know when we will be sent north but I suppose it will not be long. First we are treated very well considering everything. We sold ourselves as dearly as we could. I will have to get some kind Federal Soldier to mail this for me. The men who are guarding us treat us very well. I do not know where to tell you to direct to me. I will write again as soon as I get settled.

I remain as ever your
affectionate Son
R.M. Wall

This letter clearly confirms that we now have an example of a POW cover from the temporary Federal prison in Atlanta in September, 1864. It is also clear that the prisoner, R.M. Wall, did convince "some kind Federal Soldier" to mail the letter for him. Wall's letter entered the U.S. Mail (probably along with the soldiers' mail) at the occupation post office in Chattanooga and proceeded, by regular mail, to its ultimate destination, Cynthiana, Kentucky. Although Kentucky produced many Southern sympathizers and soldiers during the Civil War, most of the state, including Cynthiana, was serviced by the U.S. Mail during the entire conflict, so there was no need for Confederate postage on this cover.

Coincidentally, Mrs. Wall had another son (William) who wrote her from a federal prison in Cincinnati. Harrison reported two letters written by William to his mother and pictured one cover in his book, *Prisoners Mail from the American Civil War*. I believe there are many covers from the Wall correspondence floating around in collections and dealers' stocks, and most of them contain letters. I also believe they can tell some very interesting stories about the life and times of the Wall brothers. I would be interested in seeing anything else from this correspondence.

References

- Antrim, Earl. *Civil War Prisons and their Covers*. New York: Collectors Club of New York, 1961.
Harrison, Galen D. *Prisoners Mail from the American Civil War*. Dexter MI: Thompson-Shore Inc., 1997.
Simpson, Brooks D. and Jean V. Berlin, editors. *Sherman's Civil War*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999. □

Atlanta Ga Sep 5th 1864
My Dear Mother, I am very sorry to inform
you that I am a Prisoner in Atlanta
we were captured Sept 1st at Jones
River. for Webb for Hogg Dick Ham-
ington and myself from Cynthiana
Webb was wounded in the head
not very seriously the ball just
cut the scalp and came out he
is in the hospital him doing very
well. Major Dickson was wounded
in the shoulder on Aug 31st his
shoulder is broken his wound
is a very dangerous one though perhaps
he will recover. he was not captured
Major McDowell was captured Aug 31
he is here in the barracks with
us. Keller Anderson was also captured
Sept 2nd.! our company lost 12 men
captured. McDowell Co lost 5 captures
we had a very hard fight but
were over come. I am in very
good health & spirits I do

Figure 3. The pencil written enclosure

THE 5¢ NEW ORLEANS POSTMASTER PROVISIONAL DIE PROOF
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All collectors enjoy adding to their collection; to find a scarce and desired item is always exciting, to get it as an honest bargain even more so and to have it become a new discovery must be close to the ultimate philatelic satisfaction. Lot 919 in the May 15, 2002 Robert A. Siegel sale contained a most interesting item which was an image of the general design of the CSA 5¢ New Orleans Postmaster Provisional in black but the design was not exactly like the issued stamp. It was well illustrated in the catalog, which readily permitted a close examination. The illustration showed wide margins, which were not possible for the issued stamp. It appeared old and also seemed to be affixed to another piece of paper. Described as having a notation "Confederate postage stamp" on the back, it was offered as an engraved counterfeit.

Based on the illustration in the auction catalog (Figure 1), I felt the item was something special. The design did not resemble any counterfeit known to myself. As an engraved fake, it would be quite unusual and desirable; the only known engraved CSA fake is by Erasmo Oneglia and dates from the turn of the last century. Jean de Sperati faked the 10¢ Rose and the TEN, however these are made by a photo-lithographic process. I have seriously collected fakes and especially CSA fakes for over 40 years, and such a rare item would be most desirable.

Upon close examination of the details of the design, I became convinced it is surface printed and is an authentic proof. Though of no importance, there is a question as to it being considered a proof or an essay. The design is not exactly like the issued stamp; however, the design is the final design from the original die, the difference being a figure 8 individually added to each subject on the plate.

Based on examining the actual item, I am now definitely convinced that it is an authentic die proof. It is on extremely thin paper, quite common for a die proof, and the exceptional quality of the print does not even remotely resemble that of any known stamp. When offered at auction, the proof was attached at one small spot to an old piece of paper bearing the manuscript notation "Confederate postage Stamps" in a purple ink (Figure 2). The proof has since been properly removed from the original attaching paper and deacidified for proper preservation. (Such treatment is expensive, but one owes a debt to philately to see that scarce material is properly preserved.)

On close examination there is no question of the appearance of age. Every line of the design is an exact match as verified by high resolution overlays; see Figure 3 for a detailed picture of the proof. The subject proof does not resemble any counterfeit in either my collection or in the CSA reference collection, *i.e.*, the Rev. Paul B. Freeland Collection. The old CSA fakes that date from as early as 1862 have an excellent general appearance but on close examination and comparison with authentic stamps (Figure 4) they have major differences in the details of the design. The details of the proof are extremely sharp; however, the issued stamp was composed of either electrotyped or typographed images of poor quality. For a faker to have made our proof he would have had to study many examples of the authentic 5¢ to discern what the original die looked like. I think this is most unlikely and to my knowledge has never been done in the past.

The proof is surface printed. The artist started with a smooth surface and cut away the wood, copper, steel, etc., that was not to be printed. I have deliberately avoided the use of the word "engraver"; although the process is engraving, the subsequent stamps were not printed from what we commonly call engraved plates. Our normal interpretation of



Figure 1. 5¢ CSA New Orleans die proof as discovered

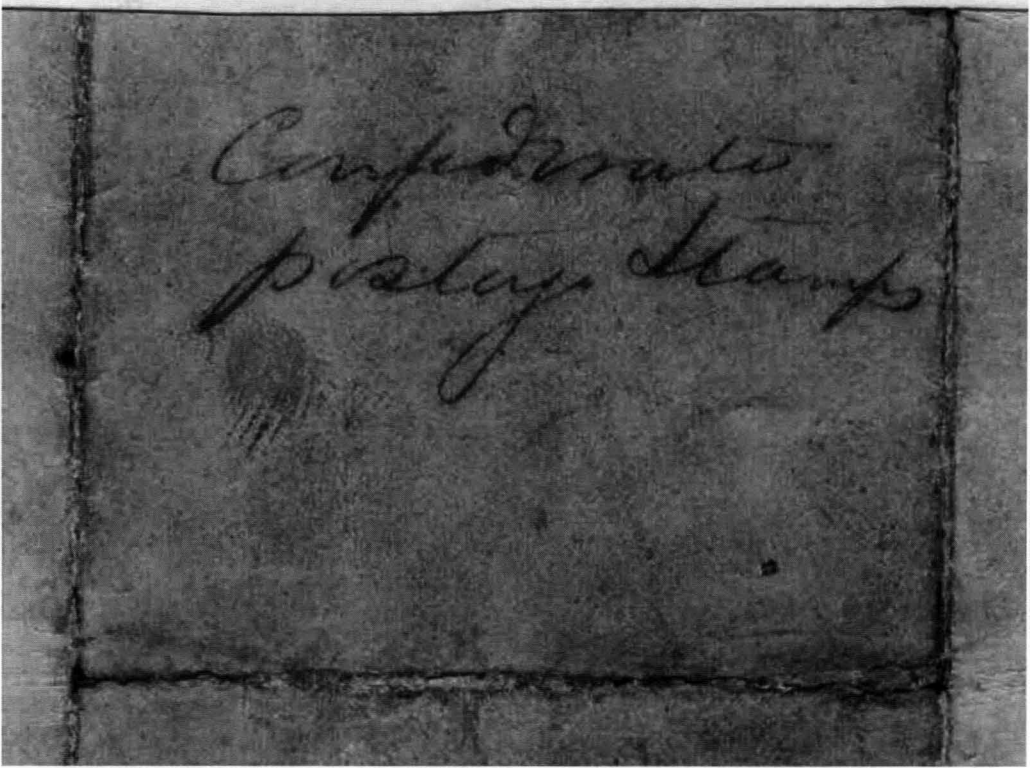


Figure 2. Scrap of paper with inscription "Confederate postage Stamps" (cropped)

engraving is to print from the cut away surface and not the high surface. A given plate could be printed either way, being a positive or negative print. However, an engraved plate prepared for surface printing versus a recessed printing would not be expected to print well if printed by the wrong process, as is also true with the converse.

When compared to the coarse lines of the issued stamp, the fine lines of our proof strongly suggest to me a metal die. However, the skill of the 19th century wood engravers was such that I prefer not to speculate on this academic point. The New Orleans provisionals have long been assumed to have been printed from stereotype (cast) plates versus electrotypes, as with the CSA De La Rue stamps. The fine lines of this proof versus the coarse lines of the issued stamp strongly suggest they were printed from typographed plates and not electrotyped ones. The electrotype process is capable of a much more exact replication of the original die than the stereotype process.

The proof is slightly smaller than the issued stamp, about 0.2 mm in width and about 0.3 mm in height. This is circa 1% deviation, which should not be unexpected with respect to the making of the plate and the actual printing of the stamps and proofs. The rectangular outer frame on the proof measures about 0.1 mm versus about 0.25 mm on the issued stamp, again explaining the poor image quality of the stamps. The proof is on a quite thin paper and would tend to shrink; the issued stamps are from typographed plates and tend to expand in manufacture.

The significance of the figure 8 near the center of the design has long been a mystery. August Dietz reported that each 8 was distinct and thus did not originate on the original die (*The Southern Philatelist*, Vol 1, No. 5, March 1925). Dietz speculated in jest

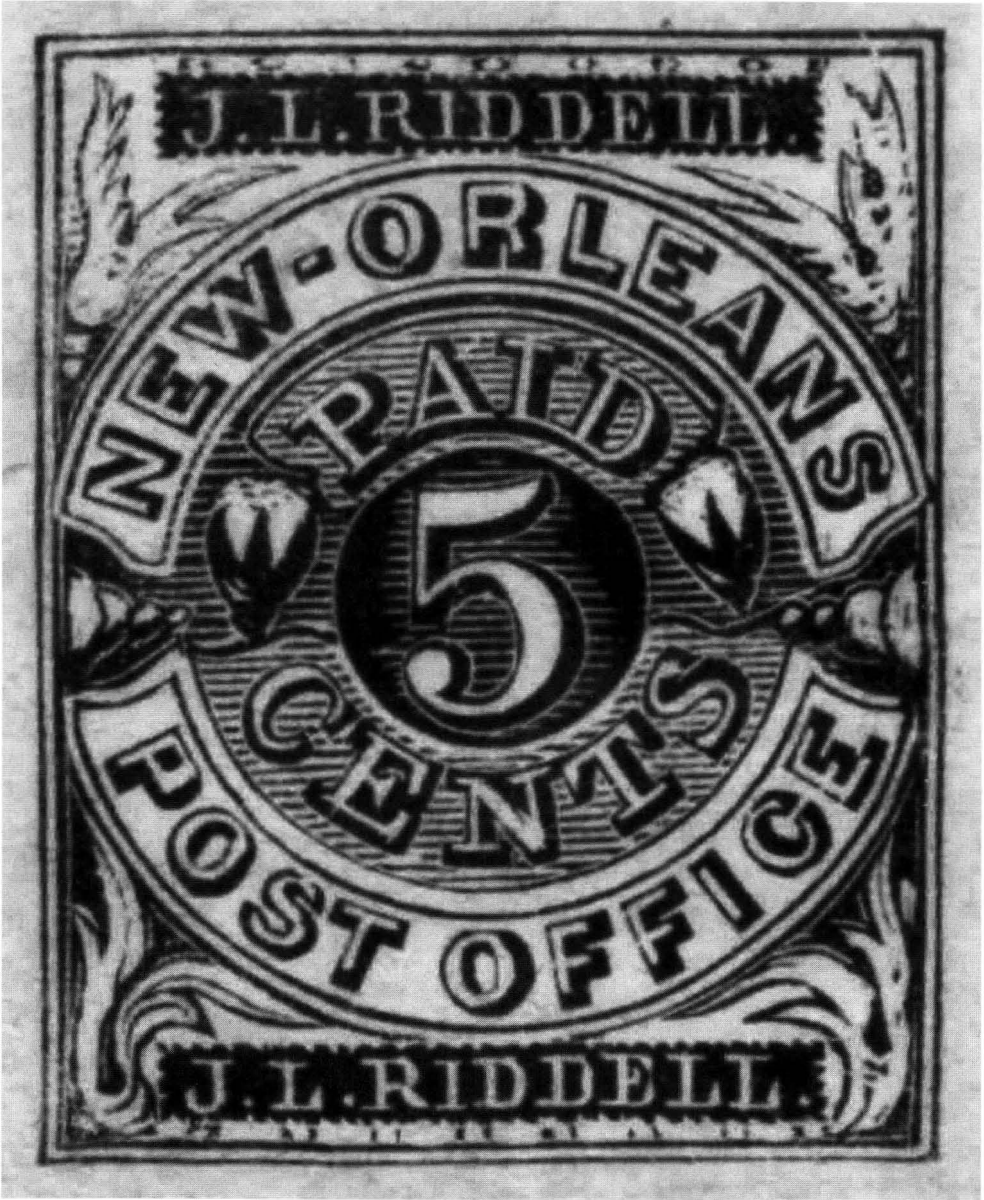


Figure 3. 5¢ CSA New Orleans die proof

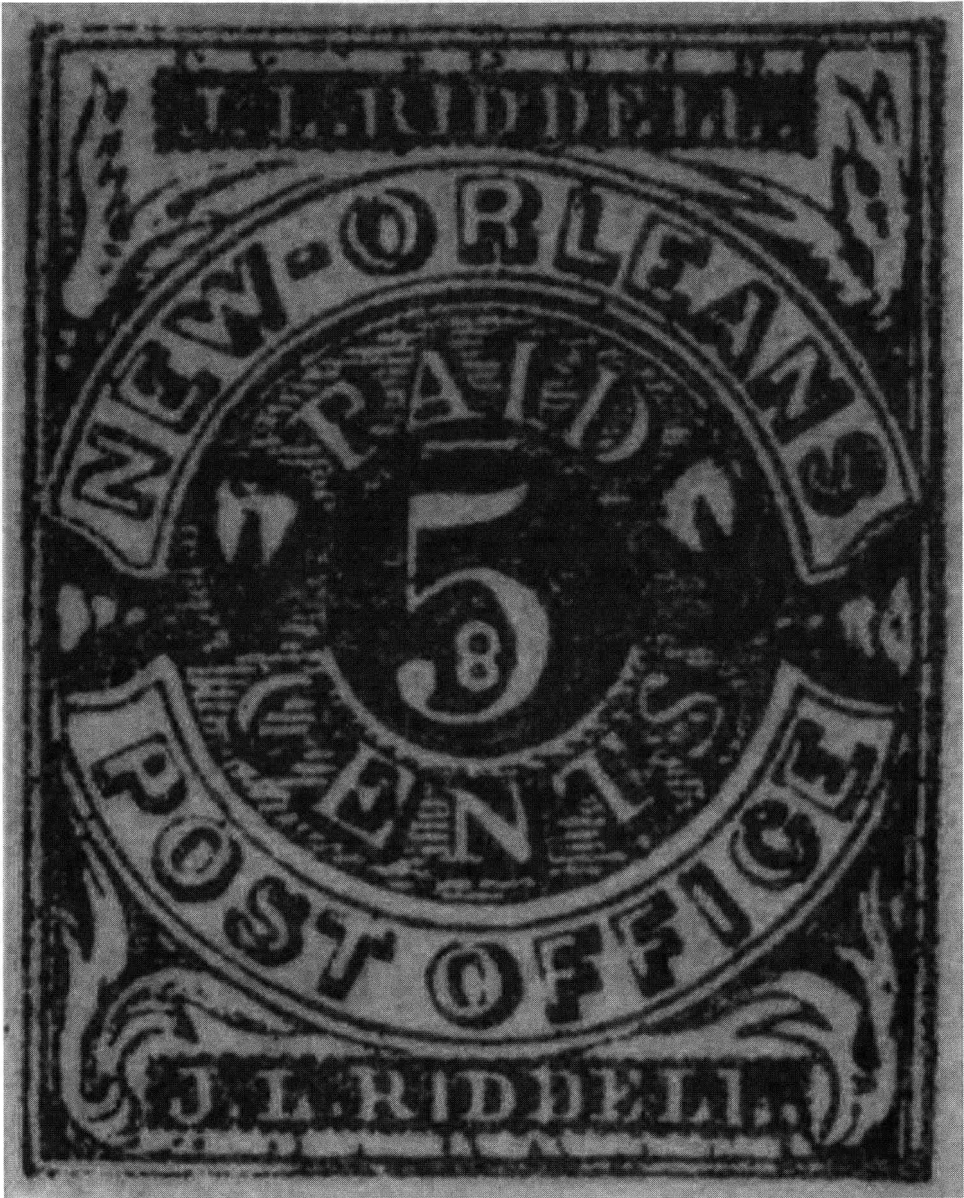


Figure 4. 5¢ CSA New Orleans issued stamp

that it may have been to represent $8 \times 5 = 40$ for the sheet size. Scott Trepel has jested that perhaps it represented 5¢ CSA rate plus the 3¢ US rate to make 8¢ total. I have long thought it was a remnant of a fastening device, perhaps the head of a pin, used to hold the clichés in place, but I think it is really too small for this. The only thing we know on the figure 8 is that it was added to each subject on the plate and thus was intentional and that the figure 8 was not on the original die.

I suspect our proof was probably looted from the Post Office on the fall of New Orleans. The looting of the Post Office is related in the below editorial from the *Evening True Delta*, published in New Orleans, Louisiana, issue of May 8, 1862:

Vandalism. It was only yesterday evening that we were informed of the disgraceful acts of the mob that, for a time, had their saturnalia in and around the new Custom-house building, on the evening of the day that the Federal forces took possession of that building. The facts laid before us - and we are satisfied they are unquestionable - are these: The Federal forces took possession of the Custom-house, Postoffice, etc. At sundown of that day the Federal force was ordered to return to the fleet at anchor opposite the city. When they left, the rowdies broke open the doors of the Postoffice, and for a time, had a perfect saturnalia in that establishment. They took possession of everything but the vault, which they could not enter; they took all the letters they could lay their hands on, and, we presume, rifled them of their contents; they carried off a valuable gold watch, the private property of the postmaster, and a large amount of specie, and, in fact robbed and plundered the establishment

A block of 40 of the CSA 5¢ Blue Lithograph, Stone 3, exists having the below inscription on the reverse in ink. The paragraph is written in a rough hand, probably at the time of capture. However the name or signature line is in a fine hand, probably by the recipient to document the origin of the souvenir. The ellipses signify words that run past the margins and are not clear:

. . . to mention that in the building where we are . . . the post-office our boys took formal possession of the mail and proceeded to distribute all. These are some of the proceeds. There was bushels and bushels of letter that had not been delivered, some of them were . . . read them were some pictures and a little money these . . . can disperse as you see fit, give some to Charly

Taken by W. E. Dexter from the post office at New Orleans April 1862.

As far as I know this 5¢ proof is the only authentic die proof of a provisional of the Confederate States of America. There are several essays but not actual proofs for the Postmaster Provisionals. As a die proof of the 5¢ has survived, we can assume that one of the 2¢ once existed and may still exist.

The Lambert W. Gerber auctions of January 21st and of April 19-20th, 1944 have two lots of interest. Lot No. 50 in the first sale was described as "1862 2¢ New Orleans in black; die 'proof' in black (62x2x)," with no estimate. The April sale has a lot with the same description, lot 27. The two illustrations differ a bit in the amount of paper shown; they could be the same item or two different examples, the illustrations could have been cropped. Both lots are illustrated in the catalogs and though the illustrations are not of high quality it is evident that they represent the same design which is a well known old forgery; the flower-like ornaments in the upper and lower left side of the design have evident spikes versus a more refined design on the authentic stamp. This forgery is illustrated on page 147 of Leonard V. Huber and Clarence A. Wagner's book, *The Great Mail* (State College, PA: American Philatelic Society, 1949).

A special thanks to Jerry S. Palazolo, Richard Frajola, Scott Trepel, Jim Lee, Jack E. Molesworth, Dick Celler and Michael C. O'Reilly for their assistance in this article. □

**A CONTROVERSIAL NEW YORK FOREIGN MAIL CANCEL REVISITED:
THE SAGA OF GE-C6(W3)
WILLIAM R. WEISS, JR.**

The identification and classification of the popular group of cancels known widely as NYFMs (New York Foreign Mail Cancellations) has grown tremendously since the original list compiled in 1926 by J. Murray Bartels.¹ His listing totaled 74 designs. By the 1942 list compiled by Edward Milliken,² the number had grown to 116 different types. In 1968, in their book *New York Foreign Mail Cancellations*,³ authors Arthur Van Vlissingen and Morrison Waud had documented 149 different types.

My 1990 book, *The Foreign Mail Cancellations of New York City, 1870-1878*,⁴ listed well over 200 different NYFMs. In discussing one of them, GE-C6(W3), I shared serious doubts about this cancel really being an NYFM despite being recognized by all earlier students, since the only on-cover example was, at best, a very weak strike.⁵

In writing my 1990 book I had sought the permission of the Collectors Club of Chicago (the copyright holders of the V-W book) to use the 1968 numbering system in my book, but permission was denied, forcing me to invent a new classification system for NYFMs. Out of respect for the deceased author (Van Vlissingen), I add the old V-W number (in parentheses) to my own when expressing it. Thus the cancel now under discussion is GE-C6(W3).

After expressing those doubts about the reputed GE-C6(W3), an example was discovered in 1944 which appeared clearly to me to be this lovely geometric. This item was illustrated and discussed in an article in *The American Philatelist*.⁶ A by-product of the 1994 article was that the clearness of the cancel struck on the cover made it evident, in my view, that the cover which was for years thought to be the only known GE-C6(W3) was in fact *not* a GE-C6(W3). Therefore, the only known example was the 1994-discussed cover.

Within a year after the AP article appeared, fellow student John Valenti, in an article written in the *U.S. Cancellation Club News*,⁷ disputed the new GE-C6(W3) as being a "worn and overinked strike of . . . [ST-4P2(A27)]". John is a serious student for whom I have the greatest respect, and although I did not agree with his conclusions, I always felt that to finally put the matter to rest we would need to find another on-cover example.

¹J. Murray Bartels, "New York Foreign Mail Cancellations, 1870-76," *Collectors Club Philatelist*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (April 1926), p. 51, and Vol. 5, No. 3 (July 1926), p. 115.

²Edward Milliken, "New York Foreign Mail Cancellations, 1871-1876," *The American Philatelist*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (January 1933), pp. 197-204.

³Arthur Van Vlissingen and Morrison Waud, *New York Foreign Mail Cancellations 1870-1876* (Chicago: Collectors Club of Chicago, 1968).

⁴William R. Weiss, Jr., *The Foreign Mail Cancellations of New York City 1870-1878* (Bethlehem PA: the author, 1990).

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 57-59.

⁶William R. Weiss, Jr., "An 'Old' New York Foreign Mail Cancellation Rediscovered," *The American Philatelist*, Vol. 108, No. 11 (November 1994), p. 1010.

⁷John Valenti, "New York City Cancellations on Circulars and Printed Matter 1870-1878. Part IV: Some Elusive NYFM Cancellations, Are They NYCM?," *U.S. Cancellation Club News*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Whole No. 217)(Fall 1995), pp. 18, 24-28.

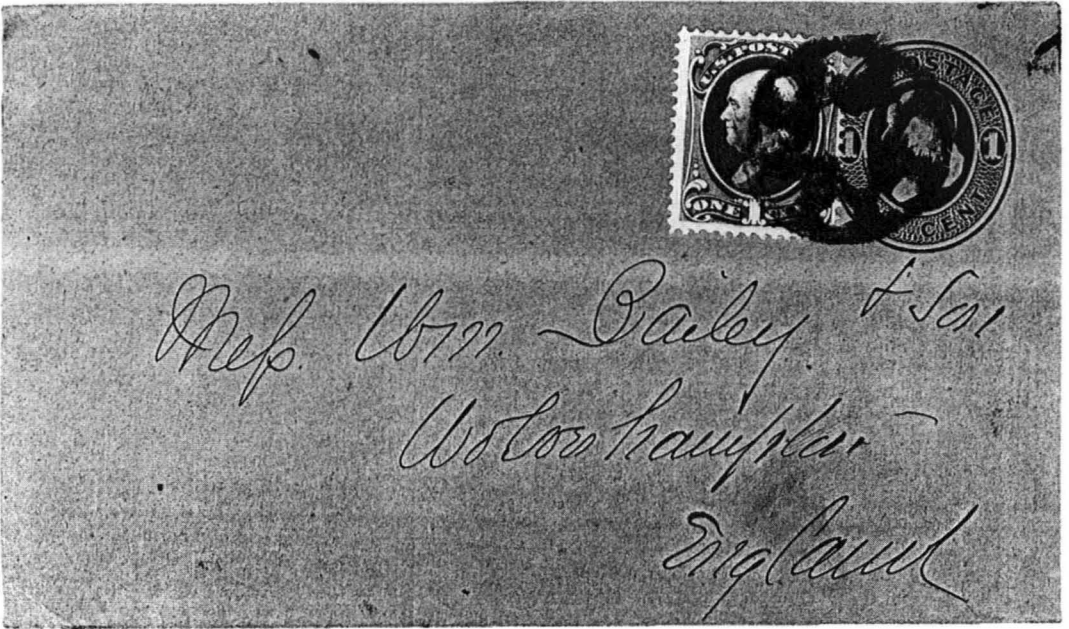


Figure 1. The finest and possibly only known NYFM GE-C6(W3) on cover

I am quite pleased to represent here an example of what is indisputably the finest, and perhaps only, GE-C6(W3) that exists on cover (Figure 1). The 1¢ entire is an 1870 Plimpton issue on orange paper (Scott U76), with a 1¢ 1873 Continental Bank Note stamp (Scott 156), addressed to England. It bears a bold backstamp of Wolverhampton dated August 30, 1874 (Figure 2). The item pays the 2¢ printed matter rate in effect at that time.

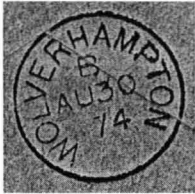


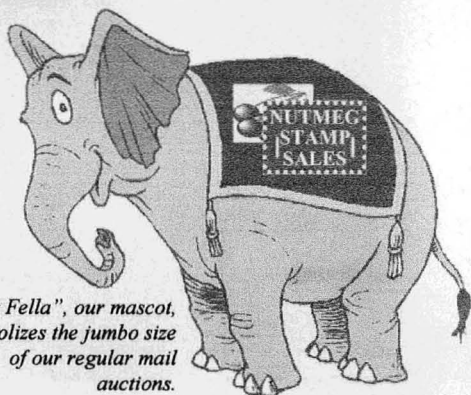
Figure 2. Backstamp of Wolverhampton

It was normal practice not to apply a New York postmark to printed matter mail, perhaps to expedite handling, although many such uses are found with a red "PAID ALL" marking, apparently to enable the foreign mail clerks to recognize at a glance that the incoming envelope which would appear to be underpaid was, in fact, fully paid. Receiving postmarks were rarely applied in England to incoming printed matter, so perhaps the lack of the "PAID ALL" caused the clerk to do so here. The item is in beautifully fresh condition and it has been certified as genuine by the Philatelic Foundation.

Based on the very clear date (August 30, 1874) on the illustrated cover and the equally clear date on the 1994-discussed cover (March 27, 1875), it is still not possible to state with complete certainty that the 1875 cover is, or is not, a GE-C6(W3), so my friend John and I will continue to disagree. □

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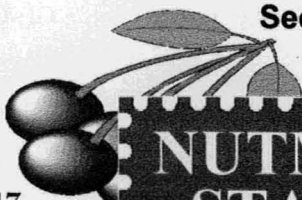
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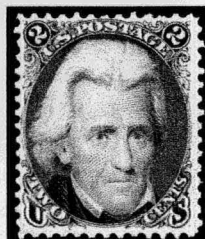
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**A HISTORY OF POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT
OFFICIAL STAMPS 1873-1874
WARREN S. HOWARD**

The Post Office official stamps are unique among the departmentals. Emblazoned with large numerals of denomination and the words "Official Stamp," they were designed so that they could not be mistaken for regular postage stamps, or the stamps of other departments.¹ Their postal history, like their physical appearance, is strikingly different from that of the other departments, and ends with an unsolved mystery. This article will explore that history.

The Postal Business

The postal service of the 1870s and 1880s was a creation of Congress, which established the basic rules that controlled its operations: the types of mail it had to carry; the postage rates, if any, which it could charge on that mail; and how it spent its money on salaries and facilities. Despite this congressional control, and the frequent infusion of public money from deficiency appropriations to cover shortfalls in the postal revenues, the Post Office Department was basically a business, financed by the postage rates which it charged its users. Its own mail was part of its business expenses, and was paid for by the postal users. The Post Office marked its official mail "Post Office Business - Free," "Post Office Department - Official Business," or similar statements, and sent it without charge.² An example from the New York City post office is shown in Figure 1. But this unpaid mail ended when Congress required that all official mail, including Post Office mail, be prepaid with official stamps purchased with special appropriations (Act of Jan. 31, 1873, 17 Stat 421).

Materials and Machinery

At the time the official stamps were required, the Post Office's greatest task was to determine how many stamps it needed to purchase to support its official mail. The department divided its initial appropriations request into three figures, one for each of the three classes of mail which existed at that time. The totals requested were: Letter rate (3¢ per half ounce) - \$808,067; Printed matter (1¢ per ounce) - \$35,704; Merchandise (1¢ per two ounces) - \$281,723.³ This estimate came before the House appropriations committee in the spring of 1873. The committee accepted the letter rate estimate, voting \$800,000 for Post Office letter rate mail in fiscal year 1874. But the committee had difficulties with the printed matter and merchandise estimates, because they covered the mailing of a large variety of items used to transport the mails: wrapping paper, twine, mail sacks and locks, scales, postmarking devices, forms, books of postal regulations, stamps and stationery for sale to the public, etc. The appropriations committee concluded that these things were the

¹Alan C. Campbell, "The Design Evolution of the United States Official Stamps," *Chronicle*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Whole No. 169) (Feb. 1996), p. 45.

²Fumiaki Wada, "Official Mail of the U. S. Post Office Department, 1778 to 1970," exhibit photocopy distributed by the USPS, 1997, pp. 15, 18-23, 26, 42, 45, 48-49. Many postal officials had been given the franking privilege by Congress (e.g., 17 Stat 306 [1872], 12 Stat 708 [1863], 5 Stat 73 [1845]), and used it on official mail. For examples, see Wada, *op. cit.*, 16-17, 24-27, 39, 41-44, 47, 50. The franked and unfranked usages overlap each other.

³House Executive Document 59, 43rd Congress 1st Session, "Abolition of the Franking Privilege," p. 12.

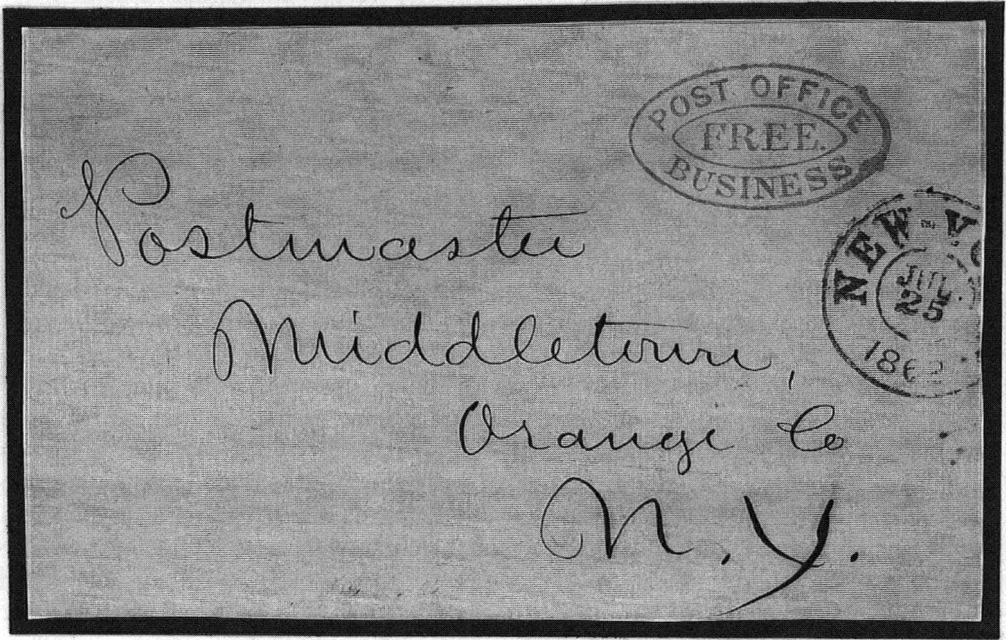


Figure 1. Post Office, New York City, July 1862, marked "Post Office Business/Free"

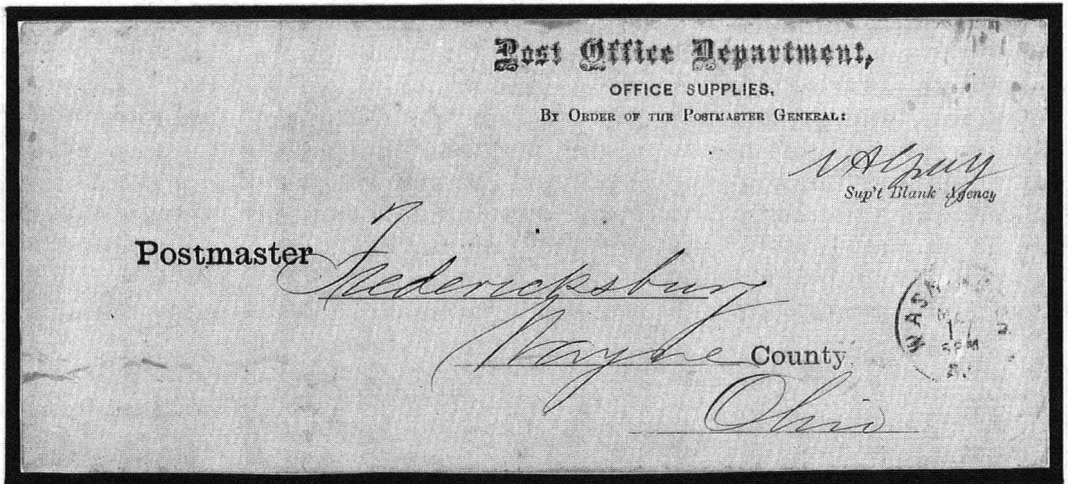


Figure 2. Post Office Department Blank Agency, Washington, D.C., May 1876 (?), marked "Post Office Department, Office Supplies," and franked by the agency superintendent; the Blank Agency handled scales, postmarking devices and wrapping paper, as well as blank forms

“materials and machinery” with which the Post Office ran its business, and should not be distributed through the paid mails. So it made no appropriations for Post Office printed matter and merchandise mail, making it impossible for the department to distribute its supplies with stamped mail.⁴

On June 11, 1873, the Post Office Department issued a directive stating that office supplies (enumerated on a long list) should be sent without payment of postage, under signature franks marked “Post Office Department, Office Supplies.”⁵ An example from the POD Blank Agency is shown in Figure 2. The result was a drastic reduction in the Post Office’s need for higher denomination stamps. While the Treasury Department, for example, was using entire sheets of 90¢ stamps to pay the postage on heavy packages,⁶ the Post Office was sending its heavy packages free of postage charges under signature franks.

Most Post Office official letters contained receipts or notices, and could be sent at the 3¢ per half ounce rate. This fact, when added to the franking of office supplies, led to a unique situation in which low denominations totally dominated the stamps issued. A few examples will show this. For every 90¢ Post Office official stamp issued, some 2,261 ordinary letter rate (2¢, 3¢, 6¢) stamps were issued. In contrast, the War Department issued only 353 letter rate stamps for each 90¢ stamp, the Treasury Department 57 and the Department of Interior 42. The average value per stamp issued was 3.2¢ for the Post Office, 5.3¢ for Interior, 5.8¢ for Treasury, and because of international rates, 10.3¢ for the Department of State. The 6¢ Post Office issues amounted to only 5% of the 3¢ issues, while Treasury, War and Interior issued 36% to 40% as many 6¢ stamps as 3¢ stamps. This sort of statistical analysis could go on at great length, but the upshot is that the Post Office officials were dominated by 3¢ stamps. Although 3¢ covers are fairly plentiful, covers with denominations higher than the 6¢ are scarce, and covers with the highest denominations are exceedingly rare. For the 24¢, 30¢ and 90¢ values, covers are almost unknown, with the only recorded examples being two 30¢ covers in the Ackerman collection.⁷

A Set Of Interest

From an artistic viewpoint, numerals of denomination compare poorly to finely-engraved portraits of statesmen, and the Post Office departmentals are exceedingly plain, at best. But these “workhorses of the departmentals,” as Monroe B. Harden has called them, have much of interest. The dies were engraved in great haste in May 1873, resulting in many eccentricities. The numerals and the words “Post Office Dept.” appear in different sizes on different denominations, and there were many variations in shading details as different engravers hurried to complete their work. The plate-making process produced several double transfers, and there is a noticeable gouge of undetermined origin on one position of the 24¢ plate. A set of special printings overprinted “SPECIMEN” was produced for sale to collectors, and most denominations are known with “SEPCIMEN” errors. There was also an inverted overprint on one sheet of the 1¢ special printing, and potentially an

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 13-14. Also on June 11, 1873, the departments were given a special rate of 1¢ per 2 ounces for printed matter. The Post Office Department itself used this rate for printed matter which was not classified as office supplies, like advertisements for contract bids. The mail had to be marked “this package contains no written matter.” See, for an example, Regency Stamps Sale 27, June 2-3, 2001, lot 2053.

⁶Lester C. Lanphear III, “Departmental Used Blocks,” *Chronicle*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Whole No. 166)(May 1995), p. 120.

⁷Alan C. Campbell, “High Value Official Stamps on Cover,” *Chronicle*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Whole No. 188)(November 2000), pp. 297, 299.

inverted “SEPCIMEN” error on that. As Admiral Combs—who studied the official special printings with great thoroughness—remarked, “Keep your eyes peeled as you explore old albums—maybe lightning will strike you.”⁸

The 3¢ denomination was produced in great quantities: 65,297,700 adhesives and 70,439,000 stamped envelopes. They are almost common stamps, unlike any other departmentals. Most of the adhesives were printed from 200-subject plates, with top and bottom guide arrows for separating the left and right panes. They occur on all the types of paper used for stamp production in the 1870s: hard, ribbed, intermediate, soft, soft bleached and newsprint, depending on the paper classification used.⁹ Several plates were used, and—at one impression per 200 copies—more than 300,000 impressions were taken. Plate maintenance became a problem, and there were total reentries on plates 140 and 141 to keep them in service.¹⁰

The embossed envelopes have their own interest, as they include a variety of dies, watermarks, paper colors and sizes. Strangest of all the 3¢ stamped envelopes are Scott’s UO10 and UO11, embossed in black or blue on blue paper with New York City penalty statements in the upper and lower left corners. Known unused only, they were discovered early in the twentieth century. They enjoy an exalted status in the specialized catalogue, although they are probably some type of essay, never used, and hardly designed to be used, since the stamps and penalty statements are mutually redundant.¹¹

Penalty Envelopes

Starting on March 3, 1877, the official stamps in general, and the Post Office stamps in particular, went through a somewhat amazing period of change. Congress authorized the use of penalty envelopes—which made official stamps obsolete—and simultaneously made 1878 fiscal year appropriations for purchase of official stamps by the War, Navy, Interior, Justice, State and Treasury departments. Conspicuously absent from that list of departments was the Post Office, which had asked for \$750,000 to cover its official stamp needs but was given absolutely nothing.

The contradictions in this legislation were soon noticed by the Third Assistant Postmaster General, whose concerns were passed on to Attorney General Charles H. Devens by the Postmaster General. On May 16, 1877, Devens issued his opinion concerning what Congress had done. The opinion centered around the status of the “departments”—which he limited to the establishments in Washington, D.C.—and their field offices, which existed elsewhere through the country. Devens concluded, based on the terminology of the act authorizing penalty franks, that they could only be used by the departments in Washington. All other offices—even though subordinate to the Washington departments—were *non-departmental* in nature, and could not use penalty franks. Consequently, the appropriations Congress had made for War, Navy, etc., were intended to

⁸W. V. Combs, “Designs of the U. S. Departmentals,” *American Philatelist*, September 1955, pp. 894-895; W. V. Combs, “U.S. Departmental Specimen Stamps,” *American Philatelist*, January 1965, pp. 265-267, February 1965, pp. 364-365.

⁹Eliot A. Landau, “Continental vs. American Papers,” *Chronicle*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Whole No. 188)(November 2000), p. 271 note 11; “Editorial Postscript,” *Chronicle*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Whole No. 190)(May 2001), p. 121.

¹⁰Alan C. Campbell, “Editorial Postscript,” *Chronicle*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Whole No. 191)(August 2001), p. 212.

¹¹Dr. Dennis W. Schmidt, “United States Official Stamped Envelopes,” *Chronicle*, Vol. 47, No. 32 (Whole No. 167)(August 1995), pp. 190-191; Prescott H. Thorp, “U.S. Post Office Department Blue Paper Envelopes,” *Western Stamp Collector*, Sept. 24, 1956; H. R. Harmer, Inc., “The L. H. Barkhausen Collection of United States Postal Stationery,” part 3, pp. 26-27.

POSTAGE STAMP AGENCY.

New York, 1877.

Pue
Nov 20
Sir:

I send herewith, by order of the Third Assistant Postmaster General, a parcel of official postage stamps amounting to \$ 21 for use in conducting the business of your office. Upon receiving it you are required to count the stamps immediately, in presence of a disinterested witness, date, sign and transmit the annexed receipt to the Third Assistant Postmaster General, at Washington D. C. In case of any deficiency, your own affidavit and that of the witness, stating the amount of such deficiency, will be necessary in order to obtain credit for the amount. Such deficiency must be reported at once.

If any portion of a parcel of official postage stamps be damaged, the Postmaster will sign the receipt for the whole amount of the parcel, and having written across the face of the receipt the number and amount of stamps unfit for use, he will return the damaged stamps, together with the receipt, to the **THIRD ASSISTANT POSTMASTER GENERAL**, who will give credit for the amount returned. But if the damage be total, the entire parcel should be returned with the receipt not signed, in order that a parcel may be sent in place of them. The package must be **REGISTERED**, and the Postmaster must also be able to prove the act of mailing by a disinterested witness. Postmasters **FAILING** to register such packages will not receive credit for the amount of official stamps, alleged to have been returned, in case the same fail to reach the department.

All applications for official postage stamps must be addressed to the Third Assistant Postmaster General, Washington, D. C., and the annexed receipt returned to him. In no case to the Agency at New York.

POSTMASTERS ARE EXPECTED in each case, to order what, upon careful estimate, may be deemed a sufficient supply of the various denominated official postage stamps for three months; and they are required in every instance, to use the form of order which will be furnished by the Department, which must be signed by the Postmaster himself, unless he be necessarily absent or sick, when it may be signed by the Assistant or Deputy, he placing the Postmaster's name above his own.

Postmasters will retain the above instructions for reference, and return the lower receipt to the 3d Assistant P. M. General, Washington, D. C.

Very Respectfully,

H. A. CHAMBERS, Agent.

Figure 3. U. S. Postage Stamp Agency, New York City, transmittal letter for official stamps, November 1877; as directed, the postmaster retained for reference the instructions for ordering and inventorying official stamps

purchase stamps for their non-departmental officers. Taking this view of things, the authorization of penalty franks and the appropriation of money to purchase official stamps were logical and consistent actions.

The major flaw in Devens' decision involved the Post Office, which had a vast number of non-departmental offices yet had not received any appropriation whatsoever for official stamps. Devens concluded that the Post Office should continue to issue official stamps to its field offices, using the authorization for "miscellaneous and incidental items" as authority.¹² And so it was done. The Post Office bureaus in Washington began to use penalty envelopes, with an embossed "Postal Service" logo substituted for an official stamp. For its non-departmental offices, the Post Office issued official stamps. A typical transmittal letter accompanying official stamps is illustrated in Figure 3. In fiscal 1878 the Post Office issued to itself 25,195,235 official stamps with a face value of \$778,171 without an appropriation for them.¹³ The cost ended up in the 1878 postal deficit. The budget estimates for fiscal 1879 came due, and the Post Office submitted a request for \$700,000. It suggested that the money could be put into a special deficiency appropriation.¹⁴ Congress did not authorize the \$700,000, and the Post Office issued itself another 23,100,665 official stamps worth \$704,044, again without an authorization.¹⁵ In effect, the money came out of the 1879 deficiency.

In the fall of 1878, the 1880 appropriation requests were made. This time the Post Office asked nothing for official stamps. It apparently anticipated that Congress would expand the use of penalty envelopes into the field offices.¹⁶ Congress did just that in the postal appropriations act of March 3, 1879. There was one point in the authorization that perhaps was not anticipated: field office use of penalty envelopes was limited to "official mail matter transmitted between any of the officers of the United States, or between any such officer and either of the executive departments." No explicit authority was given to use penalty envelopes for mail to private citizens.¹⁷

The Act of March 3, 1879 covered the whole realm of Post Office expenditures, including \$20,000 for an updated version of the *Postal Laws and Regulations*. The revised 1879 edition was assembled by postal personnel under the management of Arthur H. Bissell, Post Office law clerk, and Thomas R. Kirby, private secretary to the Postmaster General. They put the contents of the Act of March 3, 1877 into PL&R sections 249 and 250, and that of the Act of March 3, 1879 into section 251. Then they added a comment to section 251:

The penalty-envelopes prescribed under this and the two preceding sections must be furnished by the various Departments at Washington to their subordinate officers throughout the country. Official penalty-labels to be affixed to mail matter may also be furnished in lieu of or in addition to the official penalty-envelopes. The effect of these three sections [249, 250, 251] is to substitute for official postage-stamps and official stamped-envelopes furnished by the Post-office Department, official penalty-envelopes and official penalty-labels furnished by each Department to its own subordinates.

¹²Charles Devens to D. M. Key, May 16, 1877, in *Official Opinions of the Attorney General*, Vol. 15, pp. 262-269.

¹³House Exec. Doc. 1, Part 4, 49th Congress 1st Session, "Report of the Postmaster General," p. 667.

¹⁴House Exec. Doc. 5, 45th Congress 2nd Session, "Estimates," p. 145.

¹⁵House Exec. Doc. 1, Part 4, 49th Congress 1st Session, "Report of the Postmaster General," p. 667.

¹⁶House Exec. Doc. 5, 45th Congress 3rd Session, "Estimates," p. 145.

¹⁷Act of March 3, 1879, 20 Stat 362.

That was an accurate comment, but omitted one key point: that field offices did not have the same penalty frank rights as the departments in Washington.¹⁸

While the PL&R stated the law, the rules by which the law was implemented were left to another publication: the *Official Postal Guide*, published and frequently modified by Houghton, Mifflin, and Company in Boston. The *Official Postal Guide* was distributed to all post offices and Railway Mail Service facilities, and controlled the daily actions of postal personnel in handling the mails.

Post Office Mail in the Early 1880s

The official mail sent by post offices and RMS facilities traveled, organizationally, in three directions. Much mail went up the organization ladder to the RMS superintendents and the assistant PMGs: requisitions for supplies (forms, letter scales, postage stamps, etc.); requests for additional personnel; reports on the quantities of mail handled; reports of problems (such as registered letters sent to places which had no post office, undeliverable letters, mislabeled money order advices, money orders and registered letters



Figure 4. Pre-addressed penalty frank envelope for Railway Mail Service trip report, ca. 1881

addressed to persons on the department's FRAUD list, etc.). Figure 4 shows an unused pre-addressed penalty envelope for a trip report. Another major group of official mail traveled laterally between post offices: registered mail packages, money orders. A typical registered package cover is depicted in Figure 5. The third group went from post offices to their customers: returned letters, signed receipts, notices about undeliverable packages and publications, etc.¹⁹ Figure 6 illustrates a notification of an incomplete address.

It is this third group of Post Office official mail which concerns us, since it relates to the Act of 1879's restrictions on penalty mail. The 1881 *Postal Guide* had several instructions about official letters sent to private citizens:

154. Postmasters should notify the senders of undeliverable packages. These notices can be sent in a penalty envelope, official stamped envelope, or an ordinary envelope prepaid by official postage stamps.

¹⁸Act of March 3, 1879, 20 Stat 356; *The Postal Laws and Regulations of the United States of America*, 1879, p. 85.

¹⁹*United States Official Postal Guide*, Second Series, Vol. 3 No. 1, January 1881, pp. 604, 632-634, 638-639, 657, 664, 676, 684.

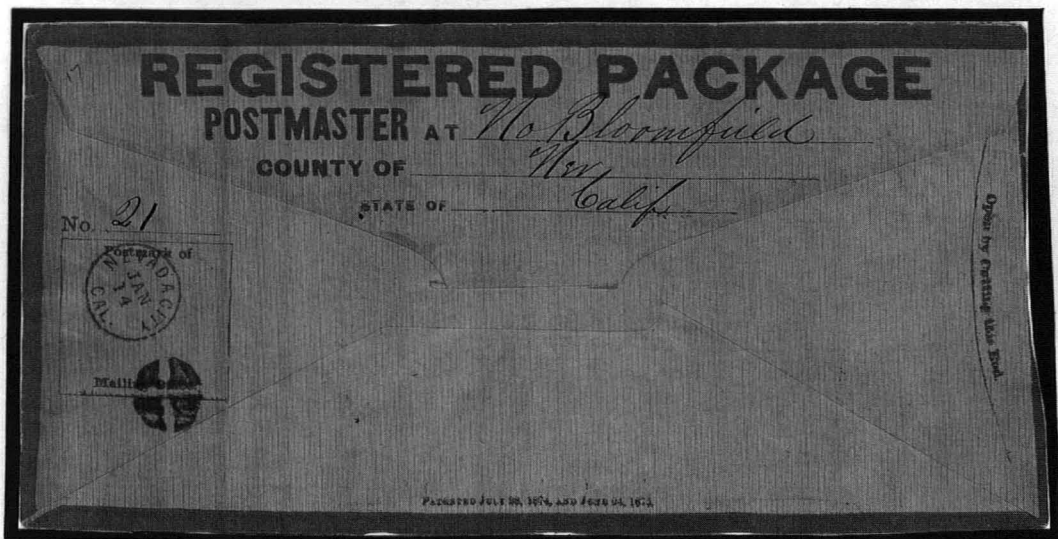


Figure 5. Registered package cover from Nevada City to North Bloomfield, California, January 187(?). This form of cover, which has no frank, was patented in June 1875. It amounted to a sub-pouch, and was to be accounted for at each stage of its trip between post offices.

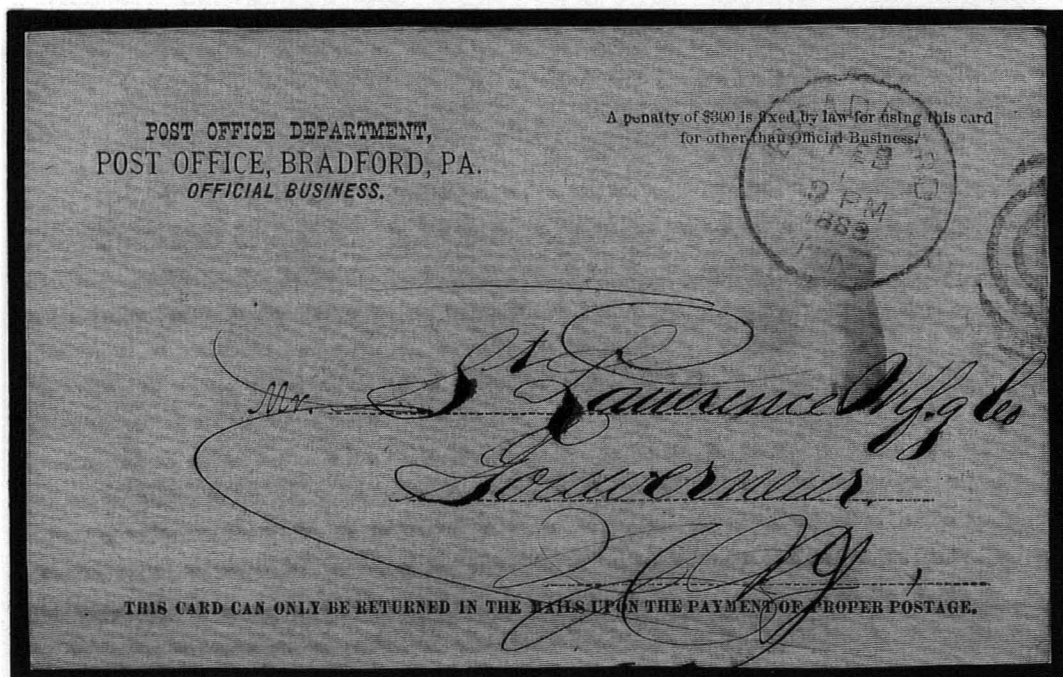


Figure 6. Post Office, Bradford, Pennsylvania, February 1883, notifying the sender of an incomplete address; the addressee was cautioned to pay postage if he returned the card with a better address

- 206. Postmasters can use penalty envelopes to return undeliverable letters to their senders.
- 214. Official communications can be sent by officers of the government to private citizens under cover of the penalty envelope.
- 218. Postmasters are entitled to use the penalty envelope when addressing private citizens on matters connected with the business of the government.
- 393. Postmasters are expected to extend to all persons the courtesy of a respectful reply to inquiries upon postal business, for which they may use penalty envelopes.²⁰

Under these rules, all post office mail to private citizens could travel free in penalty franks. If it needed to be registered, no registration fee was charged, though all other departments had to pay normal fees on their registered mail.

A New Instruction for the Postal Guide

Late in 1881 the limits of the Act of 1879 were brought before Attorney General Benjamin H. Brewster, in a case involving Department of the Interior mail sent by field offices to private citizens. Brewster ruled that field offices could *not* use penalty franks for letters to private citizens, but should use official stamps instead. The opinion was sweeping in its scope, applying to all types of field offices including post offices and railway mail facilities.²¹

The railway mail organization issued a *Daily Bulletin of orders affecting the Postal Service*, but the Attorney General's opinion, issued on January 10, 1882, did not find its way into the *Daily Bulletin*.²² In time, however, it did reach the *Postal Guide*, where it was given a separate instruction. The January 1884 version contains this section (italics added by the author):

563. The 29th section of the act of March 3, 1879 (Postal Laws and Regulations, section 251), extending to all officers of the United States Government the provisions of the sections numbered 249 and 250, Postal Laws and Regulations, for the transmission of official mail matter, requires all officers, who are *not departmental* in their character, to use envelopes which bear the appropriate indorsements, containing the name of the office from which the same are transmitted, with a statement of the penalty for their misuse; and the use of the [penalty] envelopes must be *absolutely restricted to official mail matter transmitted between officers of the United States or between any such officer and either of the Executive Departments*.²³

But the 1884 *Postal Guide* also retained the older instructions, which asserted that official communications could be sent to private individuals in penalty envelopes; that penalty envelopes could be used by postmaster for all communications upon official business; that postmasters should send respectful replies to all inquiries, for which they could use penalty envelopes; and that postmasters must send official communications in penalty envelopes, or (alternatively) prepay the communications with official stamps.²⁴

At this point, the *Postal Guide* contained a massive inconsistency. According to several instructions, postmasters could use penalty envelopes for letters to private citizens; but another instruction absolutely restricted them from doing so. The only instruction which gave much help in this situation allowed postmasters to use either penalty envelopes

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 665-666.

²¹Warren S. Howard, "A Land Office Story," *Chronicle*, Vol. 47, No. 33 (Whole No. 168) (November 1995), pp. 247-251.

²²See *Daily Bulletin*, 1882 issues.

²³*United States Official Postal Guide*, Second Series Vol. 6 No. 1, January 1884, p. 506.

²⁴*Ibid.*, instructions 565, 568, 569, 571, pp. 506-507.

or official stamps as they saw fit, giving them authority to use penalty envelopes for all their mail to other officials, and to use official stamps on their mail to private citizens. There were, however, two problems with this last choice. Use of official stamps on letters to private citizens required extra effort to accomplish a task which had been done without stamps for years. Also, use of official stamps required that postmasters have them, although they had not been issued to post offices since mid-1879. The stamp agent at New York did have official stamps on hand, but there was no appropriation from which they could be purchased. Therefore, the *Postal Guide* could require postmasters to use something which they did not have.

The Galveston Bisect

What should be described as a gem of Post Office official mail is illustrated on page 255 of the November 1996 *Chronicle*. This cover is a second-generation penalty frank from the Galveston post office, addressed to a local citizen, and bearing a bisected 6¢ Post Office official stamp to pay the postage.²⁵ Bisected official stamps are not unknown,²⁶ and this one suggests that the Galveston post office had run out of both 2¢ and 3¢ adhesives and stamped envelopes, and perhaps 1¢ adhesives as well. Under this situation, the clerk who stamped the envelope had been reduced to bisecting 6¢ stamps to get postage for his letters to private citizens. That is a difficult way to comply with an absolute restriction—but absolutes, if believed in, would justify such efforts.

If we accept the idea that the Galveston post office had adopted the *Postal Guide*'s new rule, the question arises, how many post offices did that? Potentially, many offices should have been able to use official stamps on letters to private citizens, without going to the difficulty of cutting higher denominations into pieces. Many unused Post Office official stamps and stamped envelopes have survived in collections and dealers' stocks.²⁷ While no one knows their number, they should have been able to support a substantial volume of mail to private citizens. The literature does record that in 1915, 125 full sheets of 3¢ adhesives were auctioned off.²⁸ One must suppose that these lower denominations survived unused because the post offices which had them preferred to follow the older sections of the *Postal Guide*, and thereby avoid the extra work of adding official stamps to their letters to private citizens.

To return to Galveston: assuming that the cover we have is not unique, there should be more examples "out there," unrecognized for the rarities that they are. These do not necessarily carry bisected stamps, but they may bear official stamps added to a penalty envelope. The envelope is likely to be a "second generation" penalty frank, with the penalty statement in the upper right corner instead of the lower left. Official stamps might also be found on ordinary covers dated after 1882. Any of these which show up would identify a post office which did follow the *Postal Guide* instructions.

And so the last years of the Post Office departmentals provide a mystery to be solved.

The End of the Post Office Departmentals

The *Postal Guide*'s instructions about official stamps soon became irrelevant, because the Forty-eighth Congress decided to totally eliminate official stamps. As Third

²⁵Penalty statement is in the upper right corner. See Wada, *op. cit.*, 81, for an 1880 first generation Galveston penalty envelope.

²⁶For example, see George B. Sloane, *Stamps*, Oct. 27, 1945.

²⁷Alan C. Campbell, "The Scarcity of Used United States Official Stamps," *Chronicle*, Vol. 47, No. 30 (Whole No. 165)(February 1995), pp. 41, 43, 49, 51; Rollin Huggins, *Official Chatter*, December 1989.

²⁸Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

Assistant Postmaster General A. D. Hazen laconically reported, “the issue and use of official postage-stamps was discontinued under the third section of the Act of July 5, 1884 . . . extending the use of penalty envelopes to all classes of official mail.”²⁹

And now the history of the Post Office departmentals moved to a new phase, which they shared fully with the official stamps of the other departments. On July 23, 1884, the special printings at the the Third Assistant Postmaster General’s stamp division were destroyed by burning. The Post Office contribution to this fire included 3,985 1¢ stamps, 9,410 2¢ and almost 10,000 of each of the other denominations.³⁰ A vastly larger fire was soon to come. More than 17,000,000 unissued departmentals, including 5,500,000 Post Office adhesives, were quietly awaiting their fate in the vaults of the American Bank Note Company in New York City. There were 2,888,750 1¢ Post Office stamps—which had been grossly overproduced by the Continental Bank Note Company—and 263,100 3¢ adhesives, whose stock level had been reduced to about two weeks’ supply in the spring of 1879. The vaults also contained 144,250 to 559,700 copies of the remaining denominations.³¹ It appears that there was no corresponding stockpile of unissued Post Office envelopes at the Plimpton Company in Hartford. The envelopes had been produced and shipped out as ordered, leaving nothing behind except printing dies from which more copies could be made if ordered.³²

In February 1885 a committee of postal officials supervised the burning of all the unissued official stamps at New York. The printing plates, stamp dies and transfer rolls were covered with a protective layer of wax, boxed, and put under the control of the Post Office stamp agent. At Hartford, the original dies and hubs were coated with wax and shipped by registered mail to the Post Office Department in Washington, while the working dies were defaced and thrown into the Connecticut River.³³ With this ignominious end, the Post Office departmentals became history.

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank Ellen Stuter of the American Philatelic Research Library and Jennifer Lynch of the United States Postal Service, for their help in obtaining data from the *Postal Guide* and the *Postal Laws and Regulations*. □

²⁹House Exec. Doc. 264, 48th Congress 2nd Session, “Contract for Post-Office Envelopes, etc.,” p. 77.

³⁰W. V. Combs, “U.S. Departmental Specimen Stamps,” *American Philatelist*, October 1964, p. 29; January 1965, p. 266.

³¹House Exec. Doc. 264, p. 77.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 74.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 74, 79.

UNITED STATES-BELGIUM MAIL PRIOR TO THE FIRST POSTAL CONVENTION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES

RICHARD F. WINTER

(continued from *Chronicle* 195:220)

A letter from Belgium to the United States is shown in Figure 22. This folded letter originated in Brussels on 15 April 1852, and was addressed to Philadelphia. The letter was posted in Brussels the same day and received a blue circular datestamp on the left side along with a blue boxed handstamp, **PD**, in the upper right corner. It was prepaid 14 decimes, which was marked in black pen on the reverse, "2/12" and "14." A Brussels postal clerk neglected to show the 1s credit to the British for this letter. It was sent to London, arriving on 16 April 1852 as shown by the red orange tombstone datestamp, which also indicated that the letter was paid. The letter was placed in the mail bags carried from Liverpool on 17 April 1852 by the Cunard steamship *Niagara*, arriving at Boston on 29 April. On the next day, 30 April, a Boston exchange office clerk marked the black datestamp, **B^R. PACKET/5/BOSTON.**, which showed 5¢ postage due in Philadelphia, the British open mail rate by British packet.

Special rates existed for mail to California sent through the British mail system, either via New York and Panama or directly to the West Indies and Panama. On 13 August 1851, Brussels issued Circular Postes No. 46, which showed that the letter rate to California via the United States was 19 decimes, 2 decimes to be kept by Belgium and 17 decimes or 1s5d credited to the United Kingdom. Earlier, a 27 January 1851 notice had established a rate to California via British packet to the West Indies and Panama, but this notice did not list a rate via New York. All covers from Belgium to California are quite rare. Figure 23 illustrates a folded letter outer sheet from Binche, Belgium to Nevada City, California, dated 11 August 1853. This letter was endorsed across the top, "Par voie d'Angleterre et Etats unis," a reference to the route via England and the United States vice the West Indies. A postal clerk at Binche struck an orange circular datestamp and boxed **PD** to show that the letter was fully paid. Prepaid mail to California via the British mail system was placed in closed mail bags in London and not opened until arrival at California. These letters were paid to destination in California while letters from Belgium to other locations in the United States other than the west coast required postage due. On this letter the prepayment was shown on the reverse in black pen along with the diagonal marking on the face of the letter. The markings on the reverse indicated that the letter weighed 18 grams and required three rates in Belgium or 60 centimes. The credit to the United Kingdom was marked as 2s10d (34 decimes) for a letter weighing just over 1/2 oz. The total prepayment of 40 decimes was also marked on the reverse. The letter arrived in London on 13 August 1853 and received an orange tombstone datestamp that indicated it was fully paid. The transit to America and then to California has to be presumed from sailing tables. The next steamship to depart England after the letter arrived in London was the Ocean Line steamship *Hermann*, which called off Southampton on 17 August and arrived at New York on 1 September 1853. The closed mail bags for California would have been placed on the United States Mail Steamship Company steamship *Georgia*, which departed New York for Aspinwall on 5 September. Unfortunately, the *Georgia* ran into a hurricane and had to put into Norfolk, Virginia on 10 September. The steamship company sent another steamer, the *Crescent City*, to Norfolk to pick up the mail, leaving there on 13 September and arriving at Aspinwall on 22 September 1853. Mail was transported across



Figure 22. 15 April 1852, Brussels, Belgium to Philadelphia, prepaid 14 decimes (manuscript on reverse) and sent by Cunard steamship *Niagara* from Liverpool to Boston, where it was marked for 5¢ postage due. Belgium neglected to show 1s credit to U.K.

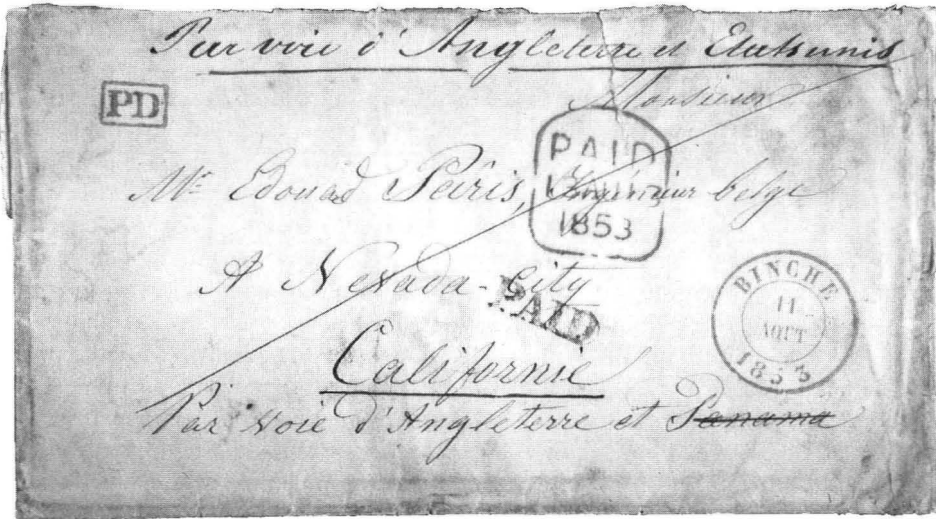


Figure 23. 11 August 1853, Binche, Belgium to Nevada City, California, sent by mail steamers via England, New York, and Panama to San Francisco. Prepayments on reverse show letter weighed 18 grams and was paid 40 decimes of which 1s10d was credited to U.K. Letter in closed mail bag from London to California.

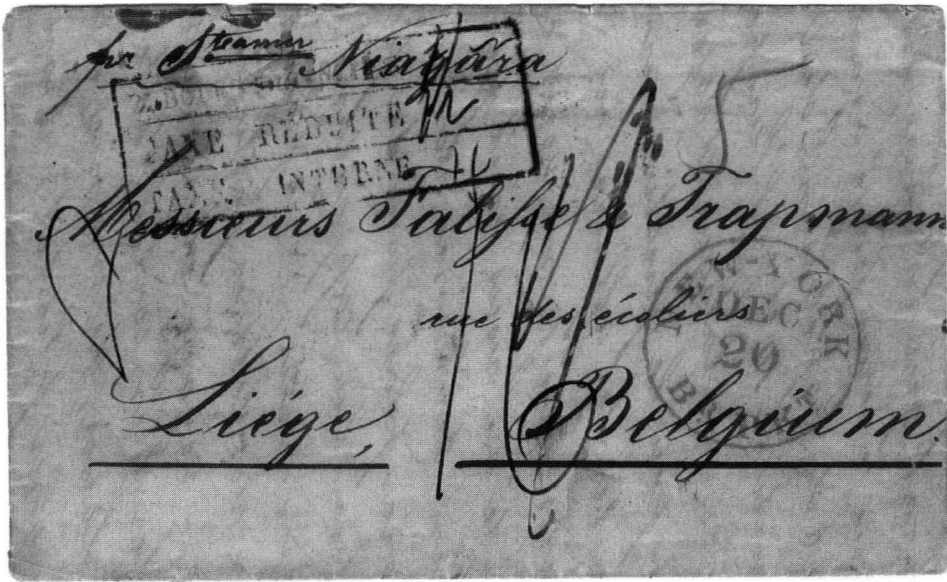


Figure 24. 20 December 1853, New York to Liege, Belgium, prepaid 5¢ for B.O.M. rate by British packet and sent by Cunard Line *Niagara* to Liverpool. London debited Belgium 1s. Postage due was 16 decimes for 8 gram letter. This letter shows a second version of the boxed Belgian accounting handstamp.

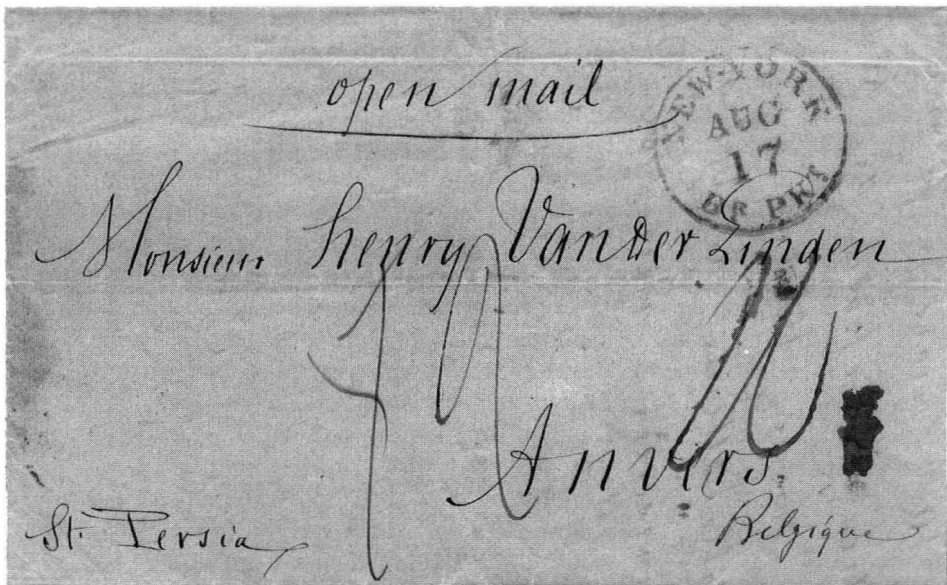


Figure 25. 16 August 1859, New York to Antwerp, Belgium, prepaid 5¢ for B.O.M. rate by British packet and sent by Cunard Line *Persia* to Liverpool. London debited Belgium 10d and postage due was 12 decimes.

the Isthmus to Panama City. On 1 October the Pacific Mail Steamship Company steamer *Panama* departed with the mail and arrived at San Francisco on 17 October 1853. A San Francisco postal clerk marked the black **PAID** handstamp. No postage was due in California.

Figure 24 illustrates a letter showing another version of the Belgian accounting handstamp. This folded letter originated in New York on 20 December 1853, and was addressed to Liege, Belgium. The letter was endorsed in the upper left corner, "pr Steamer Niagara." It was paid 5¢ for the British open mail rate by British packet, which was marked in pencil in the upper right corner. A New York exchange office clerk struck an orange circular datestamp, **NEW-YORK B^RPK^T**, indicating the date that the letter would leave New York and the steamship service that would be used. The letter was included in the mail bags sent to Boston for the next day sailing of the Cunard steamship *Niagara*. The steamer arrived at Liverpool on 3 January 1854, and the letter was sent to London, where, on the next day, it received an orange circular datestamp on the reverse. London postal clerks debited Belgium 1s in black pen. An orange circular datestamp on the reverse, **ANGLETERRE PAR OSTENDE**, shows that the letter arrived in Belgium on 5 January. A different accounting handstamp measuring 55x21mm and struck in black ink was used at Ostend. The three lines served the same purpose as the earlier marking but read, **DEBOURS ETRANGERS, TAXE REDUITE**, and **TAXE INTERNE**. This is a scarce accounting handstamp, only a few examples of which I have recorded. The Ostend clerk used blue pen to show "1/-" on the first line, "12" on the second line and "4" on the third line. The Belgian internal postage, written in blue ink on the left side, was 4 decimes because the letter weight was 8 grams. The total postage due, marked in blue pen also, was 16 decimes. An orange circular datestamp on the reverse shows that the letter arrived at Liege on 6 January 1854.

1 October 1857-23 January 1860

In August 1857, the United Kingdom and Belgium agreed to a new postal convention that again reduced the postal fees between the two countries. This postal convention became effective on 1 October 1857, and governed mail from the United States via the United Kingdom until January 1860, when the United States convention with Belgium went into effect. The 1857 convention established Belgian exchange offices at Ostend (local and traveling office), Antwerp and on the rail line between Ghent/Mouscron and Brussels/Quiévrain. In England, exchange offices were established at Dover, London and Hull. The rate between Belgium and the United Kingdom was reduced from 6d to 4d. Each country was entitled to 2d or 2 decimes. The letter rate was based on 15 grams per single rate in each country. The 1, 2, 4 rate progression of the United Kingdom was now used in both countries. Mail could be sent through France to England for an additional 2 decimes. On letters to America the 8d transatlantic portion remained, so the prepayment in Belgium for a letter to America was 12 decimes with a credit to the British of 10d. If an American packet was used to carry the letter across the Atlantic, the prepayment was only 4 decimes with 2d credited to the United Kingdom. As before, letters could be sent either fully paid or unpaid, but could not be partially paid.

Figure 25 illustrates a letter under the new convention. This folded letter originated in New York on 16 August 1859, and was addressed to Antwerp, Belgium. The letter was marked "open mail" across the top and "St. Persia" in the lower left corner, the latter referring to the steamship to carry the letter. It was prepaid 5¢ for the British open mail rate by British packet, which was marked in pencil just under the left figure of the postage due in blue ink. A New York exchange office postal clerk marked in orange ink the circular datestamp, **NEW-YORK B^RPK^T**, showing the date that the letter left New York and the packet service used. The letter was included in the mail bags of the Cunard steamship *Persia*, which departed New York on 17 August and arrived at Liverpool on 27 August 1859. A

small blue circular datestamp on the reverse shows the letter arrived at London on 27 August 1859. A London clerk marked the 10d debit to Belgium in black pen on the right side. Two circular datestamps in black on the reverse show arrival in Belgium on 28 August, a railroad marking, **ANGLETERRE PAR AMB^r OUEST**, and the circular datestamp of Antwerp. The postage due in Antwerp was marked in blue pen on the front of the letter, 12 decimes, of which 10 decimes went to the United Kingdom.

American Steamship Via United Kingdom

In June 1847, American steamships began operating across the Atlantic carrying contract mail for the United States government. Mail between Belgium and the United States via the United Kingdom was carried by vessels of the Ocean Line to Southampton (1847-1857), Collins Line to Liverpool (1850-1858) and Havre Line to Southampton (1850-1860). The rates on the letters that they carried varied with the existing postal agreements between Belgium and the United Kingdom just as on the British contract steamships.

1 June 1847-29 March 1849

I have seen no letters to or from Belgium carried by American steamships via the United Kingdom during this period. Letters from the United States would show a prepayment of 24¢ up to 20 February 1849 (first American packet sailing under the United States-United Kingdom convention), a British debit to Belgium of 1s8d, and 24 decimes postage due in Belgium for a single rate letter. After 20 February 1849, they would show prepayment of 21¢ in the United States, the same British debit to Belgium, and the same postage due in Belgium. Any examples would be quite scarce.

30 March 1849-14 February 1850

I have seen no letters to or from Belgium carried by American steamships via the United Kingdom during this period. Letters from the United States would show a prepayment of 21¢, a British debit to Belgium of 8d, and 12 decimes postage due in Belgium for a single rate letter. Any example also would be quite scarce.

15 February 1850-30 September 1857

Figure 26 illustrates a letter carried by an American steamship to England. This folded letter originated in New York on 9 July 1853, and was addressed to Antwerp, Belgium. It was endorsed in the upper left corner, "p Baltic," a reference to the steamship desired to carry the letter across the Atlantic. The letter was prepaid 21¢, the British open mail rate by American packet, which was marked in pencil in the lower left corner. A New York exchange office clerk struck the red orange circular datestamp, **NEW YORK A^m PACKET.**, to show the date that the letter was forwarded from New York and that American packet service was used. On 9 July the Collins Line steamship *Baltic* departed New York and arrived at Liverpool on 19 July 1853. The letter reached London the next day as shown with an orange circular datestamp on the reverse. The prepayment in New York covered all transit fees to England so London marked the black handstamp, **U.S.P^{K-T}**, to show that the letter arrived by American packet and that no transatlantic fee would be calculated in the debit to Belgium. The British debit to Belgium was marked in black pen alongside the New York datestamp, 4d. At Ostend the letter received an orange circular datestamp on the reverse and an orange boxed accounting handstamp on the front. This accounting handstamp is yet another type, different from the ones described in Figure 4 and in Figure 24. This marking measured 51x21mm with the three lines reading **DEBOURS ÉTRANGERS, TAXE REDUITE**, and **PORT BELGE**. Ostend postal clerks marked the letter weight of 8 grams in a blue black ink, upper left corner, and filled in the three lines of the accounting handstamp, 4d British debit, 4 decimes conversion to Belgian currency, and 2x2 decimes Belgian internal postage. The total postage due was marked in a dark blue pen, 8 decimes, which was the sum of the second and third lines of the accounting handstamp.

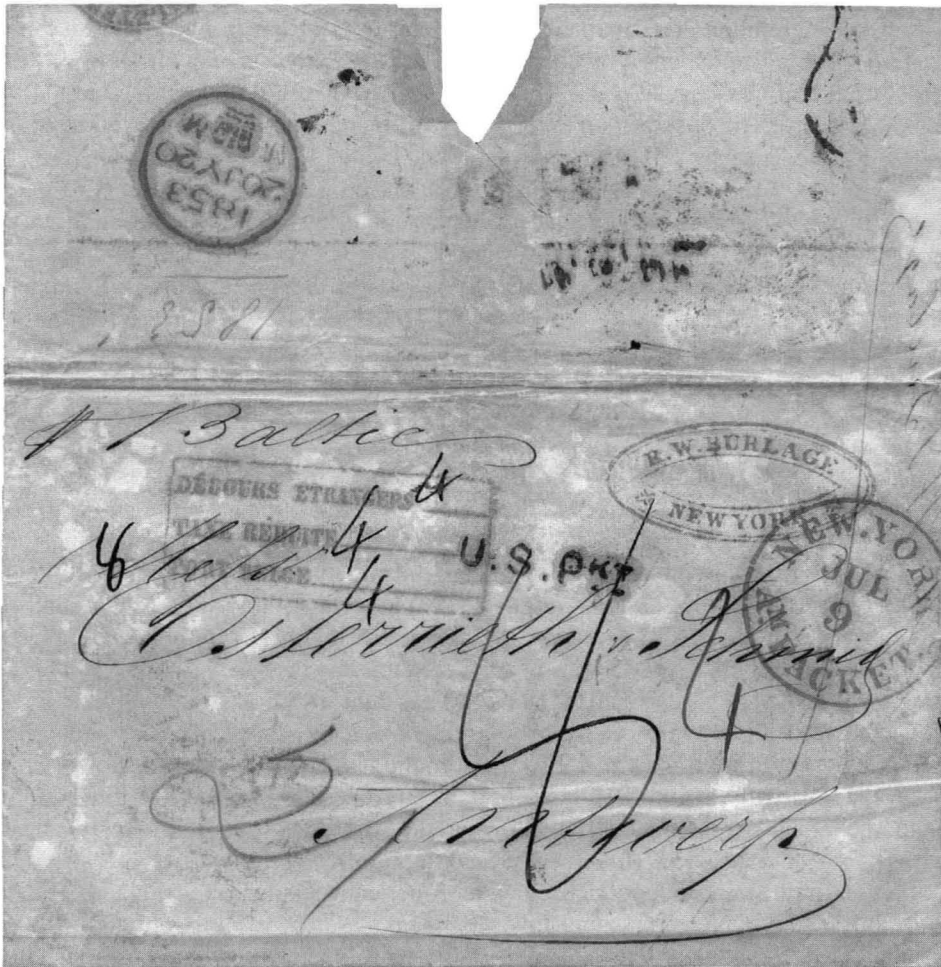


Figure 26. 9 July 1853, New York to Antwerp, Belgium, prepaid 21¢ for B.O.M. rate by American packet and sent by Collins Line *Baltic* to Liverpool. London marked U.S.P^{K.T.} and debited Belgium 4d. Ostend marked postage due of 8 decimes for 8 gram letter.

A letter from Belgium to the United States is shown in Figure 27. This is an envelope without the letter contents which was posted in Antwerp on 9 July 1854, and was addressed to Washington, D.C. The letter received a black circular datestamp on Antwerp in the upper left corner and a boxed **PD** alongside to the right. A black pen stroke across the letter face also indicated that the letter was paid. On the reverse was the statement of prepayment in black pen, “2/12” and “14” decimes. Credit to the United Kingdom was marked in black pen in the upper left corner, “1/-,” or 12d for the 8d sea postage across the Atlantic and the 4d British portion of the convention rate. The letter arrived at London on 10 July 1854, and received an orange tombstone datestamp indicating that the letter was paid. Since London intended to put the letter on an American steamship a 16¢ credit to the United States for sea postage was marked in red pen at the top of the letter. The letter was placed in a mail bag sent to Liverpool for the Collins Line steamship *Pacific*, which departed on 12 July and arrived at New York on 24 July 1854. A New York exchange office postal clerk first applied a red orange circular datestamp, **N.YORK 30 A^M-PK^T-PAID**. This was in error since postage was still due on the letter. After striking over the amount “30” in

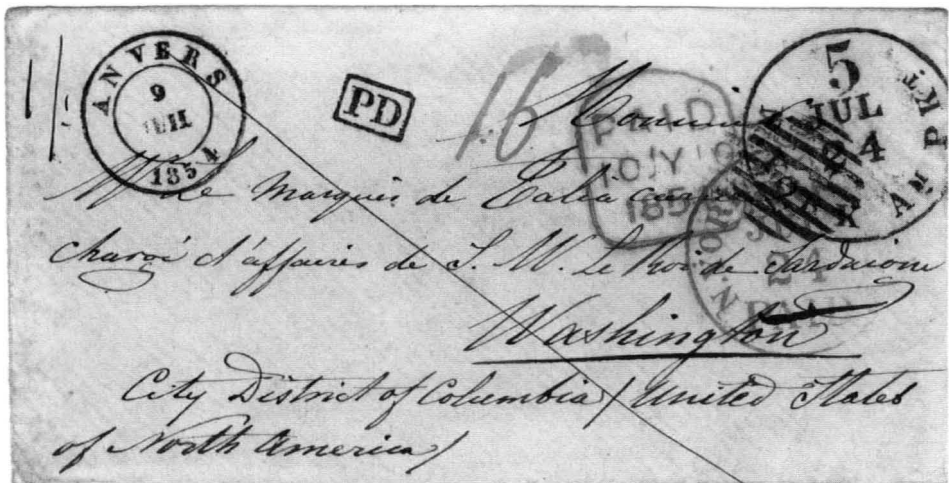


Figure 27. 9 July 1854, Antwerp, Belgium to Washington, D.C., prepaid 14 decimes (manuscript on reverse) and sent by Collins *Pacific* from Liverpool to New York. Belgium credited 1s to U.K. and U.K. credited 16¢ to U.S. New York marked 5¢ postage due.

the datestamp with a black grid obliterator, he then struck a black circular datestamp, **5 N.YORK A^MPK^T**, to show the date that the letter was processed and that 5¢ postage was due in Washington, D.C. This was the remaining portion of the American share under the convention between the United States and the United Kingdom, the British having already credited the Americans with 16¢.

Figure 28 illustrates a double rate letter from Belgium to the United States. This folded letter originated in Antwerp, Belgium on 11 January 1855, and was addressed to New York. It was endorsed across the top, “Pacific,” to indicate the desired American steamship. This was done in a hand different from the letter writer, perhaps at the post office in Antwerp where the letter received an orange circular datestamp (the ink oxidized to a very dark color) and a boxed **PD**. The reverse shows pencil notations of the prepayment, 32 decimes, 8 decimes for the internal Belgian postage of a 24 gram letter (four rates) and 24 decimes for transit via England (two rates). A credit to the United Kingdom of $2 \times 1s = 2s$ was marked in magenta ink in the upper left corner. The letter was handled on the railroad and has a black circular datestamp on the reverse, **AMBULANT OUEST No 1**. The letter arrived in London on 12 January 1855, and received an orange circular datestamp that showed the letter was paid. A London exchange office clerk marked in red ink a credit to the United States of $2 \times 16¢ = 32¢$ in the upper right corner. The letter was placed in a mail bag sent to Liverpool for the Collins Line steamship *Pacific*, which departed on 13 January and arrived at New York on 25 January 1855. New York exchange office clerks applied two markings in black ink, a circular datestamp, **NEW.YORK A^MPACKET.**, dated 25 January and a circle **10** for the postage due, $2 \times 5¢ = 10¢$.

The last letter to be discussed carried by American steamship to the United Kingdom is illustrated in Figure 29. This envelope originated in Commerce, Michigan and was addressed to Brussels, Belgium. The letter was posted on 24 July 1855, and received a black manuscript origination marking of Commerce, Michigan in the lower left corner. The letter was prepaid $2 \times 21¢ = 42¢$ for a double rate letter, which was marked in black pen in the upper right corner, “Paid 42.” At the New York exchange office, postal clerks marked the red orange circular datestamp, **NEW.YORK A^MPACKET.**, showing the date that the letter was forwarded from New York and American packet service. On 28 July 1855, the Havre Line steamship *Arago* departed New York and put mails off near

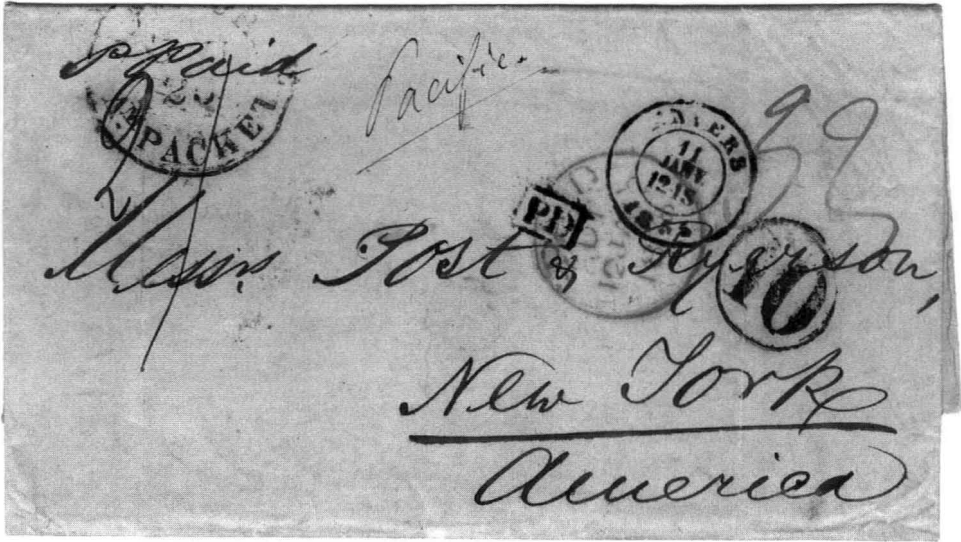


Figure 28. 11 January 1855, Antwerp, Belgium to New York, double rate letter prepaid 32 decimes (manuscript on reverse) and sent by Collins Line *Pacific* from Liverpool to New York. Belgium credited 2s to U.K. and U.K. credited 32¢ to U.S. New York marked 10¢ postage due.



Figure 29. 24 July 1855, Commerce, Michigan to Brussels, Belgium, double rate letter prepaid 42¢ and sent by Havre Line *Arago* from New York to Southampton. London marked U.S.P.K.T. and debited Belgium 8d. Traveling post office marked postage due of 14 decimes for 15 gram letter.

Southampton on 10 August 1855. The letter arrived at London the same day and received an orange circular datestamp on the reverse of 10 August 1855. A London postal clerk marked the black handstamp, **U.S.P^K.T.**, to show that the letter arrived by American packet and that no transatlantic fee would be calculated in the debit to Belgium. The clerk debited Belgium 2x4d=8d in black pen. The letter was sent to Belgium and received a black circular datestamp on the reverse, **ANGLETERRE PAR AMB^T. OUEST**, when processed on the traveling railroad post office on 11 August. Later the same day the letter arrived at Brussels and received a blue circular datestamp on the reverse. The railroad postal clerks marked the same accounting handstamp as in Figure 26 except in black ink. In blue ink they marked 15 grams letter weight in the upper left corner and the accounting box markings, 8d British debit on the first line, 8 decimes Belgian equivalent on the second line, and 2x3=6 decimes Belgian internal postage on the third line. In large blue manuscript they marked 14 decimes postage due, the sum of the second and third lines of the accounting handstamp.

1 October 1857-23 January 1860

I have seen no letters to or from Belgium carried by American steamships via the United Kingdom during this period. Letters from the United States would show a prepayment of 21¢, a British debit to Belgium of 2d, and 4 decimes postage due in Belgium for a single rate letter. Such an item would be scarce but possible since the United States advertised open mail rates to Belgium at the time. During this period most mail between the two countries traveled by the United States-French convention until 1860 when the postal convention with Belgium began.

French Steamship to France

A short-lived steamship service operated in 1847 from Cherbourg and Havre to New York. The steamship line, called the *Compagnie Générale des Paquebots Transatlantiques* (better known as the *Hérout and de Handel Line*), completed only nine round voyages from June 1847 until February 1848, when it ended operations. Letters carried by the steamships of this line are uncommon and those to or from Belgium quite scarce. Figure 30 illustrates one of two covers that I have recorded from the United States to Belgium by this line. This folded letter originated in New York on 24 July 1847 by the Consul General of Belgium in the United States, and was addressed to Francomont, Belgium. The letter was endorsed in the upper left corner, “pr Steamer Union,” a reference to the French *Hérout and de Handel Line* steamship of that name. The letter shows no prepayment at the New York post office indicating that it was taken directly to the steamship’s letter bag in New York, avoiding a 5¢ payment. The 25¢ steamship freight money fee for steamships was not charged by the *Hérout and de Handel Line*. On 24 July the steamship *Union* departed New York on the maiden return voyage of the line and arrived at Havre on 7 August 1847, where it discharged mail before proceeding to Cherbourg. This letter was processed at Havre the next day and received a red orange circular datestamp, **OUTRE-MER LE HAVRE**, showing entry into the French mail system at Havre from overseas. The French prepared special entry markings for mail brought in by the steamships of this line. They were not in place, however, for the return voyage of the first steamship, so the normal ship entry marking of Havre had to be used. The letter arrived at Paris on 9 August 1847, and received a blue circular datestamp on the reverse. Two additional backstamps show arrival in Belgium, a blue circular datestamp of 10 August, **FRANCE PAR QUIEVRAIN No1.**, and a red orange circular datestamp of Verviers, also of 10 August 1847. The letter was marked for 17 decimes postage due, 10 decimes to the French for the steamship service and 7 decimes to Belgium. This represented 6 decimes transit fee from the French border to Verviers plus 1 decime for rural service. The green boxed **SR** handstamp indicated *Service Rurale*.



Figure 30. 24 July 1847, New York to Francmont, Belgium, sent on the return maiden voyage of Hérout and de Handel Line by steamship *Union* to Havre. Letter marked for 17 decimes postage due, 10 decimes French steamship fee plus 7 decimes French and Belgian transit fees.

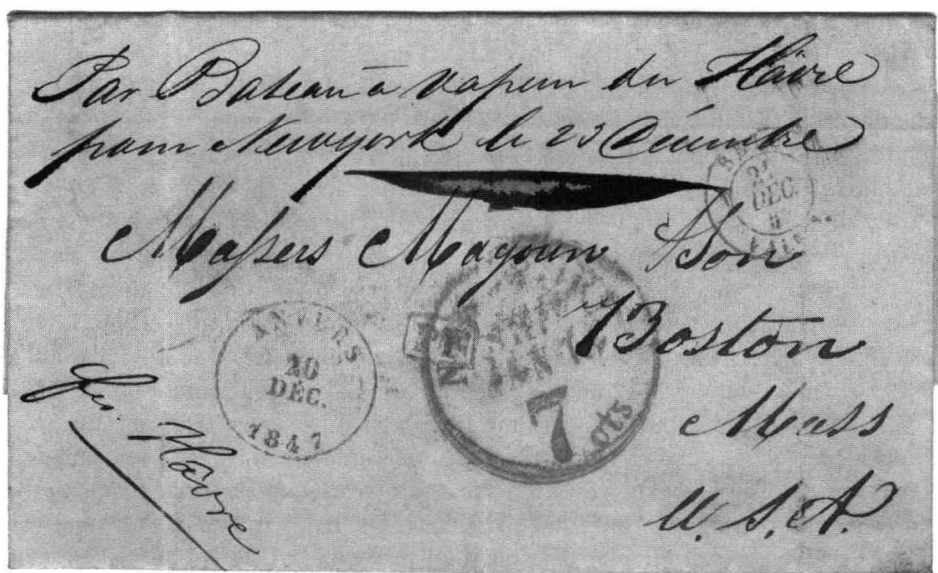


Figure 31. 16 December 1847, Antwerp, Belgium to Boston, carried on final round voyage of Hérout and de Handel Line by steamship *Missouri* from Havre to New York. Letter pre-paid 15 decimes (manuscript on reverse). New York marked letter arrived by ship and 7¢ postage due (2¢ ship plus 5¢ inland fees).

Figure 31 illustrates an even more extraordinary letter, one carried by a Hérout and de Handel Line steamship in the westward direction. Only a handful of westbound covers carried by this line have been recorded and this is the only one from Belgium. The folded letter originated in Antwerp, Belgium on 16 December 1847 and was addressed to Boston. It was written by a ship captain to the owners of the ship the day before he planned to leave Antwerp to return to Boston with cargo. The letter was left with their Antwerp agents, Brothers Nottebohm, who probably wrote the transit instructions at the top of the letter, "Par Bateau á vapeur du Hâvre/pour Newyork le 23 December." It was endorsed "fro. Hâvre" in the same black ink in the lower left corner to show that the letter was paid to Havre. The agents wrote their name and the date they received the letter on the reverse. The letter was posted in Antwerp on 20 December 1847, and received an orange circular datestamp of the Antwerp office along with a small boxed **PF** in the same color to show that the letter was paid to the frontier, which for this letter was Havre. The prepayment of 15 decimes was written in red orange crayon on the reverse, "5 10/15," to show that 5 decimes of the total 15 decimes paid belonged to Belgium and 10 decimes to France. The letter was sent to France, where it received a small orange circular datestamp in the upper right corner at Valenciennes on 21 December 1847 to show entry into France from Belgium. The letter arrived at Havre on 22 December 1847 and was marked with a small red orange circular datestamp of the Bureau Maritime at Havre on the reverse. The next day, 23 December 1847, the Hérout and de Handel steamship *Missouri* departed Havre on the last round voyage to New York of the line, arriving on 18 January 1848. A New York office clerk struck the red orange circular datestamp, **NEW-YORK/SHIP/7 cts**, to show the date that the letter was processed, 18 January, and the postage due in Boston of 7¢. This amount consisted of a 2¢ incoming ship fee plus the 5¢ inland fee to Boston. Docketing by the recipient shows that the letter arrived in Boston the next day, 19 January 1848.

French Treaty Mail

On 1 April 1857, a postal convention between the United States and France went into effect. This convention governed mail between the two countries as well as transit mail through those countries to other locations served by their mail systems. The basic rate between the United States and France was 15¢ or 80 centimes for a single weight letter, which was less than 7½ grams. The rate on letters from the United States to Belgium under this convention was 21¢ per 7½ grams. The route via France was the principal route for mail to Belgium until the United States-Belgium postal convention went into effect on 24 January 1860.

Figure 32 illustrates an early French treaty cover to Belgium. This folded letter originated in Plaquemine, Louisiana on 23 April 1857, and was addressed to Liege, Belgium. A faint red circular datestamp of Plaquemine was struck in the upper left corner, as was a red **PAID** handstamp. The letter writer marked the rate as 15¢ in the upper right corner, but the Plaquemine postmaster overwrote this with a pencil "21" for the correct 21¢ prepayment. The letter was sent to Boston where it received a black exchange office circular datestamp of 6 May on the reverse, **BOSTON B^RPK^T**. A Boston exchange office clerk marked in red orange crayon an 18¢ credit to France. Since the letter was going to England on a British contract steamship the United States was entitled to only 3¢ of the prepayment. On 6 May the Cunard steamship *America* departed Boston and arrived at Liverpool on 17 May 1857. Because the letter was in a closed mail bag from Boston to France, no British markings were struck on the letter. It arrived at Paris on 18 May and received a black circular datestamp of the Paris office on the reverse. The letter was marked with the orange boxed **PD** handstamp and sent by train to Belgium. A black circular datestamp of 20 May on the reverse, **FRANCE PAR QUIEVRAIN**, shows entry into Belgium and an orange circular datestamp of Liege, also on the reverse, shows arrival there on 20 May 1857. Since the letter was fully paid to destination, no postage due was marked.



Figure 32. 23 April 1857, Plaquemine, Louisiana to Liege, Belgium, prepaid 21¢ French mail rate to Belgium. Boston credited 18¢ to France and sent letter on Cunard steamship *America* to Liverpool. Letter in closed mail bag to France and shows no British markings.

An unpaid letter by the French convention is shown in Figure 33. This folded letter originated in New Orleans on 10 August 1857, and was addressed to Antwerp, Belgium. It was endorsed across the top, “pr first Steamer via Ostende,” the writer’s desired routing by the open mail via England and Belgium. The letter was posted on 11 August 1857 at New Orleans and received a black circular datestamp in the upper left corner. The unpaid letter rate of 21¢, a French mail rate, was marked in the upper right corner, probably at the New Orleans post office. Since the letter was unpaid, there was no requirement to honor the sender’s endorsement. The letter was sent to New York, where the exchange office used a black circular datestamp, **NEW 3 YORK**, to show the date that the letter was to leave New York in the French mail and the debit to France of 3¢. Again, since the letter was to be carried by a British contract steamship, the United States was entitled to only 3¢. The letter was placed in a closed mail bag for France. On 19 August the Cunard steamship *Persia* departed New York and arrived at Liverpool on 29 August 1857. The letter was sent to France, where the closed mail bag was opened on the railroad from Calais to Paris. A red orange circular datestamp, **ET.UNIS SERV.BR.A.C.**, shows that the letter was from the United States, was carried by British packet via England, and entered France on the ambulant from Calais on 31 August 1857. This entry marking had been put into service with the new United States-France postal convention. A black circular datestamp of Paris on the reverse shows arrival there on 1 September. Also on the reverse, a black circular datestamp of the train to Belgium, **AMB^r DU MIDI N^o2**, shows processing on the same day. Arrival at Antwerp was indicated by an orange circular datestamp on the reverse of 2 September 1857. The letter was marked in black pen across the face for postage due of 14

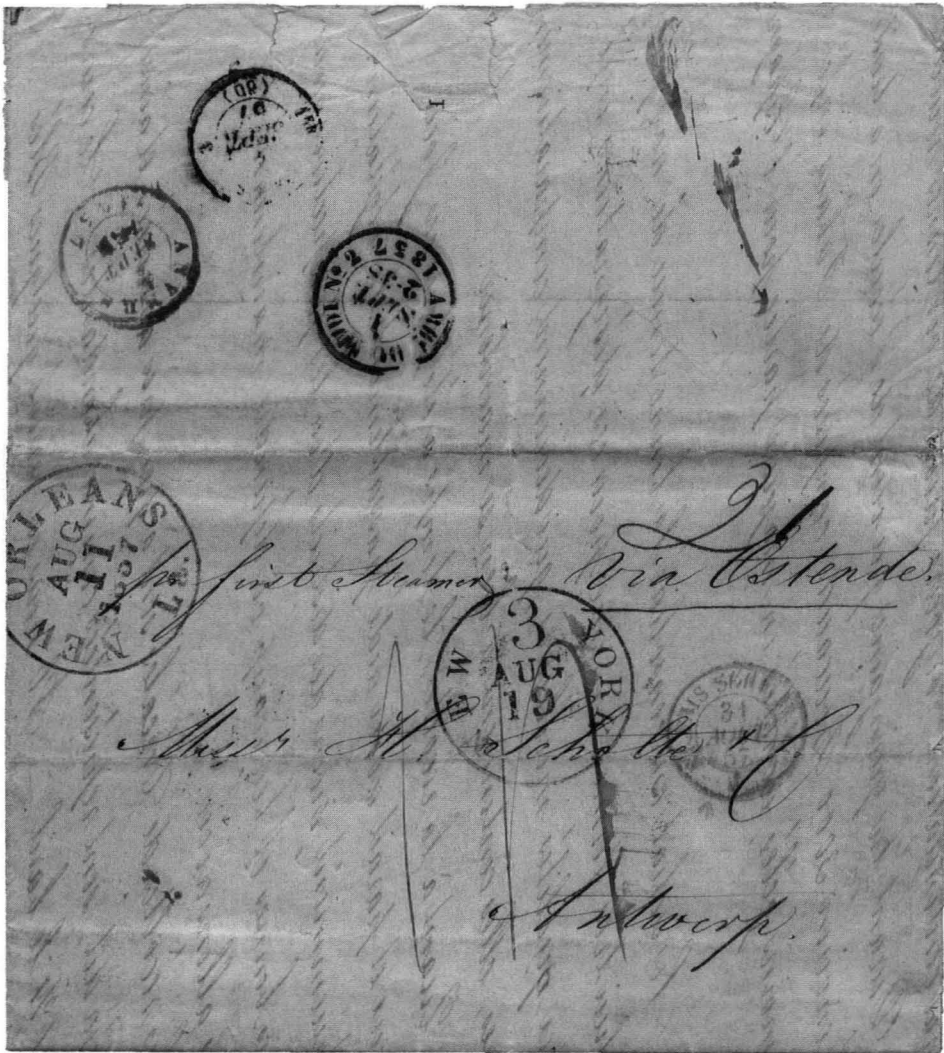


Figure 33. 10 August 1857, New Orleans to Antwerp, Belgium, unpaid letter carried by Cunard steamship *Persia* from New York to Liverpool. New York debited France 3¢. Letter marked for 14 decimes postage due, probably in error as normal rate was 10 decimes by this convention.

decimes. This may have been in error as the normal Belgian rate for such a letter was 10 decimes.

An unpaid letter from Belgium to the United States is shown in Figure 34. This folded letter originated in Liege, Belgium on 11 January 1858, and was addressed to Philadelphia. Routing instructions, "Par la France," were penned in the upper left corner. The letter was posted at Liege on 12 January and was marked with a black circular datestamp in the upper right corner. French entry at Erquelines by railroad was shown by the black circular datestamp, **BELG. A. ERQUELINES**, of 12 January. The letter arrived at Paris on 13 January and received a black circular datestamp on the reverse. A Paris exchange office clerk marked a debit of 18¢ to the United States on the left side in black pen since the letter was to be carried from England on a British mail steamship. The letter



Figure 34. 11 January 1858, Liege, Belgium to Philadelphia, unpaid letter sent by Cunard steamship *Canada* to Boston. Paris debited U.S. 18¢ and Philadelphia marked 21¢ postage due under French convention.



Figure 35. 6 February 1858, New York to Brussels, Belgium, letter prepaid 21¢ French mail rate with a pair and a single 3¢ dull red 1857 and a single 12¢ black 1857 adhesive. Letter carried to France by Havre Line steamship *Fulton*. New York credited 9¢ to France.

was put in a closed mail bag and sent to Liverpool for the 16 January 1858 sailing of the Cunard steamship *Canada*, arriving at Boston on 29 January 1858. The letter, still in a closed mail bag, was sent to Philadelphia where the bag was opened and the letter marked with a black circular datestamp of Philadelphia on 30 January. The Philadelphia exchange office clerk also marked the letter for postage due of 21¢ with a black handstamp **21**.

Finally, a paid letter by American steamship directly to France is shown in Figure 35. This envelope without contents was posted in New York on 6 February 1858, and was addressed to Brussels, Belgium. The letter was paid 21¢ for the French mail rate to Belgium with a pair and a single 3¢ dull red 1857 and a single 12¢ black 1857 adhesive, each canceled with a 7-bar grid enclosed in a circle, a standard New York obliterator. The letter was endorsed at the top, "Steamer Fulton." A New York exchange office clerk marked a red orange circular datestamp, **NEW PAID YORK 9**, to show the date that the letter was forwarded from New York and the credit to France of 9¢. Since the letter was carried on an American steamship directly to France, the United States was entitled to 12¢ of the prepayment. On 6 February 1858, the Havre Line steamship *Fulton* departed New York and arrived at Havre on 22 February 1858. A blue octagonal entry marking of 22 February 1858, **ET.UNIS SERV.AM.D. HAVRE**, shows that the letter was from the United States by direct American service to Havre. The letter was marked at Paris on 23 February with black circular datestamp on the reverse and a boxed red orange handstamp **PD** and sent to Belgium. Two additional backstamps include a black circular datestamp of 23 February 1858, **AMB^r DU MIDI N^o2**, and a circular datestamp of Brussels dated 25 February 1858.

Conclusion

On 21 December 1859, the United States and Belgium signed a postal convention to regulate mails between the two countries. The convention was placed into effect in the United States on 24 January 1860 and in Belgium on 1 March 1860, even though ratifications were not exchanged until later in the year. Exchange offices were set up at New York and Boston in the United States and at Ostend and the traveling post offices of Ostend and Antwerp in Belgium. The basic rate was 27¢ in the United States and 14 decimes in Belgium for a ½ oz. or 15 gram letter. Of that amount 20¢ belonged to the United States and 7¢ to Belgium. The letters passed through England in closed mail bags. There was also a provision for a reduced 15¢ rate should a direct steamship service between the United States and Belgium be established.

This article will close with an example of an unpaid letter to Belgium under the new convention, Figure 36. This is a colorful patriotic envelope (front only), which was posted in Cincinnati, Ohio on 29 October 1861, and received a blue circular datestamp in the upper right corner. It was addressed to Malines, Belgium. During the American Civil War, soldiers were allowed to send their letters without prepayment since they often were unable to get adhesives to prepay letters as was required by the Post Office Department. To be entitled to this privilege, their letters had to be endorsed that they were soldiers' letters and signed by a superior officer in their unit. The endorsement of this letter reads, "Army Letter/Col: A Sanders Piatt/34th Reg^{mt} O.V. USA." This letter was from a soldier in the 34th Infantry Regiment, Ohio Volunteers. In October 1861, the regiment was in the District of Kanawaha, West Virginia on unattached duty. The letter was marked for the unpaid rate of 21¢, the rate via France. It was sent to Cincinnati, where it was marked as an arriving soldier's letter with a blue handstamp, **DUE 3cts**. Since the letter was addressed overseas, this postage due marking had no significance. The letter was sent to New York. Because the letter was unpaid there was no obligation by the exchange office to send the letter in the French mail. The letter was processed for the Belgium convention mail, which brought a higher return for the Americans than did the French convention. A New York exchange office clerk marked a black circular datestamp, **N.YORK AM. PKT. 20**, showing the date

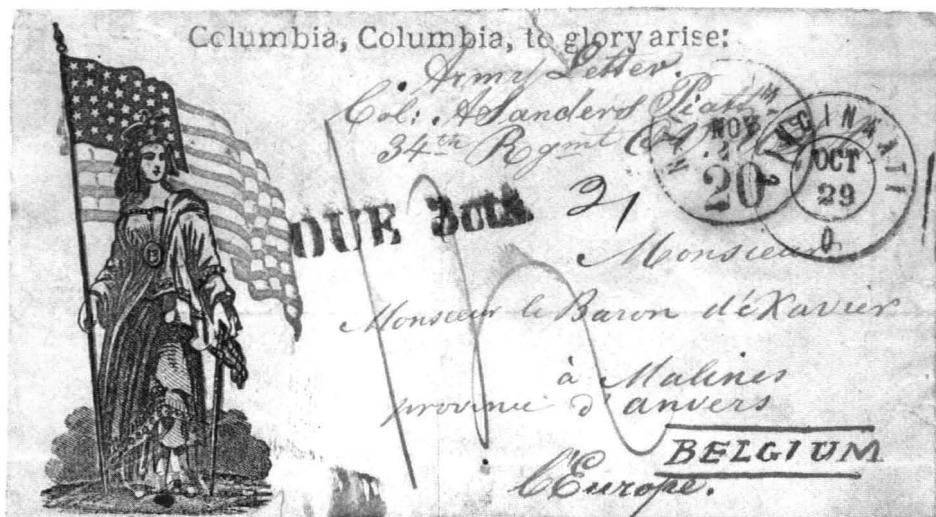


Figure 36. 29 October 1861, Cincinnati to Malines, Belgium, unpaid letter (front only) from Civil War soldier. New York sent letter in Belgium convention mail and debited Belgium 20¢. Postage due marked in Belgium was 14 decimes.

the letter was forwarded from New York and the United States debit to Belgium of 20¢. On 2 November 1861, the American contract steamship *Teutonia* of the German HAPAG Line departed New York and arrived off Southampton on 19 November. Since we don't have the back of the envelope, the arrival date at Belgium is not known, but it was probably within a day or two at the most. The letter was marked in Belgium in magenta ink for postage due of 14 decimes, the correct convention rate for a single letter.

The covers illustrated in this article come from my collection as well as the collections of James Van der Linden and Arthur White. A few examples are from the earlier collections of John Kohlhepp and Leonard Kapiloff, who generously allowed me to photograph some of their material.

Summary

Before 1860, mail between the United States and Belgium was exchanged via other countries, primarily the United Kingdom and France. Some mail was exchanged through Bremen, but examples are quite scarce. In the absence of a convention between the United States and Belgium, mail could not be fully prepaid and postage was always collected at destination. This article discusses the two principal postal systems through which mail between the United States and Belgium was conveyed before the United States-Belgium postal convention. Also, it shows examples of mail carried over a number of different routes between the United States and Belgium. The following currency abbreviations were used: "d" for pence; "kr." for kroner; "s" for shilling; "sgr." for silbergroschen. □

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ADDITIONAL ANSWERS TO PROBLEM COVERS IN ISSUE 192

The previous issue of the *Chronicle* Cover Corner (#195, August 2002) experienced some paper shuffling between the cover photo (Figure 2) and the text. We will attempt to rectify this now:

Route Agent Lewis Kaufman submitted a third cover with a cachet in oval reading "HAVE YOUR / LETTERS DIRECTED / TO YOUR / STREET AND NUMBER". This cover is shown as Figure 1 in this issue – the same illustration shown as Figure 2 in *Chronicle* 195, but erroneously described as "misplaced so we can't show it at this time." Route Agent R.H. Byne advises that this cover originated at Chebanse, Illinois. It was prepaid with a 3¢ adhesive and charged "DUE / 2" in circle adjacent to a boxed "ADV. / AUG 1 / 1865."

Two previous covers with the same cachet appeared in Issues #192 and #194. The first, an unpaid Army Letter handstamped with two different strikes of "DUE 3"; the second, prepaid with a 3¢ adhesive, but no postage due. Thus, the three were charged different amounts of postage though each was carried to Detroit, Michigan at the single rate.

Presumably the different rates were charged as follows:

1. The CHEBANSE cover, Figure 1, was properly prepaid 3¢ as a single rate letter but was charged 2¢ due to pay for advertising to locate the addressee.

2. The NASHVILLE cover, Figure 2, was properly prepaid with a 3¢ adhesive to pay the standard single rate.

3. The OLD POINT COMFORT letter, Figure 3, the original one with the cachet, was endorsed as an Army Letter. It was charged "DUE 3" without penalty for being unpaid since soldiers' and sailors' mail was permitted to be unpaid to the addressee during the Civil War.

Thereby we have three examples of different single letter rates:

1. 3¢ paid plus 2¢ due
2. 3¢ prepaid
3. 3¢ postage due

Thus far, all with the indicated cachet were addressed to Detroit and apparently received the cachet there. Do any Route Agents have the same, or similar, instructional cachets to other destinations?

ANSWERS TO PROBLEM COVERS IN ISSUES 194 AND 195

Figure 4 appeared as a cover in Issue #194, submitted by Route Agent Dennis Schmidt. The cover originated in San Francisco, California on 3¢ Post Office Dept. stationery, Scott No. U02. It is addressed to Guatemala County [*sic*] with preprinted "Registered Business" and "OFFICIAL," and is handstruck with a red "2." Agent Schmidt asks how this cover was treated regarding the letter and registration rates.

No agents submitted responses as yet. Therefore, our Associate Editor Greg Sutherland has done research resulting in the following:

a. A postal convention between the U.S. and Guatemala was effective 1 September 1862 which governed how mails were to be exchanged between the two countries.

b. Each country was to levy, collect and retain its own postage as follows: 10¢ U.S. per half ounce, with two reales (25¢ U.S. currency) collected in Guatemala.

c. Mail was to be exchanged in closed sealed bags or pouches at either San Francisco or New York within the U.S. and Guatemala City within Guatemala. Mail in both directions was to be handled by the U.S. Consul and resident Mail Agent at Panama, New Granada.

d. Mail dispatched from or addressed to a New York Exchange Office was to comprise mails originated in or destined for the Atlantic States and Territories; and mail

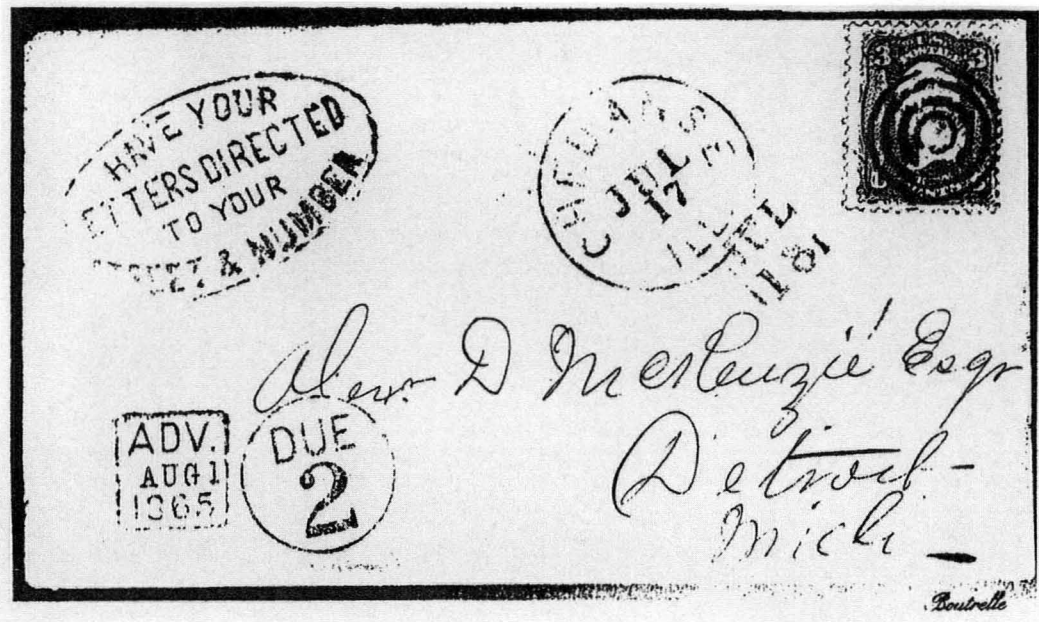


Figure 1. Chebanse, Ill. [1865] cover to Detroit, Mich., "Due 2"



Figure 2. Nashville, Tenn. [1865] cover to Detroit, Mich.



Figure 3. Old Point Comfort [1865] cover to Detroit, Mich., "Due 3"

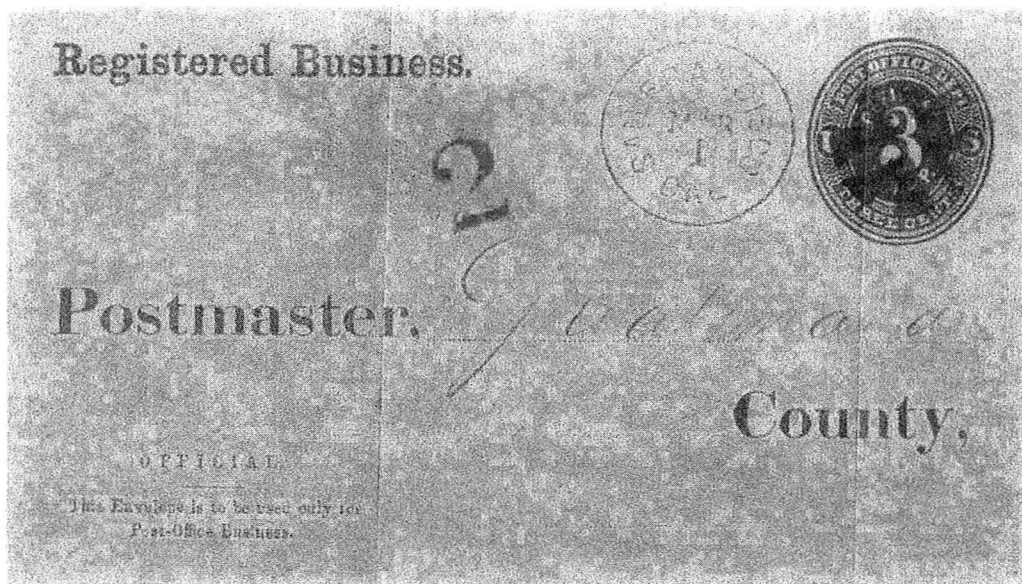


Figure 4. Official P.O. Dept. stationery registered to Guatemala

addressed to or dispatched from the San Francisco office was to comprise mails originating in or destined for the Pacific States and Territories.

e. It was not found whether this postal convention was amended during the interim between its inception and 1 August 1881 when Guatemala became a UPU member.

f. Usage of U.S. Official Department envelopes was valid from July 1, 1873 to July 5, 1884.

Figures 5A and 5B show the front and reverse of a cover submitted by Route Agent Phil Russell which has a "STEAM / SHIP" marking similar to that shown in Figure 1 of the Foreign Mails section of *Chronicle* #193. He states it is a current price list, dateline Havana, 28th March 1854. It was sent to "Mess C.F. Bennett & Co. / St. John's / Nfdld." where it arrived "AP 17 / 1854" per the arrival CDS and two transit CDS, St. Andrews and St. Johns, New Brunswick, all on the reverse.

No ship name nor originating markings are given on the cover, but Agent Russell surmises that it was taken on board a ship coming from Chagres to Havana on its way to New York. The accountancy handstamps on the obverse, a black "15" and a blue-green "9," need an explanation. And Agent Russell has five other covers to St. John's, Nfdld., some with different markings, viz., Boston and New York 10¢ transit handstamps, which he may want to share in subsequent Cover Corners.

Route Agent Yamil Kouri quickly submitted the following explanation, calling this "a straightforward routing from Cuba to British North America":

On April 6, 1851, a Postal Convention between the U.S. and Canada went into effect that established new postal rates for mail between the two nations. Postage for letters from the U.S. to Canada was set at 10¢ or 15¢ if the distance traveled in the U.S. was under or over 3,000 miles, respectively. Mail could be either totally paid or wholly unpaid, but partial payment was not recognized. Canada kept the equivalent of 5¢ and the U.S. kept 5¢ or 10¢ depending on the distance traveled. These rates were officially in effect until March 1864 although some Canadian provinces may have changed earlier than others.

The 15¢ rate for U.S. letters could only apply to letters from the west coast, which are quite scarce. However, steamship mail from the Caribbean to Canada was often rated 15¢. In my experience, the vast majority of "15¢ rate" letters during this period originated in Cuba. There are a couple of prepaid covers on which U.S. stamps were likely applied in Cuba, but most of the correspondence was sent unpaid.

The subject cover, Figure 5A & 5B, was carried by steamer into New York where the bold "STEAM / SHIP" and the "15" [cents] were applied. Upon arrival in Canada, the large "9" [pence] was applied. This was equivalent to 15¢ U.S. in Canadian currency.

PROBLEM COVERS FOR THIS ISSUE

The Figure 6 cover was posted in Bewoley, England and received two written comments: "unclaimed" and "Returned to me June 16 - 1864 - I posted it again same day unpaid." It has five handstamps on the front:

- a British circle with straightline "BEWOLEY / AU 18 / 63" in black;
- double oval "HELD FOR / POSTAGE" in blue;
- "3 / CENTS" rocker in black
- "CHIC[AGO AM. PKT. / SEP] 4 / 24" in blue;
- circle "U.S. NOTES 2 [or 3] 9" in blue.

And one on the back: a double circle "FORT SCOTT / Nov ? / KAN" in blue.

We would request that our Route Agents:

1. Identify the sequence of application of the six handstamps
2. Discuss the use of the "HELD FOR POSTAGE" handstamp and where it was applied
3. Explain the following accountancy markings on the cover
 - a. "3 CENTS"
 - b. "CHICAGO AM. PKT. / 24"
 - c. "U.S. NOTES / 29" or "39"

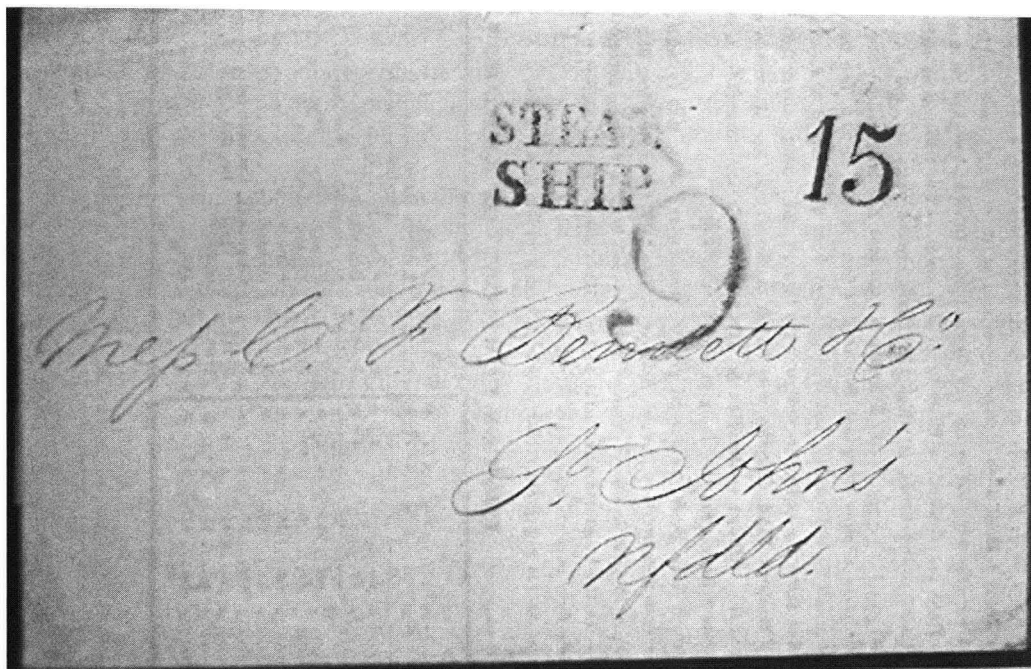


Figure 5A. Front of steamship cover to St. John's, Newfoundland

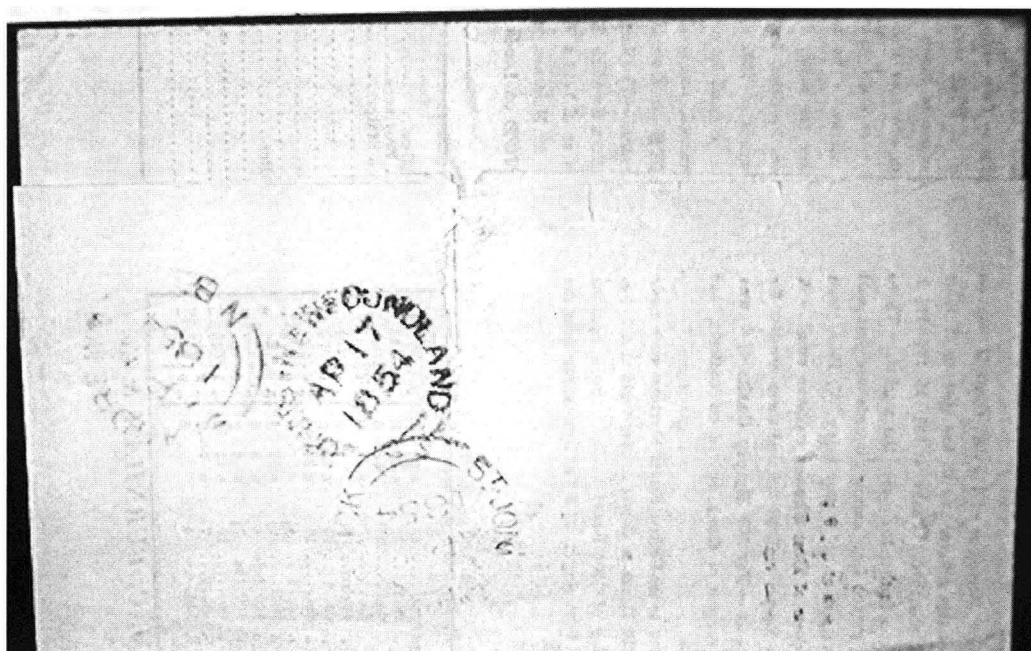


Figure 5B. Reverse of cover to St. John's, Newfoundland

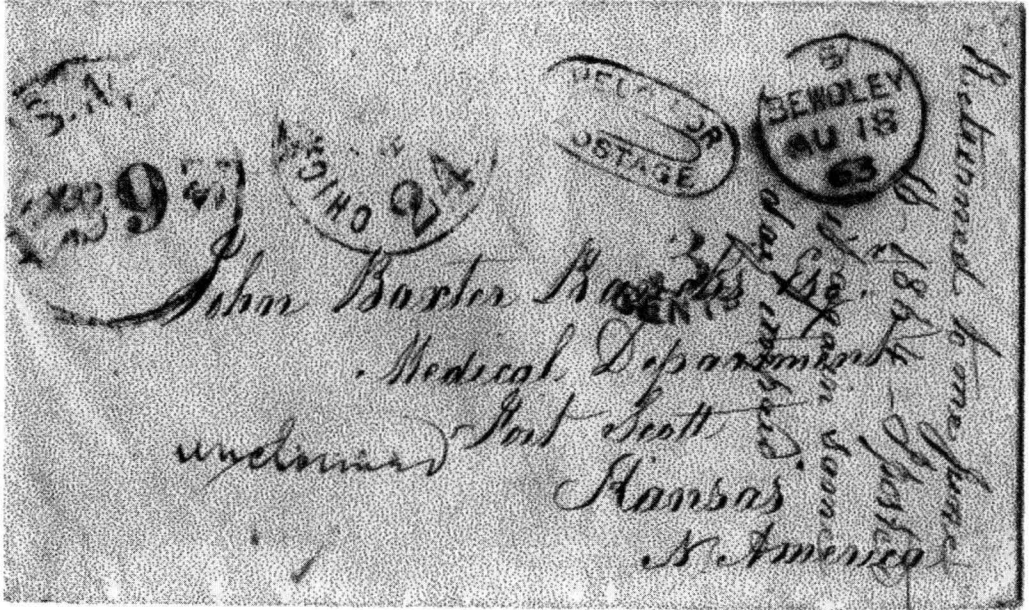


Figure 6A. England to Fort Scott, Kansas, via Chicago Am. Pkt.

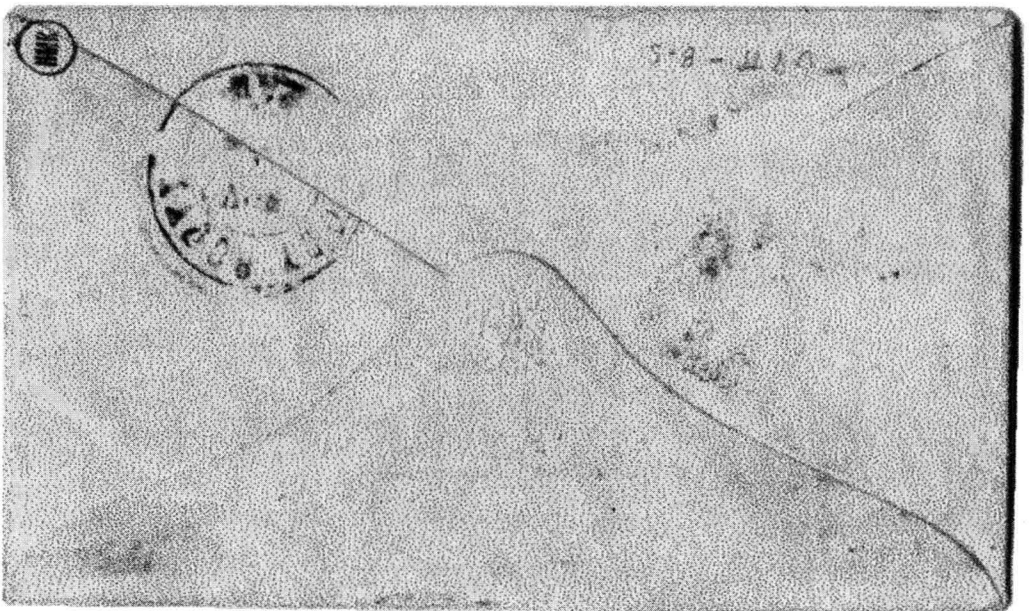


Figure 6B. Reverse of Figure 6A, England to Fort Scott cover

Please send to The Cover Corner Editor your answers to the problem covers for this issue, and any further discussion of previous answers to other problem covers, as soon as possible, preferably within two weeks of receiving your *Chronicle*. The "go to press" deadline for the February 2003 Cover Corner is January 5, 2003. I can receive mail at 9068 Fontainebleau Terrace, Cincinnati, OH 45231-4808 and via an e-mail address: RWCARLIN@aol.com.

New examples of problem covers are always needed for The Cover Corner. High resolution copiers, either black and white or colored images, have proven to be quite successful in reproducing. Please send two copies of each cover including the reverse if it has significant markings. We can also use digital images, but please coordinate first before sending diskettes, Zip disks or e-mail attachments. It is also important to identify the color of markings on covers submitted in black and white. Thanks.

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