

# The Chronicle

of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues



One of these things is not like the other: At top, the upper portion of a newly-discovered die state for the 2¢ 1869 small-numeral essay, which features a mounted post rider. Below it, the same area from a die proof of the completed design. Can you see the differences? For more, see Sam McNeil's explanatory article in our Essay-Proof section, page 237.

August 2014

Volume 66, No. 3

Whole No. 243

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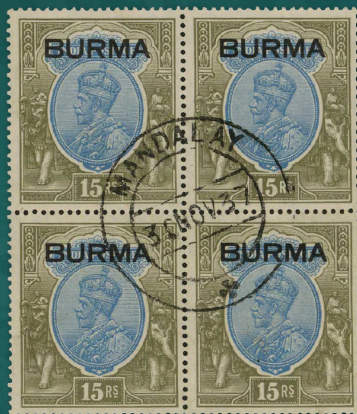
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# The Chronicle

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## **IN THIS ISSUE**

Collectors of transatlantic covers have long been aware of the Allan Line, a Canadian enterprise launched in the 1850s whose steamers carried mail between Quebec (or Portland in winter) and Liverpool. But little has been written about the vast Canadian Grand Trunk railway (GTR) that fed mails into the Allen Line, from interior Canada and from many points in the American midwest. In a major article in our Foreign Mails section, James Allen and Dwayne Littauer join forces to explore the GTR's relationship with Chicago, Detroit and Portland exchange-office mails. This initial installment, based on extensive research in Canadian archival sources not previously mined by philatelists, is largely devoted to the evolution of the GTR, and the transit-mail system that it brought into being. A concluding installment, to be published in our November issue, will analyze covers that passed through the Detroit and Portland offices and will provide tracings and usage data for all of the markings known to have been employed by those two exchange offices.

This *Chronicle* originated more than 60 years ago as a mimeographed newsletter for a study group of collectors plating the 3¢ 1851-57 stamps. In the 1851 section this issue, Rob Lund takes us back to those origins, revisiting what Carroll Chase first designated as "alpha plates" of the perforated 3¢ stamps. Lund's article provides a very useful update on current plating progress and includes photos of several unique plate-number copies.

Our cover this issue features two images from an article by a newcomer to these pages, Sam McNiel, RA 4701, who has a special interest in the proofs and essays of the 1869 stamps. In closely examining his essay-proof holdings, McNiel has made several important discoveries, the first of which is revealed in our Essay-Proof section on page 237. We are planning more from McNiel in future issues.

In our Bank Note section this month, John Barwis, current president of our Society, presents the results of laboratory research designed to determine the different paper types used on the 3¢ Bank Note stamps of 1870, 1873, 1879 and 1881. Some of the results are surprising and contradict the conventional wisdom. For example, Barwis found no evidence to support the notion that the later Bank Note stamps were printed on newsprint, a cheap paper made from log pulp. His analysis indicates the fiber basis of 3¢ Bank Note papers was always cotton, never wood pulp. This article is adapted from a paper presented in November 2012 at the first International Symposium on Analytical Methods in Philately.

Our 1847 section features an article from Roland H. Cipolla II on domestic printed-matter rates and uses during the 1845-1851 period. The focus is on printed matter franked with 1847 stamps. As the author makes clear, such items are extremely scarce.

For approximately ten years in the 1850s and 1860s, individual postmasters used handstamps that read "POST OFFICE BUSINESS FREE" or "P. O. BUSINESS FREE." These markings were almost always struck on covers sent to other post offices. Essentially, such covers are free-franked letters that lack a written frank. In our stampless section this issue, James W. Milgram examines these markings and their uses.

In our 1869 section, Stephen Tedesco presents the results of a search of New York's daily newspapers around the middle of March, 1869. The result sheds new light on the earliest known use of at least one of the low-value 1869 stamps.

There's so much in this issue that I don't have sufficient space to describe it all. Check the Table of Contents and see for yourself. ■

## PRESTAMP & STAMPLESS PERIOD

JAMES W. MILGRAM, EDITOR

### “POST OFFICE BUSINESS FREE”

JAMES W. MILGRAM, M. D.

In the first half of the 19th century an employee of the Post Office Department, writing a letter about the business of the department, would free frank the letter. Usually a postmaster would just sign his name, stamp the letter “FREE” and add the town’s postmark. But occasionally a postmaster would actually use the terminology “Post Office Business Free”—as shown on the stampless folded lettersheet in Figure 1. The franking on this cover contains the postmaster’s signature and an explanation—“P.O. Business, W. R. Southward, P.M.”—along with blue handstamped “FREE” and a matching arc townmark designating “BLOOMINGBURG, O. Dec 18 [1836].” The letter is addressed to a religious publisher in New York City, informing the publisher that a subscriber is not picking up his newspaper. In the era before prepayment of newspapers was widely embraced, the non-acceptance of unpaid periodicals was a commonplace and costly occurrence that consumed a great deal of post office time and expense.

To repeat, during the first half of the century, free franks were the way official letters were sent. Figure 2 shows an 1852 letter from the Post Office Department in Washington, D.C., sent to the postmaster in Keweenaw Bay, Michigan. The letter content concerns locks. The cover bears an unusual fancy handstamp (“OFFICIAL BUSINESS”) of the department, to which has been added the signed free frank of a post office clerk.

Beginning in the 1850s, covers with printed contents and partially printed addresses including “POST OFFICE BUSINESS” were occasionally sent with postmarks and hand-

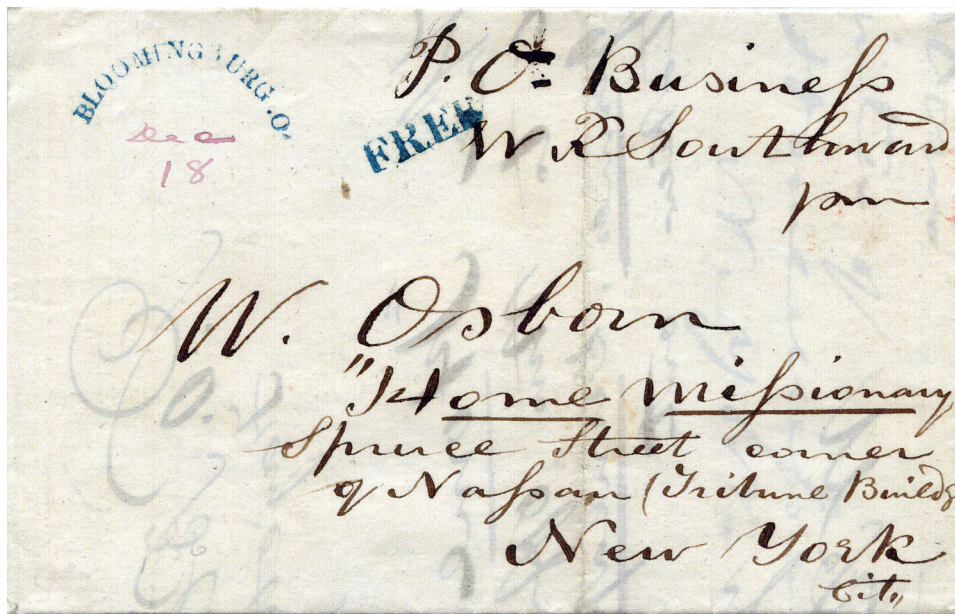


Figure 1. Free franked cover endorsed “P.O. Business, W. R. Southward, P.M.” with blue “FREE” and arc “BLOOMINGBURG, O. Dec 18 [1836]” town postmark, on a cover addressed to the *Home Missionary*, a religious newspaper in New York.

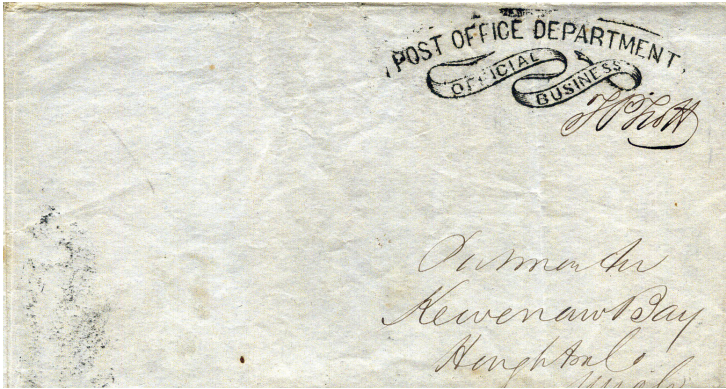


Figure 2. Cover of letter concerning mail locks, sent from the Post Office Department in Washington in 1852. The cover bears an unusual handstamp indicating the letter is “OFFICIAL BUSINESS” and the additional franking of T. P. Trott, a POD clerk.

written free franks. The upper image in Figure 3 shows a cover from the postmaster at Springfield, Massachusetts (franked “A.W. Chapin P.M.”) sent in 1853 to the same publisher as the cover in Figure 1. The envelope bears a preprinted legend (“Post Office Business”) and a partially printed address “To the Publishers of...” Figure 3 also shows the mostly printed content of the enclosed letter, a form that contains the same message as the Figure 1 letter: your publication is not taken out of this office, please discontinue it. Evidently this was a big enough problem in Springfield to justify special preprinted forms.

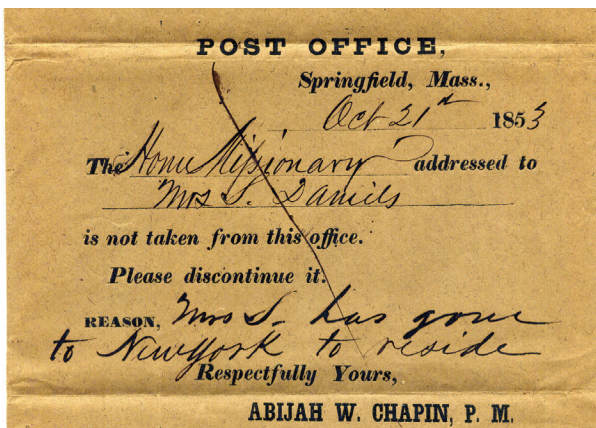
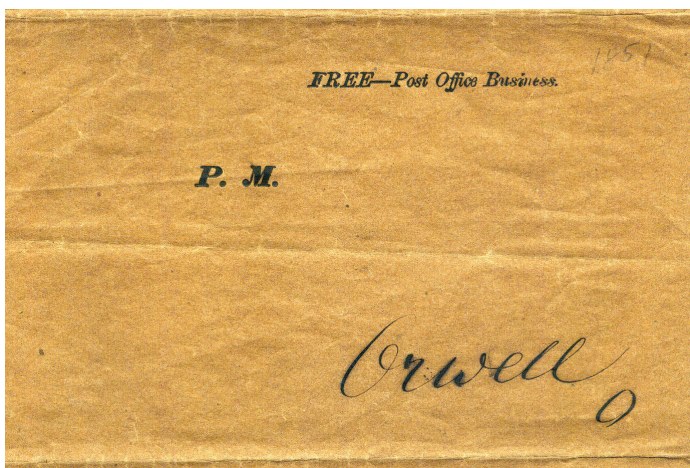


Figure 3. Above, another cover to the *Home Missionary*, sent in 1853. Bearing the printed legend “Post Office Business” and a partially printed address, the cover is franked by “A.W. Chapin P.M.” and post-marked “SPRINGFIELD MS OCT 22”. At left, in the form letter within (reduced), the postmaster tells the publisher his paper is not taken out of the post office and should be discontinued.

Figure 4. At right, 1851 cover with printed "FREE—Post Office Business" and "P.M." as part of address. There are no handstamped postmarks. Below, the content of the cover, a printed notice from the postmaster at Cleveland, informing the postmaster at Orwell, Ohio, about new procedures and regulations involving Cleveland as a distributing post office.



POST OFFICE, CLEVELAND, }  
June 1, 1851. }

SIR—This office having been made a Distributing Post Office, I take this method of calling your notice to the late instructions of the P. M. General in regard to distribution, which you will find below.

You will observe that all letters addressed to other States, which pass through this office on their way to their destination, and which are not addressed to a D. P. O. for *delivery*, should be sent to Cleveland D. P. O.

DAN'L M. HASKELL, P. M.

**Official—Instructions to Postmasters.**  
POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, May 8th, 1851.

In view of the great increase in the number of letters to be mailed, and the consequent increase of labor in post-offices likely to be produced by the law passed at the last session of Congress, "reducing the rates of postage," &c; in view also of the fact that by reducing the number of packages required to be made under the existing rule of distribution, the labor of making up the mails can be materially diminished, it is thought proper to adopt the following regulations:

*It is therefore ordered,* That on and after the first day of June, 1851, the following be substituted in place of the 81st regulation, as published in the "Post Office Laws and Regulations," edition of 1847.

Postmasters will carefully assort the letters deposited in their offices for mailing, and will mail them as follows, to wit:

1st. Every Postmaster in the New England States will mail and post-bill *direct*, to the place to which they are addressed, all letters for post-offices in his own or any other *New England State*. Every other postmaster will mail and post-bill *direct* to the place addressed, all letters for his own State or Territory; and *all* postmasters will mail and post-bill *direct* to the place addressed, all letters for post-offices in other States and Territories which should not pass through a distributing office in their proper route to the office of delivery.

Every postmaster will also post-bill and mail *direct*, all letters on which the instruction "mail *direct*" shall be written.

2d. Letters not required by the foregoing provisions to be mailed *direct*, shall be post-billed and mailed to the distributing office through which they should *first* pass, on the proper route to the place of their destination, *unless the mailing office be a distributing office.*

3d. All letters received at a distributing office

or distribution, or deposited therein for mailing, and which are addressed to places within the State or Territory where such distributing office is situated, or to places not more than one hundred miles distant from such distributing office, or which would not pass through a distributing office on their proper route to the office of delivery, shall be mailed *direct*; but if the office of delivery is more than one hundred miles from such distributing office, and the letters should properly pass through one or more distributing offices, they shall be mailed and post-billed to the last distributing office through which they are to pass, on their route to the office of delivery. (Further instructions as to the mailing of letters of which special accounts are required, will be addressed to, and affect only the distributing offices.)

4th. Each package containing letters mailed and post-billed *direct*, should be plainly directed on the outside, with the name of the office to which it is to be sent, and of the State in which such office is situated.

Packages containing letters for distribution, should be plainly directed in the same manner, with the addition of the letters "D. P. O.," (for distributing Post Office,) after the name of the office.

5th. Every Post Master, Special Agent, or other officer of the Department, will report to the Post Master General each case which may come to his knowledge, in which any Post Master shall, after the first day of October next, have so mailed letters as to subject them to more distributions than are authorized by the foregoing instructions.

Postmasters are notified that the post offices at Cleveland, Ohio, and Richmond, Virginia, have been made distributing offices from the first day of June next; and that the offices at Cumberland Gap, Kentucky, Huntsville, Alabama, and Petersburg, Virginia, will not be distributing offices after the first of July next.

N. K. HALL, Post Master General.

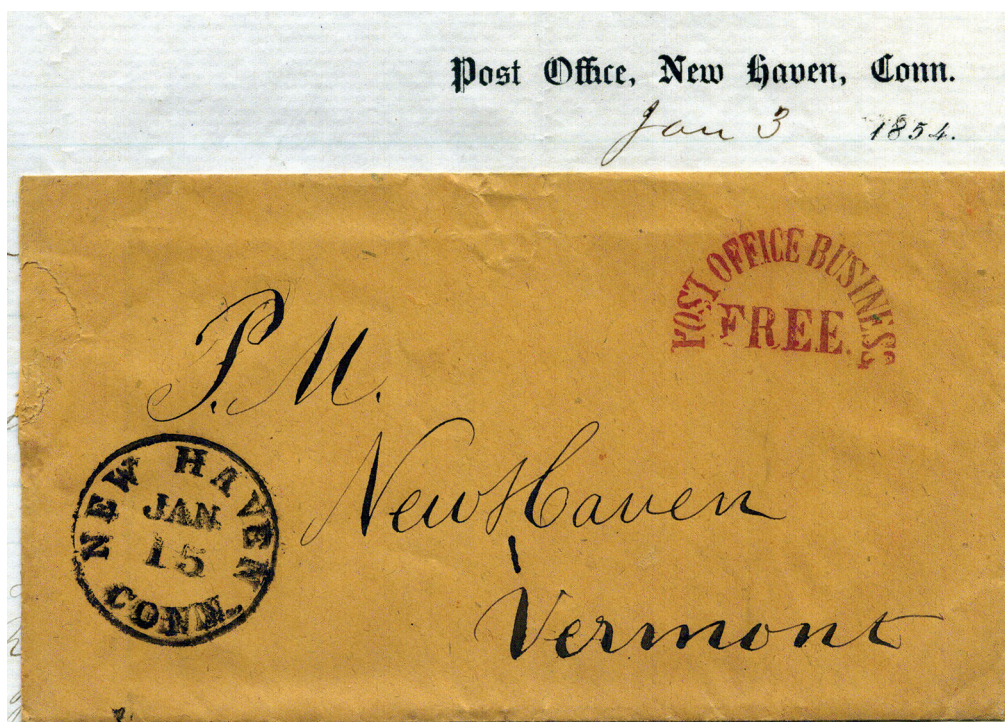


Figure 5. “POST OFFICE BUSINESS/ FREE” in arch format in red ink with black “NEW HAVEN CONN. JAN. 15 [1854]” circular datestamp on an cover addressed to the postmaster at New Haven, Vermont. At top is the upper portion of the enclosed letter, dated at the post office on January 3, 1854. This is a fairly early use of this marking type.

The earliest unfranked Post Office Business Free cover that I have seen is represented by the two items shown in Figure 4. The envelope in Figure 4 carried the official printed circular shown beneath it. The cover bears a printed “FREE–Post Office Business” and “P.M.” as part of the address, thus restricting the use of these envelopes to correspondence to postmasters. The cover shown is addressed to the postmaster at Orwell, Ohio. Also shown in Figure 4 are the contents, an interesting circular issued on the first day of the new rates in 1851, describing the responsibilities of the Cleveland post office in its newly-designated role as a distributing post office.

For a period of approximately ten years in the 1850s and 1860s, individual postmasters used handstamps that read “POST OFFICE BUSINESS FREE” or “P. O. BUSINESS FREE”. These markings were almost always struck on mail that was sent to other post offices. Essentially, the covers are free-franked letters that lack a written frank. A listing of these markings appears in Volume 3 of the current *American Stampless Cover Catalog* (pages 266-267), part of a larger listing of auxiliary markings.

The earliest examples of these “POST OFFICE BUSINESS FREE” markings are dated 1852 or 1853. They were used on form letters that postmasters had to send to one another. An example of an early use on a cover from New Haven, Connecticut, to New Haven, Vermont, is shown in Figure 5. Given the identical town names, it should not surprise us that official correspondence passed between these two offices. The marking “POST OFFICE BUSINESS/FREE” in arch format is struck in red ink. The postmark “NEW HAVEN CONN. JAN. 15 [1854]” is in black. The letter within, whose heading is shown at the top of the Figure 5 photo, is dated Jan. 3, 1854. The Connecticut New Haven used black ink for these “POST OFFICE BUSINESS/FREE” handstamps in the later 1850s. The covers

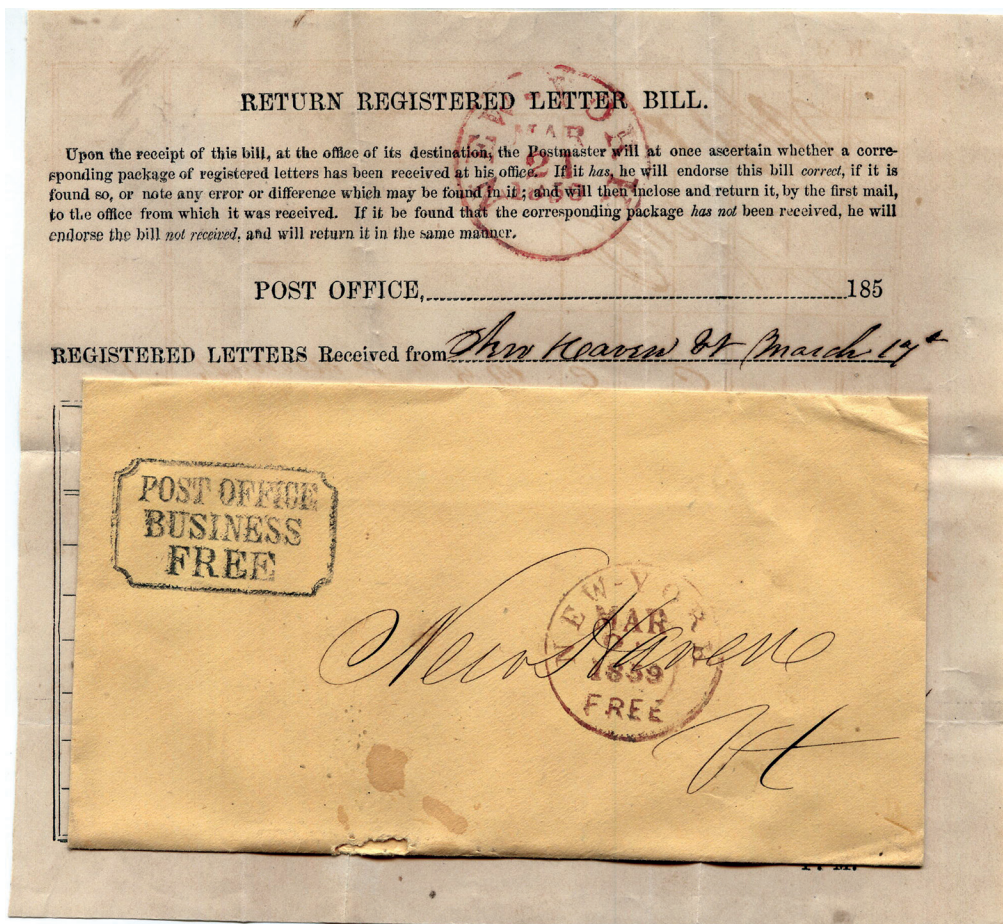


Figure 6. “POST OFFICE/BUSINESS/FREE,” within a stylized rectangle, and red “NEW-YORK FREE MAR 21 1859,” both struck on a cover sent to the post office at New Haven, Vermont. The enclosure, also shown, is a return registered letter bill, which bears a different New York circular datestamp showing the same date.

were typically addressed “Postmaster” at whatever town the letter was sent to. Neither the postmaster of the town of origin nor the postmaster of the town of destination was specifically named.

In July, 1855, when registered mail was inaugurated, the regulations called for the sending of a return registered letter bill to the post office of origin from the post office that delivered the registered letter. The reader should be aware that all letters sent through the mails were accompanied by a letter bill, from one postmaster to another, on which the letters were listed. This bill was discarded after delivery by the receiving post office. A new feature of registered mail was the creation of two bills, one to travel with the letter to the receiving post office and a second to travel with the first bill but then to be returned by separate mail to the sending post office, to serve as notice that the letter had been delivered. This was known as a “Return Registered Letter Bill.”

Envelopes bearing the handstamps discussed in this article were widely used to carry these documents. Handstamps saved the postmaster the time and effort of having to free frank all the envelopes involved in returning registered letter bills. In a large city post office such as Boston or New York, this was no insignificant amount of time. And rather than the postmaster, clerks could do the work.

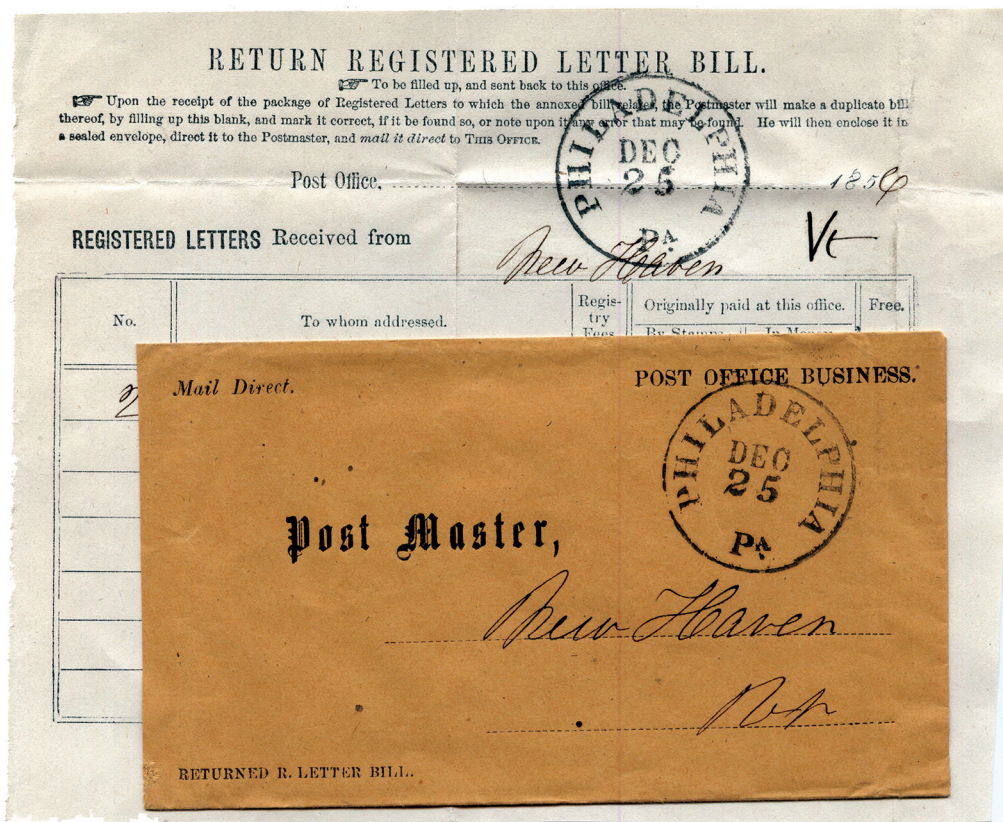




Figure 7. “P.O. BUSINESS/ FREE” in double arch and black “BURLINGTON VT. NOV 17” on another cover sent to the postmaster at New Haven, Vermont. Also shown is the content, a return registered letter bill from 1857, accounting for two registered letters which each paid 5¢ for registration and 3¢ for postage.

Figure 6 shows an envelope and the enclosed return registered letter bill sent from New York City to the postmaster of New Haven, Vermont. Note the cover was simply addressed to the town; the markings on the cover made clear it was official business for the postmaster. For this purpose New York used a distinctive boxed rectangle reading “POST OFFICE/BUSINESS/FREE.” A special red circular datestamp with integral “FREE” was also struck on the cover. The receipt within was marked with a different circular datestamp, without “FREE.”

A similar correspondence from 1857, also to New Haven, Vermont, but this time from Burlington, is shown in Figure 7. Here the markings on the cover are “P.O. BUSINESS/ FREE” in a double arch, and a “BURLINGTON VT. NOV 17” circular datestamp. The return registered letter bill, which was enclosed, was marked the previous day with a different CDS device. The numbers “9” and “10” shown on the letter bill are the registry numbers that would have been marked on the front of the covers described in the bill. The letter bill also notes that for each letter, the 5¢ registry fee was prepaid in cash, and the 3¢ letter rate postage was paid by stamps.



**Figure 8. Also from the New Haven, Vermont trove: Preprinted “POST OFFICE BUSINESS” and “RETURNED R. LETTER BILL” on cover postmarked “PHILADELPHIA PA. DEC 25” with the same circular datestamp struck on the enclosed return registered letter bill. Christmas day was not a holiday at the Philadelphia post office.**

Envelopes with these Post Office Business Free markings were used for various purposes including ordinary correspondence between postmasters. So these handstamps can be found on different types of official mail from postmasters. The variety in their forms is due to the fact that postmasters created the markings individually for their own use; the markings did not originate in Washington. Stamps existed during the period of usage of these markings, but the markings were applied to covers that would not bear stamps because they travelled free under the franking privilege.

A few larger post offices had special envelopes printed for return registered letter bills. Philadelphia and Buffalo are two examples. Figure 8, also from the New Haven, Vermont trove, shows Philadelphia’s printed “POST OFFICE BUSINESS” legend on cover with “RETURNED R. LETTER BILL” printed at lower left. Both the cover and the enclosure are postmarked “PHILADELPHIA PA. DEC 25”—indicating the postmaster was working even on Christmas Day.

Figure 9 shows yet another official letter relating to unclaimed periodicals. The upper image shows an envelope on which portions of the address “POST OFFICE BUSINESS” and “FREE” and other address information have been preprinted. Figure 9 also shows the preprinted letter content, indicating that two individuals have refused to pick up (and pay for) their issues of *National American*. The cover was postmarked “NORRISTOWN Pa. APR 23, 1858” but there is no free frank; the enclosed form letter bears the same handstamp. So while the majority of the Post Office Business Free covers seem to have been

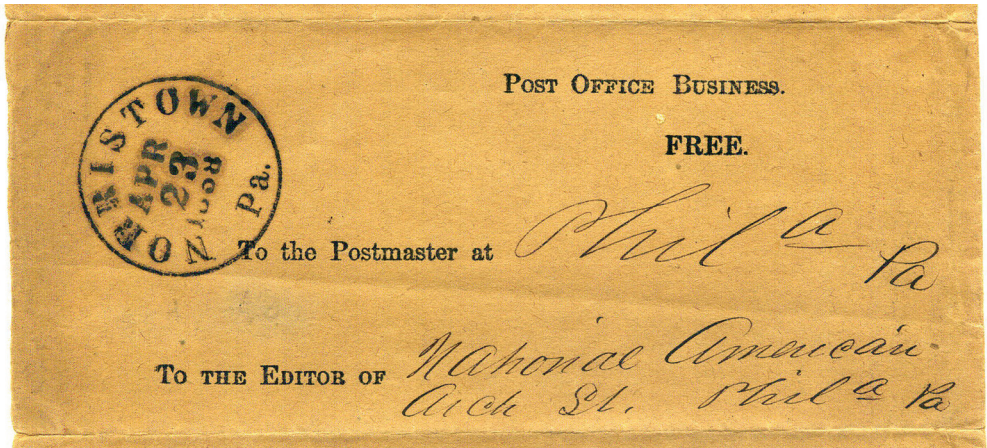
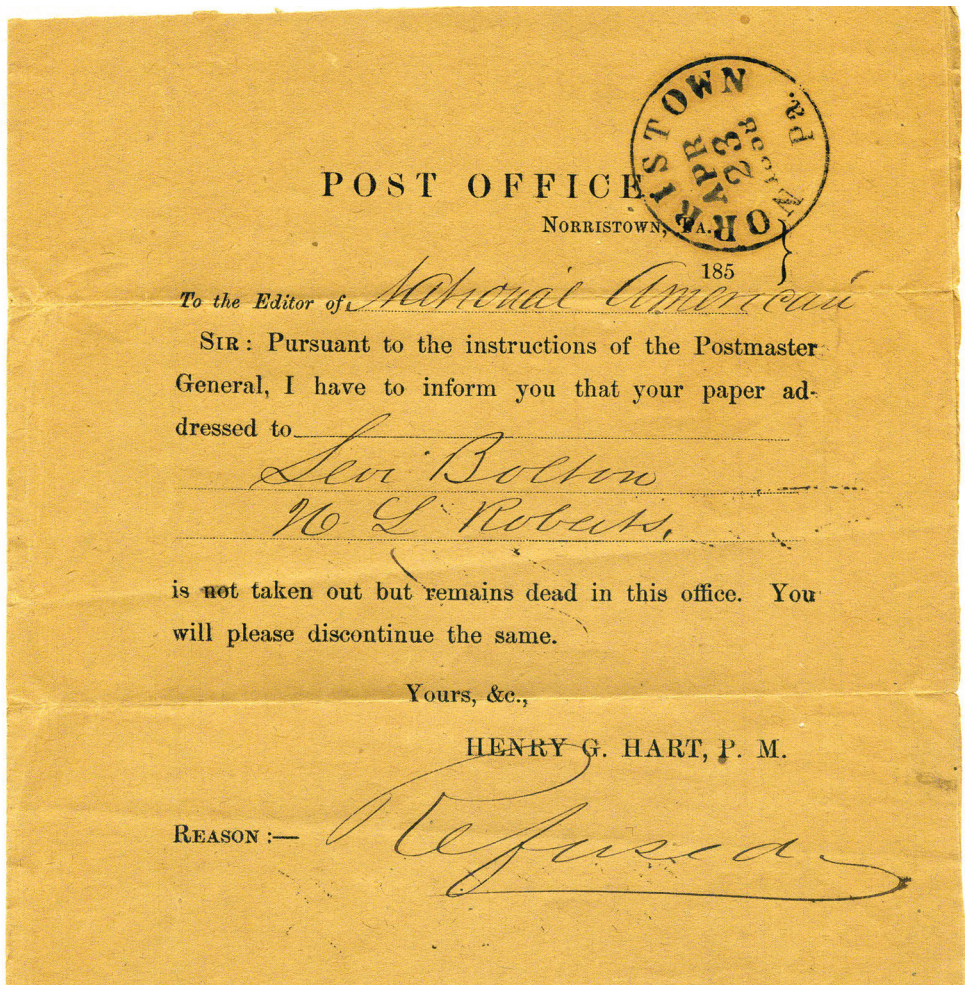


Figure 9. Above, cover with preprinted "POST OFFICE BUSINESS" and "FREE" with partially printed address, postmarked "NORRISTOWN, Pa. APR 23, 1858" and addressed to Philadelphia. Below, the contents of the cover are a printed form letter postmarked on the same date, asking a Philadelphia publisher to discontinue sending a newspaper to an erstwhile subscriber who refuses to pick it up and pay for it.



used to return registered letter bills, other uses exist. When the contents are not present, it is often not possible to determine the specific use.



Figure 10. A double use: “POST OFFICE BUSINESS FREE” in black circle with black straightline “ZOAR. O. OCT. 14” [1851] and manuscript postmaster’s free frank, sent to the postmaster at Cincinnati. The Cincinnati postmaster then added his reply, readdressed the cover and sent it back to the originating postmaster at Zoar.

The cover in Figure 10 shows a different style of Post Office Business Free marking, struck on a turned cover that carried official business in both directions. The cover originated at Zoar, Ohio. The letter within, from Zoar postmaster J. M. Brimler, is dated 14 October 1851 and discusses a circular about supply blanks. The Zoar postmaster struck the cover with his straightline marking and added his black circular “POST OFFICE BUSINESS FREE” handstamp. At Cincinnati, postmaster J. F. Noble penned his response beneath



Figure 11. “POST OFFICE BUSINESS/FREE” in arch and “NEW ORLEANS LA OCT 19, 1861” applied during the Civil War, when Louisiana was part of the Confederacy.

Brimler's inquiry, crossed out the "Cincinnati" in the address, replaced it with "Zoar" and sent this turned cover back to the originating postmaster. Thus the circular "POST OFFICE BUSINESS FREE" handstamp did duty twice on the same cover.

Four Post Office Business Free handstamps are known from the Confederacy. These are from Albany (Ga.), New Orleans, Richmond and Savannah. Figure 11 shows a New Orleans cover with "POST OFFICE BUSINESS/FREE" in an arch. The postmark is "NEW ORLEANS LA. OCT 19 1861" which is after the Confederate postal system began to function. The addressee is the postmaster in Attalaville, Attala County, Mississippi. Unfortunately, none of the surviving Confederate covers contain contents, but we know they are not for registered bills since that service did not exist in the South after June 1, 1861.

The listing of Post Office Business Free handstamps in the stampless cover catalog is a good one, but updating is still required. If readers of this article possess markings not listed in the catalog, please contact the writer at the address shown on the masthead page of this publication. A new section for these markings is planned for the forthcoming revision of the catalog, soon to be published by our Society. ■

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## **DOMESTIC PRINTED-MATTER RATES AND USES: 1845-1851**

**ROLAND H. CIPOLLA II**

This article examines printed matter rates in effect during the period 1 July 1845 through 30 June 1851, and shows examples of interesting uses. Printed matter rates during this time period are complex and can be confusing. For simplicity's sake this article will focus only on printed sheets (what we today call circulars), newspapers and pamphlets. These three types are the only surviving examples currently identified and available to philatelists. Within this article the author uses "printed sheet" and "circular" interchangeably.

To understand how printed matter rates were affected by the Postal Act of 1845, one must first examine the rates that were in effect for the 20 years preceding this change.<sup>1</sup>

### **Rates prior to 1845**

Single printed sheets, not being a newspaper and without any writing, were charged 1¢ for carriage under 50 miles, 1½¢ for 50 to 100 miles and 2¢ over 100 miles. Pamphlets published periodically and transported in the mails to a subscriber were charged 1½¢ per sheet up to 100 miles and 2½¢ for any distance greater. If not published periodically, the rate was 4¢ up to 100 miles and 6¢ for any greater distance. The "sheet" referenced is a royal sheet measuring 20 inches by 25 inches, therefore 500 square inches. The Postal Act of 1827 amended the paper size.<sup>2</sup> For a half or quarter sheets the rate was cut in half: a half sheet sent less than 100 miles was ¾¢ and over 100 miles 1¼ cents. Non-subscription newspaper rates were 1¢ if sent under 100 miles and 1½ cents over 100 miles. Newspapers sent wholly within any state were fixed at 1¢. The term "newspaper," while widely used in the legislation, was not defined in any of the postal acts prior to 1845.

Printed matter had to be 100 percent printed. The Postal Act of March 3rd, 1825, Section 30, states: "Inclosing or concealing a letter or other thing, or any memorandum in writing, in a newspaper, pamphlet or magazine, subjects it to a single letter postage for each article of which the package is composed."

### **Postal Act of 1845**

The Postal Act of 1845,<sup>3</sup> which took effect 1 July 1845, is generally regarded as the most significant rate change in the history of the United States Post Office. The act embraced the concept of "cheap postage" long sought by postal reformers and by businesses. Though rates were drastically reduced (by up to 60 percent for letters), the reductions didn't apply to printed matter. Printed matter rates remained relatively stable or, as with the single printed sheet, were significantly increased. A summary of those changes follows:

The term "circular," in contrast to printed sheet, is first used within any United States postal act. The sheets are now defined as "printed or lithograph circulars, hand-bills, or advertisements, printed or lithographed on quarto-post." A quarto-post sheet of paper is one-quarter of a post sheet, which measured 17 by 22 inches—thus the origin of today's standard 8½ x 11 inch letter sheet. The rate was raised to 2¢ for each sheet, without regard to distance. The result was an increase of postage on a printed sheet traveling under 100 miles, while the allowable size was reduced. Two years later, with the Postal Act of March 3, 1847 the circular rate was again raised another 50 percent to 3¢.<sup>4</sup>



**Figure 1. Printed circular from New York City to Norwalk, Ohio, mailed on 25 July 1845, the first month of the new 2¢ rate. The printed content promotes dry goods.**

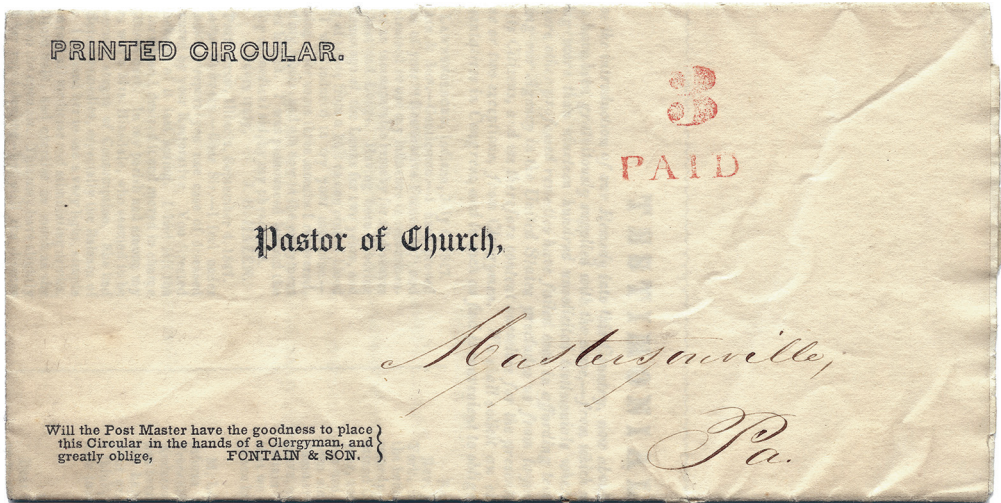
Additionally, in the Postal Act of 1845 the basis for rating a pamphlet was changed, from the number of sheets to weight in ounces. Postage was assessed at the rate of 2½¢ for each copy sent, not exceeding one ounce in weight, plus 1¢ for each additional ounce, without regard to distance.

Also, section 16 of the Postal Act of 3 March 1845 defined a newspaper for the first time: “Any printed publication issued in numbers, consisting of not more than two sheets and published at short intervals of not more than one month, conveying intelligence of passing events....” A maximum was set at 1,900 square inches. Any newspaper exceeding 1,900 square inches was classified as a pamphlet. Until March 1847 the rate for newspapers remained the same as before July 1845, except that those sent within 30 miles of the printer were allowed to go free. Effective March 1847 the newspaper rate was significantly increased, to 3¢ regardless of distance.

The Postmaster General reports from of the 1840s reveal that more than 92 percent of mails transported, both by item count and by weight, consisted of printed matter. Of that, the vast majority were newspapers and pamphlets. But numbers rarely tell the whole story. Of the millions of letters posted during this period, tens of thousands survive. Of the tens of millions of printed circulars carried by the post office during the same period, only a tiny number survive. Outside of institutions, from the 1845-51 period there are only around 40 recorded postally transmitted pamphlets and newspapers available to philately. Defying logic, of those 40 or so, only two bear stamps. Are there more out there? Assuredly so.

### **Printed circulars**

Within the period under discussion, thousands of domestically-used stampless circulars survive, with many very nice examples available to collectors. Figure 1 shows a folded circular sent in the first month of the new rate from New York City to Norwalk, Ohio. It bears a New York circular date stamp with integral stylized “2 cts.” dated 25 July (1845) and New York’s arc “PAID.” The printed content promotes a dry-goods concern and is dated “July 12, 1847.” This 13-day difference between 12 July and 25 July illustrates why



**Figure 2. Printed circular promoting a lung elixir, mailed around 25 March 1848 from Washington, D.C., to Masterville, Pennsylvania. The numeral “3” and a straightline “PAID” handstamp indicate prepayment of the newly-increased 3¢ circular rate.**

the printed date within a circular can never be relied upon to provide an accurate date of mailing.

Businesses were the vast majority of mailers sending intelligence or advertisements via printed sheets, most often in sizeable numbers for each mailing. Though prepayment of circulars was not required, businesses almost always prepaid, to assure the recipient was not offended by having to pay postage to receive an unsolicited ad. The 33 percent increase of the circular rate on 1 July 1845 by was largely borne by business and was very unpopular. Strangely though, in the Postal Act of March 1847, circular rates were raised another 50 percent—to a whopping 3¢. This caused outrage. In just 21 months circular rates increased 50-300 percent! So much for cheap postage.

Figure 2 shows a printed circular sent in March 1848 at the new rate of 3¢. The preprinted portion of the address includes “PRINTED CIRCULAR” and the cover was handstamped “3 PAID.” Sent from Washington D.C. to any church pastor in Mastersville, Pennsylvania, it offers free lung elixir to the congregation’s poor. It further states “We extend our offer to all denominations of Christians....” Note the legend at lower left: “Will the Post Master have the goodness to place this Circular in the hands of a clergyman...?” This form of targeted direct mail, quite effective in an era when the postmaster knew everyone in town, persisted into the 1890s.

Strangely, the Postal Act of 1847 neglected to state an effective date for the increase of the circular rate to 3¢. Therefore the implementation date fell to the postmasters. Figure 3 shows a circular with a printed Quaker dating (“Second Month, 1st, 1847”) inside. Since the printed sheet communicated a generic message, the printed date was of little significance. Mailed in New York City six weeks later, the cover was struck with the common “NEW-YORK/MAR 22/2cts” circular datestamp, representing the now-obsolete 2¢ circular rate. The next day it was struck with a brand-new CDS (“NEW-YORK/MAR 23/PAID/3cts”) confirming the new circular rate of 3¢. The red arc “PAID” is struck over the 3¢ CDS. The late Calvet Hahn speculated, and this author agrees, that this cover depicts the moment when the 1847 circular rate change occurred in New York City. Hahn also professed that the cover shows the first day of the new 3¢ rate and the earliest known example of the new red “NEW-YORK/date/PAID/3 cts.” integral rate marking.





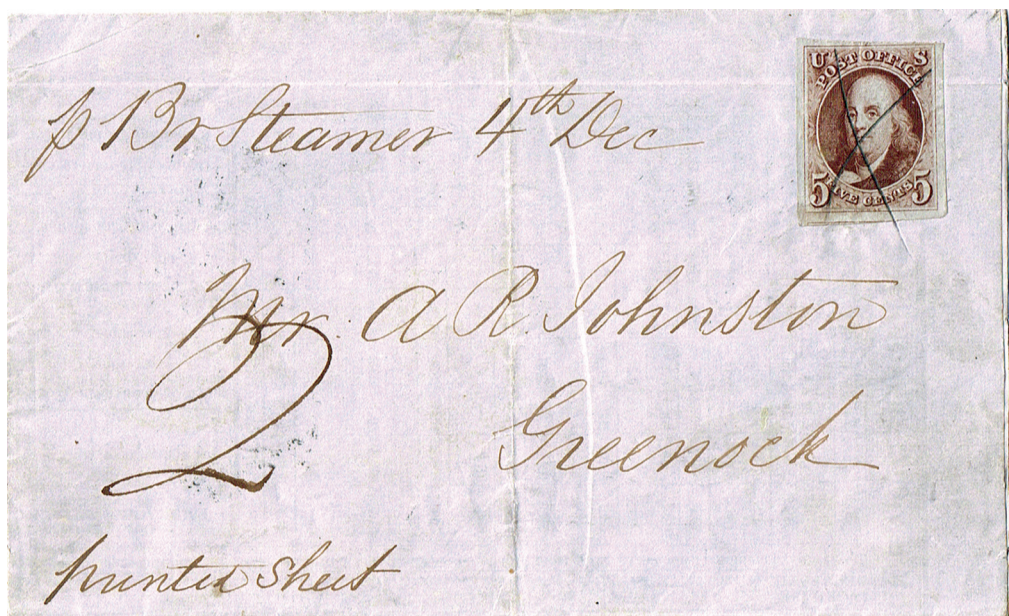
**Figure 3. Showing transition from 2¢ to 3¢ rate in New York City: Circular endorsed “Printed Circular” and “Mail Paid” in manuscript. Addressed to Jefferson, Chemung County, New York, the cover was initially struck with a red “NEW YORK MAR 22 2cts.” circular datestamp. The next day it was re-rated at the new 3¢ rate.**

Three months later, 1 July 1847 saw the release first regularly issued postage stamps of the United States. The 5¢ and 10¢ 1847 stamps were intended solely for the new reduced letter rates of 5¢ for under 300 miles and 10¢ cents for over 300 miles. Not included was a stamp to prepay the single printed sheet rate of 3¢. Given the massive volume of printed sheets then in the mails, and given that they were generally prepaid, the need should have been obvious.

Why were 5¢ 1847 stamps not used on circulars? Compared to 3¢, the 5¢ stamp was 66 percent more costly and the 10¢ stamp 333 percent more costly. Generally, business mailings involved multiple circulars. Placing a 5¢ stamp on a mailing of just 200 circulars would be extremely time consuming and raise the cost from \$6 to \$10. The simpler alternative was to drop the tied bundle at the post office, pay \$6 and let the post-office clerk mark each cover as paid.

Figure 4 is a remarkable and very rare cover, now in the collection of Gordon Eubanks. It is the only recorded printed circular, domestic or foreign-bound, bearing a 5¢ 1847 stamp that without question paid the circular rate. Many postal historians will point out that there are a good number of surviving circulars, void of any writing inside, that bear a single 5¢ 1847 stamp. With my late friend Harvey Mirsky, a highly respected student of 1847 postal history, I used to have spirited discussions about this subject. Harvey’s argument was simple: printed circular, no writing on the circular, unsealed and franked with a 5¢ stamp apparently overpaying the 2¢ rate. Therefore, though overpaid, the 5¢ stamp makes this an example of the printed matter or circular use.

But the flaw in this argument is simple: It lies in the practices of the time and the letter rate being 5¢. It was common to include a loose handwritten note or invoice inside a folded circular, to add a personal touch to an otherwise impersonal mailing. The sender, enclosing a loose note and knowing it now converts the circular to a letter, simply pays the 5¢ letter rate with a stamp. Over time, any note or enclosure gets separated from the stamped printed circular. Even though the printed sheet appears today as a valid circular, it cannot be proven



**Figure 4. Printed circular, endorsed “Printed Sheet” in manuscript at lower left, sent in November 1850 from Boston, Massachusetts, to Greenock, Scotland. Circular postage of two pence (per manuscript marking) was collected from the recipient.**

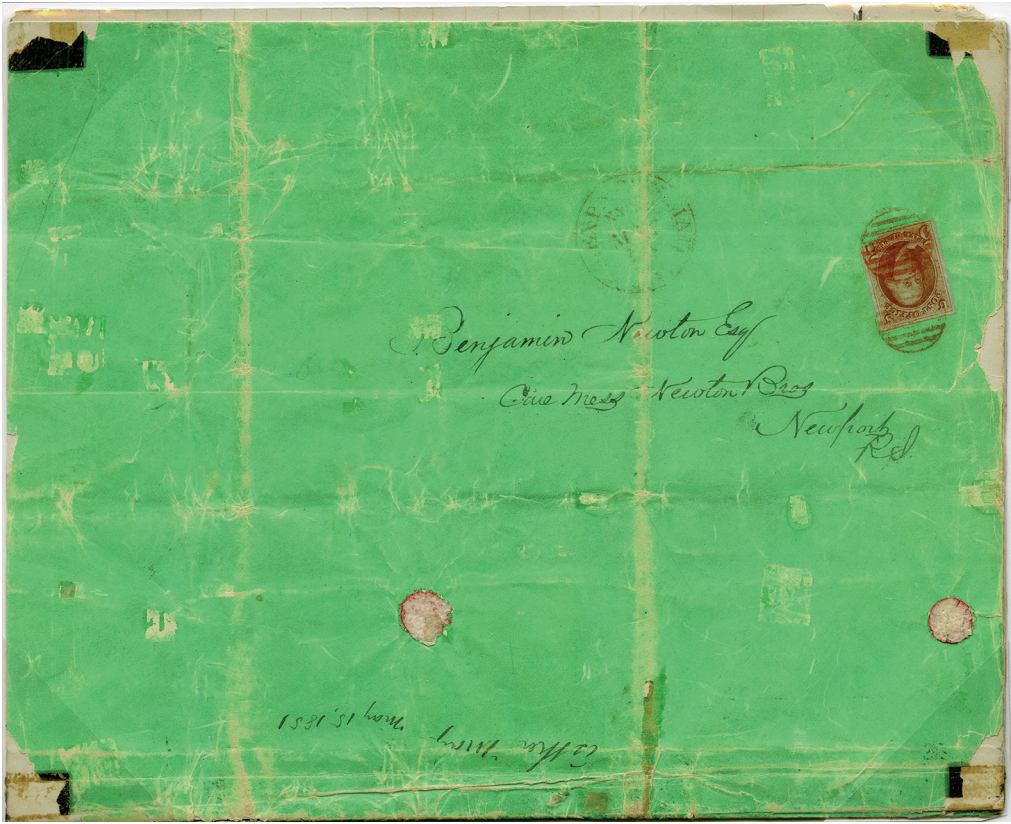
that, at time of mailing, there was not an additional piece of paper inside. More importantly, commercial circulars were most often noted as “printed matter” or “circular” on the address panel. None of the recorded printed circulars with 5¢ 1847 stamps (other than Figure 4) are so inscribed on the exterior.

Returning to Figure 4, which is a printed circular sent in November, 1850, from New York City to Greenock, near Glasgow: What proves without a doubt that this circular was posted to its recipient as printed matter and not as a letter? First, the circular is a printed prices current, without any writing, communicating business intelligence and endorsed “printed matter” on the exterior. Second, printed matter was bagged separately from letters so that on arrival in Liverpool the British post office rated it with a distinct 2 pence due marking, confirming that it was accepted as printed matter. Had this piece been in a letter bag bearing a single 5¢ and looking like all the others, it would have been rated as an incoming unpaid letter under the U.S.-British convention and marked one shilling due. It was not.

### **Pamphlets**

While surviving stampless circulars from this period are common, the same cannot be said of printed pamphlets. Despite the millions that went through the mails, there are fewer than 40 stampless examples (excluding those in institutions) known to this author. Pamphlets going through the mail, not sent by the publisher, were required to be rolled and either secured by sealing wax or enclosed in a wrapper band. This allowed the post office easy access to look for enclosures or written communications.

Figure 5, also from the Eubanks collection, shows the only recorded pamphlet bearing any 1847 stamp sent and accepted at the printed-matter rate. This is an auction catalog offering lots of tea. Per post office regulations, it was rolled up and secured by dots of sealing wax. The black corner remnants are from a very old mounting; the residue of the sealing wax are the white dots at bottom center and right. When rolled up, this object measures 1½ inches in diameter. Per the circular marking above the address, the catalog entered the U. S.



**Figure 5. Printed tea catalog sent 16 May 1851 from New York City to Newport, Rhode Island, franked with a single 5¢ 1847 stamp overpaying the 3½¢ required. When originally mailed, this catalog was rolled up into a cylinder and sealed with wax wafers.**

Express Mail<sup>5</sup> at New York with the red May 16 (1851) CDS and the single 5¢ 1847 stamp canceled with red grids. There are no other markings indicating postage due; the post office accepted the 5¢ as full and proper payment.

As noted previously, the pamphlet rate was 2½¢ for the first ounce and 1¢ for each additional ounce, any distance. The Figure 5 catalog weighs 1.6 ounces so required a total of 3½¢. For comparison the letter rate for under 300 miles to Newport, Rhode Island, was 5¢ per half ounce. If considered a 1.6 ounce letter, this catalog would have required a quadruple letter rate of 20¢. So why overpay even 1½¢? This may have been done to avoid inspection, which would have revealed prices realized lightly written inside in pencil. But this catalog without question transited the mails at the printed pamphlet rate.

### **Newspapers**

From this period, if postally sent pamphlets are scarce, then newspapers bearing postal notations are rare. Again, the reasons are simple. First, the newspaper rates stated above apply only to “Transient” newspapers and not to subscription newspapers which have always enjoyed much lower prepaid rates of postage. (Transient refers to a newspaper which is sent between two parties when the sender is not the publisher.) Second, postal regulations required that every transient newspaper had to be rolled or folded and enclosed in a wrapper band. Subscription newspapers had no such requirement and transited the mails as bundles with the destination town or city noted only on the top of the bundle. Third, the wrapper band around a transient newspaper almost always held the addressee information and proof

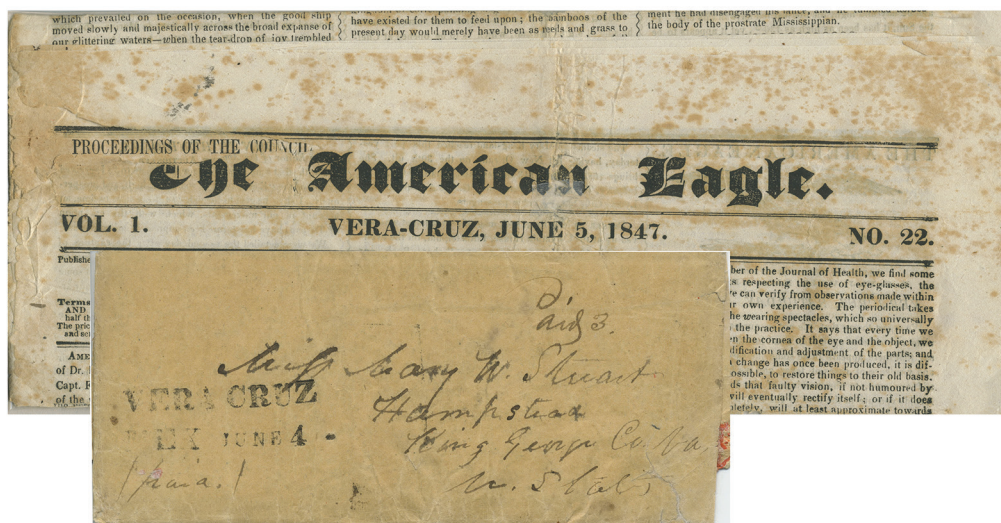
of postage paid or due. Virtually every wrapper band was thrown away or used for either heating, for personal hygiene or as part of the well-known Civil War paper drives to raise money for wounded soldiers. Wrapper bands virtually never survive.

The rare exception to the above is a fortunate circumstance for 1847 postal history. The two images in Figure 6, again from the Eubanks collection, show both sides of a turned cover. The sheet at top was sent 26 miles from Brunswick to Portland, Maine, originally wrapping a double-weight letter with postage paid by the 10¢ 1847 stamp. Four months



Figure 6. Two sides of a turned cover. Above, outer sheet from a double-weight letter sent 18 October 1848 from Brunswick to Portland, Maine. Below, the sheet was subsequently turned over and remailed 28 February 1849 as a newspaper wrapper, with 3¢ transient newspaper postage charged to the sender's post office box account.





**Figure 7. Wrapper and the newspaper it originally enclosed. The paper is *The American Eagle*, sent to King George, Virginia, from occupied Vera Cruz, Mexico, on 4 July 1847.**

later, the sheet was turned and reused as a wrapper to mail a newspaper the 128 miles from Portland to Goose River, Maine. In this use, the 3¢ transient newspaper rate was prepaid in Portland by a charge to Box 176. The notation at lower left makes this very clear: “1 newspaper, chg 176.” This is the only example of reuse like this that the author has seen prior to 1851.

Figure 7, from the collection of Mark Banchik, shows one of the few surviving examples of a postally carried newspaper from this period. The newspaper is *The American Eagle*, published in English in Vera Cruz during the occupation resulting from the Mexican-American war. This newspaper appears to have been sent home by a soldier. Per regulations, the newspaper was enclosed in a paper wrapper, which miraculously still survives, with an address in King George, Virginia, a manuscript “Paid 3” at the upper right and a second-day use of the “VERA CRUZ/MEX JUNE 4” handstamp. American troops outside the borders of the United States were allowed to send and receive mail at the current domestic rate.

Printed matter is a fascinating collecting area. By its very nature, printed matter tells the social story of America. Since it hasn’t been closely investigated by philatelists in the past, it offers opportunities for original research that can provide a real sense of accomplishment. Though far from common, material is out there, both at stamp shows and auctions. Generally it is not expensive because it has yet to be appreciated. A possible collecting time-frame would start at the end of the Civil War and come forward to the end of World War I or II. If one is so inclined it could make a stunning exhibit. Thanks to Mark Banchik and Gordon Eubanks for providing images of their covers.

### Endnotes

1. Website: <http://www.rfrajola.com/resources/1825Act.pdf> (last viewed 12 May 2014).
2. Website: <http://www.rfrajola.com/resources/1827Act.pdf> (last viewed 12 May 2014).
3. Website: <http://www.rfrajola.com/resources/1845Act.pdf> (last viewed 12 May 2014).
4. Website: <http://www.rfrajola.com/resources/1847Act.pdf> (last viewed 12 May 2014).
5. Meyer, Henry A., “U.S. Express Mail,” *Chronicle* 66 (November 1970): pp. 159-161. ■

**UPDATE: THE UNITED STATES 3¢ 1857 “ALPHA PLATES”**

**ROBIN LUND**

In the parlance of those involved in “plating” classic U.S. stamps (defining each unique position on a printing plate), alpha plates are those 1857-61 3¢ plates for which Carroll Chase temporarily assigned letters of the alphabet when he did not know the actual plate number. These are scarce plates for which full panes are not known. After the actual plate number is determined for an alpha plate, the letter designation is dropped and it is replaced by the plate number (when identifying the stamps from that particular plate).

In 1907 Chase commenced on his road to philatelic greatness with his growing interest in the U.S. 3¢ stamp of 1851. The imperforate versions of this stamp are today’s Scott catalog numbers 10, 10A, 11 and 11A. The perforated versions are 25, 25A, 26 and 26A. These stamps were engraved and printed by Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co., later known as Toppan, Carpenter & Co. The plates which printed these stamps each had 200 stamps arranged as two side-by-side panes of 100 (10x10). Prior to being issued to post offices, the sheets of 200 were cut in two. In the margin on the left side of the left pane and the right side of the right pane, the engraver placed its name and the plate number. Figure 1 is a good example. This is the full imprint and plate number from the left side of Plate 15. Figure 2 shows the block 39 stamps from which the Figure 1 photo was enlarged.

The images for the imperforate stamp were transferred to the steel plate using a three-relief transfer roll. The stamp design has an outer frame line on all four sides, but these fine frame lines did not transfer satisfactorily to the plate. To correct this problem, nearly all of the frame lines were individually hand-recut on each stamp on these plates,



**Figure 1. Engraver’s imprint and plate number (“No. 15 P.”) from the left margin of the left pane of the perforated 3¢ stamp. Position pieces like this are critical to plating the stamp.**

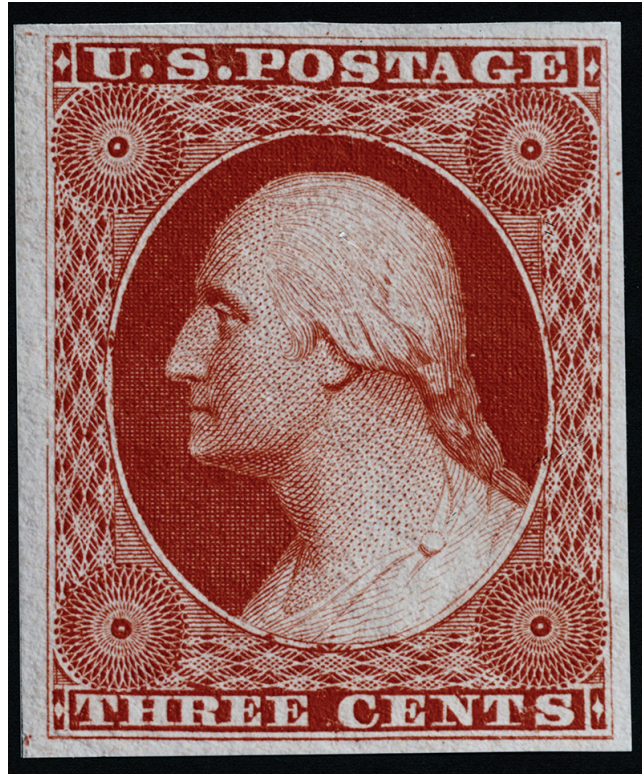


Figure 3, above, reprint proof of a 3¢ 1851 stamp, greatly enlarged to show the frame lines on all four sides. The perforated 3¢ stamps discussed in this article, Scott 26 and 26A, lack frame lines at the top and at the bottom.

Figure 2, at left, block of 39 stamps, showing the entire engraver's imprint plus plate number 15. This is the multiple from which the Figure 1 image was cropped.

resulting in somewhat crooked frame lines for each stamp. In addition, many positions had additional recuts done to strengthen various parts of the stamp design. These stamp-specific characteristics aid in plating. Another helpful feature on these plates is that about half the stamps on each plate show a guide dot that was used in positioning the design entry. These guide dots and the individual recuts caused each position to have unique characteristics. Thus it became possible for Chase to identify the plate position for each stamp on these plates. Figure 3 shows a reprint proof of a 3¢ 1851 stamp on which frame lines can be seen clearly on all four sides of the design. (The perforated 3¢ stamps that Scott designates as 26 and 26A do not have frame lines on the top and the bottom.)

Nine plates were used to print imperforate 3¢ stamps. They were numbered 1 through 8, plus one without a number that we call Plate 0. Plate 1 was reentered twice, and Plates 2 and 5 were reentered once, creating early, intermediate and/or late states of these plates. We consider each state as a separate plate, thus resulting in 13 plates of 200 stamps. Chase was able eventually to identify the original plate position of all 2,600 stamps on these plates.

When the perforation of stamps began in 1857, Plates 2 (late), 3, 4, 5 (late), 6, 7, and 8 were still being used for the imperforate stamps. The perforated versions of these stamps are Scott 25 and 25A. The stamps on these plates did not have enough room for the perforations, nor were they regularly spaced on the plate, so new plates were made in mid-

to-late 1857 to remedy this problem. These plates were made using a six-relief transfer roll from which the top and bottom frame line had been removed from each relief. Stamps from Plates 9 and 12-28 are Scott 26, and those from Plates 10 and 11 are Scott 26A.

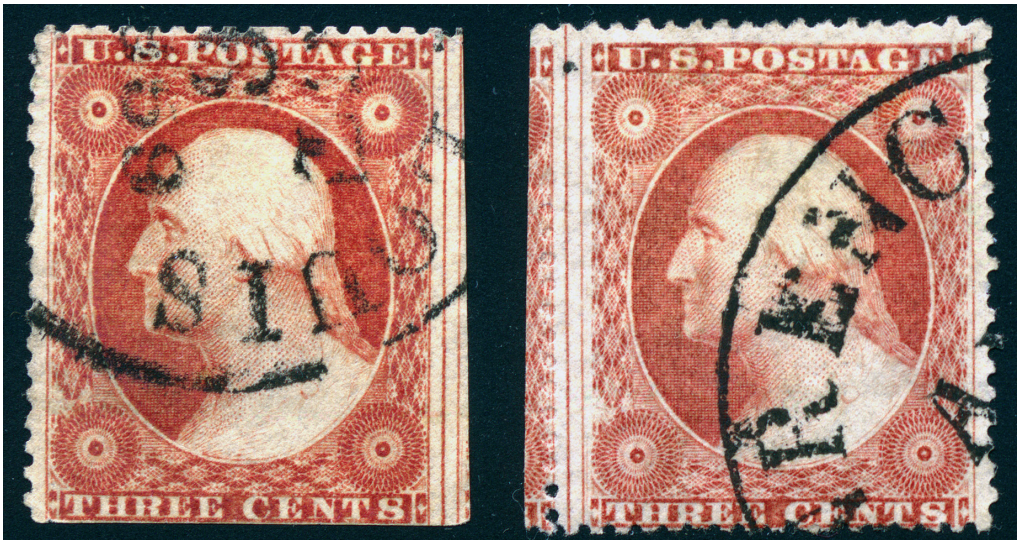
When Chase attempted to reconstruct the perforated stamps from Plates 9-28, he found that these stamps were far more difficult to plate than those from Plates 1-8 and 0. Whereas the 1851 stamps had frame lines on all four sides of the stamps, and all four of these frames were generally recut, the Scott 26 and 26A stamps had only the vertical frame lines recut, with virtually no other re-cutting. More importantly, only Plates 10 and 11 had the side frame lines recut by hand, position by position (thus each recut being somewhat crooked, and ending at the top and bottom of each stamp). Chase was able to come very close to completing the reconstructions of Plates 10 and 11 in all three states of these plates.

On Plates 9 and 12-28, the side frame lines were recut with the aid of a straight-edge, continuous from top to bottom of the plate, thus being virtually straight. Only the tops of top-row stamps and the bottoms of the bottom-row stamps show the ends of the recut frame lines. In addition, only one-fifth of the stamps on a 6-relief plate show a guide dot (upper right corner of top-row stamps and lower right corner of sixth-row stamps). Thus, individual stamps of Scott 26 are far more difficult to differentiate (and to determine their plate positions) than the Scott 10's, 11's, and 26A's.

Eighteen plates were used to print Scott 26 (numbered 9 and 12-28). Two of these (9 and 21) were reentered. Two plates were used to print Scott 26A (numbered 10 and 11), and each was reentered twice. Counting the separate states of these plates, this produces 5,200 unique positions altogether for the 26 and 26A plates.

Plating the Scott 26 stamps from plates 9 and 12-28 was like doing a jigsaw puzzle, in that the easiest positions to plate were the edge pieces. Because of this, Chase's efforts were concentrated on the left, right and the top sides of the panes of 100 stamps. The top-row stamps have guide dots and are much easier to identify; less progress was made on the bottom-row stamps.

The imprint positions were Chase's logical starting place. Aside from these, the other place Chase started reconstructing was on both sides of the center line, starting at the top with positions 10L (left pane) and 1R (right pane). Figure 4 shows stamps from Positions 10LX and 1RX, two positions that straddle the center line; in this case the "X" indicates



**Figure 4. Stamps from Position 10LX and 1RX, two positions that straddle the center line at the top of a pane that has not yet been fully reconstructed and thus lacks a number.**



that the plate is not yet determined. A more copious example is shown in Figure 5. This is a vertical block of nine, with the center line captured at right, known to be from Plate 20 (positions 29-70L20). Stamps and multiples like this, from positions straddling the center line, were the cornerstones for designating the alpha plates, to which Chase assigned the letters P, R, S, U, V, W, X, Y, and Z. Since the time when Chase first named these alpha plates, students have learned that “U” is Plate 19, “X” is Plate 22, “Y” is Plate 12, and “Z” is Plate 21. Figure 6 shows examples of some of the confirming plate number stamps. At upper left in Figure 6 is the only known example showing part of plate number 17—actually just a portion the numeral 7. Next to it is a stamp from Position 50R12, showing plate number 12. Below are stamps showing most of plate number 21 and part of plate number 16 (likely a unique item). The bottom pair shows a part of plate number 19. This plate was known as alpha plate U until the discovery of this item enabled assigning it a number.



**Figure 5. Irregular vertical block of nine, with centerline and portions of adjacent stamps captured at right. This block is known to be from Plate 20, Positions 29-70L20.**

For each unplated sheet, starting from the two initial top-row straddle positions, Chase worked down the center line towards the bottom. These 20 positions are known as the center-line stamps. He also started across the top of each plate, starting from the straddle positions, since top-row stamps are more easily identified, and can be differentiated from each other by their guide dots, where the tops of the frame lines end, and the fact that some plates have repairs to the “broken relief” flaw. For most of the alpha plates, the scarcity of top-row multiples has prevented plating all the way out from the center line to the corners of the plates. Once the corner is reached, the goal is then to work from the corner stamps down to the imprint and plate number.

Within the last 15 years there has also been an aggressive effort to complete other routes across the sheets of stamps from the centerline stamps to the numbered imprint stamps. This is being done by plating the “F” relief stamps which are the 6th and 10th horizontal rows of each sheet.

Except for alpha plates P, R, S, V and W (which in no particular order designate plates 13, 14, 16, 17, and 18), the plate numbers for all of the 1857 3¢ plates (9 through 28) have been identified in the above manner. The upper left image in Figure 6 shows the only known stamp with the partial right imprint and number for plate 17. A left imprint with number 17 has never been seen. That left-pane imprint is either Chase’s alpha code “H” or “I.” These two designations describe the left sides of plates 13 and 17, but we don’t yet know which is which, because these left sides haven’t been connected to the right sides of the plates. So the work goes on.

I would like to thank Robert Hegland, Elliot Omiya, Wade Saadi, and especially Richard Celler



Figure 6. Examples of perforated 3¢ 1851 stamps showing part imprints and full or partial plate numbers. Clockwise from 9 o'clock: Plate 21, Plate 17, Plate 12, Plate 16 and a vertical pair from Plate 19. The Plate 17 stamp at upper left shows only a small portion of the numeral 7, but this is the only numbered stamp that has ever been found from this plate, and its discovery was an important breakthrough that enabled assigning a number to a partial plating that had previously been identified only by an "alpha" letter. The Plate 16 stamp at right center is also thought to be unique.

for their support and loan of material for this article. For readers seeking more information I suggest the following articles: "The 3¢ 1857 Type 1 and 2 U.S. Stamps," Chase, *Perforation Centennial Book*, pp. 41-50; "Plating Top-Row Copies of S-4 and S-5," Simpson, *Chronicle* 54, pp. 17-18; "S4 and S5 Research," Alexander, *Chronicle* 71, pp. 127-130; "3¢ 1857 Perforated Stamps (S5) From Plate 15," Alexander, *Chronicle* 72, pp. 187-197; "Identifying Imprint Copies of the 3¢ 1857 Perforated S4 and S5," Hegland, *Chronicle* 82, pp. 76-83; "Double Transfers on the 3¢ 1857," Hegland, *Chronicle* 106, pp. 105-107; and "Plating of Centerline Copies of S5," Dershowitz, *Chronicle* 131, pp. 184-186. ■

## EARLY TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD COVERS

JAMES W. MILGRAM, M. D.

The transcontinental railroad was an entity created by the junction of two railroad companies, the Central Pacific Railroad, which built a line extending eastward from Sacramento, and the Union Pacific Railroad, which built westward from Omaha. Both companies began to build these lines in 1863. They met on May 10, 1869 at a place called Promontory Summit, Utah Territory. The story of this great construction effort is described very readably in Stephen Ambrose's *Nothing Like It in the World*.

I have previously published two articles, in *The American Philatelist* and in *Western Express*, showing covers sent during construction of the railroad and in the first weeks after the completion of the line.<sup>1</sup>

In the years of construction, before the two lines joined, Wells Fargo & Company ran stagecoaches carrying passengers and mail between one rail terminus and the other. Thus the overland mail travelled by rail, stagecoach and again rail during those years. Per the terms of its mail contract with the Post Office Department, Wells Fargo was paid by the mile, so its compensation diminished as the rail lines advanced. Conversely, the railroad companies were paid more for each mile of new track.

According to the Postmaster General's Report for 1869, the time required for a letter to travel between San Francisco and New York diminished from 16 days (April to December) or 20 days (January to March) to just a few hours over 7 days, after the rail line was completed.

Figure 1 shows a photo of a large, colorful and very rare poster, promoting the grand opening of the railroad. This was obviously created by an agent of the Union Pacific line and was probably printed in Chicago or Omaha. A May 10 date for the "great event" is prominently featured at the top. "Passenger trains leave Omaha on the arrival of the trains from the east through to San Francisco in less Four Days [from Omaha], avoiding the Dangers of the Sea!"

For many years the earliest cover known to have travelled over the completed line was a cover to Prussia sent from San Francisco on May 14, 1869. New York exchange markings on this cover were applied on May 25, 1869, documenting that the cover crossed the country in 11 days, a passage that was possible only on the completed railroad. This cover was illustrated in my *Western Express* article cited above. I also showed in that article a cover from Danbury, Connecticut, postmarked on May 11, with a docketed receiving date (in San Francisco) of May 20, 1869, representing a nine-day passage time. Currently this is the earliest east-to-west cover. The point to emphasize is that two dates are needed to enable a calculation of the transit time across the continent, which in turn supports the assumption of carriage across the newly-completed rail link.

Figure 1. This large, colorful and very scarce poster, apparently created in Chicago or Omaha, promotes the grand opening of the transcontinental railway on May 19, 1869.

“From Omaha through to San Francisco in less than four days, avoiding the dangers of the sea”—while traveling in “luxurious cars and eating houses.”

“Travelers for pleasure, health or business will find a trip over the Rocky Mountains healthy and pleasant.”

“Gold, silver and other miners: Now is the time to seek your fortunes in Nebraska, Wyoming, Arizona, Washington, Dakotah Colorado, Utah, Oregon, Montana, New Mexico, Idaho, Nevada or California.”

1869. May 10th. 1869.

**GREAT EVENT**

Rail Road from the Atlantic to the Pacific

**GRAND OPENING**

OF 1869



**Union Pacific**

**RAIL ROAD**

**PLATTE VALLEY ROUTE.**

PASSENGER TRAINS LEAVE

**OMAHA**

ON THE ARRIVAL OF TRAINS FROM THE EAST.

**THROUGH TO SAN FRANCISCO**

In less than Four Days, avoiding the Dangers of the Sea!

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Will find a Trip over the Rocky Mountains Healthy and Pleasant.

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Figure 2. Stampless cover to France with “SAN FRANCISCO CAL. MAY 13” and “NEW YORK MAY 22” exchange-office debit marking. The San Francisco merchant’s cachet and the blue French entry marking both confirm the year date as 1869. This is the earliest known west-to-east cover carried on the newly completed railroad.

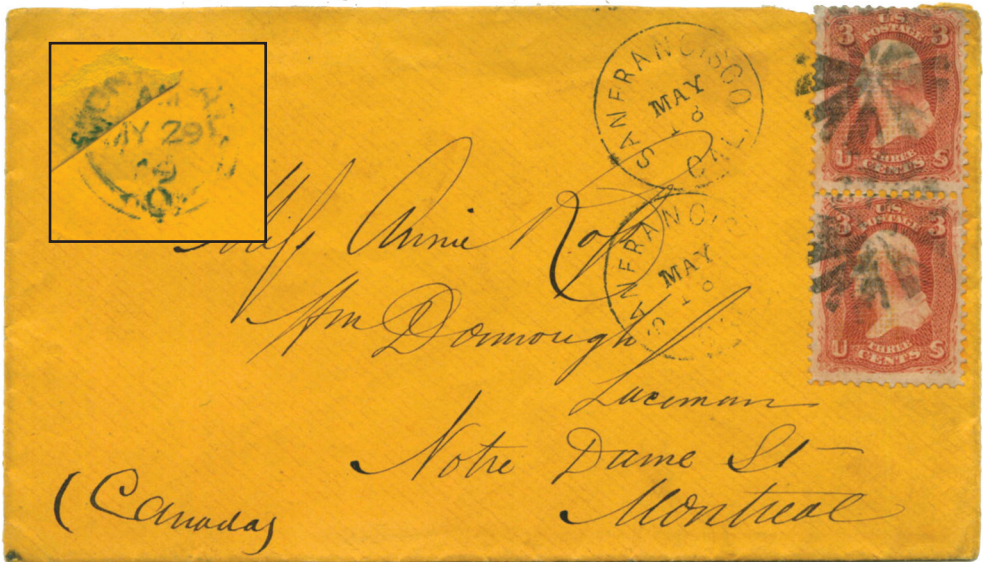


Figure 3. Another early west-to-east cover, franked with two 3¢ F-grill stamps (paying the 6¢ rate to Canada) and postmarked “SAN FRANCISCO CAL. MAY 18.” A Canadian receiving marking on reverse, shown inset, reads “MONTREAL O./MY 29 69,” documenting an 11-day trip across the country from San Francisco to Montreal.

Figure 2 is a stampless cover with a “SAN FRANCISCO CAL. MAY 13” postmark and a May 22 New York exchange-office marking with an integral 18 debit rating. The debit 18 indicates the cover was assessed as a double rate at New York, but the 8 decimes due marking shows it was treated as a single-rate cover in France. The cover also bears a blue French Calais entry marking dated June 2, 1869 and two more French postmarks on the

reverse, applied at Paris on June 2 and Barbezieux on June 3. The steamer *City of Brooklyn* of the Inman Line left New York on May 22, 1869 and arrived at Queenstown on May 31, 1869. However, the letter might also have been carried on the North German Lloyd *New York*, which left New York on May 22 and arrived in Southampton on June 2, 1869; it is possible the letter reached Calais the same day.

The circular marking to the left of the address is a merchant cachet from the sending company in San Francisco. While perhaps not clear in the Figure 2 photo, it too is dated May 13, 1869. Thus this cover crossed the continent in just nine days. This cover is now the earliest west-to-east cover over the train lines.

A second new cover, somewhat less early, is shown in Figure 3. Addressed to Montreal, this cover bears two 3¢ F grill stamps and is postmarked “SAN FRANCISCO CAL. MAY 18.” Fortunately there is a backstamp (superimposed inset in Figure 3)—“MONTREAL O. /AM MAY 29, 69”—that documents an 11-day journey, again possible only on the new train. This cover travelled during the second week of transcontinental train operation. It was probably routed to Montreal directly from Chicago or Detroit, but that doesn’t diminish its interest as an early artifact of the transcontinental railway.

Neither of these covers was sold as early railroad use. It pays to check the dates on all covers that crossed the United States in May of 1869.

### Endnotes

1. Milgram, James W., “The Transcontinental Railroad: A Meeting of East and West,” *The American Philatelist*, February 2003, pp. 126-135; and “Usages Showing Transcontinental Railroad Service,” *Western Express*, Whole Number 227, March 2008, pp. 4-6 (2008). ■

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## A NEW DIE STATE OF THE 2¢ 1869 SMALL-NUMERAL ESSAY

SAM McNIEL

The recent acquisition of the essay shown greatly enlarged in Figure 1 was intended to complete my collection of the 1869 small-numeral 2¢ essays. The illustrated item is a large die proof on India paper, mounted on card, but cut down to the shape shown. I purchased it as Scott 113-E3c, which the specialized catalog lists in six colors, one of them the brown shade of the item in Figure 1.

The 113-E3c essay represents the completed die from which the plates for the printed essays were made. But close inspection reveals that Figure 1 is not a complete die proof, so it could not have been used to make the plate. In fact, as the accompanying illustrations will



**Figure 1.** Newly discovered die state for the 2¢ 1869 small-numeral essay. Vertical lines are complete behind “UNITED STATES” but there is no shading in the areas between the ornamental scrollwork and the drape that forms the background for “POSTAGE”.



Figure 2. Enlargement of the upper portion of the Figure 1 essay. The word “POSTAGE” is imposed on a drape supported by ornamental scrollwork. On both sides of “POSTAGE,” the negative areas between the drape and the scrollwork show no shading lines.



Figure 3. The same area from the completed die. Short horizontal shading lines have been added to soften the negative areas between the ornamental scrollwork and the drape.

show, this is an unfinished proof, a heretofore unrecognized state of the die. My collection is still one die state short.

### Background

The National Bank Note Company team that worked on the 2¢ 1869 design also did the 3¢ and 12¢ design work for this series. James McDonough was the designer, Christian Rost the vignette engraver, and George Thurber the letter and frame engraver.

Two die states have long been cataloged in Clarence W. Brazer’s *Essays for U.S. Adhesive Postage Stamps* and Scott’s *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps & Covers*. The incomplete die (first state) is listed by Scott as 113-E3a (die proof on India, die sunk on card) and 113-E3b (die proof on India, cut to stamp size). According to Scott these items “have incomplete shading around UNITED STATES.”





**Figure 4. Enlarged scan of the design of the 2¢ 1869 stamp as issued, here taken from a large die proof (113P1). Except for the larger numeral and related changes, all of the design elements are identical to the final state of the small-numeral essay.**

An example of 113-E3b is presented in the Scott specialized catalog. Even in the tiny catalog illustration, it is evident that there are no vertical shading lines behind the words "UNITED STATES". Examples from the final die state, for which varieties and colors are listed as 113-E3c through 113-Eg, are described as showing the "Complete die."

Coming back to my discovery, Figure 2 enlarges the upper portion of the Figure 1 design, featuring the large drape that forms the backdrop on which is imposed the word "POSTAGE". For comparison, Figure 3 shows this same area from a proof of the completed die.

The drape is supported by the ornamental scrollwork that forms the top of the stamp design. The ends of the drape are woven over and under elements of the ornamental frame. Note that there are substantial differences between the images in Figures 2 and 3. On both sides of the word "POSTAGE", in the negative area between the scrollwork and the drape, there are no shading lines at all in Figure 2. In Figure 3, many short horizontal shading dashes have been added to these enclosed areas. Since this work was all contained within the ornamental frame, it was likely done by Rost, the vignette engraver.

There are other less significant changes as well. Note in Figure 3 that a vertical line

has been added to the two vertical portions of the drape, where it hangs down from the scrollwork on either side of POSTAGE.

Figure 4 is an enlarged scan of the design of the 2¢ 1869 stamp as issued, here taken from a large die proof (113P1), to clearly show the design elements. The only difference between the Figure 4 image and the final state of the small-numeral essay shown partially in Figure 3 is the enlarged numeral that characterizes the issued stamp. All the other design elements are identical.

So the record now shows three die states for the small-numeral 2¢ 1869 essay.

In State 1, there are no vertical shading lines in the area behind “UNITED STATES” and there are no horizontal shading lines in the negative areas defined by the scroll and the drape. Imprints from this first state of the die are Scott numbers 113-E3a and 113-E3b.

In State 2, vertical shading lines have been added behind “UNITED STATES,” but the negative areas between scroll and drape remain blank. So far, the only example known is the one shown here in Figures 1 and 2. More examples may surface now that collectors know what to look for. Examples from State 2 are currently not listed in Scott.

In State 3 and on the issued stamp (Figures 3 and 4), the negative areas between the scroll and the drape have been softened with horizontal shading lines. Imprints from this third state of the die are Scott numbers 113-E3c through 113-E3g.

## References

*Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*, 2014, Scott Publishing Co., Sidney, Ohio.

*Essays for U.S. Adhesive Postage Stamps*, by Clarence W. Brazer, 1977, Quarterman, Lawrence, Massachusetts.

*The United States 1869 Issue: An Essay-Proof History*, by Fred P. Schueren, 1974, published by the Collectors Club of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois. ■

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CONTEMPORARY REPORTS OF EARLIEST SALE OF 1869 STAMPS  
STEPHEN M. TEDESCO

Recent gleanings from contemporary articles in the New York City newspapers suggest that March 23, 1869, was the release date for the earliest 1869 stamps. Previously, based on documents uncovered at the National Archives by researcher Alfred E. Staubus as presented in a 1987 *Chronicle* article by Scott R. Trepel, the release date for the stamps was thought to be March 20, 1869.<sup>1</sup> The recently unearthed newspaper citations suggest that the original interpretation of the archival data may not reflect what actually transpired.

The March 20 date was based on New York Postmaster James Kelly's written request to Third Assistant Postmaster General A. N. Zevely, in a letter dated March 18, 1869. Kelly's letter stated:

I have to inform you that I shall probably be out of several denominations of postage stamps by Saturday morning 20th inst. I am informed by the Stamp Agent that he is not yet authorized to supply any of the new issue, and therefore does not feel at liberty to anticipate any portion of my order of the 23rd ultimo.

Will you be kind enough to furnish him with the necessary instructions, to supply whatever denominations I may actually require to meet the demands of the public.

A file notation made by Zevely the next day, March 19, summarized his response as follows: "Agent will deliver such new stamps as are required in advance of the receipt of requisition which leaves here on the 20th instant. Wrote Boyd same day."

While Boyd was thus clearly authorized to requisition the new stamps as early as March 20, there's no firm evidence that he actually did so.

Figure 1.  
News item prominently featured in the *New York Commercial Advertiser* of March 23, 1869, stating that the new postage stamps would be delivered to the "General Office" (meaning the main post office) that morning.



**THE CITY.**  
**The Davenport brothers give their last  
seance in this city to-morrow evening at Steinway Hall.**  
**The new postage stamps were sold at the  
Post-Office, in this city, for the first time yesterday.**

Figure 2. From the March 24, 1869, edition of the *New York Tribune*: “The new postage stamps were sold at the Post-Office, in this city, for the first time yesterday.”

**Company, A large quantity of the new stamps have  
already been furnished to the New York Post Office,  
but only those for two cents are as yet sold to the  
public, the old stock of the other grades not having  
been exhausted, and the new ones can be sold only  
when none of the old style remain on hand. All the**

Figure 3. From the *New York Herald* of Saturday, March 27, suggesting that as of March 27, 1869, only 2¢ 1869 stamps had so far been sold to the public.

Three different New York City newspaper clippings put forward what actually took place during the next few days. Of particular note was the great anticipation that can be found in the country’s many newspaper columns, which were abuzz with expectations that their post office would be releasing the new postage stamps within days.

Shown in Figure 1 is a brief but prominently featured announcement in the *New York Commercial Advertiser* of March 23, 1869, stating that the new postage stamps would be delivered to the “general office” (meaning the main post office) that morning.

On the next day, Wednesday, March 24, the *New York Tribune* confirmed what the *Advertiser* was privy to the day before: “The new postage stamps were sold at the Post-Office, in this city, for the first time yesterday.” Figure 2 shows the actual *Tribune* article, which appeared in a news section called “THE CITY.”

A third news report, shown in Figure 3, appeared in the *New York Herald* on Saturday, March 27. This brief notice suggests that as of March 27, only 2¢ 1869 stamps had so far been sold to the public, since the other denominations had not yet been depleted.

### Conclusion

When he wrote to Washington on Thursday, March 18, saying he will “probably” be sold out of several denominations of 1861-68 stamps by Saturday, Postmaster Kelly may well have been being prudent or overcautious. The reports presented here indicate there was no sell-out until the following Tuesday. These new documents also cast doubt on the currently accepted earliest documented use (EDU) date for the 2¢ 1869 stamp, which is listed in the Scott specialized catalog as March 20, 1869. The cover on which this listing is based should be re-examined in light of these documents. Published EDU dates for all the other 1869 stamps are consistent with the new evidence.

### Endnote

1. Scott Trepel, “Post Office Records Confirm March 20, 1869 Issue Date,” *Chronicle* 136, pp. 270-72. ■



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### PAPER CHARACTERISTICS OF U.S. 3¢ STAMPS, 1870-1881

JOHN H. BARWIS

This article describes laboratory research conducted on the United States 3¢ stamps of 1870, 1873, 1879 and 1881 (Scott catalog numbers 147, 158, 184 and 207) to characterize the types of paper used by the three private bank note printing companies that produced the stamps. The goal of this work was to quantitatively determine how many different papers each company used, and which of these papers may have been used by more than one company. Analyses included measurement of paper thickness, fiber length and deformation, bending resistance, permeability, and sizing chemistry. The results demonstrate that combinations of these variables discriminate between the multiple paper types used by each company.

The results also show that the stamps of the bank note companies comprise a more extensive range of paper types than have been assumed by collectors over the past 100 years. Thickness-frequency distribution data are shown to provide important clues about whether thickness variations are simply normal artifacts of manufacturing, or whether they represent multiple paper types with different mean thicknesses. Results also provide insight to papermaking practices of the 1870s and 1880s, with particular regard to composition, quality control of thickness, and the use of sizing to improve paper quality.

#### Historical background

Prior to 1894 all United States postage stamps were manufactured under contracts with private printing companies. Stamps manufactured between 1870 and 1889, the so-called Large Bank Note stamps, were produced by three corporations originally involved in printing currency and security paper: the National, Continental and American Bank Note Companies. From 1870 through 1882, these companies printed more than 21.2 billion United States postage stamps in 12 values, using papers which varied in thickness and texture. Historical information about these papers is unavailable, as the government printing contracts provided no technical details on the materials to be used. The author has found no information about the paper mills that supplied the printing contractors, or about the products they provided. A search of the Crane Company archives indicated that Crane provided no postage stamp paper to the bank note companies in the 1870s. The Willcox Paper Company of Glen Mills, Pennsylvania may have been the primary supplier, but this is speculative.

The four printings of the 3¢ Bank Note stamps are relatively easy to identify. Small design details differentiate National and Continental stamps, as well as the two American printings. Figure 1 shows examples of the four different printings, with design differences inset below the four stamps. A so-called “soft” paper, used by Continental beginning in late 1878, is likely to have remained in use after Continental was acquired by American in February, 1879. Proof of Continental Bank Note Company origin of stamps in this time frame therefore requires cover evidence dated prior to American’s takeover.

For more than 100 years, collectors have been aware of paper variations on the Bank Note stamps, and have characterized them using a wide range of qualitative descriptions.





**Figure 1. The four printings discussed in this article. Shades vary widely, and most are not diagnostic as to printing. Scans courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries.**

The best-known of these descriptions are summarized in Table 1 (next page). For most collectors it is sufficient to say the National and Continental papers tend to be thinner, stiffer, and more translucent than the thicker and softer American papers, and the sound from a “snap test” helps identify the two general groups. Controversies nevertheless remain among specialists, such as: How many papers were used by these companies, and what characterizes them? Did National and Continental use the same paper? Is the paper used by Continental in late 1878 the same paper first used by American?

### Data collection

From an unsorted group of used, off-cover 3¢ greens, stamps were first allocated to their appropriate printing. Fifty of the most poorly centered stamps were chosen from each printing to ensure at least one wide margin for measuring thickness on non-inked areas. Each stamp was numbered so that data collected could be linked to unique samples. The intent was to facilitate comparisons of parameters other than thickness, should distinct thickness-based subpopulations be established within a given printing.

Paper thicknesses were measured by the author.<sup>1</sup> Fiber composition was determined by Robert Hisey, a professional paper engineer, using industry-standard staining techniques.<sup>2</sup> Sizing composition was determined by Hope College’s Department of Chemistry using industry-standard chemical spot tests.

For each of the 200 stamps for which thickness was measured, the Center for Ink and Printability in the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences at Western Michigan University measured bending resistance and permeability, also using industry-standard procedures.<sup>3,4</sup> Bending resistance was determined by measuring the force required to bend a stamp for a given small distance. Permeability was determined by measuring the time required for a fixed volume of air to pass through a fixed area of stamp under a constant pressure.

Most collectors approach the identification of these stamps first by printing contractor, then by apparent differences in paper thickness when a stamp is held before a light source. Paper thickness data for each printer/contractor are therefore presented first. Other measurements are then related to these data.

### Paper thickness

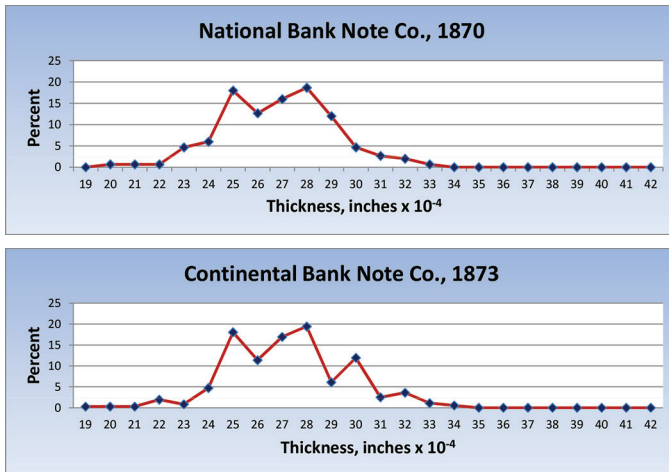
Wiley was the first to determine thicknesses of Bank Note stamps, and published measurements of the 3¢ greens produced under each printing contract.<sup>5</sup> The measurements from this study confirm the ranges of Wiley’s data for each of the four printings, and display the same trends within each printing.<sup>6</sup>

Two general trends are evident in the raw data. First, the National Bank Note Company stamps comprise a slightly narrower thickness range than in any of the contracts from 1873 onward. Second, each of the four printings can be characterized by more than one commonly occurring thickness. These are termed modal thicknesses.

Displaying thickness data graphically provides a better understanding of the relative frequency of occurrence of a given thickness. The two graphs in Figure 2 chart the percentages within each size class of the first two printings. None of the resultant curves represent a single normal distribution—i.e., a simple bell-shaped curve. Rather, each distribution displays more than one modal thickness. This suggests that under each of these contracts, papers were drawn from more than one population, a notion reflected by collectors’ ob-

Author	National 1870 Issue	Continental 1873 Issue	American 1879 Issue	American 1881 Issue
Luff, 1902	White wove, thin to moderately thick	1. Stiff, hard, thin to thick 2. Semi-transparent, almost pelure 3. Porous, thinner than #4 4. Thick, soft, porous	Soft, porous, same as 1873 #4	Same as 1879
Wiley, 1915	Hard, avg. thickness 0.00275 in.	1. Hard, avg. thickness 0.00275 in. 2. Soft “American” paper	Soft, avg. thickness 0.00330 in.	Soft, avg. thickness 0.00330 in.
Brookman, 1966	1. Hard, white, smooth surfaced, thin 2. A little thicker, slightly less hard than normal	1. Hard, same as National #1 2. Soft “American” paper	1. Very soft, coarse mesh, more yellowish and not as smooth as hard papers 2. Intermediate paper, same stiffness as hard paper but more opaque	Very soft
Landau, 1999	Thin, hard, white, starch sizing	Thin, hard, white, starch sizing	Unbleached newsprint, soft, straw to ivory color	Unbleached newsprint, soft, straw to ivory color
Barwis, 2001	n/a	1. Thin, hard, close-wove 2. Thin, hard, open-wove 3. Medium, soft, open-wove 4. Thick, soft, open wove	n/a	n/a
Scott, 2012	White wove, thin to medium thick	White wove, thin to thick	Soft, porous	Soft, porous

**Table 1. Paper characteristics of large Bank Note stamps as seen by various observers.**



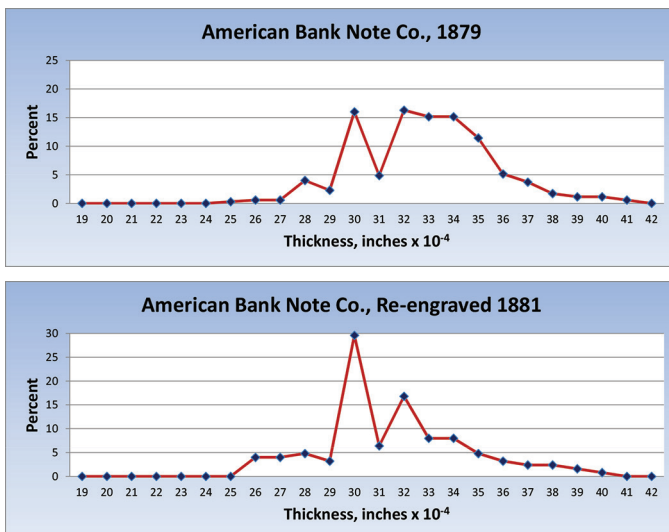
**Figure 2. Thickness frequency distributions for the 3¢ National stamps (top) and Continental stamps (bottom). The multi-modal distributions suggest that the papers for both firms were drawn from more than one population, as supported by the generalizations summarized in Table 1.**

servations over the years, as summarized in Table 1. Whether these modes represent more than one paper source, or more than one production run from a single source, cannot be determined from these data alone.

National paper thicknesses are bimodally distributed, with modes at 0.0025 and 0.0028 inches (0.0635 and 0.0711 mm, respectively). It is likely that these modes represent the means of two overlapping normal distributions. Brookman observed two discrete papers types (see Table 1), which may well be represented by these modes.<sup>7</sup> Although Wiley’s data clearly reveal these modes, he obscured them by characterizing the paper with a single description and a mean thickness of 0.00275 inches (0.0699 mm).<sup>8</sup> Luff (1902) must have observed the thickness range, and noted the existence of discrete subpopulations.<sup>9</sup> Scott’s catalog descriptions do not recognize discrete paper types.<sup>10</sup>

The frequency distribution of Continental paper thickness is striking in two respects. First, Continental stamps thinner than 0.0030 inches (0.0762 mm) are characterized by the same modes as the Nationals. One is tempted to conclude that the two companies used the same two papers, perhaps obtained from the same supplier. However, stiffness, fiber length and permeability data refute this; these characteristics are discussed later.

Second, a third mode at 0.0030 inches appears in the Continental distribution. This mode is also seen in the frequency distribution of 1879 American Bank Note Company



**Figure 3. Thickness frequency distributions for the 3¢ American stamps. The upper graph shows the 1879 stamps and the lower graph shows the re-engraved stamps of 1881. Again, the distributions are multi-modal. The distribution in the upper graph may reflect Continental paper that was used by American after it picked up Continental’s contract in February, 1879.**

stamps. The top graph in Figure 3 shows the thickness frequency distribution for the American Bank Note stamps of 1879; the bottom graph shows the same information for the re-engraved American stamps of 1881. The multi-modal distribution depicted in the upper graph may reflect the paper Continental began using in the second half of 1878, which continued in use after the American assumed control of Continental's contract and printing operation on February 4, 1879.<sup>11</sup> Here we have a problem: when off-cover stamps were sorted for this study, how could the "same" paper wind up in two different piles? The answer is that subtle variations do exist in paper translucence within a single thickness grade. Given a large group of stamps 0.0030 inches thick, an objective observer using translucence would call almost half of them Continentals. Another observer would likely produce a very different result. Thus only covers dated before February 4, 1879 can prove whether a stamp was printed by Continental before its absorption by American.<sup>12</sup>

Most of American Bank Note Company's stamps printed during the 1879 contract were on paper 0.0032 to 0.0034 inches thick. This modal thickness has a higher standard deviation than the modal thicknesses in earlier contracts, and may suggest quality control issues at the paper mill. Modal thickness ranges were narrower during the 1881 contract, in which the primary mode was the thinner (0.0030 inches) of these two papers.

What can we infer from the thickness data? In none of the four printings are paper thicknesses randomly distributed. Rather, they cluster around four thicknesses which may represent normal distributions around the means of four discrete populations. Some of the variation is likely due to how often the stamps had been soaked by philatelists in the past 130-plus years, as soaking tends to thicken and roughen paper. Soaking some stamps more often than others would tend to increase the standard deviation of a given population. Sizing variations may cause some papers to swell more than others during soaking, by affecting a paper's capacity to imbibe water.

The thickness-frequency data suggest the use of four modal thicknesses with different basis weights. Based on the weights of the 200 stamps used to collect the thickness data, the papers' basis weights would have ranged from 53-56 g/m<sup>2</sup> (0.0025 inches thick) to 69-72 g/m<sup>2</sup> (0.0032 inches thick).

### Elastic modulus

Elastic modulus is the tendency of a solid to deform non-permanently when a force is applied. For paper this is a function of the paper's bending resistance divided by the square of the paper's thickness.<sup>13</sup>

It is important to recognize that two papers with identical appearance and thickness may have different elastic moduli due to the way they were made. They may have contained different percentages of fines in the pulp resulting from different treatment in the beater, thus widening the range of bending resistances. Sizing concentrations may have varied, which would also lead to greater variation in bending resistance. Variations in ink-layer thickness would tend to broaden the range of bending resistances for any given paper thickness. Soaking stamps would increase paper thickness and would decrease elastic modulus.

**Table 2. Elastic modulus data for 1870-81 U.S. 3¢ Bank Note stamps, without regard to thickness differences within each printing.**

Printing	Stamps	Elastic Modulus Mean/Std. Deviation.
National, 1870	50	.53 / .09
Continental, 1873	50	.51 / .14
American, 1879	50	.42 / .08
American, 1881	50	.36 / .08

Printing	Elastic Modulus: Mean/Standard Deviation			
	.0025 in.	.0028 in.	.0030 in.	.0032 in.
National, 1870	.61/.08	.54/.09		
Continental, 1873	.53/.14	.47/.12	.40/.06	
American, 1879			.43/.10	.43/.11
American, 1881			.40/.11	.37/.05

Table 3. Elastic modulus data for all stamps which match the four modal thicknesses shown in Figures 2 and 3. Identical thickness does not mean identical paper.

Table 2 shows elastic modulus data for the four categories of 3¢ Bank Note stamps. The top two data rows indicate that when National and Continental stamps were compared as entire populations, no significant difference was discerned in their elastic modulus. This is consistent with the “snap test” used by collectors for identifying “hard” vs. “soft” paper. Although the mean elastic modulus of the 1881 population is lower than the mean of the 1879 population, standard deviations indicate significant population overlap.

A more revealing way to consider paper stiffness is to examine the differences in bending resistance within each printing, based on the modal thicknesses shown in Figures 2 and 3. Table 3 lists the means and standard deviations of these moduli, and this information is depicted graphically in Figure 4. These data prove that identical thickness does not mean identical paper. For example, both of the modal thicknesses used by National were stiffer than paper of the same thickness used by Continental. The thinner of these two National papers is 13 percent stiffer than its Continental counterpart.

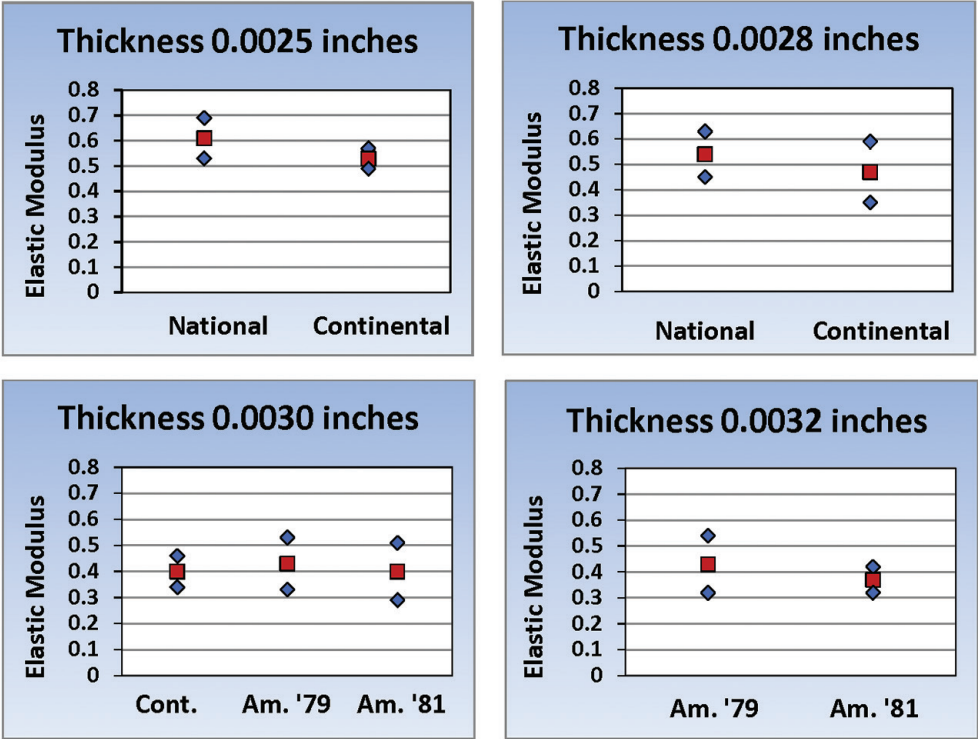


Figure 4. Elastic moduli of the four modal thicknesses for which data is presented in Figure 3. Red squares are means; blue diamonds are standard deviations.

Elastic modulus data taken alone indicate no significant differences in 0.0030-inch-thick paper used in three of the four printings, although Continental's displays a narrower standard deviation. This was most likely the paper on hand when the American Bank Note Company assumed control of Continental's operation in February 1879. Paper supplied after depletion of the inherited supply may have been made to a less exacting standard. As we shall see later, sizing probably played a role in this regard.

In the third quarter of 1878 and January 1879, Continental delivered about 166 million 3¢ stamps to the Post Office Department.<sup>14</sup> After February 1879, when American assumed Continental's contract, more than 1.3 billion (6.5 million sheets) of these stamps were delivered prior to release of the 1881 re-engraved stamps. Therefore a random sample of Continental or American pre-re-engraved stamps on 0.0030-inch paper is about eight times more likely to have been printed after January 1879.

The 0.0032-inch-thick paper used by the American Bank Note Company during the 1881 printing is considerably more pliable (i.e., more easily bent, or flexible) than paper of the same thickness used in American's previous contract. The 1881 paper's mean elastic modulus is about 16 percent lower, and variation about the mean is low, as indicated in the bottom right graph in Figure 4. Other analytical results, particularly sizing and permeability, establish differences among papers which demonstrate very similar elastic moduli.

### **Fiber analysis**

All of the papers stained as cotton. In none of the samples from any of the printings was any evidence seen that would support the presence of soda/sulfite pulp (i.e., "newsprint") in the American Bank Note Company printings, as reported in the literature.<sup>15</sup> Occasional stray fragments which stained as lignin are likely to have been detritus inadvertently introduced in the manufacturing process. A few fragments of unidentifiable debris were also observed, but are immaterial.<sup>16</sup>

A total of 23 stamps were repulped for fiber-size analysis. Although this is an insufficient number to quantify differences among paper types, the data can establish variations between the fabrics of papers with identical composition and thickness. Mean fiber lengths range from 0.532 mm to 0.732 mm, and are shortest in the Continental papers. Shorter fibers suggest longer or more intense beating of the cotton rags used as feedstock for pulp making. This is supported by the observation that cotton fibers in the Continental papers are the most deformed of the four printings.<sup>17</sup> A fiber size-frequency distribution skewed toward the fine fraction may have adversely impacted permeability. Additional work would be required to support this conclusion.

### **Sizing analysis**

Sizing increases a paper's surface strength and stiffness, and may provide a smoother finish. Sizing also imparts some form of liquid resistance to the paper or paper fibers by increasing the surface energy or decreasing the porosity of the paper. Sizing which increases surface energy forms a water-repellent film on paper fibers, which inhibits adsorption of water but not oils. This allows a higher proportion of ink to remain on the printed surface and minimizes ink feathering. In the 19th century rosin-alum sizing was often used. Because it was added to pulp slurry, usually in the machine chest or the headbox, it is considered "internal sizing," or "beater sizing." In contrast, surface sizing involves immersing dried paper into a sizing solution, an extra step that adds production time and therefore increases unit cost. Such sizing types, which include starch and gelatin, form films that decrease paper porosity and permeability.

Five stamps from each of the four printings were laboratory tested for the presence of the three principal sizings used in 19th century paper manufacturing: gelatin, rosin-alum, and starch. Standard spot tests were used for the analyses.<sup>18</sup>

Gelatin was used as sizing in all of the National and Continental stamps tested. Both of the American Bank Note Company printings tested negative for gelatin. Only the American Bank Note Company's 1879 printing tested positive for rosin. Rosin is never used alone as sizing because it will not adhere to paper fibers; it is always used in combination with a mordant, usually alum. Alum is slightly acidic (pH 4.5-7.9), so over time rosin/alum-sized papers can become discolored. Its inclusion in the American Bank Note Company's 1879 printing is probably the reason that these stamps are usually found with yellower paper than any of the other three printings. For their 1881 printing the American Bank Note Company switched to paper sized with starch, which is probably the reason these papers are whiter than those used in 1879. More work is needed to determine if fillers such as calcium carbonate also contributed to paper whiteness.

Why were three different sizings used in manufacturing paper to print these issues? The decision to purchase rosin-alum sized paper in 1879 was undoubtedly an economic decision by the American Bank Note Company, since the change would have lowered their unit cost of paper. When the mill introduced rosin-alum into the slurry, the process of drying the paper and then rewetting it in a sizing tank was eliminated. This would have speeded production, simplified equipment maintenance and decreased unit labor cost, thus allowing the manufacturer to sell at a more competitive price.

### Permeability

Permeability is the rate at which a fluid under a constant pressure will flow through a porous solid, and represents the interconnectedness of the solid's pore space. Longer flow-through times indicate lower permeability, an effect of both fiber size and how densely fibers have been packed together to form the paper's fabric. Highly permeable papers will absorb ink more readily, which can result in lower resolution of line-engraved printing.

When all four printings are considered as a single population, no discernible relationship exists between permeability and paper thickness. The reasons for this are fairly straightforward. At least five factors influenced the permeability of these stamps. 1. For a given thickness, paper varies in closeness of weave. 2. For a given thickness, paper varies in the degree of calendaring—a process of smoothing by passing the paper through rollers. 3. The composition and concentration of sizing varies considerably. 4. Ink-layer thickness varies by a factor of four; ink clogs pores and lowers permeability. 5. Stamps were exposed to a wide range of post-use treatment (soaking history).

A more incisive way to examine these data is to consider permeability variation between the modal thickness groups (see Figures 2 and 3) of each printing. In Figure 5, the mean values of elastic modulus for each modal thickness group are plotted against each group's mean permeability. Stiffer paper is toward the right of this chart, and less permeable paper is toward the top. From 1870 to 1879, the trend was toward papers which were less pliable and less permeable. Then in 1881 the American Bank Note Company changed to a more pliable and more permeable paper. It was a less acidic paper than the company had previously used, which is why today the 1881 papers are generally whiter than the 1879s.

Figure 5 shows that papers sized with gelatin (blue area in the chart) span a wide range of stiffness and permeability. The stiffest gelatin-sized paper is also one of the thinnest—the 0.0025-inch-thick paper used by the National Bank Note Company. The thicker of the two National papers and Continental's 0.0025-inch-thick paper have very similar stiffness and permeability. The thickest Continental paper—the 0.0030-inch-thick paper used in late 1878 and January 1879—is the most pliable paper used by that company, and is the least permeable of all papers used for the 3¢ Bank Note stamps. Continental's 1878 gelatin-sized paper is very close to the rosin/alum-sized papers, both in permeability and stiffness. Although permeabilities of American's 1881 starch-sized papers are close to the permeabilities of two gelatin-sized papers, the starch-sized papers are far more pliant.

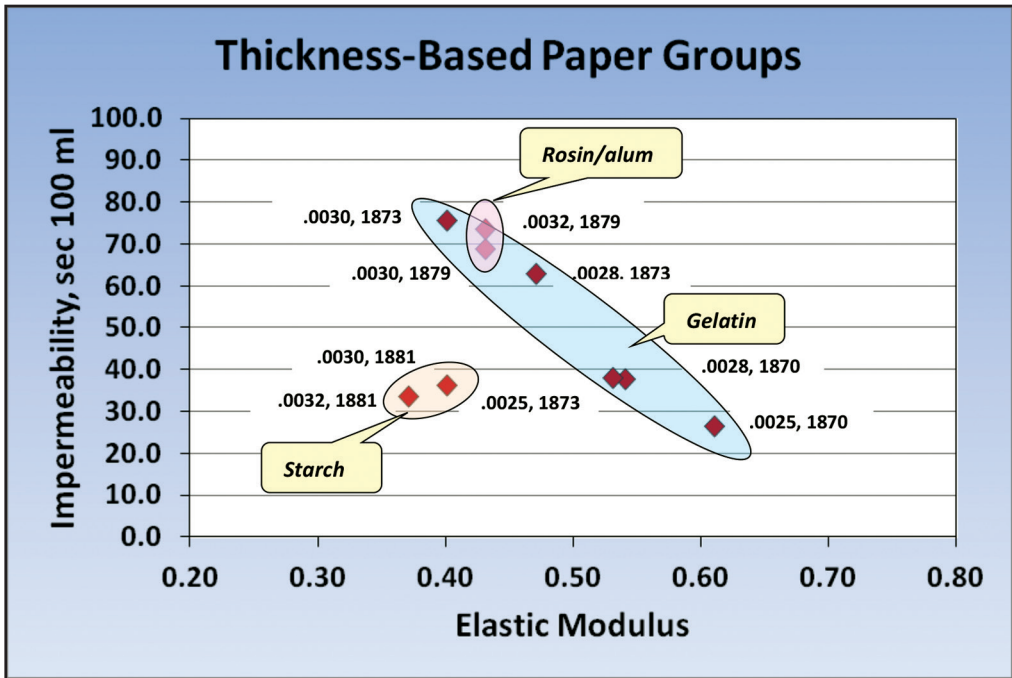


Figure 5. Mean elastic modulus versus mean permeability for each of the four thickness groups. The shaded areas enclose papers that show the same type of sizing.

### Paper's impact on print quality

All three printing companies constantly dealt with the same challenge facing all manufacturers in managing the tension between minimizing unit production cost while retaining or improving product quality. Intaglio printing required paper pliable enough to be forced into printing-plate recesses, but strong enough to withstand the printing process and to yield prints not easily prone to wrinkling or tearing. Too much pressure applied in the calendering process might result in stronger paper but weaker resolution of fine line engraving. Less sizing might result in pliability more suitable for gravure printing, but unsized or ineffectively sized paper might cause blurry images from ink bleed.

This study suggests that type of sizing, rather than paper thickness or permeability, was the greatest influence on print quality. Figure 6 shows enlarged portions of stamps from each of the shaded regions in the chart in Figure 5. First, considering groups of stamps with similar elastic moduli, compare line resolution of either of the two starch-sized stamps with either of the rosin/alum- or gelatin-sized stamps. The 1881 re-engraved stamps tend to look flat, in some instances resembling offset prints. One could reasonably hypothesize that permeability of the re-engraved stamps—which is more than double that of the rosin-alum-sized stamps or the Continental 0.0030-inch-thick, gelatin-sized stamps—caused ink to be imbibed by the paper. Indeed, the ink layer is on average slightly thinner on the re-engraved stamps. But the entire range in ink-layer thicknesses for 200 stamps is only 0.0004 inches, and the range of average ink-layer thicknesses varies between printings by only 0.00004 inches.

A better way to understand the relative importance of permeability versus sizing is to compare groups of stamps with similar permeabilities. Compare images of starch-sized stamps in Figure 6 to those from all three modal thicknesses in the lower end of the field of gelatin-sized stamps in Figure 5. The 0.0025-inch-thick paper used by the National Bank Note Company is the most permeable of all the paper types, yet the images on this paper



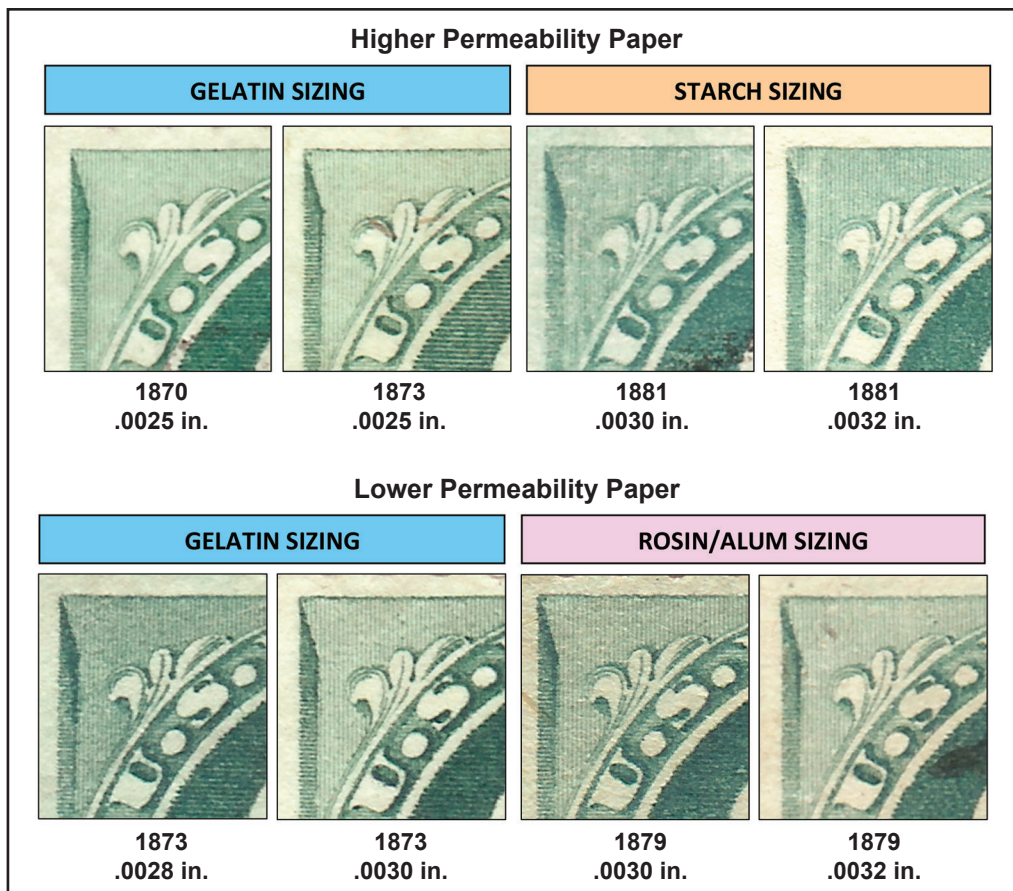


Figure 6. Graphic representation of the influence of sizing on print quality.

are usually crisp. Weak lines are sometime seen, but those cases are seldom blurry and are probably just the result of overly aggressive plate wiping. Nor does paper thickness appear to play much of a role in image quality. Continental's images on 0.0030-inch paper are just as finely resolved as those throughout the entire thickness range.

### Summary and conclusions

The main types of Bank Note stamp papers traditionally have been defined on the basis of thickness and relative stiffness. This has always been a sensible approach for collectors. After all, what collector wants to run a lab test on a stamp (especially a destructive one) before adding it to an album? Yet a closer look is required to understand how Bank Note stamps were produced and the reasons behind their appearance, because papers that look the same may perform very differently as image platforms.

The question "How many paper types are there?" can be answered quickly only if the basis for defining "type" is specified. Table 4 summarizes different ways of grouping the Bank Note stamp papers. If one is interested in paper thickness, there are four paper types, each with a fairly wide range about a mean thickness. If one is concerned primarily with the printing surface as influenced by sizing, there are three types.

Within each of the 1879 and 1881 issues, the two main modal thicknesses display no significant differences in elastic modulus or permeability. Print-quality differences are due to different sizings.

Type	Issue	Printer	Thickness, inches	Sizing	Avg. Elastic Modulus	Avg. Perm., sec/100 ml
1	1870	National	0.0025	Gelatin	0.61	26.70
2	1870	National	0.0028	Gelatin	0.53	37.80
3	1873	Continental	0.0025	Gelatin	0.54	38.10
4	1873	Continental	0.0028	Gelatin	0.47	62.90
5	1873	Continental	0.0030	Gelatin	0.40	75.80
6	1879	American	0.0030	Rosin/Alum	0.43	69.00
7	1879	American	0.0032	Rosin/Alum	0.43	73.70
8	1881	American	0.0030	Starch	0.40	36.40
9	1881	American	0.0032	Starch	0.37	33.60

**Table 4. Characteristics of the types of paper used to print the large Bank Note stamps.**

The National and Continental Bank Note companies did not use the same papers. Although both companies used .0025- and .0028-inch-thick gelatin-sized paper, the elastic moduli and permeabilities of both papers vary significantly between printings. In fact the thicker of the two National papers is most similar to the thinnest Continental paper.

Continental’s thickest paper, the so-called “transitional paper” used in late 1878, was no doubt used by the American Bank Note Company in early 1879 until the supply was depleted. However, this .0030-inch-thick paper was made with different sizing than most paper of the same thickness also used by American.

At no time in either of the American Bank Note Company’s two printings was newsprint—cheap paper made from “groundwood”—used for postage stamp production. Groundwood is made by pushing logs against a grindstone, whereas the American papers are cotton. The few wood fragments seen in the Continental and American papers are most likely debris that found its way into the pulp, at a very low level in any event.

### Acknowledgements

James Allen provided all stamps used in the analyses, as well as insights into sizing chemistry. Measurements done at the Center for Ink and Printability at Western Michigan University were supported by a 2011 research grant from the Institute for Analytical Philately. I wish to thank Prof. Alexandra Pekarovicova for her involvement in this work. I am grateful for the help of Paper Engineer Dr. Robert Hisey, who analyzed fiber composition and offered valuable advice on paper manufacturing techniques. I also thank Prof. Graham Peaslee, and his student Eric Greve, of the Department of Chemistry at Hope College, for performing the sizing spot-tests. Technical reviews of this paper by James Allen, David Herendeen, and Robert Hisey are greatly appreciated.

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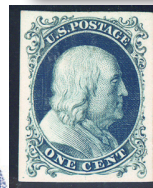
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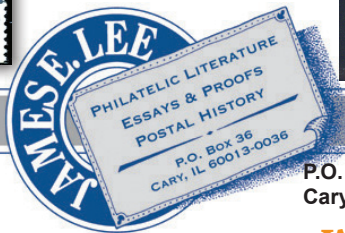
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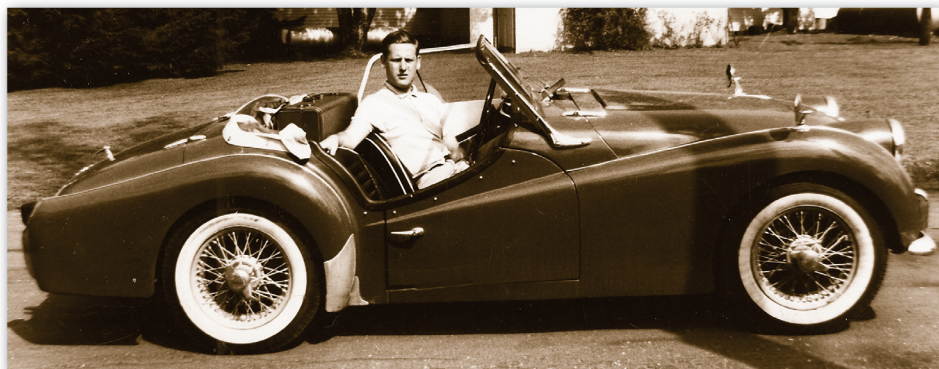


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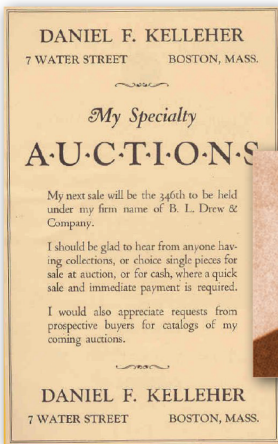
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## OFFICIALS

ALAN C. CAMPBELL, EDITOR

### INTERCEPTED ILLEGITIMATE PRIVATE USES OF NAVY OFFICIAL STAMPS

LESTER C. LANPHEAR III

A previous *Chronicle* article about the uses of the Navy Department department included a section called “Illegitimate Private Usages.”<sup>1</sup> Most of that section discussed a Captain Maddox and the illegal use of Navy stamps by his sister, who lived in Washington, D.C. There was also mention of another correspondence, from New Orleans, which involved similarly improper uses of 3¢ Navy stamps, including two covers struck with an “Insufficiently Paid” marking. This article will expand on the illegal uses from that source.

While all the 3¢ Navy covers to Capt. Maddox from his sister appear to have gone through the mail uninterrupted, the illegitimate uses from New Orleans experienced a different fate. A least five covers from this 1876 correspondence have survived. They appear to be addressed by a Mrs. Raul to her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Stephen Raul Jr., in New Hampshire. Perhaps her son was a Navy Department official who had supplied his mother with Official stamps.

A cover from this correspondence is shown in Figure 1. A sharp-eyed postal clerk noticed this illegal use, struck the envelope with an “INSUFFICIENTLY PAID” handstamp and returned the letter to the sender. I cannot explain the blue crayon markings on the cover.

We know from the presence of other covers from this correspondence that it reached its recipient in New Hampshire. The question is: How? In examining the cover under magnification and black light, it is not apparent that there was an additional stamp on the cover.



Figure 1. 3¢ Navy stamp, used illegally on personal correspondence. The use was detected at the New Orleans post office and the cover was marked insufficiently paid.



**Figure 2. Another cover from the same correspondence as Figure 1. Here the illegal use of the 3¢ Navy stamp was also detected, but the letter was sent to the Dead Letter Office in Washington. After proper postage was secured from the sender, the 3¢ Bank Note stamp was added and the letter was sent on to its destination.**

But when one looks at a color photocopy of the cover, a faint shadowing is revealed to the left of the 3¢ Navy stamp. It appears likely that a 3¢ Bank Note stamp was applied to the cover before it re-entered the mails. This stamp was presumably killed by the New Orleans postmark, while the obliterator portion of this duplex was struck partially over the address. Subsequently, the stamp fell off the cover or was removed by a previous collector.

A few years after I purchased the cover in Figure 1, I acquired another cover from the same correspondence. This is addressed to the same person, Mrs. Stephen Raul Jr., and also bears a 3¢ Navy stamp. This illegitimate use was not intercepted by the post office. The cover has a classic New Orleans geometric obliterator cancel tying the stamp. A manuscript notation on the back of this cover, apparently written by the recipient or her agent, reads: “There seems to be something wrong about these blue stamps as one of Mrs. Raul’s letters was stamped ‘Illegal Postage’ and was detained at the post office.” This note suggests that the sender, even after having a previous letter detained at the post office and being forced to add a regular 3¢ Banknote stamp to it, persisted in trying to use her ill-gotten Navy stamps for correspondence with her daughter-in-law. (Most of the covers are not clearly dated, so they can’t be put in sequence.)

Remarkably, yet another cover from this correspondence, shown in Figure 2, recently surfaced in Germany. It is amazing that after 140 years, a previously unknown cover comes to light to add to our story. This cover was originally franked with a 3¢ Navy stamp, with a classic New Orleans geometric obliterator cancel killing the stamp. The “INSUFFICIENTLY PAID” handstamp, partially obscured, appears to have been struck after the 3¢ Navy stamp was cancelled in New Orleans. For some reason this letter was not returned to the sender. Instead, it was sent to the Dead Letter Office (DLO) in Washington, D.C. A blue DLO triangular handstamp was applied in October of 1876. The envelope was opened and it was determined that this was not official correspondence, whereupon the “ILLEGAL STAMP” handstamp was added to the cover. An official notice was sent to Mrs. Raul to forward 3¢ to the DLO. Once 3¢ was received, the DLO added the 3¢ Bank Note stamp and the letter was then placed back into the mailstream on its way to New Hampshire.

Although a fair number of Official covers that ended up at the Dead Letter Office eventually made their way into collectors' hands, most of them bear Treasury or War stamps. It seems unlikely that covers from the same correspondence would have reached the market from two different sources—the family archive and the DLO. Since other covers in this correspondence made it to New Hampshire undetained, we are comfortable with the assumption that all the surviving covers came from the find of a single correspondence.

The mysterious blue numbers that also appear on this cover and are not the same as those on the cover in Figure 1. They were almost certainly applied in New Orleans as the cover in Figure 1 was not sent to the DLO in Washington. If a reader can provide an explanation of these crayon markings, that would be most appreciated.

#### Endnote

1. Alan C. Campbell, "Usages of Navy Department Official Stamps," *Chronicle* 193, pp. 53-54. ■

*When you think of United States postal history provenance,  
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## **PORTLAND AND DETROIT EXCHANGE-OFFICE MAILS, PART 1: DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTERNATIONAL TRANSIT MAIL SYSTEM**

**JAMES A. ALLEN AND DWAYNE O. LITTAUER**

Today we recognize Portland, Detroit, and Chicago exchange-office transit mail by the presence of characteristic exchange-office markings. Such artifacts are about the only remains of this complex system of mail transport, except for archived government documentation and system timetables. This article summarizes the development of associated sea, land, and particularly rail transport, explores the bases of the exchange-office system, displays a wide variety of illustrative covers, and presents an updated listing of exchange-office markings that have been recorded for Portland and Detroit. The history section of this article relies heavily on original documents in various Canadian archives that are now available in digital form from [Canadiana.org](http://Canadiana.org). This research has uncovered many interesting facts that have not previously been published in the philatelic or historic literature. The rail transportation system has received scant attention in the past, even though it was fundamental to the Canadian strategy that eventually led to the new United States exchange offices and the associated areas of philately. Complexity and rapid change characterize this era of postal development.

The Chicago exchange office was the western terminus of the envisioned mail system in this article. Intimately related to both the Detroit and Portland (Maine) exchange offices, Chicago has been well covered by Leonard Piskiewicz.<sup>1</sup> But to provide context and scope for this exchange-office system, some mention of the Chicago and other exchange offices is necessary to explain the entire system and the periods of transition.

Reading the limited literature about the Detroit, Chicago, and Portland exchange offices, one might get the impression that some federal bureaucrat decided one day to move international mail in closed bags between an arbitrarily-selected port on the east coast of the United States (Portland) and the western states, established the exchange offices, and out came the system as we know it today, with fairly scarce exchange-office markings. But in fact, the evolution of this system was slow and halting, as this article will reveal.

### **It all starts moving in Canada**

The year 1851 is a logical starting point for examining the network that would include the Portland, Detroit, and Chicago exchange offices. This is when the government of Canada passed an act creating a “Main Trunk Line of Railway.” In 1852, it granted the charter for the Grand Trunk Railway.<sup>2</sup> Originally envisioned as the major rail trunk line that would eventually tie western Canada to the Maritime Provinces, it soon retrenched and located its eastern terminus just west of Quebec City on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River.

The Canadian government wanted to solve the problem of winter restrictions on transportation and trade with Lower Canada. The St. Lawrence River ports of Quebec and Montreal faced restricted travel three or four months a year because of ice and snow. Winter travel restrictions and the desire to have year-round seaport access are often given as the



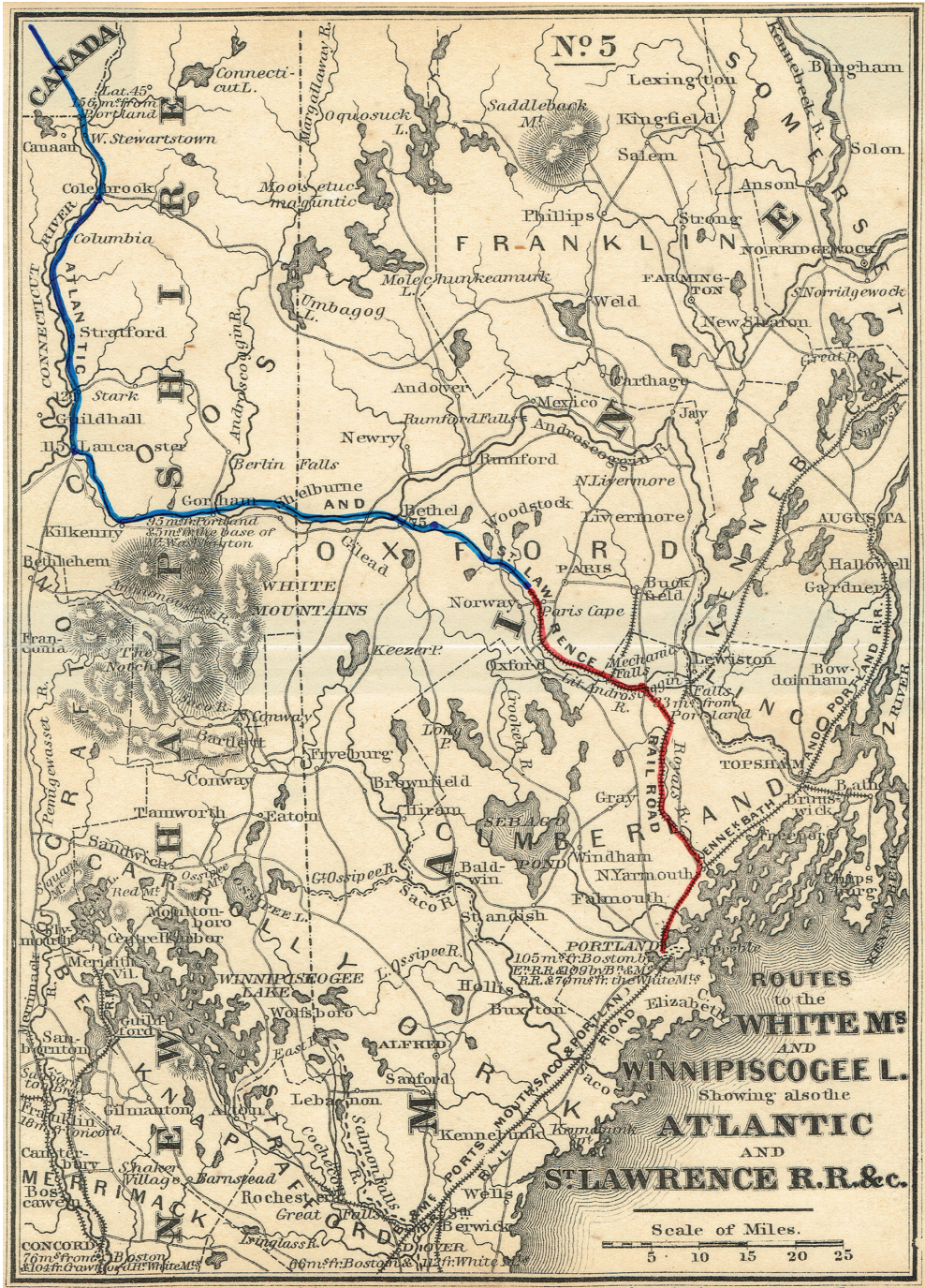
**Figure 1. Imperforate 1851 stamp on cover to Medford, Massachusetts, place of origin not known, but posted on the first leg of the Grand Trunk Railway, showing an early manuscript marking (from 1852 or 1853) of the Atlantic & St. Lawrence Rail Road.**

primary motivation for creating the railroad. However, that would be an oversimplification. From the earliest dates of this vision, the objective of the Canadian government was to begin to tie Canada together and, ultimately, to open trade with the western United States, particularly Chicago. The railroad was the means to this end. Also, trade and tariff wars in one form or another were constant between the United States and Canada at this time. Tariff barriers were the subject of much government consternation and legislation on both sides of the border. In addition, Hugh Allan and his Allan Line (Montreal Ocean Steamship Company), a Canadian company, had for a long time aggressively sought to compete for the Cunard shipping routes and markets.

By July 1853, the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) opened the route from Montreal to Portland through the combination of the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Rail Road (Canadian) and the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Rail Road (United States). This was the first international railroad. Each component was incorporated in 1845 with the objective of linking the United States and Canada. On 5 August 1853, GTR entered into a 999-year lease of the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Rail Road. Figure 1 shows a cover, used on a local leg of this route, that bears the earliest type of the Atlantic & St. Lawrence manuscript postmark, which was known used from 1852 to 1853. Like many RPO covers, the origin is not indicated, but it likely was from somewhere near the railroad.

Figure 2 shows an official 1848 map of the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Rail Road. The red line traces the track that was completed by 1848. The blue line shows the incomplete portion. This railroad became the United States link from Portland to the envisioned trunk line across Canada. "Through operations," i.e., closed mail bags that were to be opened at one of the exchange offices rather than at the port of arrival, began slowly and irregularly at first as the process for actually running the railroad and handling the mail was developed. At this time, all freight and passengers, including mail, had to be ferried across the St. Lawrence River at Montreal. Minimum delays of a day or more were normal. These transshipments by ferry continued until late 1859.

By 1853 Portland was being used as an exchange office for coastal mail moving up from Boston into the Maritime Provinces.<sup>3</sup> Research for this article in Canadian archival



**Figure 2. Official map of the first leg of the Grand Trunk Railway in 1848. The red line shows the track that was completed by 1848; blue line shows the incomplete portion.**

documents led to the discovery of a reference dated November 1853 in which the Canadian postmaster general (PMG) announced that Portland would be the exchange office for mail from Montreal and Sherbrooke (Quebec).<sup>4</sup> In this same announcement, Detroit was designated an exchange office with Windsor, Chatham, U.C., and Montreal. In April 1852, *The Canada Post Office Guide of 1852* listed Detroit as an exchange office only with its neigh-

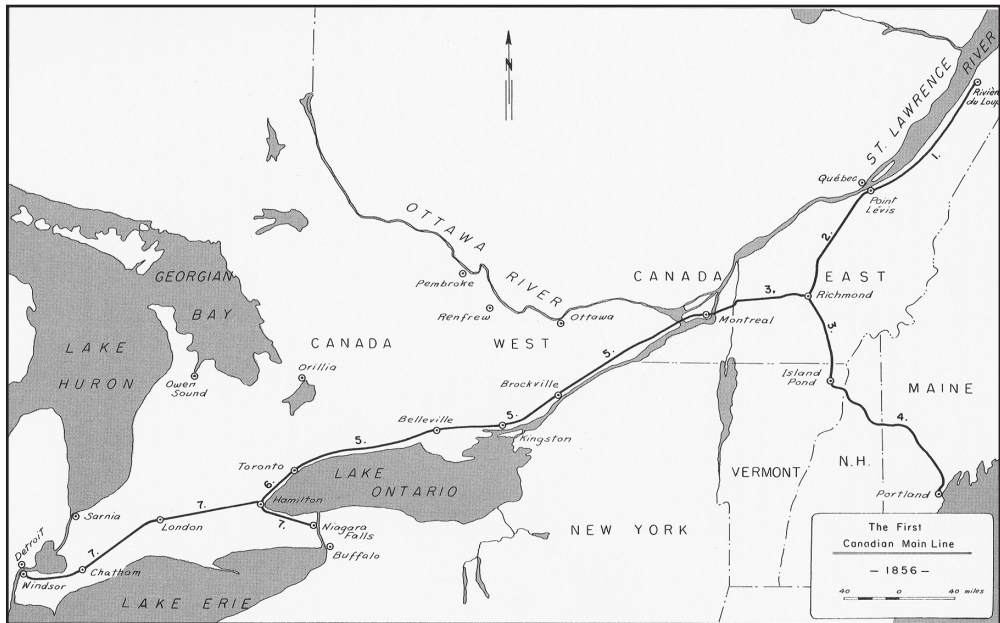


**Figure 3. Early cover carried on the GTR and processed through the Portland exchange office. This cover was posted at Quebec City on 19 August 1853 and sent to Wiscasset, Maine. Unusually, it bears two cross-border exchange office markings.**

bor, Windsor, Ontario. It listed Montreal, Toronto and Kingston as exchange offices on the Canada side, with Boston and Albany, New York, on the United States side.<sup>5</sup> The 1853 reference announcing Portland as an exchange office for Canada-United States mail is two years before the 1855 listing in the United States *Postal Laws and Regulations* (PL&R).<sup>6</sup> The 1855 PL&R is often cited as the first listing.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 3 shows one of the earliest covers GTR carried and processed under the 1853 arrangement. It was posted at Quebec City on 19 August 1853, addressed to Wiscasset, Maine, and bears the two-line Montreal “CANADA/PAID 10 Cts” and the arched Portland “U. STATES” cross-border exchange-office markings, showing prepayment of the 10¢ United States–Canada convention rate. The cover was carried by boat from Quebec to Montreal and then by train in a closed mail bag that was opened in Portland, from which it was sent to Wiscasset. The double exchange-office markings are unusual and scarce. Standardized protocols probably were not in place at the time. So even though Portland was on the Atlantic coast, and not at the border, the Montreal office already considered it as an exchange office for mail moving to and from Canada. The move to designate Portland formally as an exchange office for international transit mail involving Canada and the United States came later and was part of the incremental evolution of the overall system.

Also in 1853, Malcolm Cameron became the Canadian PMG. He aggressively consolidated mail rail services and in 1855 introduced the first North American postal money order system (the United States established its postal money order system in 1864). In late 1855 the Canadian provincial government contracted with the Allan Line for fortnightly sailings between Liverpool and Quebec between April and October, and monthly sailings between Liverpool and Portland from November to March, the months when the St. Lawrence River was closed to ship navigation. By 1856, GTR had been extended to Toronto, creating a continuous track from Portland to Windsor, Ontario (opposite Detroit), with the last section from Toronto to Windsor being owned and operated by the Great Western Railway (Canada). This extension was significant: it reduced the Quebec-to-Windsor trip time from 10½ days in 1853 to just over two days in 1856.



**Figure 4. Grand Trunk Railway route in 1856, including the Great Western railroad. Numbers indicate the approximate order of completion of individual segments of the line.**

Figure 4 shows this early route. The numbers on the route segments show their approximate order of approval or completion. This coordinated railroad network was all part of the Canadian PMG’s vision for improving mail transportation. In June 1857, the Canadian provincial government increased its subsidy so the Allan Line could increase its transatlantic service from fortnightly to weekly.

Choosing Rivière-du-Loup, a town on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, well down river from Quebec, as the eastern terminus for the Grand Trunk Railway was first mentioned in the Canadian Act of 1 July 1856.<sup>8</sup> Originally, the railway was planned to go to Trois-Pistoles, Quebec, and beyond to the Maritime provinces, but financial support for the Maritime connection faded quickly. The terminus objective was repeated on 27 May 1857 when another Act was passed to fund the GTR from Rivière-du-Loup all the way westward to Sarnia, Ontario, on Lake Huron. This more northern route then crossed from Sarnia into the United States at Port Huron, Michigan. Figure 5 shows a portion of an 1872 official map by S. Augustus Mitchell that provides details of the relative proximity of Detroit and the Sarnia crossing. The designated completion date for the eastern terminus at Rivière-du-Loup was January 1860.<sup>9</sup> Note in Figure 5 that at both Sarnia and Windsor, a ferry was required year-round to transship mail, freight, railcars, and passengers. A bridge was authorized for Sarnia in July 1856, but was never built, for unknown reasons.

It is interesting to observe the creativity GTR employed to make the system succeed. Figure 6 shows the plan for the ferry between Sarnia and Port Huron and the surrounding GTR complex. It is taken from a GTR Company report from 1859.<sup>10</sup> A “swing ferry” or “flying ferry” was attached to a 1,000-foot chain that was anchored in two places upstream toward Lake Huron in the St. Clair River. That river flows south into Lake St. Clair, but since the plan’s orientation is rotated 90 degrees counter-clockwise, the river is shown flowing from left to right in Figure 6. The strength of the river’s current was sufficient to assist the ferry in moving back and forth from Sarnia to Port Huron between the slips at Point Edward on the Canadian side and Fort Gratiot, Michigan.

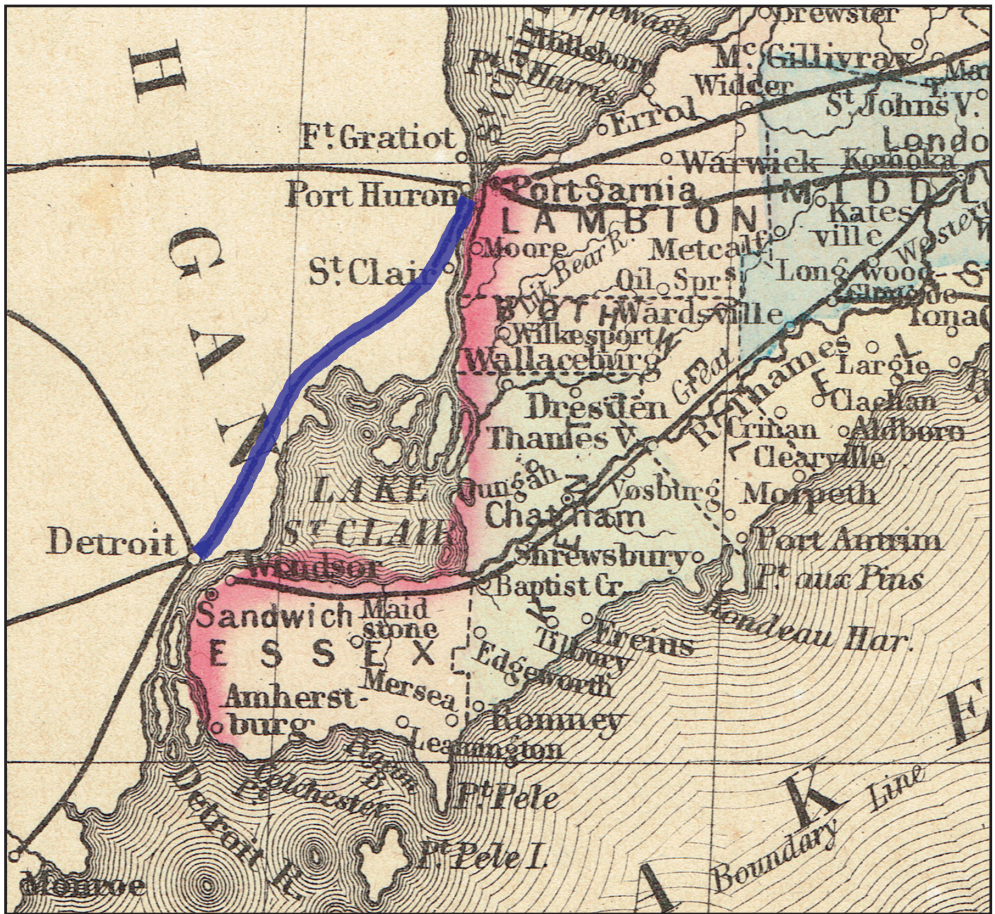
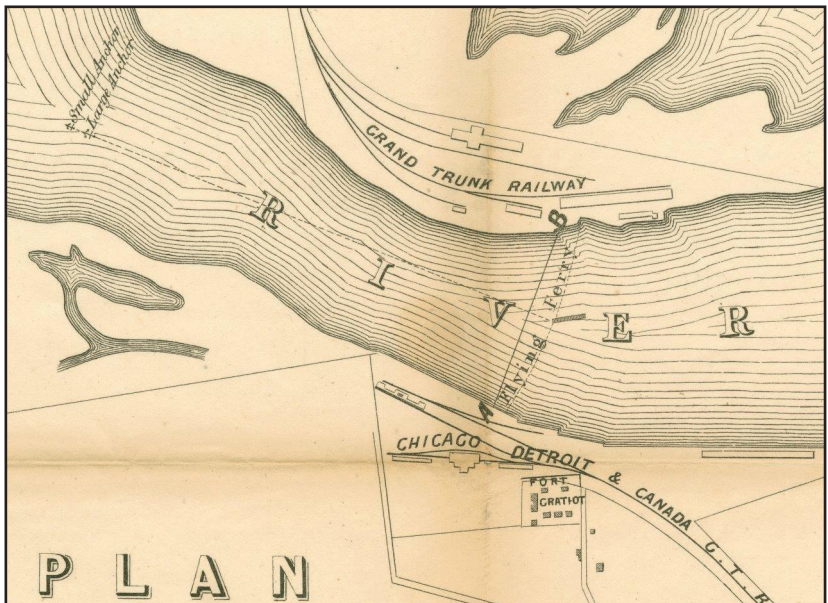


Figure 5. The rail route between Port Sarnia, Ontario, and Detroit (blue line). At either end of this line, a ferry was required to transship railcars, mail, freight and passengers.

Figure 6. The Grand Trunk Railway ferry crossing of the St. Clair River from Sarnia, Canada, to Port Huron, Michigan, was by means of a “swing ferry” on a chain anchored upriver. Map courtesy of D. B. Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario.



It is not certain exactly when railcar ferrying began, but a separate car ferry operated at least as early as 1864. It is likely the swing ferry carried railcars of standard gauge from the beginning.<sup>11</sup> In 1867 the swing ferry chain was hit by a ship and broke loose sending nine full railcars downriver. Canada and the United States generally had different railroad gauges until 1872, when the United States rail gauge was adopted by both countries. However, almost from the beginning of this route, GTR installed extensive tracks, side rails, handling equipment, elevators and buildings on both sides of this international junction, used a third rail to assist in the track transitions, and even created changeable train car trucks. The swing ferry was continued until about 1872, when entirely self-powered, larger, standard car ferries took over the routes. These new ferries were able to transfer up to 22 cars at a time. In 1888, 332,000 cars crossed at Sarnia. In spite of this complexity, the transit speed of the mail, goods, and passengers increased dramatically. Ferries were required at Sarnia until 1891 when the world's longest underwater (and first international) tunnel, known as the St. Clair River Tunnel, was constructed between Sarnia and Port Huron.

As early as 1856, GTR experienced financial difficulties, and tensions existed among the interdependent parties. Commencing in 1857, the United States, Canadian, and British PMGs began negotiating a "Portland route" or a fast route through the United States to Canada. This was a concept that had been envisioned by leaders on both sides of the border as early as the 1840s. Squabbles continued over rail transport rates, not surprising given the number of parties involved. Canada tried to convince all that this was a great plan. The Canadian government had huge Grand Trunk loans at stake, while the British had the biggest investment in the railway. Allan Line and GTR negotiations with both the Canadian and British governments had to occur simultaneously because of the interdependence of the services, loans, and subsidies. At this time, the British also contracted with the competing Cunard Line. The Canadian government considered the British subsidies of the Cunard Line and United States patronage and promotion of that line to be unfair since it drew trade away from Canada and was extremely detrimental to the mail service for all.<sup>12</sup>

By 1857, the groundwork was set. All that remained was to convince the United States PMG that sending mail through Canada was advantageous because it would substantially reduce transit time to the western states, where the United States sought further development. Once the United States PMG agreed, Portland's importance as an exchange office in this system increased. Canada wanted the trade routes, but it also sought other justifications for the continued funding of its GTR "railroad vision."

All did not go smoothly for Canada with an often-reluctant United States partner. As late as July 1858, the United States PMG said he wanted to exchange mail between Liverpool and Portland by Canadian mail packets, but he was not keen on any changes to existing treaty rates nor was he "interested in exchanging mails in the summer months by way of Canada." Eliminating summer service would have dramatically reduced the benefits for Canada with respect to freight and passenger transportation. It would have put the GTR back into direct competition with Cunard into Boston and New York and would have reduced traffic to the Quebec and Montreal ports.<sup>13</sup>

After building the necessary ships, the Allan Line began weekly transatlantic service on 20 April 1859.<sup>14</sup> Finally, in November 1859, Horatio King (the United States PMG) and Sidney Smith (the Canadian PMG) consented to an agreement for moving mail via the Canadian packets. The parties now understood and agreed this included moving mail year-round from Detroit and Chicago through Canada.<sup>15</sup>

### **Mail process details**

By 22 November 1859, the United States and the United Kingdom had agreed that the mail to and from the United States should be dispatched by the Canadian packets weekly,

both in summer and winter. "And in view of the superior facilities afforded by the Canadian Grand Trunk Railway for communication with the Western States, that Detroit and Chicago would be authorized to exchange Mails directly with the British Offices, leaving the remainder of the Correspondence to be included in the Portland post office bags." The British Post Office was asked to separate the Detroit and Chicago Mails from the rest of the dispatch, and add Cork (Queenstown) as an Office of Exchange.<sup>16</sup>

On 22 November 1859, basic mail-sorting rules and directions were spelled out by the Canadian PMG and agreed to by Rowland Hill, representing the British post office. He added more sorting rules for the U.S. mail. This was conveyed to the United States PMG on 25 November 1859. For example, for one specific upcoming trip from Cork, a Canadian steamer "shall take mails for Detroit and Chicago, including all the correspondence which may have accumulated for the States of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri and Arkansas, and similar mail for Portland, containing the correspondence of the State of Maine, also mail for the other States, containing such correspondence as would be too late for your Packet via Southampton, but be in time for the Canadian Packet. Signed by Rowland Hill, secretary for PMG [GB]." The receiver of this communiqué, the Canadian PMG, consented to putting his mail clerks on board the ships to help in the sorting process. This appears to be the very beginning of sorting mail on the ships bound for the U.S. and it was the Canadian PMG's idea.<sup>17</sup> Cunard previously began on-board sorting.<sup>18</sup> The United States-French Convention was amended in 1861 to allocate each of the states and territories to a specific exchange office.<sup>19</sup>

In the same 22 November 1859 communication, the Canadian PMG reminded everyone that Portland had already been named an exchange office. This was announced in London 18 December 1858 after receipt of notification from Washington on 15 December 1858. The arrangement was formalized in London 3 February 1859 and in Washington 11 January 1859. The remainder of what the Canadian PMG requested was technical details to be worked out. Since this process might result in unnecessary delays, these details were to be resolved at a later time.

Figure 7 shows a 16 January 1859 cover from Freeport, Illinois, to Melbourne, Victoria, sent during this transition period. The route connecting Detroit to the rapid GTR route was not yet complete. Instead, the letter was sent to New York, as evidenced by the 21 January exchange-office backstamp. However, it was then sent to Portland where it was put on the Allan Line *North American*, which departed 23 January. This was several days earlier than the next steamer from New York or Boston. Since it was sent to Portland in a closed mail bag, the letter received no Portland exchange-office marking. Nevertheless, this was the first sailing under the agreement between the United States PMG and the Canadian post office.<sup>20</sup> The letter was prepaid 45¢ by a recut 1¢ and a pair of 12¢ stamps of the 1851 issue and two 10¢ type II stamps of the 1855 issue. The United States retained 21¢ for its internal rate and sea transport to England and it credited Britain 24¢ for transit to Australia. The letter arrived in Liverpool on 3 February and London on 4 February. From there it was sent on the European & Australian Line steamship *Teviot*, which departed from Southampton 19 February 1859 and arrived in Alexandria 7 March 1859, and then on the European & Australian Line steamship *Oneida*, which sailed Suez 16 March 1859 and arrived in Melbourne 30 April 1859. These were the last outward voyages of the short-lived European & Australian Line.<sup>21</sup>

This article identifies a number of covers as carried by Allan Line steamships. The presence of a Chicago, Detroit, or Portland exchange office marking may indicate that the letter was sent on an Allan Line steamship, but that was not always the case. The conclusion of what ship carried a cover must be made by correlating the dates of the exchange office and other markings on the cover with the data in *North Atlantic Mail Sailings*<sup>22</sup> to determine





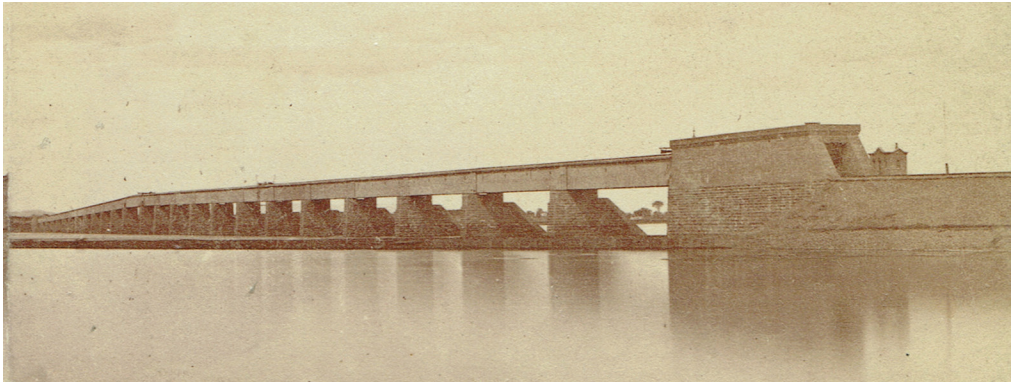
**Figure 7. Transition period cover from Freeport, Illinois, 16 January 1859, prepaid 45¢ and addressed to Melbourne, Victoria. The cover was sent via New York City (per backstamp) through Portland without receiving a Portland exchange-office marking.**

the ship sailing that most closely fits those dates. This analysis is more difficult in later years as the number ships that could have carried a given letter increased.

After an extensive and lengthy lobbying effort by the Canadian PMG, the British requested that Rivière-du-Loup be included in the modified additional articles establishing Portland as an exchange office under the United States–British Convention. Rivière-du-Loup was authorized to exchange mail between the United States and the United Kingdom essentially as an extension of the Portland authority, but was not itself designated as an exchange office.<sup>23</sup> Although Rivière-du-Loup was not mentioned in the additional articles of early 1859, the articles added in late 1859 selected Rivière-du-Loup to off-load mail in the summer, not only because it was on the originally planned GTR rail line, but also (as was noted early on by the Canadian PMG) because it was 600 miles closer to Europe than New York. Ships also travelled to Rivière-du-Loup on the comparatively smooth water of the St. Lawrence, avoiding the potentially rougher seas to New York.<sup>24</sup>

Some interesting observations can be drawn from reading the correspondence between the U.S. and Canadian PMGs concerning the oft-repeated proposals for the specific additional exchange offices under the existing postal conventions. The first proposal for the specific additional exchange offices appears to have come from the Canadian PMG, not the United States PMG as one might have expected. To sell his vision of an improved mail transport into and across Canada, to and from the United States (with the commensurate expansion of the role of the railways), the Canadian PMG regularly promoted, and encouraged others to promote, the improved flow of all mail into the western, southwestern and southern United States. Coupled with the GTR track plans, Portland, Detroit, and Chicago became obvious choices for new exchange offices.

The United States PMG also agreed to send to Portland supplementary mail that was received too late for transmission via New York, along with any other mail endorsed “by Canadian steamer” that couldn’t receive same-day service from New York.<sup>25</sup> Reports of salaries and services for the year ending September 1861 listed service for exchanging certain supplementary mailbags on the Quebec and Richmond route (see Figure 4, track sections



**Figure 8. The Victoria Bridge, a covered railway bridge crossing the St. Lawrence at Montreal, was completed in 1859. This photo is from a stereo view taken in 1871.**



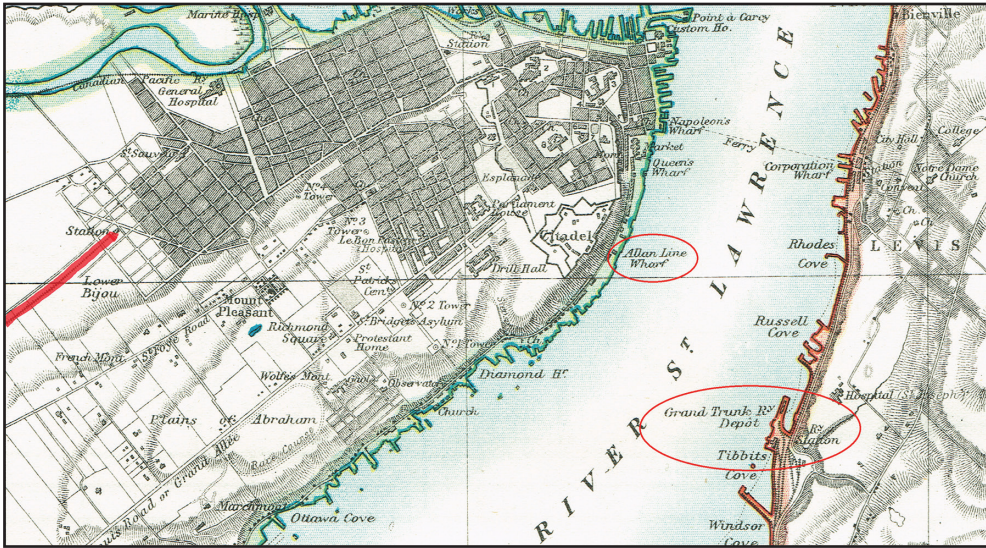
**Figure 9. From a Michigan Central Rail Road map of 1848. The blue line shows the link from Detroit to Chicago before the GTR expanded into the United States from Sarnia and completed the Port Huron to Detroit route.**

2 and 3). Those reports indicated that GTR baggage men regularly handled supplementary mail through the GTR system.<sup>26</sup>

### **Another critical transportation component is completed**

Construction of the Victoria Bridge across the St. Lawrence River to Montreal started in 1854 and was completed by late 1859. This overcame the impassable winter ice problem. It was the longest bridge in the world at the time (9,186 feet) and was known as the eighth wonder of the modern world. It was completely encased and was constructed from tubular steel. Figure 8 reproduces an original photograph of the bridge, taken from an 1871 stereo view by photographer J. G. Parks. This bridge alone shaved off another day or more of travel time. It was envisioned before 1854 to be a key component of a rapid cross-country rail system into and through Canada. The stone foundations for this bridge are still in place today, 154 years later.

On 21 November 1859, the Chicago, Detroit & Canada Grand Trunk Junction Railway finished the Detroit Junction to the Fort Gratiot (Port Huron) line, deeded it to Detroit, and then leased it back. This leg allowed GTR to move faster. In Figure 5, this segment is marked in blue. Tracks, wharves and leased ferry services were put into operation under GTR management. This avoided the Great Western/Windsor-controlled sections across from Detroit and the congestion that was already occurring. It is noteworthy that the mail crossed into the United States from Canada, travelled over 60 miles south within the United States, but received no markings until it reached the Detroit exchange office, its intermedi-



**Figure 10. Quebec map from 1899, showing the GTR and Allan Line wharves and suggesting the difficult topography. Red line shows the north side railroad entering the city.**

ate destination on its way to Chicago. This was also the case in the reverse direction and on mail to and from the Chicago exchange office. Such was the nature of the “through mail” bag-handling system on the trains. On the United States side, the GTR was linked up with Michigan Central Road (MCRR) and others to give them access to Michigan, Chicago, and beyond. The blue line in Figure 9 shows the MCRR route to Detroit before the GTR expanded into the United States from Sarnia and completed the Port Huron to Detroit route.

By June 1861, offices of the Quebec-Rivière-du-Loup post route on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, across from Quebec City, were discontinued because the mail was “served from the railway [directly] instead.”<sup>27</sup> The north shore facilities (old Port of Quebec) had declined significantly in the previous decades. Moreover, during this time, it became simpler and less costly to load and unload vessels on the south shore of the river near Lévis, where there was rail service. This was the case until 1879 when rail service from Montreal to Quebec City was established.<sup>28</sup> Figure 10 is a portion of an 1899 map of Quebec by W. & A. K. Johnson, Edinburgh & London. The red line at the left shows the north side railroad entering Quebec. The Allan Line Wharf and many others on the north side of the river were developed after the 1860s. However, the GTR depot on the south side is close to how it was configured in the 1860s. The topographical contours visible in this map make this rail arrangement understandable and show why GTR carved out what little land was available by the shoreline early on. Figure 11 is an 1870 original photo from a stereo view by Quebec photographer L. P. Vallee, entitled “View of Quebec from the Grand Trunk Depot, Levi.” It shows what this depot looked like in the 1860s and 20 or more years thereafter. The view is facing to the northwest across from old Quebec City.

Passengers, freight and mail were shuttled to and from Quebec City on the north shore by ferry. Steamboats were necessary for many years to shuttle mail back and forth to Montreal and intermediate way offices. Because there was no rail service on the north shore, GTR could not keep up with the local domestic mail load that was now being placed on it. Beginning in 1859, the Canadian post office contracted with the Richelieu Company for 18 steamboat shuttles to transport English mail (this was all that was specified) on the Montreal-Quebec route.<sup>29</sup> These accounted for 30 percent of the steamboat mail conveyance contracts in that year by the Canadian Post Office Department. This continued for many years.



**Figure 11. The Grand Trunk railway depot on the St. Lawrence at Levis, from an 1870 stereo view by photographer L. P. Vallee. This view looks northwest to old Quebec City.**

This explains the greater prevalence during this period of steamboat mail between Quebec and Montreal compared to railroad mail. In 1865, the area ship channel was widened to 200 feet and deepened to 20 feet, further readying it for larger ocean-going steamships. History would show this helped the city of Montreal more than the port of Quebec.

GTR became the dominant contractor for the conveyance of mail by 1862. Local mail and “through mail” were often contracted separately. Even if they may have been sent over the same routes, they were often on different train tracks.<sup>30</sup>

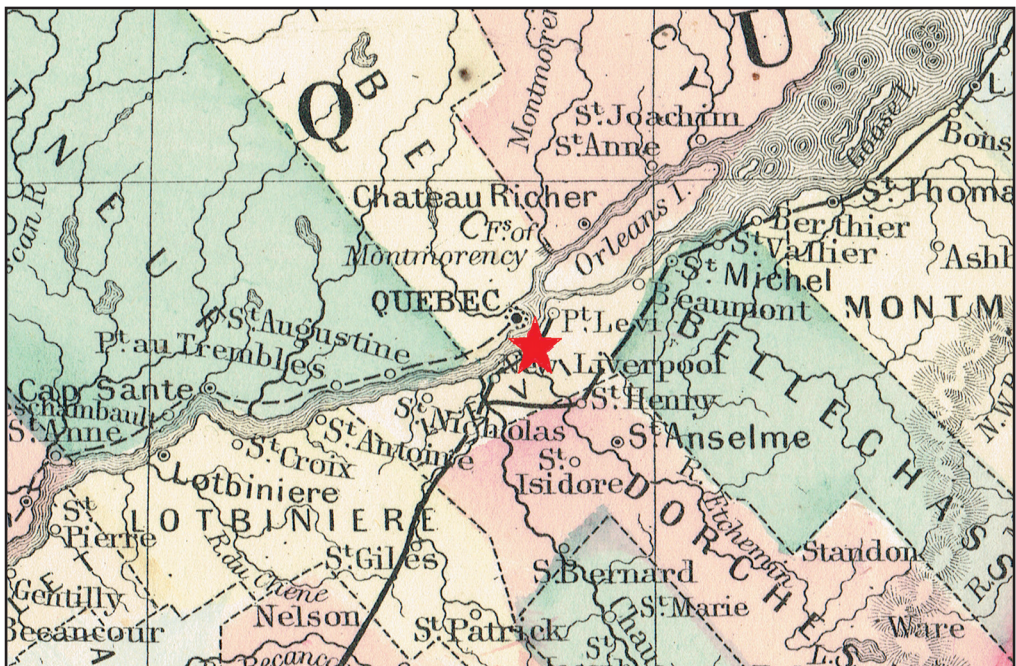
### **Mail service by rail**

The Montreal-to-Portland route was considered a main line from its beginning. As such, daily express passenger trains carried the mail. Special weekly express mail trains were often used to expedite the Allan Line ocean steamer mail. For the most part, trains from Quebec up to Richmond or down to Rivière-du-Loup carried both passengers and freight. Ocean steamer mail generally was carried in the baggage compartments. An on-board post office representative was not present unless needed, which was often the case for local mail.<sup>31</sup>

For context, at this time express trains were those that maintained speeds of 20 mph or greater (when the delay for stops was averaged in), with all others running at 10-15 mph (with stops). For several years after the system was initiated in 1860, special mail trains were often run on the Quebec–Rivière-du-Loup route. These were equipped with a “traveling post office to further sort mails.”<sup>32</sup> (This was several years earlier than the regular use of on-board railway post office sorting clerks within the United States.) Local mail at this time was noted to be minimal. A complex mixture of trains was used for over 15 years to service the mail in this system.

How much mail was being transported over the GTR route from Portland to the west, much of which was processed through the exchange offices? Quoting testimony before a sub-committee of Parliament by GTR personnel: “It comprises the American mail matter from the whole north-west—Michigan, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, &c, and [it is understood] sometimes requires a whole car. Our [Canadian] mails occupy but a third of a car, and the other two-thirds are used by the Company for the express service and baggage.”<sup>33</sup> During the 1864 hearings, it was noted that railway postal clerks were employed on the long-line areas with few and only brief stops, and that timely sorting could not be accomplished without the traveling postal cars.<sup>34</sup>

After studying numerous train and ship schedules for the period 1860-75, noting the transport speeds and drop off points, it appears all incoming ocean-going steamship mail was most advantageously dropped at Rivière-du-Loup. Technically, the GTR terminal was in the village of Fraserville in the parish of La Rivière-du-Loup. It was on the south side of the St. Lawrence River and on the south side of the Rivière du Loup, the river that gave the town its name. The GTR wharf for the large ocean-going vessels was on the St. Lawrence River and accessed the GTR terminal by rail and by bridge from the north over the Rivière du Loup. The GTR trains from the east moved quickly up the 120-mile track to a Pointe-Lévy GTR track juncture. Point Lévi (Pointe-Lévy) was the eastern terminus of this GTR leg at the time, although it is often listed incorrectly as the location of the GTR depot. The Figure 12 map shows a 6-mile leg headed back east towards Point Lévi that could transport GTR trains’ mail or passengers to and from the main GTR depot on the St. Lawrence. From Point Lévi, ferries operated to and from old Quebec City on the north side, and numerous steamboats, previously mentioned, took mail to stations along the way to Montreal. The location of the GTR Depot is indicated by the red star in Figure 12. Rivière-du-Loupe is to the northeast and Richmond to the southwest along the Quebec-Richmond route. Figure 12 suggests the complex railway and mail-delivery arrangement that was needed to make this system work, especially because of the topographical obstacles.<sup>35</sup>



**Figure 12.** Star indicates the location of the GTR depot on the St. Lawrence River at Levis.

From the GTR depot, the train then proceeded southwest to Richmond (see Figure 4) where numerous mail transfers were made, both eastbound and westbound. Mail was carried to Montreal for distribution within Canada, in the “through mail” to the Detroit and Chicago exchange offices for destinations in the United States west, or back down to Portland for destinations in the rest of the United States, according to the sorting plan. The train from Rivière-du-Loup averaged 18 mph during the first couple of years, but increased to 28 mph within a few years (both including stops). The mixed trains that also carried local mail and local passengers averaged around 10 mph. Everything appears to have been planned to maximize the speed of the mail moving through the system and was implemented by agreements between the United States, Canada, the Grand Trunk Railway, the Allan Line, and Great Britain. To that end, in 1863 two daily trains ran continuously between Detroit and Montreal and between Montreal and Quebec via Richmond and Pointe-Lévy. Two express trains ran daily each way to Portland as well. One express train was taken up by the “USPOD entirely over the whole line [so far as mail was concerned].”<sup>36</sup>

How many letters were carried on the Canadian packets during this period, whether mixed or through mail to be processed by the exchange offices? Table 1 shows the data for 1861 to 1863, taken from the online Canadiana archive mentioned at the outset.<sup>37</sup> Based

Between	FY 1861	FY 1862	FY 1863
Canada/United Kingdom	670,000	800,000	860,000
United States/United Kingdom	360,000	820,000	305,000
United States/France or Prussia	130,000	140,000	152,000

**Table 1. Letters carried annually on Canadian packets.**

on the annual volume presented in the table, it is difficult to understand how a whole train car could have been required on a regular basis for the through mail, as described by GTR officials for this time period.

### New contracts with the Allan Line

In 1863, the Canadian government entered into a new five-year contract with the Allan Line, effective 1 April 1864, to carry the mail that went through the exchange offices or over the GTR. The prior contract had also been changed. Beginning 1 April 1864, Allan advised he could decide from time to time where to terminate a voyage, i.e., Quebec or Montreal, although he could not terminate a voyage at Quebec without the Canadian PMG’s approval. It is unclear why this latter restriction was imposed, and no evidence was found to indicate this was enforced in practice.

The second contract with the Allan Line (unlike the first) made no mention of Rivière-du-Loup. It provided that the contractor receive and deliver the mail at Liverpool, Londonderry, Quebec or Portland and bear all costs of delivering mail to or from the steamships in those places. The Canadian PMG formally required all steamers in the fleet to have an onboard “Post Office” suitable for sorting and mail handling, along with living quarters for postal personnel, but no more than two post office officers and clerks were allowed for each steamer.<sup>38</sup> By contrast, the new GTR contract for a similar period still specified Rivière-du-Loup as part of the mail route. That GTR contract delineated a “special Ocean Mail Service” and provided for a “special train” from Quebec to Montreal wherever the steamship arrived more than five hours before the departure of the regular train. A “special express train” was already in place from Montreal to Portland. The new GTR contract guaranteed two trains daily. Again, the goal was to keep the mail moving quickly between and through the two countries.<sup>39</sup>

Just how big was this total railroad system of transportation and mail delivery from the United States, within Canada, or through Canada? The GTR began in 1853 and by 1861 was running 271 locomotives of Canada's total fleet of 390. It had purchased many other railroads, and continued to do that for many years. After acquiring a total of 129 other railroads, it became the largest railroad in the world. The average number of cars in a mixed train in 1860 was only 13.5. They generally had one mixed baggage and post office car and one passenger car. The remaining cars carried freight.

The GTR and the Canadian government risked much and devoted a lot of resources to perform the contracts with the United States in order to send mail through the exchange offices.<sup>40</sup> In the mid-1860s, the average daily mail was 350 pounds on the Quebec to Rivière-du-Loup route (126 miles); 1,500 pounds on the Quebec to Richmond route; and 1,900 pounds on the Montreal to Richmond route.<sup>41</sup> Disputes were very common over costs, appropriate prices, and the actual amounts of mail going through Canada, to Canada, or being off-loaded in the United States before reaching Canada.<sup>42</sup> Even with their various interests at stake (mail, valuables, security, service, etc.), the United States Post Office Department and the United States government took a completely hands-off approach to the trains. That included the scheduling of the only passenger trains that ran to the border—even the United States portion of the trip. Once in Canada, all Canadian laws were applied to all the United States mail in transit.<sup>43</sup>

### **Speed drives the process**

By 1872, the *International Railway and Steam Navigation Guide* listed both a “mail” and an “express train,” daily for the Quebec-Rivière-du-Loup route.<sup>44</sup> By this time, the mail train took 9 hours, not 6-7 hours as it had taken during the first 10 years of operation. This indicates it must have become a local train that carried passengers as well. The express train now averaged 28 mph while making seven stops in 126 miles. Logically, the express train carried the incoming steamship mail, rushed it to Pointe-Lévy and Richmond, where it was transhipped to Montreal or Portland. Richmond had east and west post offices at the time to facilitate mail transfers. Finally, the same railway guide also stated that a “Special Train, with Ocean Steamer’s Mails, due to leave Point Levi at 1:20 PM will run every Saturday, on arrival of trains from the West [meaning Montreal and Portland].” Any other sorting required could be accomplished during the six-hour transit time. In 1879, train connections on the north side of the St. Lawrence River to Quebec were inaugurated.<sup>45</sup> A quick perusal of the 1872 guide makes it obvious that the railroad and transportation options on all sides of the Great Lakes had expanded rapidly in the 10-plus years since the Victoria Bridge first spanned the St. Lawrence. Competitive pressures on all the railroads were huge. By 1882, *Guide #48* revealed the trip from Rivière-du-Loup now took only 4 hours 25 minutes (30 mph with stops). The logic of off-loading mail there, which initially began in the 1850s to gain mail transport speed, became even clearer as the years progressed, since the steamship continued up the St. Lawrence River at a relatively slow pace, finally debarking passengers and cargo at Quebec.<sup>46</sup> Most ships docked on the south side of the river, where the railroad depot and mail service was located. Again, saving time was paramount from the beginning of the plan.

### **Significant historical results**

With the construction of this extensive and relatively efficient system to meet the contract conditions among the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and the Allan Line, mail could be transported and processed for delivery all across the United States, particularly to the west and Midwest, achieving unprecedented reductions in transit times. Additionally, the Canadian PMG and GTR management significantly advanced mail-sorting on board ships and GTR railroad post offices. Stiff competitive pressures provided further motivation to speed the mail-handling and delivery processes. All of this success helped

the Canadian government continue to justify its railroad expense and strategy, secured a niche of the United States mail transport for many years, and opened other commercial opportunities into the United States.

The Grand Trunk Railway grew into the largest railroad in the world during this era. The Allan Line continued to prosper for many years, even as many of the United States steamship companies failed. The exchange offices, the Allan Line, and the railroad system were necessary components of the large and complex mail-transportation system. For philately, the necessary expansion of the United States exchange-office system gave rise to many interesting markings and postal history artifacts that will be the subject of the concluding installment of this article.

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## ANNALS OF THE WAR OF 1812: RUNNING THE BLOCKADE OF NEW YORK

STEVEN WALSKE

This is the second article in a short series that marks the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812.<sup>1</sup> As with the previous article, this vignette concerns letters that passed through the British blockade of the United States from 1813 to 1815.

When President James Madison declared war on the more powerful Great Britain on June 18, 1812, he was counting on their being distracted by the much larger war being waged in Europe between Great Britain and Napoleonic France. Madison's presumption was correct. With its armies tied down in Europe, Great Britain waged a mostly naval amphibious war against the United States. This state of affairs persisted until Napoleon inconveniently decided to invade Russia. Napoleon's losses there, and on the Iberian Peninsula to British forces under the Duke of Wellington, precipitated an invasion of France itself, culminating in Napoleon's abdication on April 6, 1814. Napoleon was exiled to the island of Elba. Figure 1 shows a painting by Sir William Quiller Orchardson of Napoleon's travel into exile.

Napoleon's abdication resulted in the restoration of the French monarchy and peaceful relations between France and Great Britain. This allowed the British to turn the full



Figure 1. *Napoleon on Board the Bellerophon*, by Sir William Quiller Orchardson, showing Napoleon Bonaparte being transported into exile. From the Tate Gallery, London.

force of their military power on the United States, and reinforcements were sent immediately to Canada. Recognizing this profound turn of events, Madison wisely opted for peace, and the war was soon ended by the December 24, 1814 Treaty of Ghent, which essentially restored everything to the pre-war status. Never was a war fought for so little purpose, which is why it is largely overlooked today.

Britain's naval war against the United States centered on a commercial blockade of the Atlantic coast. This was implemented in stages, starting with the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays on February 6, 1813 and soon followed by the New York area and Long Island Sound on May 26. Blockade of the southern coastline was initiated on September 1 and blockade of New England on April 25, 1814. After news of the Treaty of Ghent was received in America, the blockade was lifted—on March 6, 1815.

The most popular and secure method to send a letter through the blockade was on a cartel ship. Cartels were unarmed sailing ships that carried returning POWs or official correspondence under a flag of truce, which made them exempt from capture by the British Navy or by privateers. They are called “cartels” because their exemptions were set out in the Barclay-Mason Cartel (or agreement) of May 14, 1813.

Figure 2 illustrates an example of a blockade-run letter carried by a cartel. It atypically shows entry into Europe through Lorient, France, even though it is addressed to Ireland. The unusual routing forms the core of this story.



**Figure 2.** June 14, 1814 letter from Washington City to Belfast, sent through the British blockade of New York via cartel ship *l'Olivier*, a French naval brig, via Lorient, France. Two shillings seven pence was collected from the recipient in Ireland.

This letter was written by Samuel Williams in Washington City on June 14, 1814. In his letter, Williams explains to a family friend in Belfast that, “I wrote to you the succeeding spring [1813] and sent the letter to the Department of State in this City to be forwarded. I regret that the war has suspended our correspondence so long.”

Williams (1786-1859) was a surveyor in Ohio, and left an account, subsequently published, of his military experiences from July 1812 until September 1813 on the north-west frontier.<sup>2</sup> In January 1814, he was appointed Deputy Marshal at Chillicothe, Ohio, in charge of 350 British prisoners who had been captured by Admiral Perry on Lake Erie in September 1813. In April 1814, he accepted an appointment in the Treasury Department and moved to Washington, where he wrote the letter in Figure 2. He again used his position to send the letter through the State Department.

Fortuitously for Williams, the State Department was just then preparing a package of papers to send to Europe. The French naval brig *l’Olivier* had arrived in New York on June 9, after a 45-day trip from Lorient, France, bearing the first official dispatches from the restored French monarchy. The *Olivier* had been launched on July 3, 1810 with 16 guns and named the *Mamelouck*. It was re-named *l’Olivier* (“Olive Branch”) on April 21, 1814—three days before it left on its historic mission to the United States.

The reply from the United States to the new French government was scheduled to be carried on the return trip of the *Olivier*, which was granted cartel status by the blockading British naval forces. On July 1, the New York *Gazette* reported that, “It is said Despatches to go by the French brig Olivier have been received from Washington, and that she will sail in a day or two.” Those dispatches, along with Williams’ letter, left New York aboard the *Olivier* on July 5 and arrived in Lorient on July 24.

On its arrival in Lorient, Williams’ letter was deposited in the post office, which marked it with the double straightline “COL PAR L’ORIENT,” indicating that it had been brought into France on a private ship from North America. Cross-channel postal relations between Calais and Dover had been restored on April 19, 1814, and the packet rate on a single letter was one shilling two pence. This was added to one shilling two pence inland postage to Belfast, for a total of 2/4 postage due. This was subsequently corrected to 2/7 when the letter passed through London’s Foreign Office on August 12.

The restoration of the French monarchy came as welcome news to a number of French refugees in the United States. A particularly prominent *Bourbonnais*, Colonel Bouvier de la Motte Degondreville, resolved to leave New York at the earliest opportunity. Meanwhile, the Portuguese ship *Dois Hermaos* (“Two Brothers”), was looking to attain cartel status, which it received by agreeing to carry the French royalists home.

New York agents for the *Dois Hermaos*, Vasques & Meuron, began advertising for passengers and letters. The June 16, 1814 *New York Gazette* reported as follows:

**The good fast sailing coppered Portuguese ship DOIS HERMAOS, Captain Borges, 350 tons burthen, well calculated for passengers, will sail from the port of N. York on the 20th of June for Liverpool and Lisbon. Every attention will be paid to the comfort of the passengers. Steerage passengers will also be received. For passage and letters apply to**  
**VASQUES & MEURON**  
**No. 71 Cedar-street**

Surviving covers indicate that letters were carried for 50¢ per half ounce. This private mail forwarding fee was retained by Vasques & Meuron as compensation for placing the letter on the cartel ship. After multiple delays, the *Dois Hermaos* left New York on July 14 with 100 passengers “to be landed in France and England.” Among them was Colonel Degondreville.

Figure 3 shows a letter carried by the *Dois Hermaos* on that voyage. It was datelined “New York 7 mo 3 1814” (July 3, 1814 in Quaker format), and entrusted to Messrs Vasques & Meuron, who added their July 14 manuscript forwarder marking on the reverse as well as the “50 cts” letter charge notation on the front upper right.



**Figure 3.** July 3, 1814 letter from New York City to Lancaster, England, sent through the British blockade of New York via the cartel ship *Dois Hermaos*, a Portugese merchant ship that was granted cartel status because it was carrying Bourbon exiles back to France after the restoration of the French monarchy.

This personal letter from John Barrow was landed in Portsmouth, England. The August 15, 1814 *London Times* reported the August 12 arrival of the ship:

The *Two Brothers* arrived at Portsmouth, from New York, has brought a series of papers to the 14th ult. This vessel was permitted to proceed on her voyage by our ships of war, forming part of the blockade to the American coast, in consequence of having on board Colonel BOUVIER DELAMOTTE DEGONDREVILLE, of the ancient French artillery, and other Frenchmen attached to the Bourbons. The arrival of a part of our army from France in the St. Lawrence, with the report of further reinforcements destined for that quarter, seems to have impressed the American government with a conviction that the contest is now to assume a more serious appearance than they dreamed of a few months ago.

Barrows' letter was postmarked "SHIP-LETTER PORTSMOUTH" and rated 2 shillings due. It passed through London on August 13, where it was corrected to 2/10 due.

Meanwhile, the arrival of the British reinforcements reported by the *London Times* proved to be a powerful incentive for peace. The two sides began negotiating seriously in August 1814 and reached agreement in December.

### Acknowledgements

John Olenkiewicz and Richard Frajola provided essential assistance in period newspaper research.

### Endnotes

1. Steven Walske, "War of 1812 Chronicles: Running the Blockade of New London, Connecticut," *Chronicle* 242 (May 2014).
2. Samuel Williams, *Two Western Campaigns in the War of 1812-13: 1. Expedition of Captain Henry Brush, with supplies for General Hull, 1812; 2. Expedition of Governor Meigs, for the relief of Fort Meigs, 1813*, (Cincinnati: R. Clarke & Co., 1870). ■

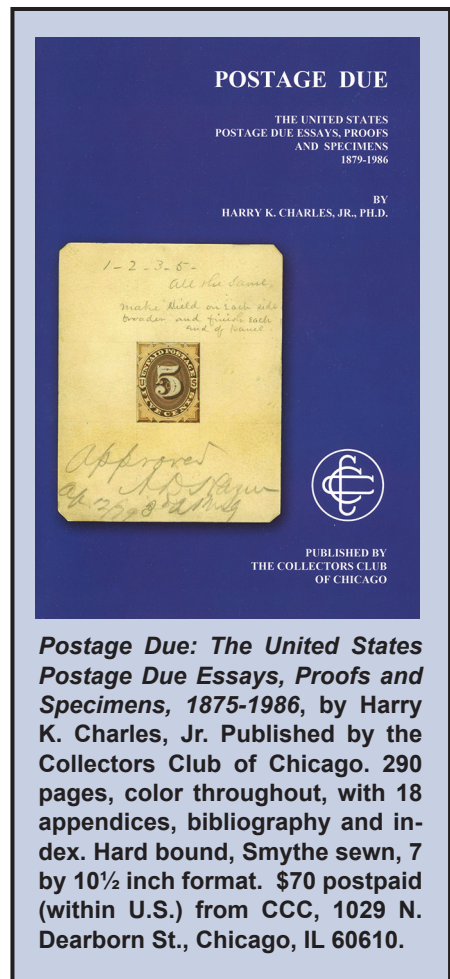
**POSTAGE DUE:  
UNITED STATES POSTAGE DUE ESSAYS, PROOFS AND SPECIMENS  
BY HARRY K. CHARLES, JR.  
REVIEWED BY GEORGE G. SAYERS**

Each of us brings differing resources to the philatelic table: our own experience, formal education, purchasing capacity and passion for philately. And it takes time, effort and persistence to process, evaluate and integrate the information available in the diverse philatelic literature into a working knowledge base.

In this new book, part of the on-going series of handbooks from the Collectors Club of Chicago, author Harry K. Charles, Jr. has done an excellent job of creating and documenting the “Dues” knowledge base. The foreword credits Bob Markovits, attorney, entrepreneur and champion philatelic exhibitor, with the ultimate inspiration for this collection and this book which is its record. Markovits advised pursuit of a specialized collecting interest. If I were writing this book, I would provide lots of chapter endnotes loaded with explanatory details, and include page numbers of citations to make reference-checking easy. Yes, that’s just what the author did—and he added 18 appendices presenting important related information and documents.

I enjoyed this book, which is crammed with lots of pictures related to the text, supplemented with information about recognizing individual essays, types of proofs, production methods, production sequences and much more. While focused on the Postage Dues, this book is an education in every aspect of U.S. stamp design and production, from 1879 to FDR and beyond.

The first three chapters take us back to 1879 with the enabling legislation, design and approvals for the initial Dues issue from the American Bank Note Company. Chapter four first describes the production of the Dues plates and their examination and approval using India-paper plate proofs. Then it describes the printing of the five issues of plate proofs on card stock for publicity distribution to interested parties. The plate proofs on card stock data seems somewhat out of date. The chapter does not note George Brett’s 1992 work (in *Essay-Proof Journal* #193) resolving some Post Office Bill Book issues, including the plate proofs on card; and it does not note my *Chronicle* 214 article finally resolving dates and



quantities issued between the Bill Book data and Brazer's *EPJ* articles. My conclusions on dates and quantities are different. In particular, my dating of the second card proof printing as 1882 and the quantity as 1,000, resolves the problem with the Scott *Specialized* listings for J1P4-J7P4 brown, indicating 1884 as the year of the switch to J15P4-J21P4 red-brown. Chapter five explains ABNC trial color proofs, but continues Petrie's association with the Atlanta trial color proofs, which was debunked in footnote 34 of my *Chronicle* 214 article.

Chapters six to eight explain the tumultuous 1894 transfer of Dues production to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing while implementing a complete design change. Die cracks and transfer roll "claws" offer some added red meat to the story of this First Bureau Issue, which lasted 36 years. Chapter nine details the limited essay and proof data for the modern Dues. Chapter ten focuses on the several types of specimen overprinted dues stamps and proofs which occur (except for type E) on stamps and proofs supplied as examples of postally valid stamps to foreign postal administrations under Universal Postal Union. Chapter 11 explains the Parcel Post Postage Dues. Sixty pages are then devoted to useful appendices.

The "claws" flaw is an example of the interesting detail included throughout the book. The standard late-19th-century practice for sets was to produce several copies of the basic frame die then add in the specific vignette and value. In 1894, at the peak of the Dues production problems, it was found that the blank space allotted for the 50¢ central value was slightly too small (Chapter 6, Figures 15 and 16). When the left belly of the "5" was cut in, four lathe-turning marks were inside the numeral outline, looking like four claws. Chief engraver Thomas Morris noted the error and ordered it corrected on the unhardened transfer roll, which was done easily. The annotated die proof ordering that correction is shown in Chapter 6 as Figure 17. So those 50¢ Dues die proofs show the "claws" but the plates made from that transfer roll do not, providing an interesting contrast to my *Chronicle* 212 article on flaws caused by transfer roll defects.

But that's not the end of the story. Sixteen years later, when a new transfer roll was required, institutional memory of the claws issue was gone. The unaltered claws die was used, and an uncorrected transfer roll was hardened and used to make plates for the 50¢ Dues value. So while the first BEP issue 50¢ stamp exists with and without the claws defect, the die proofs exist only with claws. This story is told in great detail with many illustrations.

Of particular interest to me is Appendix H, which presents documents related to the transfer of dies and plates to the BEP from ABNC in 1894. The receiving inventory, dated 6 April 1894, of two of the 43 boxes of dies, transfer rolls and plates by the "Custodian of Dies, Rolls and Plates" shows the Newspaper and Periodical transfer rolls each contained three transfers, some with three identical transfers, some with three different transfers. These transfer rolls, made by Continental in 1874, shortly after the 88 small Official stamps, confirm the then-contemporary practice of filling rolls with different designs.

And last, I have a possible answer to the question of the color changeling set shown in Figure 7 in Charles' Chapter 8. Here he shows a set of Roosevelt small die proofs of first-issue Postage Dues, in a different shade from normal, with the statement that they show no evidence of prior mounting. I purchased some quite similar color proofs on the same Roosevelt paper in 2004 and noted in my opinion that these proofs had been removed from the gray Roosevelt backing. I retained the 1¢ which shows a patch of the gray paper on the back, and the 50¢ which shows the aforementioned claws. I have concluded these are color changelings, resulting from removal from the backing by softening the adhesive, probably via microwave heating.

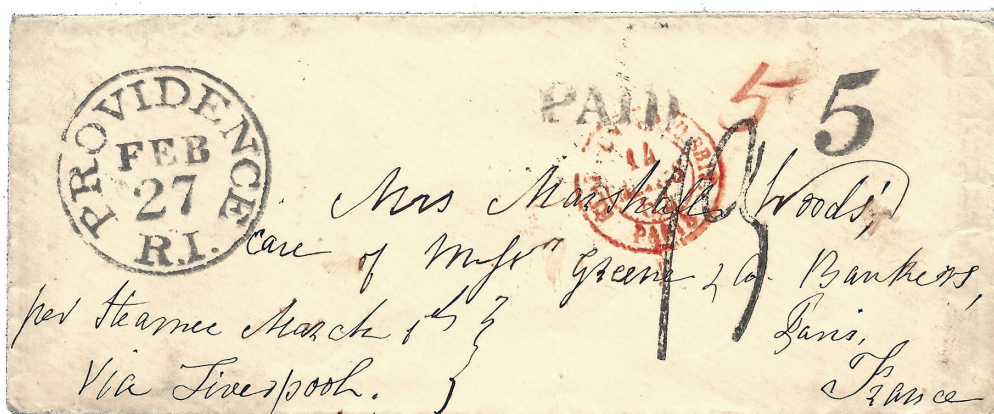
Conclusion: This book is a valuable collector reference and a useful guide for authors of books on specialized collections. The information, references and appendices are worth much more than the price. ■

**ANSWER TO PROBLEM COVER IN CHRONICLE 242**

Our problem cover from last issue, shown front and back in Figures 1 and 2, was a pretty little stampless envelope sent from Providence to Paris in 1854. On the front, in addition to the Providence circular datestamp, there is an orange Paris double-circle datestamp (“ETATS-UNIS. PAQ. BRIT.”), a black handstamped “PAID,” a black handstamped “5,” a red crayon “5” and a black French due marking. At lower left is the directive “per Steamer March 1st Via Liverpool,” which is confirmed by the “BOSTON, MAR 1, BR. PKT.” handstamp on the reverse.

The challenge was: From the information presented and from the various rating markings on the cover, tell what postal convention it was sent under, what shipping line was used, what the cost was to send and receive it, and what ship transported it.

Several Society members responded. The earliest and most complete explanation came from Route Agent Kenneth Katta, who replied more or less as follows:



**Figure 1.** Our Problem Cover from last issue was this stampless cover sent from Providence to Paris in February, 1854. The challenge basically was to explain the cover.



**Figure 2.** Reverse of the Figure 1 cover, with Boston, London and Paris datestamps.



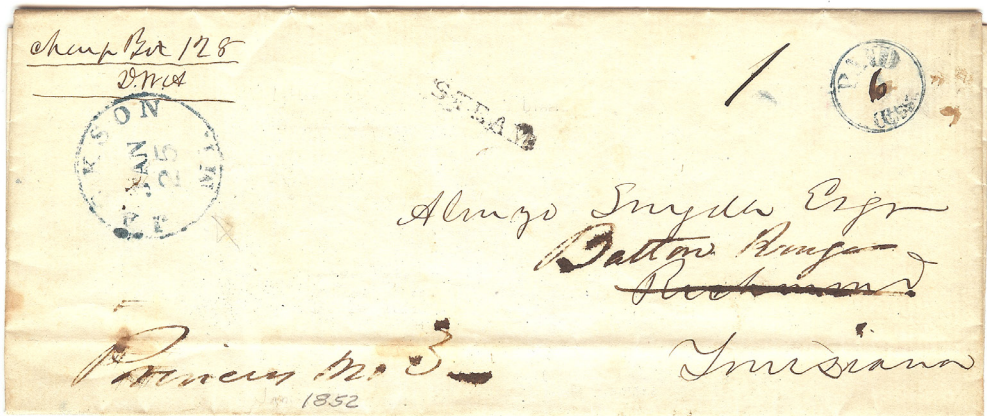
The cover was sent by British open mail on the Cunard steamer *Canada* from Boston to Liverpool, under terms of the United States-British convention of 15 Dec 1848. Per data in the Hubbard-Winter book, this ship departed Boston on 1 March 1854 and arrived in Liverpool on 12 March.

Article XI of the convention states that for letters posted in the United States, prepayment of the 5¢ inland postage would pay the letter on board a British packet in either Boston or New York harbor. The United Kingdom sent the letter to France under terms of the 1843 Anglo-French convention. France collected postage due of 13 decimes (about 26¢) for a letter weighing up to 7½ grams. France compensated Britain for the sea postage and British transit. The black handstamped “5” and “PAID” were applied at Providence and indicated prepayment only to Boston. The red “5” in crayon is a restatement (at Boston) of the U.S. prepayment.

Matt Kewriga, Labron Harris and Jerry Palazolo also contributed to the discussion.

### PROBLEM COVER FOR THIS ISSUE

Our problem cover for this issue, shown in Figure 3, is more difficult than it first appears. This is a folded cover, internally dated January 25, 1852, with notation that it




**Figure 3. Problem cover for this issue. Stampless cover that entered the mails in Jackson, Mississippi, on January 25, 1852. The circular handstamped Jackson “PAID 3 Cts.” rater has been overwritten with a manuscript “6” and the address has been changed from Richmond (presumably Louisiana) to Baton Rouge. Other markings are “STEAM” and what appears to be a numeral “1”. Question: What’s going on here?**

originally contained a petition from a judge regarding a case with a Louisiana connection. The blue circular datestamp at left reads “JACKSON, MI. JAN 25”. A circular rating mark, in matching ink at upper right, originally indicated “PAID 3 Cts.” but the handstamped “3” was overwritten with a manuscript “6”. The cover was first addressed to Richmond, Louisiana, but “Richmond” was stricken out and “Baton Rouge” added. The cover also bears a handstamped straightline “STEAM” and a manuscript “1”.

The challenge is to explain what the markings mean and how the cover was carried from its origin to its destination. ■


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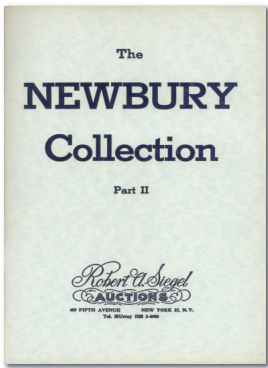
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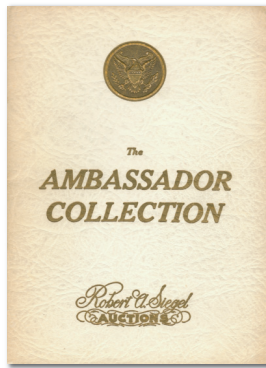
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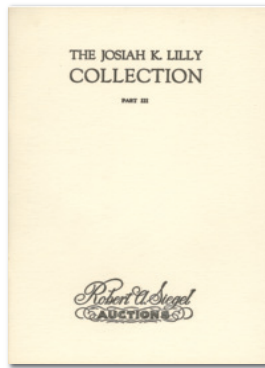
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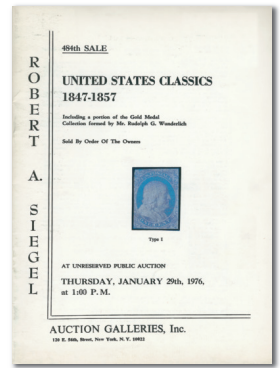
Newbury 1961



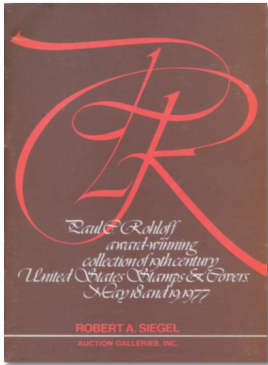
Ambassador 1966



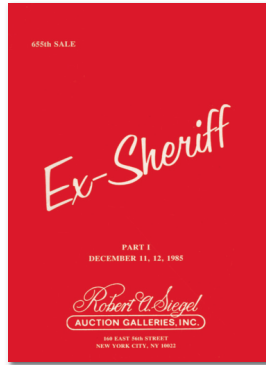
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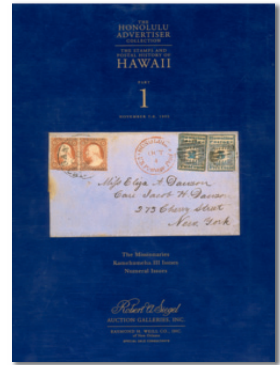
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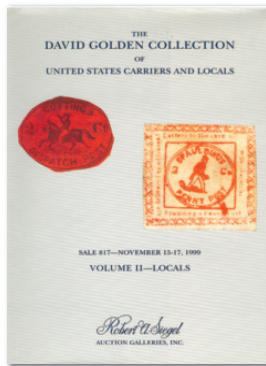
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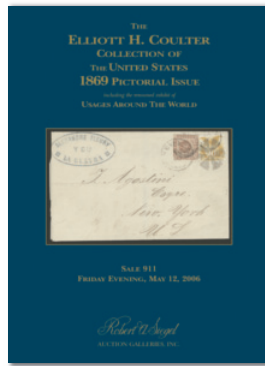
Honolulu Advertiser 1995



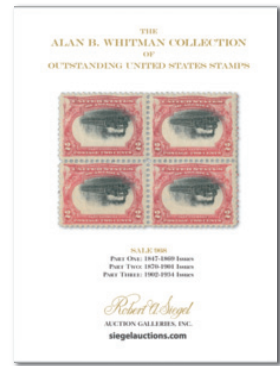
Zoellner 1998



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Coulter 2006



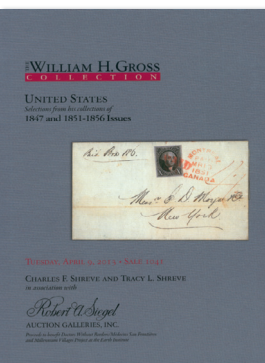
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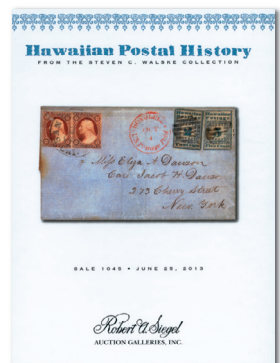
Twigg-Smith 2009



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Gross 2013



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