

# The Chronicle

of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues



The most dramatic “foreign entry” on a 19th century U.S. postage stamp: Enlargements of key portions of the Type I 10¢ 1861 stamp from Position 94L4, showing traces of the underlying 90¢ 1861 design. Chip Gliedman provides all the details in our 1861 section.

February 2019

Volume 71, No. 1

Whole No. 261

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# The Chronicle

## of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues

February 2019  
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# STAMP COLLECTING



## = H. R. HARMER on "CONDITION" =

(See page 442).

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*Therefore I am, as I have always been, a strenuous advocate of taking whenever possible the finest obtainable specimens for one's collection. I recognize that a hobby that gives its devotees not only an absorbing and entrancing study, but at the same time gives them a reasonable chance of obtaining whenever they wish the return of their outlay, is a hobby founded on a rock. Of course, some careless people will buy rubbish in a dear market and some clever ones will buy fine stuff in a reasonably cheap market. That applies*

*in every branch of life and commerce, but the average collector who buys the finest stamps at the fairest prices, to use a slogan I have coined myself, should have no subsequent cause for regret whenever he sells.*

*The collector who buys a second-quality stamp buys a steadily depreciating security, and the man who buys the finest quality buys a certainly appreciating security. I am assuming, of course, what I feel sure is accepted by the huge majority of my readers, that the average collector buys from two points of view only. His interest in his hobby, and secondly the hope that should he at any time decide to sell, he will get some reasonable proportion of his outlay back. I do not think I find one collector in one hundred that ignores the second consideration.*

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**C.G.**



## THE EDITOR'S PAGE

MICHAEL LAURENCE

### IN THIS ISSUE: FOREIGN ENTRIES

On line-engraved postage stamps, plate-entry errors occur when something goes wrong in the process of transferring a stamp design from die to plate. Double and even triple transfers can be found on early United States stamps. Inverted transfers are also known. But the most striking transfer errors are “foreign entries”—when the design of another stamp is mistakenly entered into the plate. On United States postage stamps the most easily recognized foreign entry is the “5¢ red error” of the early 20th century (Scott 467, 485 and 505), created when a 5¢ transfer roll was mistakenly used to re-enter a few positions on a 2¢ Washington plate. Foreign entries are also known on 19th century Official and Revenue stamps.

The only foreign entry on a 19th century United States postage stamp, depicted on our cover, is explored in detail by 1861 editor Chip Gliedman in an article in this issue beginning on page 47. The stamp is the 10¢ 1861 Type 1, and the foreign entry is an underlying and not fully erased impression of the 90¢ 1861 stamp. This variety has been known to collectors for almost a century, but for all that time, it has never been properly illustrated. Gliedman remedies this, using contemporary computer graphic technology to tell a fascinating story.

There's much more. In our Stampless section this issue, beginning on page 13, Mark Schwartz explores the development of the Boston post office from its beginnings up to 1776. Schwartz uses Boston-related artifacts to provide a highly readable introduction to the broader subject of colonial postal history. And in a bonus feature immediately following, Daniel J. Ryterband presents stunning covers supporting an explanation of early steamboat mail on the Hudson River. Included is the earliest cover known to have been carried by a steamboat in the United States—dated 1 Oct 1808 and sent up the Hudson on the *North River* (later known as the *Clermont*). This is Ryterband's first contribution to the *Chronicle*; we hope to see more.

The recent dispersal of the Richard Drews 1861 essays (Siegel sale 1195, December 12, 2018) should enhance an already growing interest in the highly complex proofs and essays from the decade of the 1860s. In an article in our Essay-Proof section (page 58), South African member Jan Hofmeyr continues to mine the Brazer-Finkelburg archive of essay-related documents, here telling the story of the Loewenberg essays of 1863-66. Hofmeyr illustrates some highly unusual material, including a se-tenant essay block showing U.S. and French stamps conjoined.

In our 1851 section (page 41), platers Jay Kunstreich and Richard Celler collaborate to provide corrections to Mortimer Neinken's reconstruction of Plate 5 of the perforated 1¢ Franklin stamp of 1857. Also in our 1851 section, James Milgram updates the printed post-

*(EDITOR'S PAGE concluded on page 57)*

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## **THE BOSTON POST OFFICE FROM 1639 TO 1776**

**MARK SCHWARTZ**

### **Introduction**

The postal history of Boston, Massachusetts, provides a window onto the American postal system. It is thus the story not just of a city, but of a developing country. Boston had the first post office in the original 13 colonies; the first postal markings; and the first paper money in the Western hemisphere. It was the major port in America for most of its first 200 years; a major railroad hub; and a focus for the genesis of the independent mails. Almost everything that happened to the American postal system happened in Boston. This article is the first in a projected series. It spans the time from that first post office in 1639 through the end of the Siege of Boston in March of 1776.

### **Settlement of Boston**

Boston was settled by colonists who had moved from the neighboring town of Charlestown in search of fresh water. It was initially called Trimountaine because of its three mountain groups (which no longer exist). On September 7, 1630 it was named after Boston, the English city in Lincolnshire. At this time, it consisted of only the Shawmut peninsula, surrounded by Massachusetts Bay and the Charles River, and connected to the mainland by a narrow isthmus. This geography would play an important role during the siege of Boston by rebel colonists. Figure 1 shows a map of Boston as it existed in 1635.

### **First Boston post office**

Richard Fairbanks was born in 1588 in Lincolnshire, and came to America with his wife in 1634. He became an influential citizen of Boston, and his house—a tavern—was licensed to sell “strong water” or distilled spirits. By 1639, Massachusetts legislators recognized the need for a post office to serve as the repository of mail brought from or sent overseas. As it was common European practice to use taverns and inns as post offices, the Massachusetts General Court, on November 6 of that year, established Fairbanks’ tavern as the first post office in the original 13 colonies. The annals of the court stated:

**For preventing the miscarriage of letters; & it is ordered, that notice be given that Richard Fairbanks his house in Boston is the place appointed for all letters which are brought from beyond the seas, or are to be sent thither, are to be brought into; and he is to take care that they be delivered or sent according to their directions; and he is allowed for every such letter 1 penny, & must answer all miscarriages through his own neglect in this kind; provided that no man shall be compelled to bring his letters thither, except he please.**



Figure 1. Boston in 1635, from a map created in 1935. The city was surrounded by water, with land access via one narrow spit of land, the "Boston Neck." Richard Fairbanks' tavern, where the first Boston post office was established in 1639, is circled in red.

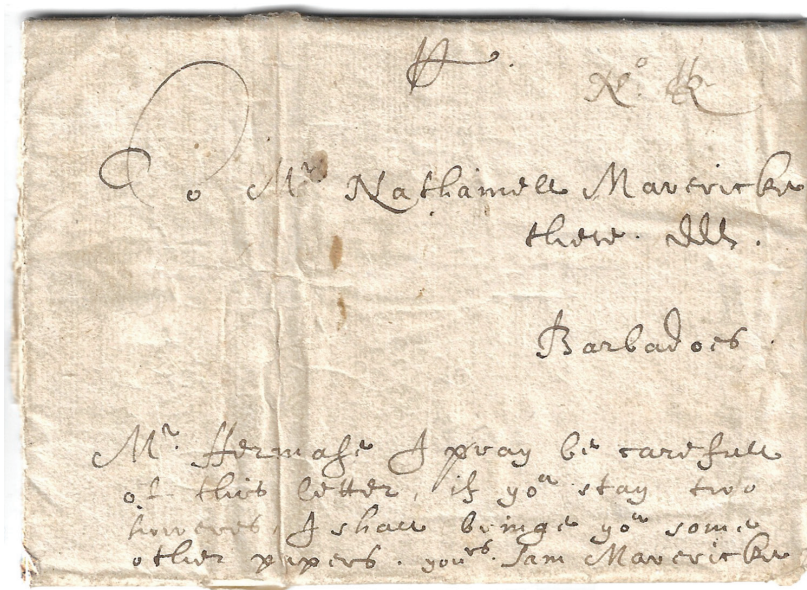
Fairbanks' tavern was located between Washington and Devonshire Streets just north of Water Street, as shown by the red circle on the map in Figure 1. At this time, there were perhaps 100 families in Boston and only one church.

Fairbanks was given the title of postmaster in 1643, and his tavern remained Boston's post office until his death. As noted above, the letters dropped off and picked up at Fairbanks' tavern were those sent by sea. Since he received payment directly from those who brought letters to him or picked them up from him, there was no necessity to put any markings on the letters. Correspondence that passed through this first American post office are unmarked and cannot easily be determined.

While we cannot be certain, the letter in Figure 2 may well have been left at Fairbanks tavern. It is datelined April 15, 1651, and is the earliest known letter datelined at Boston and one of the very earliest from anywhere in the original 13 colonies. I choose to believe that it went via the Fairbanks post. The markings at the top center and upper right are the sender's notations: "P" likely meaning "Par" and "No. II" indicating the second letter in the correspondence. Below the addressee's name are two words I cannot decipher, but which may be the name of the residence in St. Lucy's parish where Nathaniel Mavericke lived and worked. Finally, at the bottom, it reads "Mr. F(erncase?), I pray be careful of this letter, if you stay two morrow, I shall bring you some other papers, yours Sam. Mavericke."

The letter within was written by Samuel Maverick to his son Nathaniel, a planter and merchant in St. Lucy's, Barbados. In the early 1620s, Samuel Maverick had settled in a place called Winnissimmet (now Chelsea) by the local Pawtucket Indian tribe. His house is said to have been the first permanent house in Massachusetts. A few years later, he married





**Figure 2. April 15, 1651: letter sent from Samuel Maverick in Boston to his son in Barbados. This the earliest known letter dated in Boston and one of the earliest from any of the original 13 colonies.**

the widow Amias Thompson, who had inherited several properties, including Noddle's Island, site of present-day Logan Airport. Maverick became one of Boston's most prominent citizens, and is memorialized in Maverick Square, a neighborhood in East Boston, and Maverick Station, part of Boston's widespread subway system.

It seems likely that Fairbanks operated the post office in his tavern until he died in 1667. While a new Boston postmaster does not appear to have been appointed for about 10 years, there is evidence of efforts to establish a domestic post. On December 10, 1672, the second governor of New York, Francis Lovelace, announced a monthly postal service between New York and Boston. The Boston Post Road (also known as the King's Highway) still mostly exists, memorialized by markers along its length. The first mail left New York on January 22, 1673, taking around two weeks to get to Boston. The route was from New York to New Haven and Hartford, Connecticut, and then to Springfield, Brookfield, Worcester, Cambridge and Boston, Massachusetts. This new postal service was short-lived, due primarily to two factors. First, in July 1673, the Dutch re-occupied New York for about a year and a half, ending Lovelace's term as governor. Second, after the English recaptured New York in November 1674, an Indian named Metacomet (also given the name Philip because of the friendly relations between his father and the Mayflower Pilgrims) launched an attack on towns throughout the region, including many on the Boston Post Road. This war continued in southern New England until August 1676. Moreover, business leaders were not enthusiastic about this new postal route, and any enthusiasm on the part of Massachusetts Governor Winthrop may have been dampened by the death of his wife.

Beyond the Boston Post Road, we have additional evidence of the activity of a domestic post. On January 6, 1673, the proceedings of the Massachusetts General Court included the following statement:

...it is ordered by this Court & the authority thereof, that from henceforth every person so sent upon the publicke service of the country shall be allowed by the Treasurer after the rate of three pence a mile to the place to which he is sent, in money, as full satisfaction for the expence of horse & Man;...

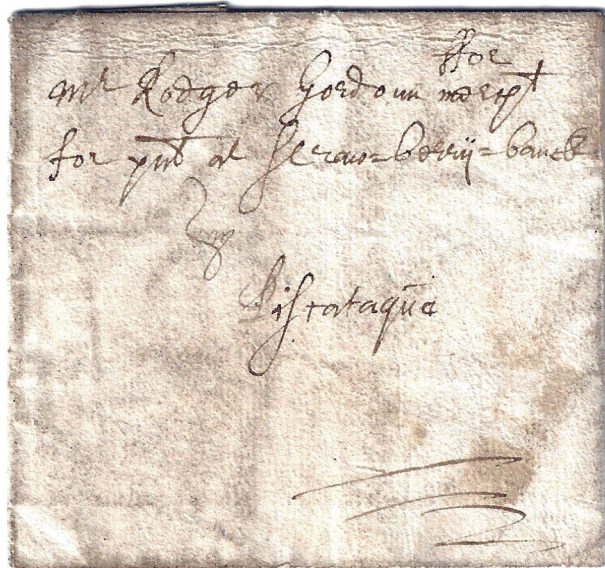
This determination by the Massachusetts General Court of payment for a post rider indicates that a domestic post existed in parts of Massachusetts at this time.

Fairbanks died in 1667 and no one had taken his place. The Massachusetts General Court became concerned that:

...many times the Letters imported are throwne upon the Exchg, so that who will, may take them up; no person (without some satisfaction) being willing to trouble their houses therewith; so that Letters of great moment are frequently Lost.”

John Hayward was named on June 1, 1677 to take over as postmaster for Boston (and for the entire Massachusetts Bay Colony), and to be responsible for both domestic and sea post. Beginning in 1680, all ship captains were required to bring their letters to Hayward, who was to receive 1d for each letter and 2d for each package. Hayward remained postmaster until 1687, having served two terms. The letter in Figure 3 may well have passed through Hayward’s post office, although it would not be the practice to put postal markings on letters for another 15 years or more. The full address reads “For Mr Rodger Gourdon, merc[han]t, for post at Straw-berry-bank, Piscataqua.” Strawberry Bank was (and is) a neighborhood in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

**Figure 3. Dated 3 November 1685 and sent from Boston to Piscataqua (Portsmouth), New Hampshire. This letter may have passed through the post office of John Hayward, who followed Fairbanks as postmaster in Boston and was responsible for both domestic and ocean letters.**



The letter within is datelined Nov. 3, 1685 and sent from John Campbell in Boston to Rodger Gordoun in Piscataqua (now Portsmouth), New Hampshire. Gordoun was a merchant who traveled frequently between New Hampshire, Boston and Barbados. The letter discusses prices for goods at Barbados and which of them would be most profitable to trade. A most interesting aspect of this letter is that the sender, John Campbell, would himself become the Boston postmaster in 1702. I did not recognize this until I acquired the letter shown below in Figure 5 and was able to compare the signatures.

### **The Neale patent**

The earliest attempts to begin a postal service were undertaken either by a single colony (Massachusetts/Boston) or a pair of colonies (the Lovelace Post). The first attempt to create a truly pan-colonial post occurred in 1691, when the British Crown granted a patent to Thomas Neale. In February of that year William and Mary gave him a 21-year license

to erect, settle, and establish within the chief parts of their majesties’ colonies and plantations in America, an office or offices for receiving and dispatching letters and pacquets, and to receive, send, and deliver the same under such rates and sums of money as the planters shall agree to give, and to hold and enjoy the same for the term of twenty-one years.

Thomas Neale (1641-99) was a powerful man in late Stuart England. Prior to becoming, in effect, the Postmaster General of the North American colonies, he had been



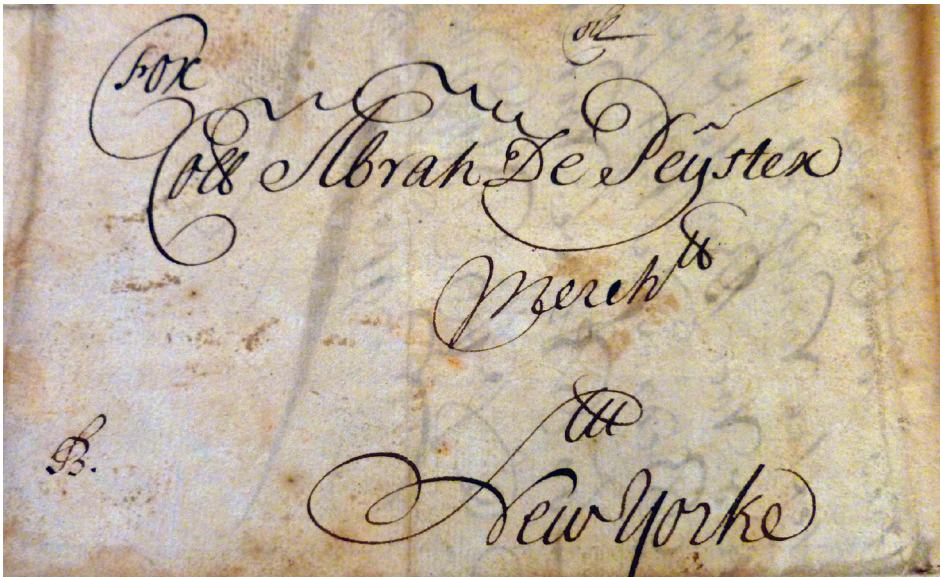
a high sheriff and a member of parliament. He was also Master of the Mint, preceding Isaac Newton. Rather than coming to America to establish his post office, Neale appointed Andrew Hamilton, Governor of New Jersey, as his resident Deputy. The chief post office was established in New York City and Hamilton traveled to each colony to urge passage of postal legislation. Over the next few years, the assemblies of New York, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut all did so. In Boston, Hamilton appointed Duncan Campbell postmaster of Boston and Massachusetts Colony in 1693. Campbell was authorized to convey public letters for free; receive sea letters; transmit letters within and beyond the colony at specific rates; and to mark letters with the date of arrival (the latter requirement apparently not followed).

However, by 1698, this new venture was heavily in debt, and Neale fired Hamilton. Despite marrying England's richest widow, Neale died insolvent in 1699. Under the management of Hamilton and Robert West, the colonial postal system struggled along until 1707, when the Crown took back the patent and began to run Neale's operation. Much additional information about the Neale patent can be found in "Neale Patent Mail, 1693-1707" by Dr. Timothy P. O'Connor in *Chronicle* 237.

### The first Boston postmarks

During the period of the Neale Patent, Postmaster John Campbell applied the first postmarks at Boston in 1702. An example is shown in Figure 4, the address panel of a letter datelined June 30, 1702, and sent from Boston to New York with a fancy "B" (at lower left) but no rate notation.

The letter shown in Figure 4 reposes in the archive of the New-York Historical Society and is shown here through the courtesy of O'Connor. Boston continued to use the manuscripts "B" or "Bo" (and "Sh" if a ship letter) until 1768, when the first Boston handstamps were introduced. There are earlier "official" letters datelined at Boston that bear the letter "B", but they do not appear to have been processed by the Boston (or any) post office. Instead, they were likely carried privately. Postmarks were introduced



**Figure 4.** Address panel of a letter datelined June 30, 1702, and sent from Boston to New York with a fancy "B" (at lower left) which may be the earliest Boston postmark. This letter reposes in the archive of the New-York Historical Society and is shown here through the courtesy of Timothy P. O'Connor.

in New York in 1709, Newport in 1714 and Philadelphia around 1728.

O'Connor has diligently searched Massachusetts archives and turned up several examples of the use of a franking privilege in Massachusetts from 1699-1707. Section 9 of the Act of the Massachusetts Privy Council in 1693 allowed for conveyance "free of all charge" of "all letters of public concernment for their Majesty's service."

**Figure 5. Dated June 9, 1707 and sent by Boston postmaster John Campbell to Nathaniel Byfield in Bristol, Massachusetts. The manuscript marking at lower left ("ffrank J:C") represents the earliest known example of an American free frank in private hands.**

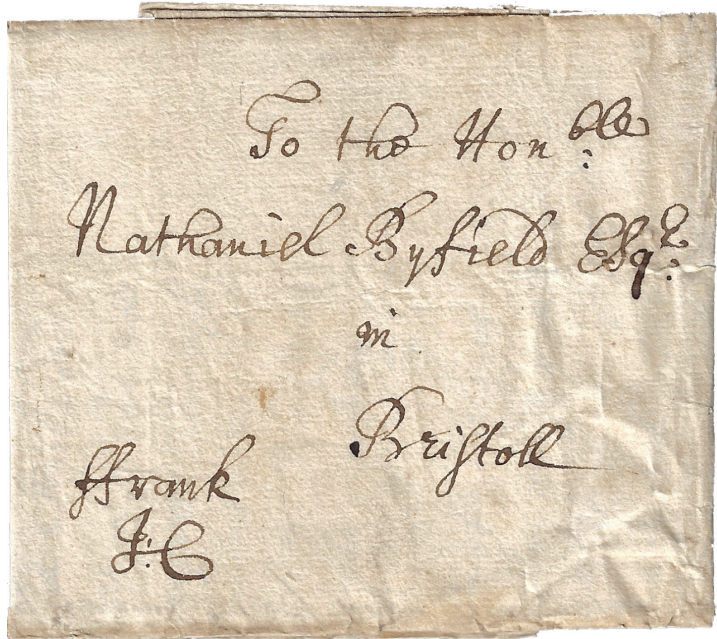


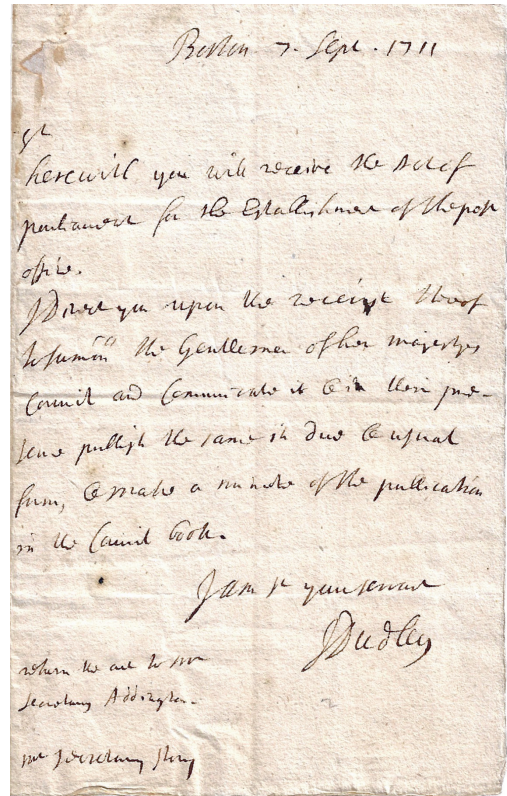
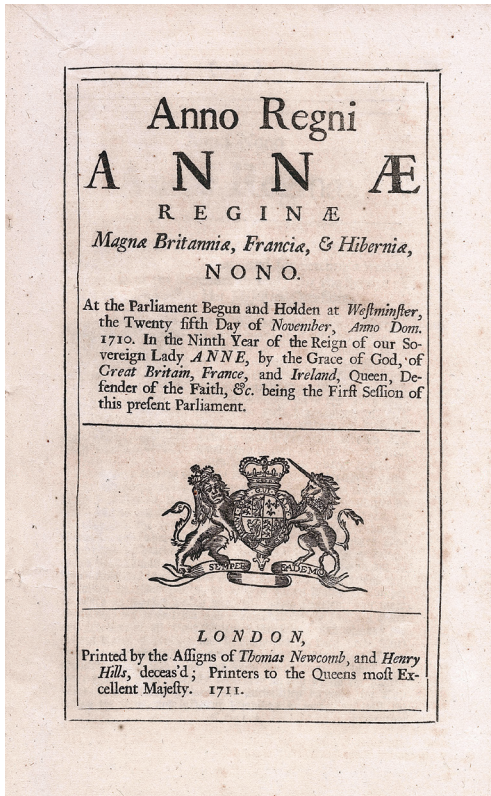
Figure 5 shows the earliest known example of an American free frank in private hands. On June 9, 1707, when this letter was datelined, John Campbell (1653-1728) was the Boston postmaster. He was either the brother or son of Postmaster Duncan Campbell, having succeeded him in 1702. The letter was sent by John Campbell in Boston to Nathaniel Byfield, first judge of the Court of Vice-Admiralty in Bristol, Massachusetts, and endorsed "ffrank J:C". It contained a second letter which had been sent to Campbell. The full story of this interesting correspondence was told in *Chronicle* 232.<sup>1</sup>

### **The British Post Office Act of 1710**

In 1710, the British government decided to take direct responsibility "For All of Her Majesty's Dominions" and passed the Post Office Act of 1710. More familiarly known as the Act of Queen Anne, it took effect June 1, 1711, creating a chief letter office at New York and establishing postal rates in lawful British money, based on the distance traveled. While the act specified rates in British shillings and pence, that specie was rarely seen in the colonies, and the rates soon began to be stated in pennyweights and grains of coined silver (most often the Spanish milled dollar).

The left image in Figure 6 shows the cover page of the Queen Anne Act, which as originally printed consisted of 14 pages. The right image in Figure 6 shows a letter, sent from Boston on September 7, 1711 by Joseph Dudley, governor of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, to Charles Storey, secretary of the Royal Council of New England. This letter, which appears to be the earliest letter announcing the Queen Anne Act in America, accompanied a copy of the Act: "...[H]erewith you will receive the Act of parliament for the establishment of the post office." In his letter, Dudley instructs Storey to communicate this to the members of Her Majesty's Council and to publish the act in the Council Book.





**Figure 6.** At left, the title page of the the British Post Office Act of 1710, better known as the Act of Queen Anne, which established postal rates within the American colonies. At right, letter from Joseph Dudley, governor of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, transmitting the act to the secretary of the Royal Council of New England.

Distance	Single sheet	Double sheet	Triple Sheet
up to 60 miles	4d (1dwt, 8gn)	8d (2dwt, 16gn)	1sh (4dwt)
60-100 miles	6d (2dwt)	1sh (4dwt)	1sh, 6d (6dwt)
Boston to Conn. or Maine	9d (3dwt)	1sh, 6d (6dwt)	2sh, 3d (9dwt)
Boston to New York	1sh (4dwt)	2sh (8dwt)	3sh (12dwt)
Boston to Philadelphia	1sh, 9d (7dwt)	3sh, 6d (14dwt)	5sh, 3d (21dwt)

**Figure 7. Effective 1 June 1711: postage rates from Boston under the Queen Anne Act.** The act specified rates in British shillings and pence, but very little British money circulated in the colonies. Covers were typically rated in coined silver, valued in pennyweights (dwt) and grains (gn). Payment was often made in paper currency, whose value was eroded by inflation as the years passed.

Figure 7 shows the rate chart under the Queen Anne Act. The rates are per sheet of paper and while there are rates for letters sent 0-60 and 60-100 miles, for letters beyond 100 miles, rates were determined by the origin and destination cities.

While the postal rates were stated in lawful British money, very little of this was circulating in America, in part a policy of the British government. Coined silver, primarily the Spanish milled dollar, was more commonly seen, but even this was scarce. Instead, what was often seen in Massachusetts and in the other colonies was locally issued paper money.

### First paper money in the western world

In fact, Massachusetts issued the first paper money in the western world, as a result of the need to pay expenses for the unsuccessful action against New France (Canada) during King William's War. In December 1690, the General Court authorized the issuing of paper currency. As the years passed and additional paper currency continued to be issued, its value in lawful British money declined. By 1723, it took 2.3 Massachusetts paper shillings to equal one British shilling. From this period we see the earliest letters from Boston rated in this depreciated currency, called "Massachusetts Old Tenor." Similar notes were issued in Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. They were considered interchangeable.

Only seven letters are known rated at this 2.3 relationship of Old Tenor to British lawful money. One of them is shown as Figure 8. Dated at London on August 16, 1723, the letter is addressed to Hugh Hall, a Boston merchant who was a Harvard graduate and a slave dealer. The letter arrived at Boston on October 23 and was rated as double ship letter sent 0-60 miles. Below "Mr.," we see "BSh 1N9", reflecting a letter which arrived at Boston by ship, with a rate of 1 shilling, 9d. The official rate was 9d British money, or 1 sh, 9d in local currency (including a 1d sterling or 2d local ship fee). The note at bottom left reads "p Capt Dove QDC," abbreviating Quem Deus Conservet, Latin for "Whom God Preserves."

**Figure 8. Dated at London on August 16, 1723, this letter reached Boston on October 23 and was rated as a double ship letter sent 0-60 miles. The collection indicated at left center was 9d British money, or 1 sh, 9d in Massachusetts currency (including a 1d sterling or 2d local ship fee).**



Over the next few decades, Massachusetts paper currency continued to decline versus British money. By 1735, it had dropped to only 28 percent of British money and by 1748, 14 percent. Figure 9 shows a letter dated Feb. 20, 1748 and sent from Boston to Newport, Rhode Island. It was prepaid 7 shillings in Massachusetts paper currency (equal to 12d British money) as a triple-sheet letter sent up to 60 miles. The townmark and rating (at top center) reads "Bo paid 7".

By 1752, the value of a Massachusetts shilling had dropped further, to just 11 percent of a British shilling. While most of New England accepted depreciated local paper currency at the same rate, other colonies such as New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia, did not. Therefore, when a letter from Boston (or a ship letter via Boston) was sent to one of those colonies, it had to be rated in coined silver.

While different from British shillings and pence, coined silver maintained a stable relationship to British currency. Coined silver was valued in pennyweights (dwt) and grains (gn), with 1 shilling sterling equal to 3dwt, and 1dwt equal to 24gn. A cover sent from London via Boston to Philadelphia is shown in Figure 10. Note that it is rated in pennyweights and grains. Docketed as originating in London on December 17, 1742, it was rated at Boston (April 23, 1743) for a collection in Philadelphia of 21dwt, 16gn as a triple-sheet letter and including a 16gn ship fee.



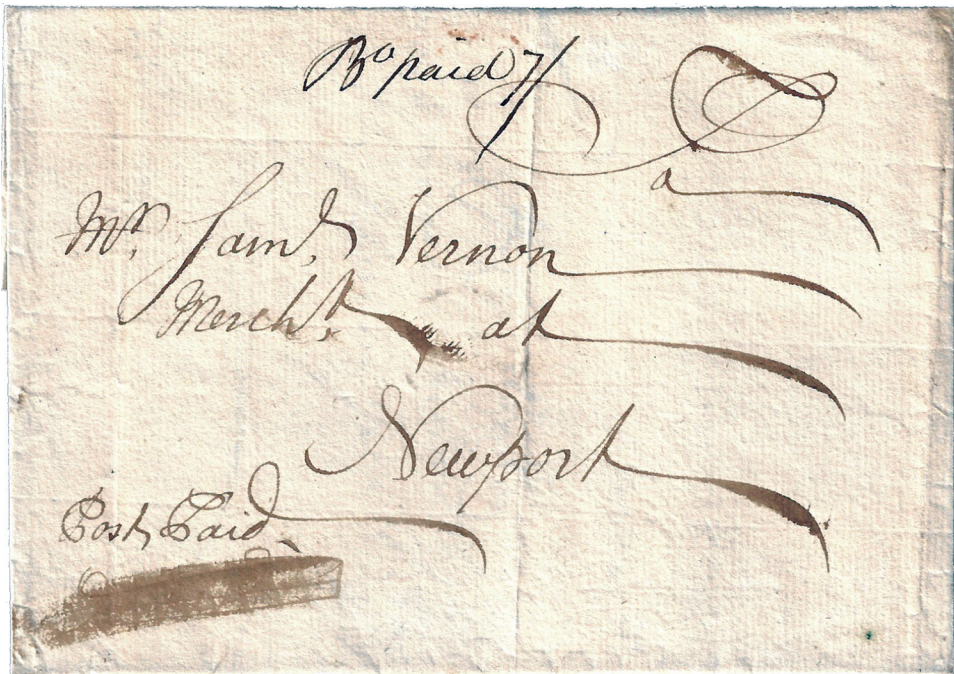


Figure 9. Dated Feb. 20, 1748 and sent from Boston to Newport, Rhode Island, this letter was prepaid 7 shillings in Massachusetts paper currency (equal to 12d British money) as a triple-sheet letter traveling up to 60 miles. The townmark and rating (at top center) reads “Bo paid 7”.



Figure 10. Cover sent from London via Boston in 1742, rated at Philadelphia in pennyweights and grains. Docketed as originating in London on December 17, 1742 and sent from via Boston on April 23, 1743. Rated 21dwt, 16gn as a triple-sheet letter including a 16gn ship fee.

### Benjamin Franklin becomes Deputy Postmaster

While Massachusetts's paper currency was being used in New England, other paper currency was being used in New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia. For an intra-colonial postal system, the confusion that this caused, especially in overall accounting, was untenable. In 1753, Benjamin Franklin and William Hunter were appointed deputy postmasters general for the Colonies. They soon decided to eliminate the confusion by instructing postmasters to rate *all* letters in pennyweights and grains. Figure 11 shows a letter sent within New England, in this case from Boston to Providence, docketed March 7, 1763, which would have previously been rated in paper currency. The "Bo: 1..8" marking at upper right indicates the cover was sent from Boston and rated 1dwt, 8gn in coined silver.



**Figure 11.** Docketed March 7, 1763 and sent from Boston to Providence, this letter was rated 1dwt, 8gn as a single-sheet letter sent up to 60 miles. A few years earlier, Franklin and Hunter had instructed colonial postmasters to rate all letters in pennyweights and grains.

Franklin and Hunter's instruction was generally followed. However, it did not eliminate the basic problem—that many people in the colonies did not have sufficient silver and copper specie to use to pay their postal bills. Thus, we see letters rated in pennyweights and grains, and in the local currency of the addressee. The letter in Figure 12 shows an example of this type of double rating. Dated Sept. 24, 1764 and sent from Boston to New York, it was rated officially 4dwt as a single sheet letter sent between these two cities ("Bo. 4" at upper right). At New York it was also rated 1 shilling, 8d in local currency (magenta "1/8"). This practice of double rating continued until the Act of Congress of 1792 established the United States Post Office and set rates in dollars and cents.

### The Act of King George III of 1765

When the Queen Anne Act of 1711 was passed, the high postal rates were intended to help pay for military expenses associated with War of the Spanish Succession. Since it had been expected that these expenses were to be paid by 1743, a new postal law was to be





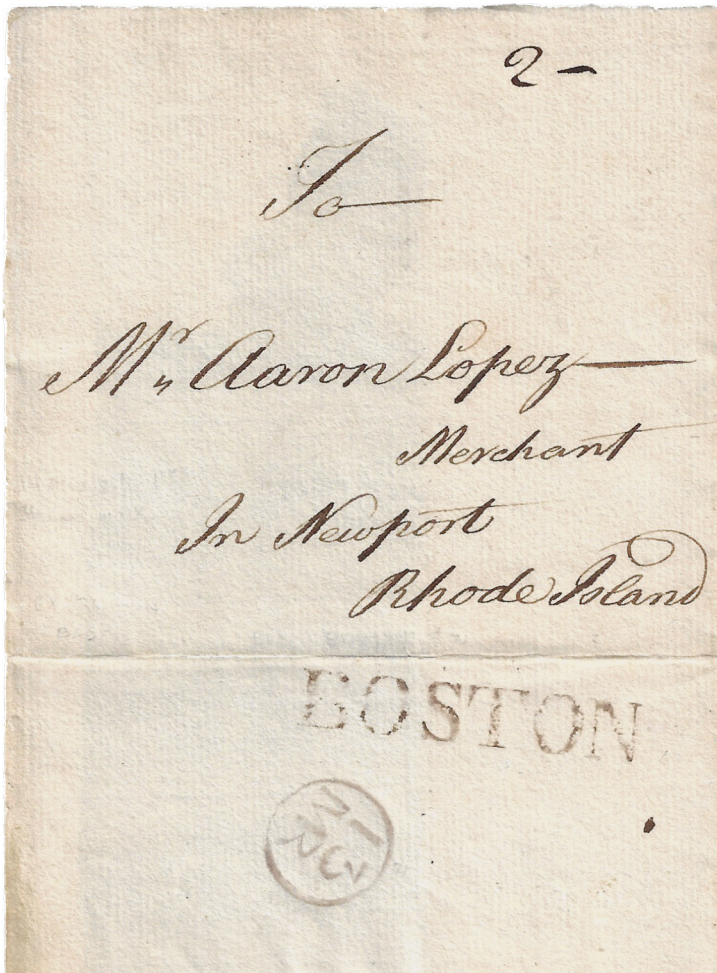
**Figure 12. Dated Sept. 24, 1764 and sent from Boston to New York. Rated officially 4dwt (“Bo. 4” at upper right) as a single-sheet letter sent between these two cities; at New York it was also rated 1 shilling, 8 pence in local currency.**

implemented at that time. However, new wars created new debts, and the implementation of a new postal law with reduced rates was delayed until 1765.

The most prominent changes to the Queen Anne Act were the extension of the zoned mileage rates, which had ended at 60-100 miles; and the long-expected reduction in rates (although only significant for letters sent longer distances). For example, the rate for a letter of a single sheet sent from Boston to Philadelphia declined from 7dwt under Queen Anne, to 4dwt under King George III. In addition, a port-to-port rate (within America) of 4d (or 1dwt, 8gn) was established, and the 2d (16gn) ship fee was now made official. A table of these new, zoned rates is shown in Figure 13. The act was noted in a public announcement on June 8, and printed in the *Boston Evening Post* of August 5. Effective October 10, it was not a substantial change from the Queen Anne Act, rather a series of amendments to that act.

Distance	Single sheet	Double sheet	Triple Sheet
up to 60 miles	1dwt, 8gn	2dwt, 16gn	4dwt
60-100 miles	2dwt	4dwt	6dwt
100-200 miles	2dwt, 16gn	5dwt, 8gn	8dwt
200-300 miles	3dwt, 8gn	6dwt, 16gn	10dwt
300-400 miles	4dwt	8dwt	12dwt

**Figure 13. Effective 10 October 1765: new zoned rates under the Act of King George III. These were similar to the previous Queen Anne rates for shorter distances, but modestly lower for longer distances.**



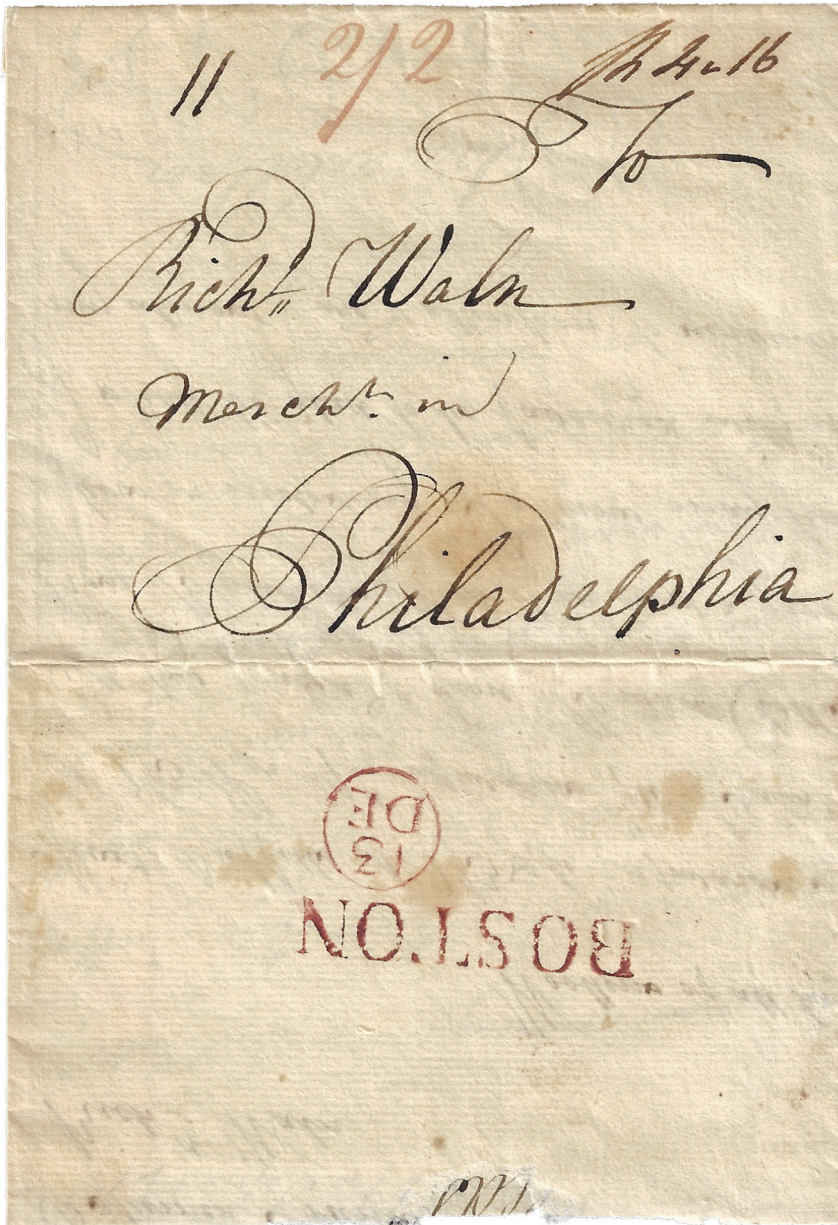
**Figure 14. The first handstamp used at the Boston post office, here on a single-rate letter posted 13 March 1769 and rated 2dwt for the 60-100 miles distance between Boston and Newport, Rhode Island.**

### **Boston handstamps**

Around the time the King George III rates were enacted, we begin to see new handstamps used in the colonies. New York had used a two line handstamp “NEW YORK” for several years,<sup>2</sup> but in 1764 we see a two-line 53x16 millimeter “PHILA/DELPHIA”; in 1765, a 51x6 mm straightline “SAVANNA”; and in 1766, a 28x12 mm two-line “HART/FORD”.

An example of the first handstamp used at the Boston post office is shown in Figure 14. This was a single-rate letter posted on March 13, 1769, rated 2dwt for the 60-100 miles distance between Boston and Newport, Rhode Island. This 43½x7½ mm handstamp is first known used in February, 1769. For the first six months, it was struck in a violet shade of ink, as on the cover in Figure 14. From what I have seen, these strikes are often faded or not well struck. Perhaps because the marking did not show up well, this violet ink was changed to red by August or September. By April 1770, both red and magenta inks were being used. Below the straightline “BOSTON”, note the handstamped encircled “13 MR”. This is called a Franklin mark, introduced by Benjamin Franklin as a means to show when a letter



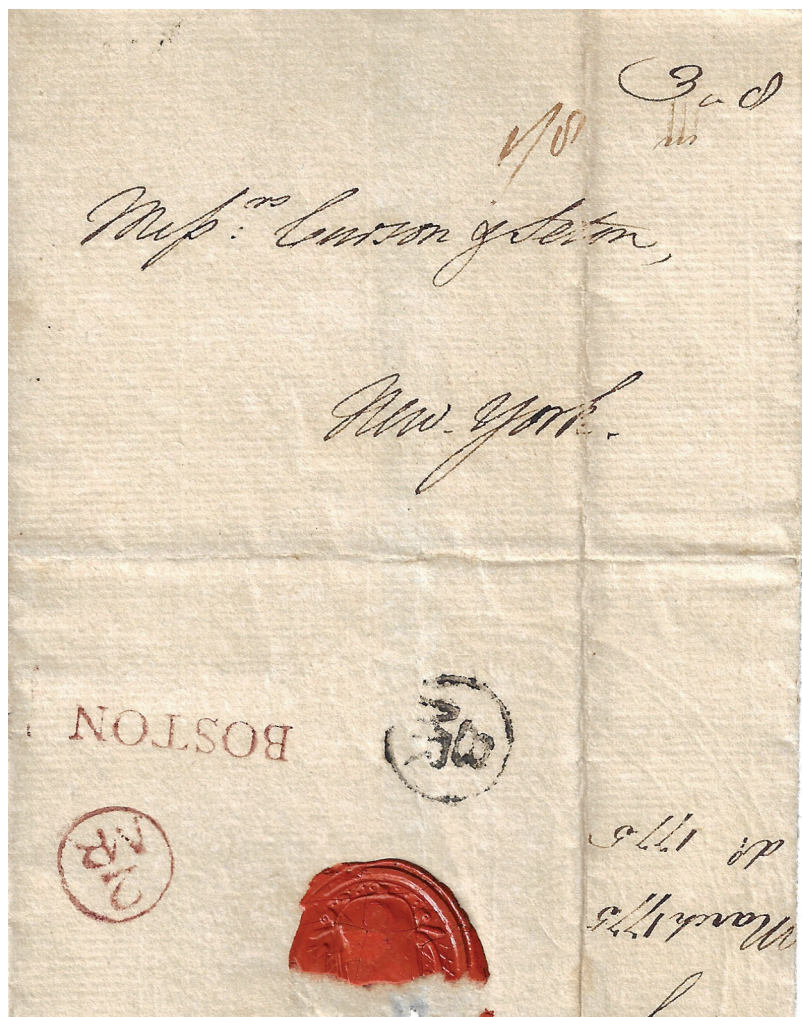


**Figure 15.** Struck with the first Boston handstamp in magenta, this cover was posted on December 13, 1773 and rated 4dwt, 16gn as a single-sheet ship letter originating in England and upon arrival sent the 300-400 mile distance to Philadelphia.

was posted. Predecessor markings called Bishop marks were devised by Henry Bishop, Postmaster General of England, in 1661; these were the world's first postmarks.

An example of the Boston handstamp in magenta is seen in Figure 15, on a letter posted at Boston on December 13, 1773, rated 4dwt, 16gn as single-sheet ship letter originating in England and upon arrival sent 300-400 miles to Philadelphia. The pen marking at upper right reads "Sh 4-16". When the cover arrived at Philadelphia, the rating in coined silver was restated as 2sh, 2d (magenta "2/2" at top center) in local Pennsylvania currency.

**Figure 16. The smaller BOSTON handstamp on this cover was used only 3½ months in 1775. This letter to New York, posted at Boston on March 2, 1775, was rated 3dwt, 8gn as a single-sheet letter sent a distance of 200-300 miles. At New York it was also rated 1sh, 8d in local currency.**



### **The last royal handstamp used at Boston**

In 1775, a new, smaller handstamp began being used at Boston and other colonial towns. It was used in Boston for only 3½ months, from February 20 to June 4. An example is shown on the cover in Figure 16, which was posted at Boston on March 2, 1775 and sent to New York as a single-sheet letter traveling a distance of 200-300 miles. The cover was rated at Boston at the official rate of 3dwt 8gn (black manuscript “3..8” at upper right). At New York this was rerated in local currency as 1shilling, 8d (magenta manuscript marking above the address). Note the two different Franklin marks on this letter. The “2 MR” marking in red indicates the date the letter was posted. The “8 MR” in black may indicate when it was received in New York, but we are not certain of that.

### **The Massachusetts independent post and the Siege of Boston**

Beginning in 1774, we see one of the most interesting periods of Boston postal history. That year, the British Parliament passed a series of laws intended to punish the patriots for the Boston Tea Party. Called the Intolerable Acts, they closed the port of Boston until the East India Company was repaid for the tea dumped into the harbor; moved trials of royal officials from Massachusetts if it was felt they would not get a fair trial; forced the quartering of troops; and, most importantly, brought the government of Massachusetts un-



der direct control of the British Government. This last act abrogated the provincial charter and the independence of the provincial government. Governor Thomas Gage dissolved the provincial assembly in October 1774. However, the citizens refused to accept this dissolution, reconvened at Concord as a Provincial Congress and set up the first autonomous government in the colonies. Considered traitors subject to arrest by the British, this Congress moved from town to town to avoid the British troops who were searching for its members.

In April 1775, British soldiers were given orders to capture and destroy rebel supplies stored at Concord, about 20 miles west of Boston. The supplies had already been moved and on April 19, the Massachusetts militia was waiting for the British at Lexington. Outnumbered at Lexington, the rebels fell back. The British regulars proceeded on to Concord, where about 500 rebels defeated three British companies. Additional rebel militia caused further casualties as the British made their way back to Boston. The rebel militias then blockaded the narrow strip of land leading to Charlestown and Boston, beginning the Siege of Boston.

The following month, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress had moved to Watertown, and on May 12 passed an act setting up a Provisional Post. The main post office was established at Cambridge, substituting for the one at Boston still under the control of the British. Thirteen additional post offices were established at places such as Salem, Ipswich, Newburyport and Haverhill, and new rates were created. One manuscript copy of this act survives in private hands; a second copy was reported by ter Braake to be in the Rhode Island Archives.<sup>3</sup> It begins "In Provincial Congress, Watertown, May 12, 1775. Resolved, as the Opinion of this Congress that Post Riders be immediately established to go from Cambridge and to ride the following roads, viz...." The document goes on to list the post roads, post offices and postmasters of the independent post, as well as the rates by distance (0-60 miles, 61-100 miles, 101-200 miles, and on in increments of 100 miles). This post lasted only a few months, until November 1775. Thereafter letters were rated according to the Act of the Continental Congress, Sept. 30, 1775.

A rare letter rated under this Provisional Post is shown in Figure 17. Dated October 10, 1775 at Newburyport, it was there rated 1 shilling, 6½ pence in Massachusetts currency (black manuscript "NPort 1/6½" at upper right) as a single letter to travel the 400-500 mile distance to Philadelphia. At Philadelphia, it was rerated 4dwt, 16gn in coined silver (per the Resolution of Congress, September 30, 1775, manuscript marking at upper left) and also 2 shillings, 2 pence in Philadelphia currency (pencil marking above the address).



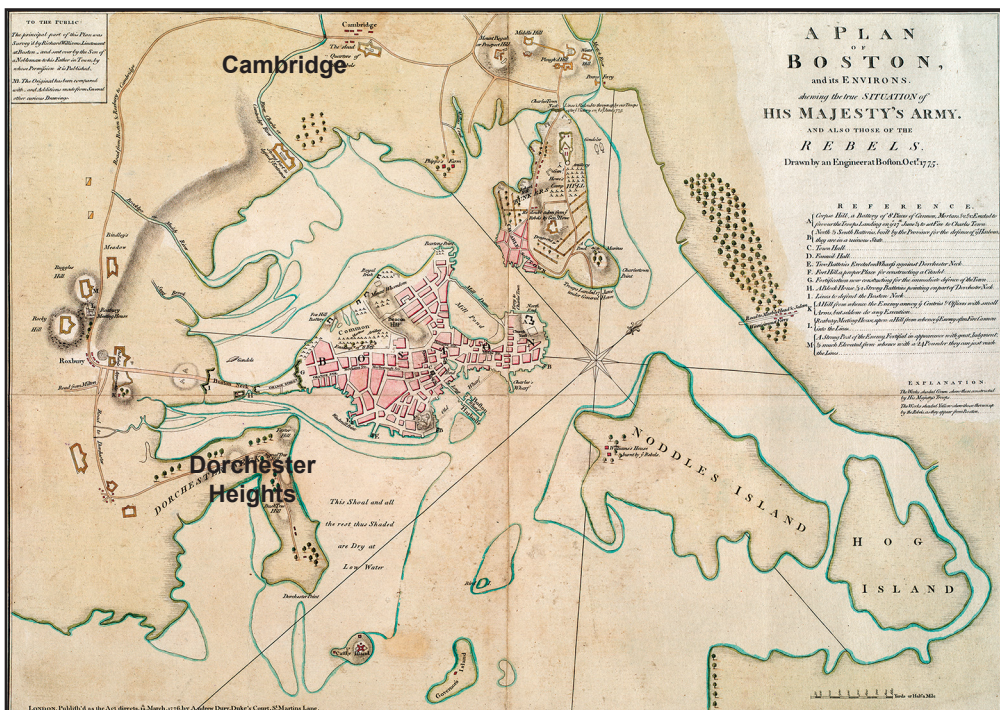
**Figure 17. A rare letter rated under the terms of the Massachusetts Provisional Post. Dated October 10, 1775 at Newburyport and rated 1sh, 6½d per the Act of the Massachusetts Provisional Congress for a single letter sent 400-500 miles. At Philadelphia it was rated 4dwt, 16gn in coined silver, and 2sh, 2d in Pennsylvania currency.**

After the Battle of Bunker Hill, where on June 17, 1775 the British took both Breeds' Hill and Bunker Hill but suffered significant casualties, the siege saw little action for several months. This was in part due to the lack of heavy weaponry among the rebel forces. But events were unfolding far away which would have a major effect on the siege and on the developing Revolutionary War.

Fort Ticonderoga was originally built by the French at the south end of Lake Champlain. While only a small British garrison protected the Fort in 1775, it was strategically placed and provided a means for the British to supply New York. On May 10, rebels from Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut, led by Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold, surprised the garrison and captured the fort, along with over 60 tons of cannons and other arms.

In November 1775, George Washington, now commander of the rebel troops outside Boston, sent Henry Knox to Fort Ticonderoga to bring the captured cannon back to Boston. The 25-year old Knox had been a Boston bookseller with an academic interest in military matters. He put his academic interests into practice building fortifications around Boston, and was given a commission as a colonel in the artillery.

Knox reached Ticonderoga in early December. He and his men carried the 60 tons of cannon and other arms overland from the fort to the northern end of Lake George, and then by ship to its southern end. On its way, the boat carrying the cannon foundered and sank, but was refloated. From Lake George, the cannon traveled by sled over snow-covered roads towards Albany, but ran into problems at the Hudson River, which was covered by ice too thin to travel over. Knox devised a plan to drill holes in the ice to let water rise over it and refreeze, making it thick enough to bear the weight of the cannon. This was only partly successful, as cannons did break through into the river. However, the cannons were



**Figure 18. Map of Boston (greatly reduced) drawn by a British engineer in October 1775 and published in London in 1776. This shows the strategic vulnerability of Boston, surrounded by water (at least at high tide), commanded by Dorchester Heights, and connected to the mainland (at Roxbury) by the narrow spit known as Boston Neck.**



recovered and while the details of the remaining trip are sketchy, it was an enormous task to carry, drag and push them the more than 200 miles from Lake George, down to Albany and Kinderhook, west into Massachusetts and across the entire state to Boston. And all of this over terrible roads in the middle of winter, completing what was in one historian's opinion "one of the most stupendous feats of logistics of the war."<sup>4</sup>

Knox' achievement was the beginning of the end of the Siege of Boston. On the night of March 2, Washington used some of the captured cannon to shell the British in Boston from the Cambridge side of the town. The map in Figure 18, drawn by a British engineer in October 1775 and published in London in 1776, shows the relationship between Boston, Cambridge and Dorchester Heights. Readers who are familiar with the geography of modern Boston will appreciate how much landfill has been done since the days of the Revolution. Much of Dorchester Heights was pushed into the harbor to make Back Bay.

On the night of March 4, while the British were distracted by the rebel barrage—which inflicted few casualties—approximately 2,000 American soldiers proceeded to haul the cannon up Dorchester Heights. A first-hand account of the end of the Siege of Boston appears in a letter British Captain George Eliot wrote on the morning of March 18, 1776 aboard one of the transport ships leaving Boston on its way to Halifax. The first page of Eliot's letter, addressed to Bartholomew Chaudry, a friend in Devon, is shown in Figure 19. Its content provides an on-the-scene description of the British astonishment at these events: "To our great surprise...the enemy had thrown up such works on the Dorchester Hill as could not probably have been done...with less than ten thousand men."

Dear Chaudry.  
On Board Harlowe and William Town-  
send, about 5 miles from Boston  
18<sup>th</sup> March 1776. King's Road.

On this Instant at 1/2 past 11. o'clock at night  
the Rebels began a bombardment on the Town from some  
new works that they had thrown up on the Cambridge side  
and at the same time they opened a Round Battery, and  
threw several Shells into the Town, I happened to be  
on the Town Guard towards the North end, and at the  
same time they began to cannonade us, and likewise  
opened another Round Battery ~~at~~ which they  
continued to play upon us all night without doing  
us any kind of hurt, except a few Houses on the South  
side, which were disfigured by the shot and shells, this sort of work  
they continued from time to time, but on the Monday  
night of the 17<sup>th</sup> in particular, when a general  
cannonade began on all sides, and shells thrown from  
all directions, this continued the whole night, but  
to our great surprise on the Tuesday morning  
the enemy had thrown up such works on Dorchester  
Hill, as could not probably have been done by the opinion  
of every body, with less than Ten Thousand Men, and  
then found our selves so beleagued all round, that  
a disposition was made for attacking those hills  
on the Tuesday evening, for they bombarded and  
fell down the Castle William in order to land  
their, but it blowing so very hard, that one of  
the Transports got on shore, the Grandiers  
and Light Companies were to have gone over  
in the flat Boats and to have been sustained  
by some Regiments, the Remainder of the Troop  
was at the same time to have gone and attacked the  
works at Proctor's, but from the badness of the  
weather, and the violent Gale of Wind, it was found  
impracticable, and therefore the scheme was  
abolished, which consequently determined the General

Figure 19. This letter written March 18, 1776 by a British officer to a friend back home, contains an on-the-scene account of the British expulsion from Boston.

The British continued to underestimate the energy and commitment of Washington's troops. "We then found ourselves so insulated all round, that a disposition was made for attacking those hills." The British sent three regiments to attack the hills by land and by sea, but were unsuccessful in taking Dorchester Heights. "From the badness of the weather... the scheme was abolished [forcing] the General to abandon the town."

### Re-opening the Boston post office

The expulsion of the British from Boston allowed the rebels to re-open the Boston post office in April. The earliest letter known from that office is shown in Figure 20. It was sent on May 16, 1776 to Captain John Langdon in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, rated 2dwt as a single-sheet letter going 60-100 miles. Langdon was a New Hampshire politician who served in the Second Continental Congress in 1775-76. He left in June 1776 to become an agent for the rebels and supervised the construction of several warships. The most striking aspect of this letter is the brilliant yellow-gold ink in which the postmark and date (Franklin



Figure 20. Letter datelined May 16, 1776, sent to John Langdon in Portsmouth, N.H., rated 2dwt as a single-sheet letter going 60-100 miles. The Boston postmark and Franklin marks are struck in a brilliant yellow-gold ink.



mark) were struck. The “BOSTON” handstamp appears to be the same one that was used by the British in early 1775 (see Figure 16). This is the earlier of the two examples of the Boston straightline handstamp known in yellow-gold ink.

The color of this Boston handstamp brings to mind a story told of Benjamin Franklin at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia 13 years later, in 1789. During the convention, George Washington sat in a chair which had a carving on its back. The carving showed the top half of the sun, complete with rays. At the close of the convention, James Madison quoted Franklin as saying: “I have often looked at that sun behind the president without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting. But now I know that it is a rising sun.”

I would like to think that the rebels who recaptured Boston were thinking the same thing when they chose that sunny, optimistic color with which to postmark the first letters from the re-opened Boston post office—that the sun was indeed rising on a new nation.

### Endnotes

1. Timothy O'Connor and Mark Schwartz, “Use of the Franking Privilege in New England in 1699-1707: The Earliest Proof of a Durable Post,” *Chronicle* 232 (2011), pp. 305-11.
2. The first two-line “NEW YORK” handstamp, the earliest on North American mail, was used on Bristol Packet covers in 1710-12; it remains unclear where this marking was applied. Various other two-line NEW YORK hand stamps are known used in 1756-60; 1758-69; and 1770-1773.
3. A.L. ter Braake, *The Posted Letter in Colonial and Revolutionary America, 1628-1790* (American Philatelic Research Library, 1975).
4. Victor Brooks, *The Boston Campaign* (Conshohocken, Penn., Combined Publishing, 1999). ■

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## EARLY STEAMBOAT MAIL ON THE HUDSON: A HISTORY OF POSTAL PRACTICES

DANIEL J. RYTERBAND

Collectors of mail carried by steamboat on inland and coastal waterways have struggled for generations to understand the relevant postal laws and how they differed from those applicable to incoming ship letters originating in foreign countries. A relatively large body of information exists, but much of what has been written is incorrect, incomplete or unnecessarily confusing. The primary reasons underlying collector confusion have been incomplete information relating to the postal laws and instructions as they evolved over time, and the inconsistent treatment of steamboat letters by local postmasters from port to port. This article, the first in a planned series addressing mail carried on inland and coastal waterways, examines postal practices used in the handling of steamboat mail on New York's Hudson River in the period up to 1824.

### **Robert Fulton, the *North River* steamboat and the ship letter period**

In 1807, Robert Fulton and Robert Livingston built the world's first commercially successful steamboat, the *North River* (later colloquially referred to as the *Clermont*), which carried passengers and commercial goods between New York City and Albany via the Hudson River. The *North River* was able to complete the round trip of approximately 300 miles in 62 hours, compared to eight days for sailing sloops. After its first successful season, two more steamboats were added to form a fleet and Fulton and Livingston were awarded a monopoly to operate steam vessels on New York waterways.

Under the Postal Act of 2 March 1799, letters carried by ship to a seaport were to be assessed postage at the rate of 6¢ for local delivery at the port of entry or, if addressed beyond the port, the regular postage from the port of entry to the destination plus a 2¢ ship fee. Both New York City and Albany, by nature of their water being tidal, were seaports. The earliest letters carried by steamboat were therefore subject to the ship letter rules under the 1799 Act. Some letters delivered in the port of entry were treated as drop letters and assessed postage at the drop fee of 1¢. When carried by land between Albany and New York City, such letters would be rated 17¢ for the distance of 150 to 300 miles for a single sheet. Volume on the Hudson grew quickly, because mail carried by steamboat was both faster and less expensive than if carried by land.

Figure 1 shows the earliest known letter carried by steamboat in the United States. It is dated 1 October 1808 and endorsed "per Steam Boat." It was carried outside the mails from New York City to Albany on the *North River* and dropped into the mails in Albany. It is not rated as a ship letter but rather as a letter for local delivery, a drop letter boldly marked "1 Cent" postage due. Previously unknown to most collectors of steamboat mail, this letter supersedes the prior earliest known example (also bootlegged on the *North River* and from the same correspondence), which is dated 11 November 1808 and reposes in the Peltz collection at the Albany Institute of History and Art. The recipient of these letters received the benefit of earlier delivery via steamboat as well as a substantial savings in postage.



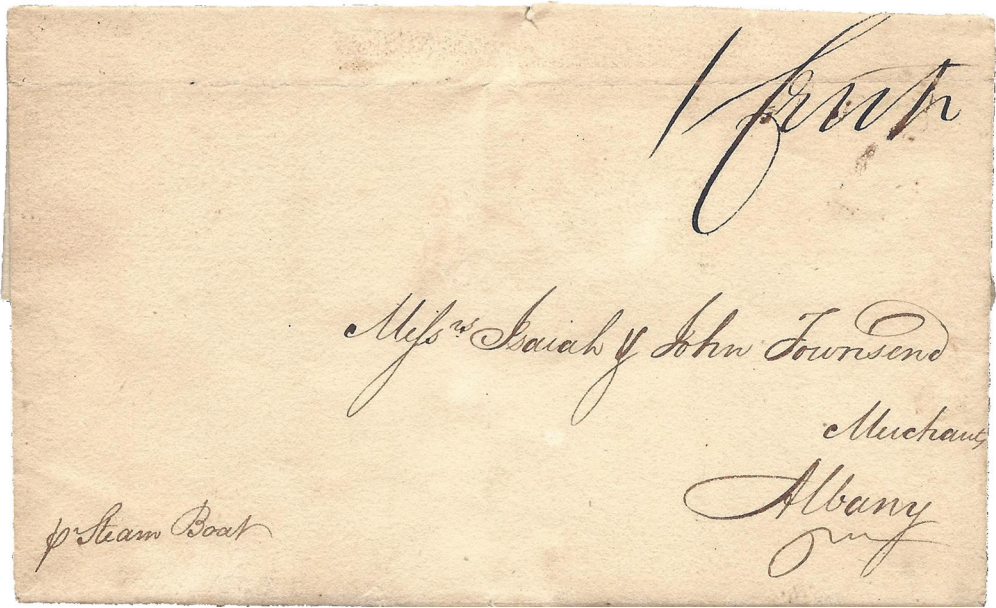


Figure 1. Earliest known letter carried by steamboat in the United States, dated 1 October 1808. Carried privately (or “bootlegged”), dropped at the Albany post office and there rated 1¢ due (“1 Cent”) as a letter for local delivery. Carriage outside the mails saved the recipient 5¢ under the ship letter rates that applied to such mail at the time.

Figure 2 illustrates a letter carried by the *North River* on its last trip to Albany, 14 July 1814. This is also endorsed “Steam Boat,” but rated with manuscript “6,” representing 6¢ postage due as a ship letter for port of entry delivery. The recipient of this letter paid more than the drop fee, but much less than he would have paid for a letter carried by land.

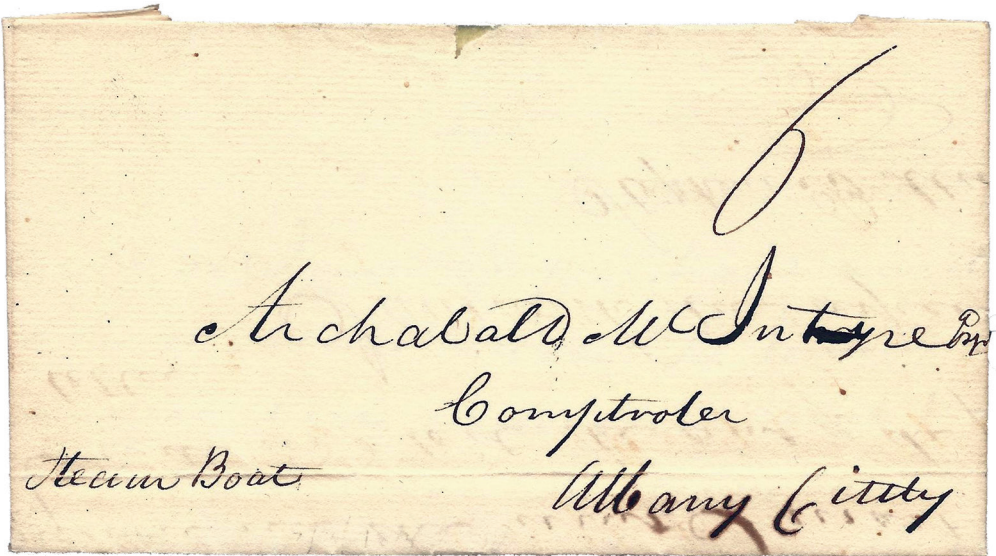
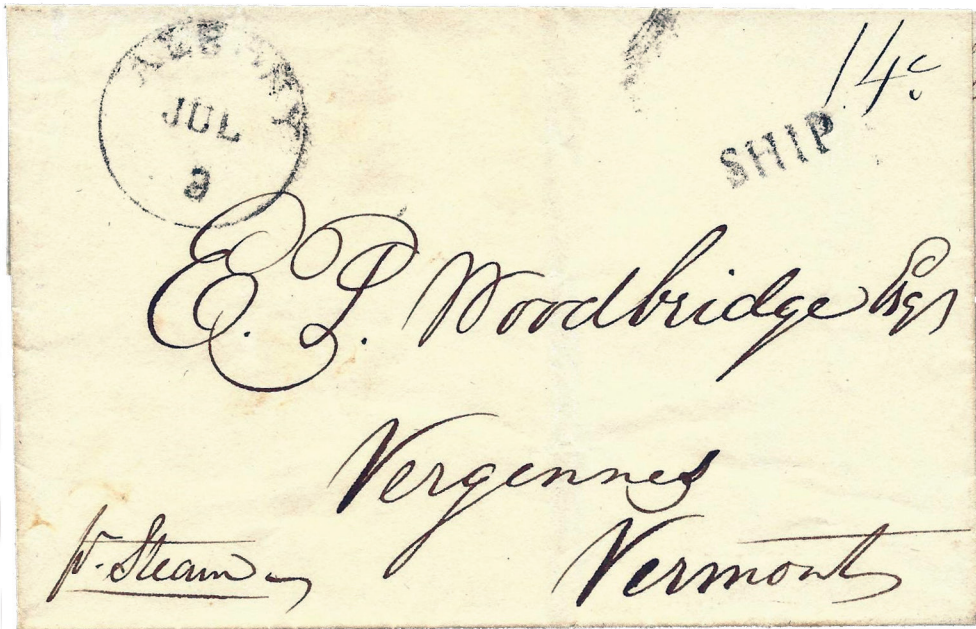


Figure 2. Letter carried on the *North River* on its final trip between New York City and Albany, dated 14 July 1814, endorsed “Steam Boat” and rated for a collection of 6¢ as an incoming ship letter for delivery in the port of entry.



**Figure 3. Letter carried on the *Car of Neptune*, New York City to Vergennes, Vermont, dated 6 July 1812. This cover entered the mails 9 July in Albany and was rated as an incoming ship letter for delivery to a destination beyond the port of entry.**

Figure 3 illustrates a letter carried on the steamboat *Car of Neptune*, the second steamboat in the fleet. This originated in New York City on 6 July 1812 and is addressed to Vergennes, Vermont. It entered the mails at Albany on July 9. Albany applied the handstamped “SHIP” marking and rated the cover 14½¢ due, representing the 2¢ ship fee plus 12½¢ postage for the 90 to 150 mile distance between Albany and Vergennes. Both the Figure 2 and Figure 3 letters were rated as ship letters, so the post office revenue was reduced relative to the alternative and less efficient means of carriage by land from origin to destination.

### **Development of postal laws and the first steamboat mail contract**

The steamboat greatly improved the efficiency of mail carriage, and the need for special postal provisions became clear as mail volume between the ports of New York City and Albany increased. The Post Office Act of 30 April 1810 formally established the overall scheme for handling loose letters (mail not received in closed bags under contract with the Post Office) received from steamboats. It specified that the steamboat master was to deliver mail to local post offices prior to breaking bulk, with substantial penalties in the event of failure and included a requirement to provide to the receiving postmaster a certificate indicating the number of letters delivered, the name of the vessel and the place from which she last sailed. The act also specified that the postmaster was to pay the master 2¢ for each such letter or packet delivered, and it distinguished between letters of domestic and non-domestic origin by specifying that the “commanders of foreign packets,” which were covered under laws applicable to ship mail incoming from other countries, were not to be paid the 2¢ fee.

The full text of the two salient paragraphs from the 1810 act are as follows:

*SEC 14. And be it further enacted, That no ship or vessel arriving at any port within the United States, where a post-office is established, shall be permitted to report, make entry or break bulk, until the master or commander shall have delivered to the postmaster all letters directed to any person or persons within the United States, or the territories thereof, which, under his care, or within his power shall be brought in such ship or vessel, except such as are*



directed to the owner or consignee of the ship or vessel, and except also such as are directed to be delivered to the port of delivery to which such ship or vessel may be bound. And it shall be the duty of the collector, or other officer of the port, empowered to receive entries of ships or vessels, to require, from every master or commander of such ship or vessel, an oath or affirmation, purporting that he has delivered all such letters, except as aforesaid. And if any commander or master of any ship or vessel shall break bulk before he shall have complied with the requirements of this act, every such offender shall, on conviction thereof, forfeit for every such offense a sum not exceeding one hundred dollars.

*SEC 15. And be it further enacted,* That the postmasters to whom such letters may be delivered, shall pay to the master or commander, or other person, delivering the same, except the commanders of foreign packets, two cents for each letter or packet, and shall obtain, from the person delivering the same, a certificate specifying the number of letters and packets, with the name of the ship or vessel, and the place from whence she last sailed; which certificate, together with a receipt for the money, shall be, with his quarterly accounts, transmitted to the Postmaster-General, who shall credit him with the amount.

Importantly, instructions issued by Postmaster General Granger on 12 July 1810 specified that letters carried on steamboats were “to be rated in the same manner as if conveyed by land.” As a result, unlike incoming ship letters originating outside the United States, postal charges on steamboat letters were not to reflect the ship fee but rather were to be based on the distance between the point the letter was picked up by the steamboat and the destination. This “origin to destination” standard was intended to mitigate the losses that the Post Office suffered due to application of more favorable ship rates.

To provide clarity with regard to the legislation and reinforce the instructions provided by the Postmaster General, the New York postmaster issued a notice, on 20 October 1810, specifying that steamboat masters should receive the 2¢ fee. The text of this notice is as follows:

**Pursuant to...the Post-Master General’s instructions thereupon, the masters of the *Steamboats* plying between this city and Albany, and of all other packets and vessels navigating the Hudson and East rivers, and the rivers which discharge their waters into the bay of New York, are required to deliver their letters into this office in like manner as the masters of ships and vessels arriving in this port from sea, and they will be entitled to receive two cents for each letter or packet so by them respectively delivered. —THEODORUS BAILEY, Postmaster, Post Office, New York City, 20th October 1810.**

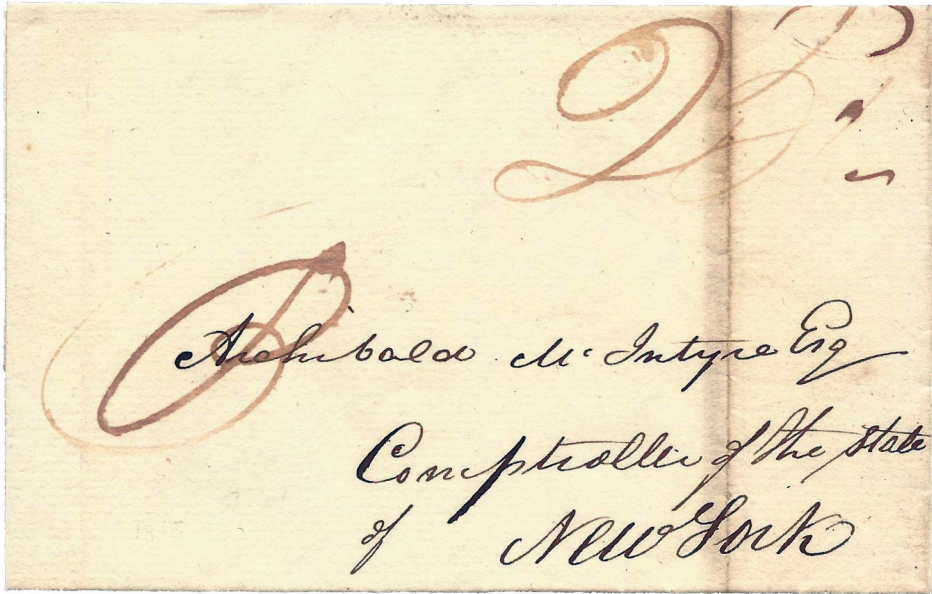
Note that neither the 1810 act nor the New York postmaster’s instructions specified that the 2¢ fee was to be added to the postal rate.

Notwithstanding the presence of the 1810 law and instructions, mail carried by steamboats on the Hudson continued to be assessed postage as ship letters until 1815, as illustrated by the covers shown in Figures 2 and 3 and as discussed further below.

The Post Office Act of 27 February 1815 reiterated the requirement of the 1810 act regarding payment of the 2¢ fee to steamboat masters and further clarified that such fees were payable only with regard to letters of domestic origin not carried under contract, thereby reinforcing the distinction between domestic steamboat mail and foreign ship mail. The 1815 act also made clear that the law applied to steamboats without a mail-carrying contract as well as to loose letters carried by contract carriers outside locked mail bags, thereby setting the stage for awarding Post Office contracts to steamboat operators. On 15 April 1815 the Post Office Department awarded Fulton and Livingston the first contract to carry mail by steamboat.

Figure 4 illustrates a letter carried by the *Car of Neptune* from New York City to Albany, dated 24 May 1815. This cover is significant for two reasons. It is the earliest known example bearing a manuscript “B” (Boat) postal marking and the earliest known cover rated under the 1810 and 1815 acts based on the land rate using the full “origin to destination” distance.

As discussed previously, the postmaster at the port of entry was required to reconcile his records to the certificates provided by the steamboat master, and to account for the payment of the 2¢ fees when filing his quarterly reports with the Postmaster General. While



**Figure 4. Letter carried on the *Car of Neptune*, New York City to Albany, internally dated 24 May 1815 and correctly rated 25½¢ (1815 war surcharge rate) based on the full distance between Albany and New York. This is the earliest known letter bearing the “B” (“Boat”) postal marking and also the earliest known letter rated based on origin-to-destination land rates under the 1810 and 1815 acts.**

neither the 1810 nor the 1815 acts required the port of entry postmaster to apply a mark on letters received from steamboats, the need for accuracy presumably led postmasters to mark such letters in a manner that distinguished them from overland mail. The manuscript “B” was the Albany postmaster’s mark of accounting, and a tool to ensure accuracy in the recording of the 2¢ payments to the steamboat master.

The Figure 4 letter is rated 25½¢, the 1815 war surcharge rate for 150 to 300 miles based on the full distance by overland mail between Albany and New York City. While the provisions set forth in the Post Office Acts of 1810 and 1815 had been in effect for five years, based on examination of available covers from this time period I have concluded that the implementation of the “origin to destination” rating of steamboat mail coincided with the awarding of the mail contract to Fulton and Livingston.

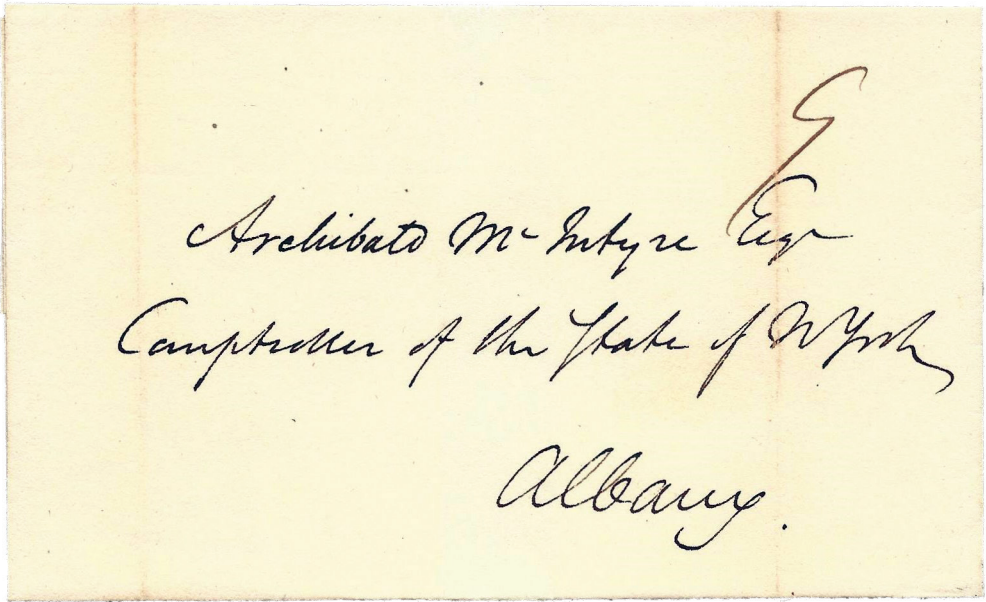
Figure 5 illustrates a letter from the same correspondence as Figure 4, dated 14 April 1815, one day before the Fulton/Livingston contract became effective. This is rated 9¢ due as an incoming ship letter for port of entry delivery in Albany (6¢ port of entry delivery plus 50 percent war surcharge). Had this letter been rated based on the land rate for the over-150-mile distance, it would have been assessed postage of 25½¢ like the cover in Figure 4.

### **The act of 1823 and evolution of handstamped steamboat markings**

As the efficiency of steamboat mail carriage continued to increase and the number of boats plying the waterways grew, it became necessary to clarify the way the “origin to destination” contract land rates provision should be administered.

The Post Office Act of 3 March 1823 formally established that all waters on which steamboats regularly pass from port to port, including coastal waterways, were to be considered post roads. Immediately following the 1823 act, Postmaster General Meigs issued instructions that specified how to handle mails received from steamboats, referencing and reinforcing the importance of enforcing the provisions set forth in the 1815 act. The instruc-





**Figure 5. Letter carried by steamboat from New York City to Albany dated 14 April 1815, one day before the mail contract awarded to Fulton and Livingston became effective, rated 9¢ due as an incoming ship letter for port of entry delivery (6¢ port of entry delivery plus inappropriate application of the War surcharge of 50 percent, which did not apply to ship letters). This was the last day the postmasters in Albany and New York City applied ship letter rates under the Post Office Act of 2 March 1799.**

tions reaffirmed that the rate properly charged for a steamboat letter of domestic origin was the regular postage from the point the letter was picked up (as reported by the master of the vessel) to final destination. To ensure clarity on this important and often misunderstood provision, the instructions stated that “you will therefore charge all letters which you receive or send by steamboats with postage according to the distance they are conveyed, at the same rate as if sent through the mail by land.”

The full text of Meigs’ letter to postmasters, dated 4 March 1823, is as follows:

The public having made arrangements for transmitting correspondence along the sea coast, as well as through the country, at great expense, found itself a loser on that account, in consequence of the numerous establishments of steam boats.

To prevent these losses and to subject all letters and packets of letters conveyed by steam boats, to the regular postage, Congress, by an act passed on the 3rd inst. have established all routes on which these boats pass, as post roads.

You will therefore charge all letters which you receive or send by steam boats, with postage according to the distance they are conveyed, at the same rate as if sent through the mail by land.

The account of steam boat letters should be kept by itself, and may be kept on the common blanks for ship letters received, merely substituting the words “steam boat” for ship.

It is important particularly on account of the state of the receipts and expenditures of the department, that the act ...be duly enforced and carried into effect...and I hope you will not fail to prosecute should the law be violated.

Yours respectfully, RETURN J. MEIGS, Postmaster General

The handstamped markings “STEAM” and “STEAMBOAT” appeared shortly after the 1823 act, replacing the “B” and similar manuscript markings in the major ports and serving as an accounting tool to enable the proper recording of such letters and payments in the postmaster’s quarterly ledger.

Figure 6 illustrates a letter carried from Albany to New York City dated 13 May 1823 and rated 12½¢ due for 80 to 150 miles with a red straightline “STEAM BOAT” handstamp applied upon entry in New York City. Based on my knowledge and personal study of early steamboat mail, this is the earliest use of any steamboat handstamp in the United States.<sup>1</sup> The rating on this cover differs from earlier covers because on 22 January 1821, Meigs announced that the mail distance between Albany and New York City had been recalculated to be less than 150 miles, reducing the single-sheet rating from 18½ to 12½ cents.



**Figure 6.** Letter carried from Albany to New York City dated 13 May 1823 and rated 12½¢ due for 80 to 150 miles, with red straightline “STEAM BOAT” handstamp applied upon receipt in New York City. This is the earliest use of any steamboat handstamp in the United States.

Note that there is no distinction in the postal laws for letters marked “STEAM” versus “STEAMBOAT” (the former is generally an abbreviation of the latter), but “STEAM” is more common for ports along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers whereas “STEAMBOAT” is more common at ports along the Atlantic seaboard. Other handstamped markings were occasionally used to designate incoming letters carried by steamboat, such as “BOAT,” in the post office at Plattsburgh, New York, on Lake Champlain.

### Summary and conclusion

Fulton and Livingston launched the first commercially successful steamboat in 1807 and mail carriage commenced shortly thereafter. Inconsistent application of postal practices developed for other purposes created significant revenue losses for the Post Office by enabling mail carried by steamboat to avoid the more expensive overland mail postage rates, and this led to recognition that loose letters carried by steamboats required new regulations and new methods of calculating postal charges.

The Post Office Act of 1810, along with accompanying instructions from both the Postmaster General and the New York City postmaster, formally established the overall scheme for handling loose letters received from steamboats. It specified the way such letters were to be handled by steamboat masters and established that a 2¢ fee would be payable to the boat master for each loose letter. It also established that the postal rates would be calculated based on an “origin to destination” standard as if carried by land, which differed from



the way incoming ship letters were treated. The acts of 1815 and 1823 provided further clarity around the law, with the former reinforcing the provisions of the 1810 act and the latter specifying that all inland and coastal waterways on which steamboats regularly pass were to be considered post roads.

Before 1815, letters carried by steamboat can be found with manuscript sender's endorsements designating carriage by steamboat or with the name of a specific boat. Most of these very early letters were carried entirely outside the mails to the addressee, or entered the mails at a port and were rated for local delivery or as ship letters. The first contract to deliver mail by steamboat was awarded to Fulton and Livingston in 1815 and as the volume of steamboat mail grew, port of entry postmasters recognized the need for new accounting procedures to ensure the accuracy of their accounts and to reconcile the certificates provided by the steamboat masters.

The earliest known letter carried by steamboat is dated 1 October 1808. The earliest known letter marked "B", indicating official carriage by steamboat as recognized by a port of entry postmaster, is dated 24 May 1815 and was carried from New York City to Albany. This important letter is also the earliest known example rated under the law set forth in the Post Office Acts of 1810 and 1815, which were not applied by the postmasters in Albany and New York City until the Post Office Department entered into the first contract to carry mail by steamboat on 15 April 1815. The earliest known use of any handstamp "STEAM BOAT" marking in the United States is dated 13 May 1823 on a letter from Albany to New York City. All of these dates are coincident with the issuance of laws and instructions governing the treatment of early letters carried by steamboat.

The inconsistent treatment of steamboat mail in the early years, along with incomplete information regarding the evolution of postal laws and instructions, has historically left collectors of early steamboat mail struggling to understand postal practices. This article presents new information regarding the Post Office Acts of 1810 and 1815 as well as insights into the evolution of various postal practices. I hope that it enhances appreciation of this complicated area of pre-stamp postal history.

New York's Hudson River served as the post office proving grounds for the development of practices related to early steamboat mail. In a future article I will examine the Post Office Act of 3 March 1825 and illustrate inconsistencies in the treatment of incoming steamboat letters by postmasters in various ports within New York State.

### Endnote

1. The *American Stampless Cover Catalog* (1988 edition, volume 2, page 134) lists a handstamped STEAM from Norfolk, Virginia dating from 1818, but this marking is not known to the current generation of collectors and the listing may represent a typographical error. The author owns a Chesapeake Bay steamboat cover datelined 30 June 1823 that previously reposed in the collection of Calvet Hahn, an expert on steamboat mail. Hahn noted that this cover represents "the earliest listed for the area." The author welcomes new information from other collectors on early STEAM and STEAMBOAT handstamps. ■

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**NEINKEN'S ONE-CENT PLATE 5 RECONSTRUCTION REVISITED:  
CORRECTIONS TO POSITIONS 83R5, 51R5 AND 71L5**

JAY KUNSTREICH AND RICHARD CELLER

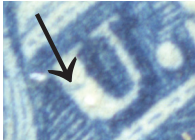
Anyone attempting to plate the scarce 1857 1¢ Plate 5 stamps will run into difficulty when trying to plate Positions 83R5, 51R5 and 71L5 using Mortimer Neinken's 1¢ 1851-57 book.<sup>1</sup> This article presents corrected plating information for those three positions.

In the case of Neinken's Position 83R5 mat, we discovered that the plating was wrong. Shown in Figure 1 are two examples of the supposed Position 83R5. The stamp at left in Figure 1, plated by Neinken, is from the balance of Neinken's Plate 5 collection, sold by Siegel in 2011 (sale 1016, lot 964). The stamp at right in Figure 1, plated by Stanley Ashbrook, is from the Jefferys collection, sold by Bennett in 2004. Both these stamps match the Neinken book's Position 83R5 mat. No doubt one or both was used to create Neinken's mat for Position 83R5.

The problem we discovered was that these are not "E" relief stamps (from rows 5 and 9 of the plate), but actually "D" relief stamps (from rows 4 and 8). Once we reached this conclusion, it was clear that the stamps could not be Position 83R5. It did not take long to match them to the Position 75R5 mat in Neinken's book. We do not know why Ashbrook and Neinken thought these stamps were relief "E," or why they chose Position 83R5, but the Position 83R5 mat on page 358 of Neinken's book is actually Position 75R5.



**Figure 1. Two 1¢ 1857 stamps from the same position on Plate 5. These were plated as Position 83R5 by Mortimer Neinken and Stanley Ashbrook respectively, but they actually come from Position 75R5.**



**Figure 2.** The two known examples that actually plate from Position 83R5. Both show a tiny curl in the "U." This feature shows more clearly in the stamp at left, but close inspection shows it is evident on both examples.



That left an empty space for Position 83R5. We believe Mark Friedman, a fellow plater, has identified the real Position 83R5 stamp, shown at left in Figure 2. We later found a confirming example, shown at right in Figure 2.

The identification of these stamps as the real Position 83R5 is based on the presence of a small curl in the "U" of the "U.S. POSTAGE" label, shown in the two enlargements accompanying Figure 2. The feature shows more clearly on the discovery stamp at left, but it is present on both examples.

Curls are typically caused by foreign matter, such as threads, adhering to the transfer roll when the plate is being made. Successive entries from the transfer roll often continue to show the curl, which gets weaker with each entry until the curl falls off the roll.

There is a similar curl in the "U" on four consecutive entries of "E" relief positions on Plate 5, in order of plate entry: Positions 42R5, 82R5, 41R5, and 81R5.<sup>2</sup> Neinken shows this curl only on his Position 41R5 mat, but we have confirmed that the curl occurs on all four positions. As our Position 83R5 candidate does not match any of these four known positions, it seems clear that the curl initially appeared on Position 83R5, our missing position, resulting in a sequence of five consecutive entries showing the curl, starting with Position 83R5, then continuing with Positions 42R5, 82R5, 41R5, and 81R5.

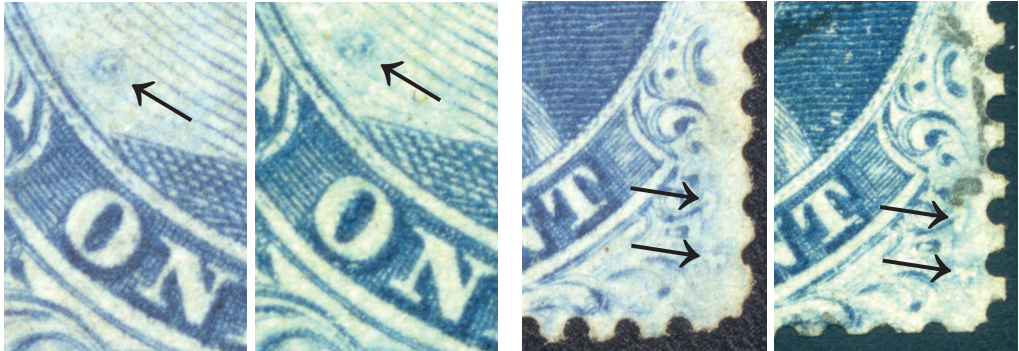
A corrected mat for Position 83R5 is presented in Figure 3, sized to match the mat images in the Neinken book. Platers can copy this image and paste it into their Neinken book.



**Figure 3.** Corrected plating mat for Position 83R5. Plating features have been highlighted in red pen.



In addition to the curl in “U” shown in Figure 2, the other distinctive plating features of Position 83R5 are three pronounced “blisters” in the lower half of the stamp. These are shown in the enlargements presented in Figure 4. The two images at left show the “blister on shoulder” in the two stamps in Figure 2. The two images at right show colorless areas from the lower right quadrants of the same stamps.



**Figure 4. Other plating features from Position 83R5. The two images at left show the “blister on shoulder” from the two stamps in Figure 2. The two images at right show colorless areas from the lower right quadrants of the same stamps.**

on the shoulder” from the two stamps in Figure 2. The two images at right in Figure 4 show colorless areas from the lower right quadrants of both stamps. It should be evident that these features are identical on both stamps. Three additional smaller “blisters” found in the top half of the stamp are also indicated on the Figure 3 mat.

If anyone has a multiple containing Position 83R5, the authors would appreciate seeing it.

Position 51R5 and Position 71L5 in the Neinken book also show incorrect mats. We have found pairs or strips in both cases which tie these positions to their neighbors. Corrected mats for Positions 51R5 and 71L5 are presented in Figure 5. As with Figure 3, these are sized to fit the Neinken book.

We believe the incorrect 51R5 mat on page 354 of the Neinken book is actually Position 91R7. We don’t know what position the incorrect Position 71L5 mat on page 344 might be, but we note that Neinken included a question mark on his mat.

Although many specialists in the past have done extensive research in their areas of expertise, it is always fulfilling to do one’s own study and analysis to corroborate earlier



**Figure 5. Corrected mats for Positions 51R5 and 71L5. As with the corrected mat in Figure 3, these are sized to fit the Neinken 1¢ book. Platers can copy them and paste them into the book.**

findings. Through reexamination, questioning and a passion to learn, simply looking at your own stamps or covers can lead to new discoveries.

Special thanks to Mark Friedman, who discovered the first Position 83R5 example, and who provided his time in helping edit portions of this article.

### Endnotes

1. Mortimer Neinken, *The United States One-Cent Stamp of 1851 to 1861*, U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, 1972.
2. Plate entry methodology for this issue can be found in *The 1851 Issue of United States Stamps: A Sesquicentennial Retrospective*, U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, 2006, pp. 3-24. ■

## EARLIEST CUMBERLAND, MAINE, PRINTED POSTMARK

JAMES W. MILGRAM, M.D.

The Cumberland, Maine, precancels are among the earliest documented precanceled postmarks in the United States. From at least 1857 to 1868 covers with stamps are known with five types of preprinted postmarks. I discussed these in two articles in *Chronicle* 206 (2005) and again in *Chronicle* 249 (2016). In the earlier article I showed a photo of a stampless cover from Cumberland with a “29 Jan” circular printed postmark. At that time, I had never seen the actual item, only the photo. But this cover has now surfaced, and it is especially interesting because it retains its original enclosure.

The cover is shown as Figure 1 and the enclosure is shown in Figure 2. Prepared by Horace I. Gray, a printer and mass mailer in Cumberland, this is a printed circular (dated December 13, 1856) offering supplies to postmasters—“a priced list of articles used in Post Offices which can be supplied by me at a low rate.” The articles include gold pens, pencils, printer’s ink, steel pens and a canceling device that Gray calls a “Blotter.” This is to be “used with printer’s ink and will be found very convenient, as letters so marked can be immediately packed without injury, which cannot be done if they are canceled with common ink. For specimen of impression from same, see outside of this letter.”

The outside of the letter, also presented (in part) in Figure 2, shows a killer cancel of the sort applied by Gray’s “blotter”—a grid with eight bars. This is perfectly centered on the back of the circular and appears to be printed, rather than handstamped.

The date on the Figure 1 cover shows that this circular was mailed January 29, 1857, almost six weeks after the date in the printed enclosure. The postmark on the Figure 1 cover is a printed circular datestamp, 34 millimeters in diameter, showing a distinct break in the outer rim at about 5 o’clock, after the “D” of CUMBERLAND.

This circular rim, with its distinctive break, is the same as appears on the highly-regarded Cumberland covers bearing 3¢ 1857 stamps with printed addresses and postmark. One example, written up by Stephen G. Rich in *Stamps* magazine for August 22, 1942 (“CUMBERLAND MAINE Circle Type Precancel from the 1850s”) is the cover shown in Figure 3 (page 46). On this cover all the printing, including the postmark, was done in one pass. Note that the capital letters letters “M” in “POSTMASTER” and “MASS.” in the address and “ME” in the circular datestamp are typographically identical. All three M’s came from the same typeset.

In the circular datestamp on the stampless cover in Figure 1, the lettering is closer to the rim, suggesting the letters were remounted within the same rim at a subsequent date. This recently rediscovered cover also shows that Gray took advantage of the fact that these circulars were addressed to postmasters, so they could be sent with no postage necessary because postmasters could receive mail for free. Surviving covers such as Figure 3, sent to postmasters with the circular postmark tying stamps, also could have been sent free. The covers suggest that Gray began sending circulars to postmasters without postage in 1857, but by 1858 he was franking them with stamps. Why he did this is not known. His later



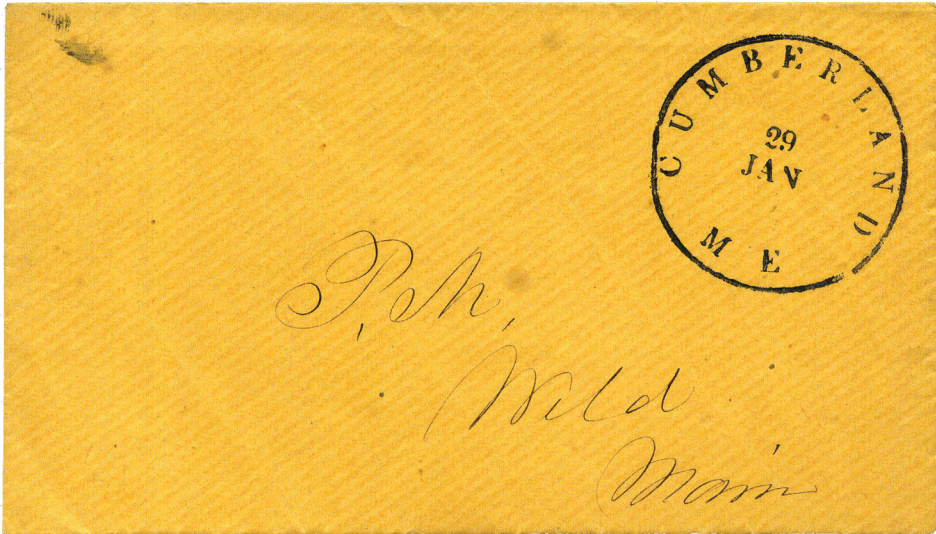


Figure 1. Stampless cover with printed “CUMBERLAND ME 29 JAN” and no rating mark, sent free to a postmaster in Maine. The contents are shown below.

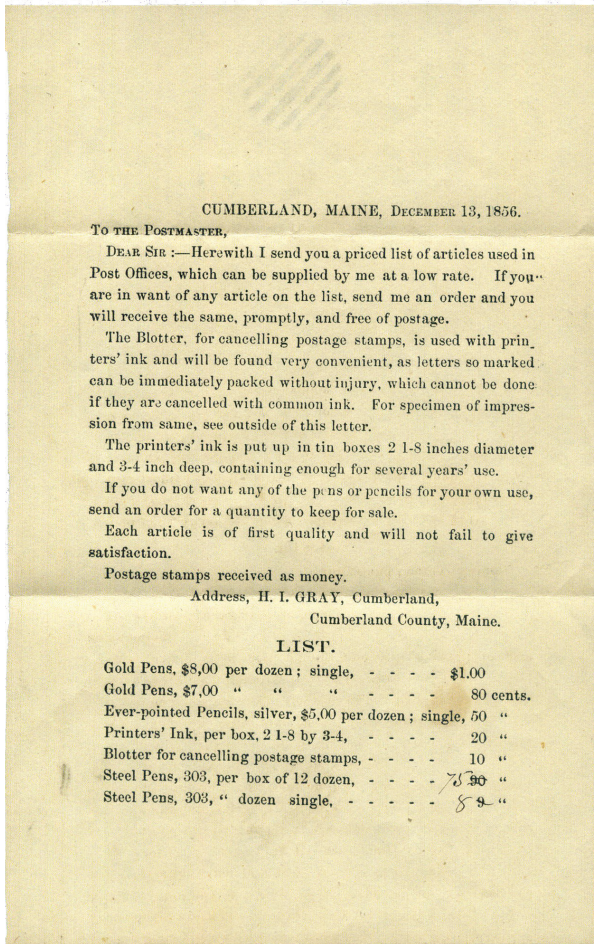
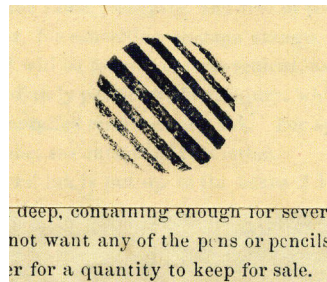


Figure 2. The enclosure carried in the Figure 1 envelope, shown reduced at left, was a printed circular, dated December 13, 1856. The sender of the circular, Horace I. Gray, was the man who created the printed Cumberland postmarks. Gray was an early direct mail marketer as well as a printer. In this circular, Gray offers a variety of supplies for postmasters, including a killer cancel that he called a "blotter for cancelling postage stamps." An example of the marking was applied to the back of the circular. This is shown life-size (folded over) below. This marking also appears to be printed, not handstamped.



deep, containing enough for several years' use. If you do not want any of the pens or pencils for your own use, send an order for a quantity to keep for sale.





Figure 3. 3¢ 1857 stamp tied by a printed “CUMBERLAND ME 15 MAY” (probably 1859) to the postmaster at Erving, Mass. Illustration courtesy of Arnold Seligut.

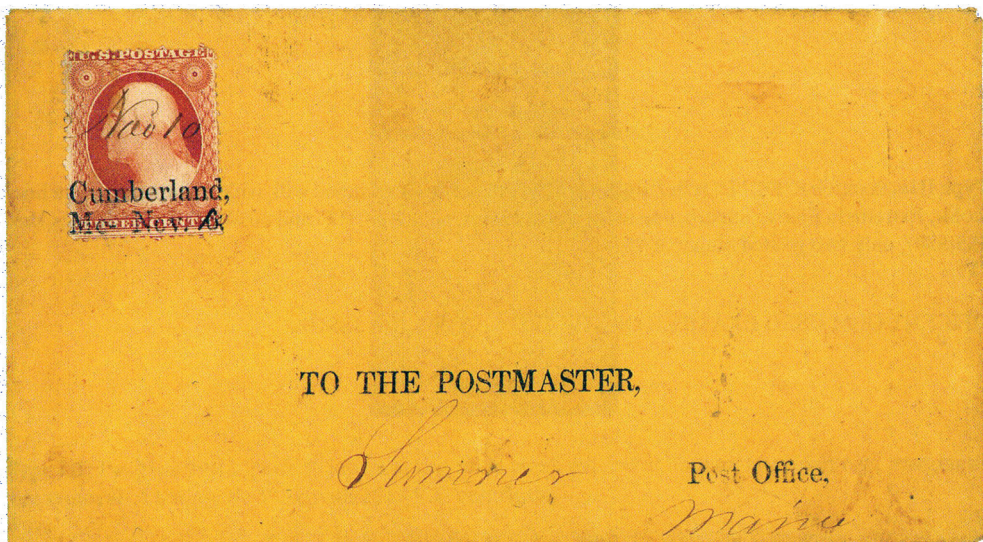


Figure 4. 3¢ 1857 stamp (Scott 25) tied to cover with two-line “Cumberland, Me. Nov. 6” redated with manuscript “Nov 10”. Illustration from Rumsey Auction, December 2017. All the type on both these covers came from the same typeset.

circulars to schools concerning stationery (1859) and to Boards of Supervisors concerning highways (1860s) of course required prepayment of postage.

The Rumsey sale in late 2017 (sale 76, 13 Dec 2017, lot 59) contained a cover showing a beautiful example of the Type 3 Cumberland double-straightline postmark. This is shown in Figure 4. The printed postmark on the stamp appears to be dated Nov. 6 but redated to “Nov 10” in manuscript on the stamp. The stray comma after Cumberland, struck on the cover and not on the stamp, makes it clear that this was a printed postal marking, applied *after* the stamp was affixed to the cover. ■



THE 10¢ 1861 TYPE I FOREIGN ENTRY  
CHIP GLIEDMAN

The 1861 issue of United States stamps is remarkably free of major design varieties and plating marks, at least as compared to the preceding 1847 and 1851-57 stamps. Other than assorted doubled frame lines on some denominations, the “Dot in U” variety on the 1¢, the “TAG” variety on the 10¢ Type II, and a “Scratch under A” on the 24¢, denominations other than the 2¢ “Blackjack,” which was somewhat rushed into production, are relatively free of catalogued plate varieties. However, the 10¢ 1861 stamp has one notable exception—a foreign entry on one position of Plate 4. This elusive item has been known for almost 100 years and recently reappeared, in a plate block of four containing a splendid example, sold in the October 2018 Robert A. Siegel auction of a portion of the William Gross United States collection. High-resolution images of the block, generously provided by the Siegel firm, allow us to revisit this very unusual variety, which is listed but not illustrated in the Scott specialized catalog. The Gross block is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Plate block of four of the 10¢ 1861 Type I stamp, sold by Siegel in October as part of the William Gross collection of classic United States stamps. The lower left stamp, Position 94R4, is the “foreign entry” position, showing traces of design elements from a previous entry of the 90¢ 1861 stamp that was not fully erased from the printing plate.

### **A brief history of the 1861 issue**

Much has been written about the transition from Toppan Carpenter, printers of the 1851-60 stamps, to the National Bank Note Company, printers of the 1861 issue. Most relevant to this story is the existence of two sets of designs for the 1861 stamps—a set of designs printed early in the process as “proof of concept,” and a second set, with minor changes to the designs of all but the 24¢ and 30¢ denominations, requiring new plates to print the issued stamps. The first 10¢ plate, bearing a “National Bank Note Company No. 4” imprint, was also pressed into service and stamps from this plate were issued for postal use. Because there are design differences between the two 10¢ issues, those printed from Plate 4 are designated “Type I” and the modified design (from Plates 15 and 26) is designated “Type II.” Most notably, at the top of the design the Type I stamps have a heavier curved line below the stars and an outer line over the ornament.

Lester Brookman estimated that 500,000 Type I stamps were issued and 27,300,000 of the Type II.<sup>1</sup> The Type I stamps were primarily used between September 1861 and March 1862. It is conceivable that unexpected demand for the 10¢ denomination required the post office to put Plate 4 into use to complement production from the Type II plate or plates.

While Type I stamps are much scarcer than the Type II stamps, the broad distribution and use of the Type I stamps, with at least 122 covers known from 51 locations coast to coast, certainly suggests that the Type I stamps were routinely issued by the Post Office Department.

### **History of the 10¢ foreign entry**

The plate variety discussed here was first reported by a stamp dealer, A. Krassa, in the July 1922 issue of the *Collectors Club Philatelist*, more than 60 years after the stamp was put into use.<sup>2</sup> The article described a single example of the 10¢ Type I showing traces of a previous entry on the plate. The entry was later identified as the 90¢ 1861, with the triangular lower ornament from the 90¢ design showing clearly at bottom of the 10¢ stamp.

Normally, an erased entry is the same design, made from the same transfer roll, with the erasure done to correct a poor or misaligned entry. But in this case, the previous erased entry was an entirely different design—that of the 90¢—made from another transfer roll. When Krassa announced his discovery, the specific position on the 200-subject plate was not known. Although the re-entry clearly shows elements of the 90¢ design, it is not clear enough in the right places to determine whether the erased design represents the first 90¢ design or the design of the issued 90¢ stamp.

### **Ward's discovery**

Sometime after Krassa reported his single stamp, the Figure 1 10¢ block, with part imprint and plate “No. 4” selvage, was acquired by Philadelphia dealer Philip H. Ward, Jr. When Ward examined the block carefully, he discovered that the lower left stamp showed the same traces of the erased 90¢ entry found on the single reported by Krassa. This identified the specific position as 94R4; the fourth stamp in the bottom row of the right pane of Plate 4. Figure 2 shows an enlargement of the 10¢ 94R4 stamp, digitally cropped from the Gross block, alongside a similarly sized 90¢ 1861 stamp. Figure 3 shows those same two images, further enlarged and superimposed. This ghostly representation suggests how highlights from the underlying 90¢ image, if not fully erased, might intrude into the 10¢ design.

### **Visible characteristics of the re-entry**

In his magisterial handbook on 19th century United States stamps, Lester Brookman attempted to illustrate the salient features that characterize the 94R4 variety, but the black and white halftone images provide scant detail.<sup>3</sup> High-resolution scans of the Figure 1 block

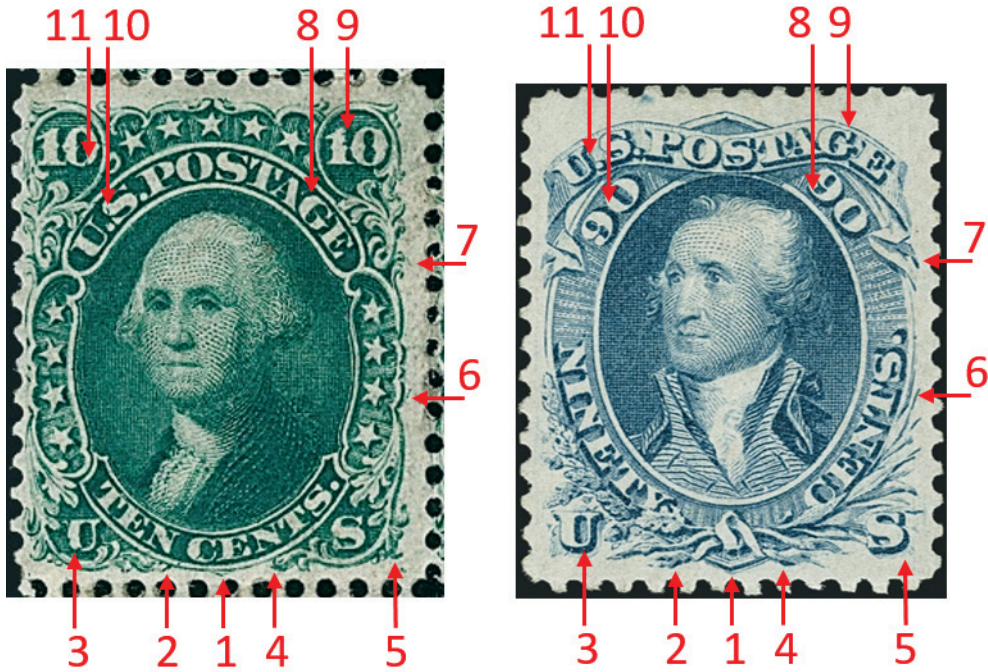




Figure 2. At left, an enlarged image of the Position 94R4 stamp, digitally cropped from the Figure 1 block. At right, a similarly sized image of a 90¢ 1861 stamp, elements of which can be seen in a careful examination of the Position 94R4 stamp.



Figure 3. This ghostly image is a composite of the two images in Figure 2, precisely overlapped, suggesting how the unerased highlights from the underlying 90¢ design might intrude into the 10¢ engraving. Elements of the 90¢ design are especially noticeable at bottom; the "V" at bottom center is particularly prominent.



**Figure 4. Updating Lester Brookman's original diagramming, these images show 11 different points in the 94R4 stamp where elements from the underlying 90¢ transfer, which was not fully erased, appear in the 10¢ design. In each case, the numbered arrows point to foreign elements on the 10¢ stamp that relate to the identically numbered design elements on the 90¢ stamp.**

from the recent auction enable us to present features of the poorly-erased entry with much greater clarity. The two images in Figure 4 follow the scheme and nomenclature of Brookman's original diagram, highlighting 11 features (numbered red arrows) on the 10¢ Position 94R4 stamp and correlating them precisely to equally specific features on the 90¢ design.

Most notably, the deeply incised "V" at the bottom center of the 94R4 stamp shows very clearly below the bottom of the curved value tablet on the 94R4 stamp. These distinguishing features are given the red number 1 in the Figure 4 images. Twin tongues from the ribbon to the left of the deeply-incised "V" show as two extraneous lines below the "N" in "TEN". These are numbered 2. And so on with other features, up to 11.

For those who are still struggling with what postal historians sometimes dismiss as flyspeck philately, additional plating marks are illustrated in the three massive enlargements presented in Figure 5. The lower image in Figure 5 shows the "V" below the value tablet (numbered 1 in Figure 4), the hints of the ribbon (2 in Figure 4) which can be seen extending into the letters CE of CENTS and outward beyond the border under the N in TEN. Additional plating marks identifying this position show in the 10 at upper left; and a trace of the 0 (from 90) appears as a curl within the first S of U.S. POSTAGE (10 in Figure 4). Likewise, the small arcing line to the right of the third star on the right side is another key plating characteristic that can be directly mapped to the 90¢ design. This is an artifact of one of the cornstalks that decorate the lower right portion of the 90¢ stamp (6 in Figure 4).

Brookman's estimate of 500,000 issued stamps implies that 2,500 200-subject sheets were printed, which suggests that 2,500 copies of this variety were originally created. In addition to the Krassa copy and the Gross block, the Newbury collection contained a used example; and a cover with a 94R4 stamp has been recorded.<sup>4</sup>

This article should cause collectors to take a closer look at copies of the 10¢ Type I





**Figure 5. Enlargements of key portions of the 94L4 stamp, with contrast enhanced, showing traces of the underlying 90¢ design. The "V" beneath the value tablet shows clearly, with other foreign elements in the C and E of CENTS, and below the value tablet to the left. Other foreign elements from the 90¢ design can be seen in and around the numeral 10, within the S of U.S. and within and beyond the stars in the right margin.**

stamp residing in their collections, perhaps to find additional copies of this scarce and fascinating plate variety. We look forward to announcing additional copies as a result.

#### **Endnotes**

1. Lester G. Brookman, *United States Postage Stamps of the 19th Century*, New York. H.L. Lindquist Publications, 1966, Vol. II, pp. 44-48.
2. *Collectors Club Philatelist*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (July 1922), pg. 113.
3. Brookman, *op. cit.* pp. 42-43.
4. *The Saul Newbury Collection, Part II: United States 19th Century Issues*, Robert A. Siegel Auctions, sale 244, October 17, 1961, lot 432. ■

## STENCILED HOTEL CORNERCARDS

JAMES W. MILGRAM, M.D.

### Background and introduction

This continues a series of articles on the subject of stencil markings found on classic United States covers. The exploration began in *Chronicle* 255 (August, 2017) with an article listing and describing stencil postmarks on stampless covers. It continued in *Chronicle* 257 (February 2018) with a similar article describing stencil postmarks on stamped covers.

After receiving encouragement from readers and from the general editor of this publication, I decided to expand the scope of the stencil discussion. In *Chronicle* 258 I wrote about various types of stencil markings that can be found on Civil War covers. In *Chronicle* 259 I wrote about stencil-maker advertising covers, and in *Chronicle* 260 about vessel-named stencil markings found on steamboat mail.

From an examination of the large collection of stencils on envelopes formed over many years by long-time USPCS member James Kesterson, it is clear that the most frequent use of stencils on envelopes was to create commercial cornercards. Stenciled commercial cornercards are far more common than stenciled addresses or stenciled personal cornercards.

No examples of stencil cornercards of any sort have been noted until envelopes came into use. But the reader might recall that stencils were used as postmarks on stampless covers from a few small towns in the 1830s and 1840s (I showed examples in *Chronicle* 255), so stencil devices could have been used earlier. But the use of cornercards really coincides with the advent of envelopes.

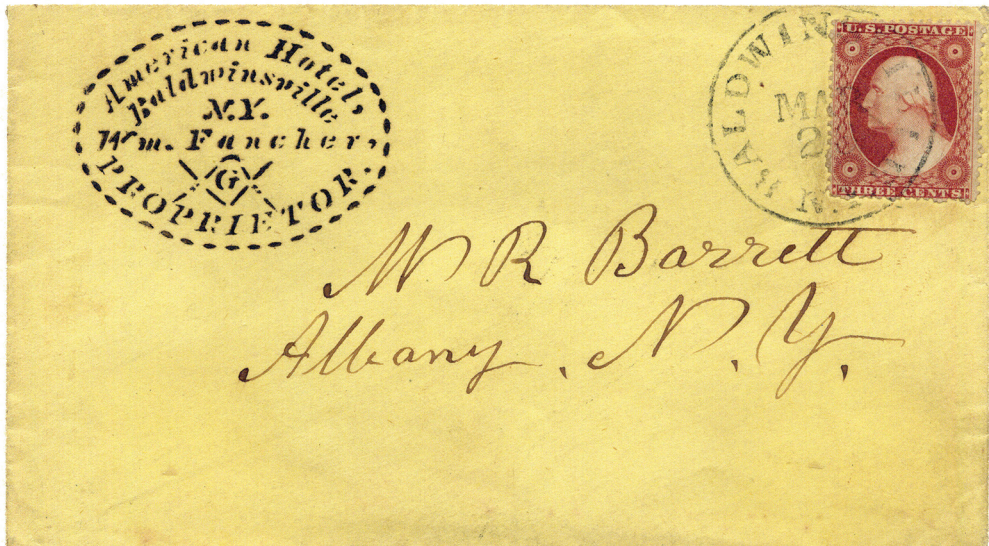
### Hotel corner advertising

One group of stencil cornercards that can easily be discussed as a separate category are cornercards used on hotel stationery. This usage could be two-fold: business letters from the owners of the establishments or personal letters from guests staying at the hotel. Without the contents it is impossible to determine the specific type of use, but most stenciled hotel cornercards seem to be business related. The word “proprietor” is frequently present in the marking. No doubt the owners created the cornercards at least in part to advertise their hotel.

Hotel advertising envelopes have been widely and seriously collected for more than a century. Legendary cover collector Edward S. Knapp assembled a hotel cover collection so vast that a two-day auction was required to dispose of it (Parke-Bernet Galleries, March 5-6, 1942).

Hotel advertising on covers includes all types of cornercards, most notably cameos and illustrations. Within this universe, stencil ads, while not particularly common, stand out because of their attractiveness, the uniqueness of their method of application, and





**Figure 1. 3¢ 1857 stamp on a cover to Albany bearing the striking oval stencil corner cachet of the American Hotel, Baldwinsville, New York. This is the only on-cover stencil marking that shows a masonic symbol, the square and compass.**

the eye-appeal of their lettering and border design. Most all hotel stencil cornercards date from the 1850s and 1860s.

The group gathered here is representative of different design types and not intended as a reference listing. Four unusual covers are discussed in detail and shown in their entirety. Stencil ads from other covers have been assembled into a plate of life-sized illustrations, (Plate 1, overleaf) with salient information presented in the adjacent table, which lists covers alphabetically by hotel name, and provides information about the city and state of the hotel, the decade in which the stencil was used, and the text of the marking (shortened in some cases to fit the table format).

### Covers

The 3¢ 1857 cover in Figure 1 is most unusual because the oval marking it bears includes a clever stenciled representation of a masonic compass. This bold, clear strike is the only stencil marking known on cover to show a masonic symbol in any form. The complete legend reads “American Hotel, Baldwinsville, N.Y., Wm. Fancher, Proprietor.” The cover was sent from Baldwinsville to Albany, probably in the late 1850s. The circular datestamp reads “MAY 2?”.

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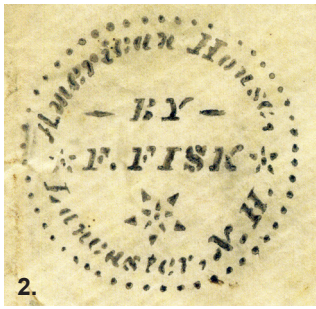
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NG31 0HS, United Kingdom. (+44) 01476 594698

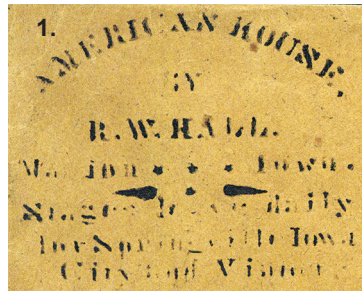
e-mail:  
bill@barrell.co.uk



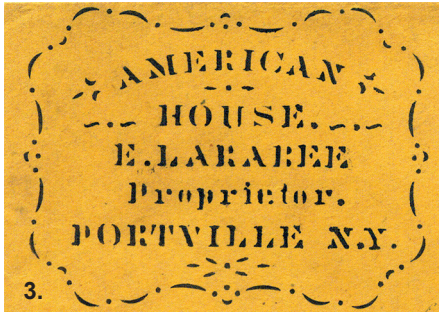
PLATE 1



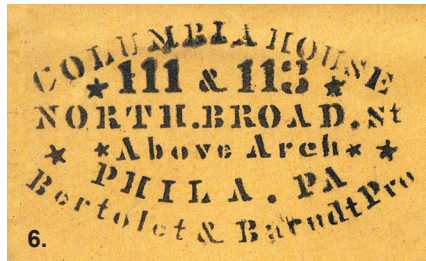
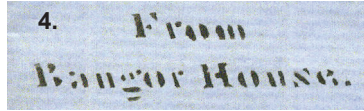
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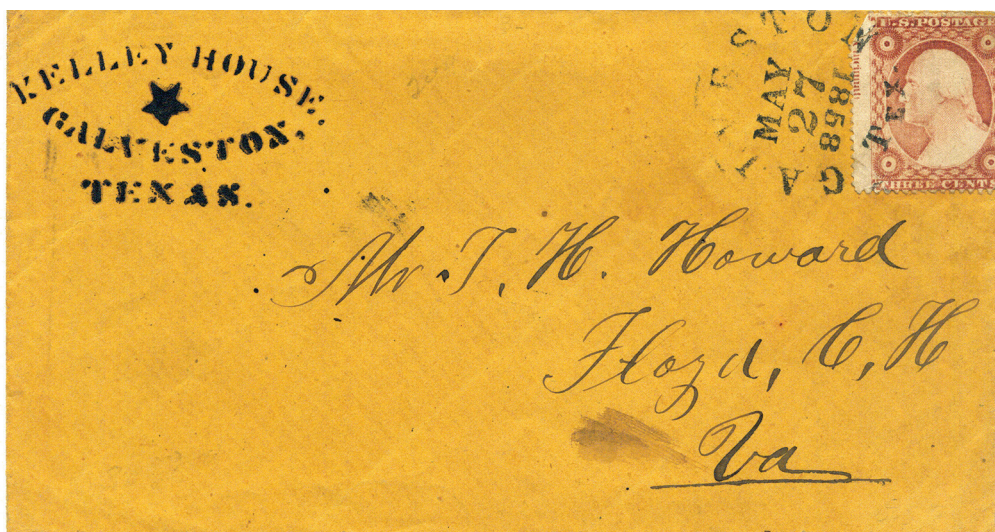


12.



13.





**Figure 2.** This 3¢ 1857 cover (with part imprint captured at left) bears a simple three-line stencil marking, ornamented with a star, from Kelley House, Galveston, Texas.

Stencil cornercards from hotels in the south or west are not often encountered. The cover in Figure 2, also franked with a 3¢ 1857 stamp, is a nice example. The simple, three-line stencil design (“Kelley House, Galveston, Texas”) encloses a five-pointed star, emblematic of the Lone Star State. Stencil makers rarely left large negative spaces in a stencil plate. The temptation to add a design element was seemingly irresistible.

Reference	Town	Era	Hotel/Legend
1	Marion, Iowa	1860s	American House by R.W. Hall
2	Lancaster, N.H.	1850s	American House by F. Fisk
3	Portville, N.Y.	1850s	American House, E. Larabee, Proprietor
Figure 1	Baldwinville, N.Y.	1850s	American House, Wm. Fancher, Proprietor
4	Bangor, Maine	1850s	From Bangor House
5	Ironton, Ohio	1850s	Center House by I. Hamilton
6	Philadelphia, Pa.	1860s	Columbia House, Bertolet & Barndt, Pro.
7	Xenia, Ohio	1850s	Ewing House, E. Gram, prop'r
Figure 2	Galveston, Texas	1850s	Kelley House, Galveston, Texas
8	Dubuque, Iowa	1850s	Key City House, R.E. Scidmore & Co.
Figure 3	Riverhead, N.Y.	1870s	Long Island House, John P. Perry, proprietor
9	Poughkeepsie, N.Y.	1860s	Poughkeepsie Hotel, J.H. Butzer, proprietor
10	Ft. Edward, N.Y.	1850s	Rail Road House, Joshua Eldridge, proprietor
11	Richville, N.Y.	1860s	Richville House, N.R. Tuttle, proprietor
12	St. Johnsbury, Vt.	1850s	St. Johnsbury House, W.S. Watson, proprietor
Figure 4	N. Greenfield, N.Y.	1860s	Snyders Hotel by E.S. Snyder
13	Ballston Spa, N.Y.	1860s	Union Hotel, A. Wilbur, proprietor

**Table 1. Representative stenciled hotel corner cachets. The imprints illustrated and listed here have been selected to show various design types; this is not intended as a definitive listing. Markings are arranged alphabetically by hotel name.**

The 3¢ stamp on the Figure 2 cover is tied by a Galveston circular datestamp indicating May 27, 1858, with the year slug inverted. On first glance this appears to be a rimless marking, but traces of a rim show at the top. The wing margin at left on the stamp captures the word “Cincinnati” from the printer’s imprint. The full text of the imprint would have read: “Toppan, Carpenter & Co., BANK NOTE ENGRAVERS, Phila, New York, Boston & Cincinnati.”

Most stencil cornercards date from the 1850s and 1860s. The 3¢ 1869 cover in Figure 3 is unusual both for its franking and for the fancy format of the stenciled ad imprinted at right. This is the only hotel stencil known on an 1869 cover. The highly ornate double-oval stencil border, in a track pattern, surrounds a crisply cut four-line text containing decorative

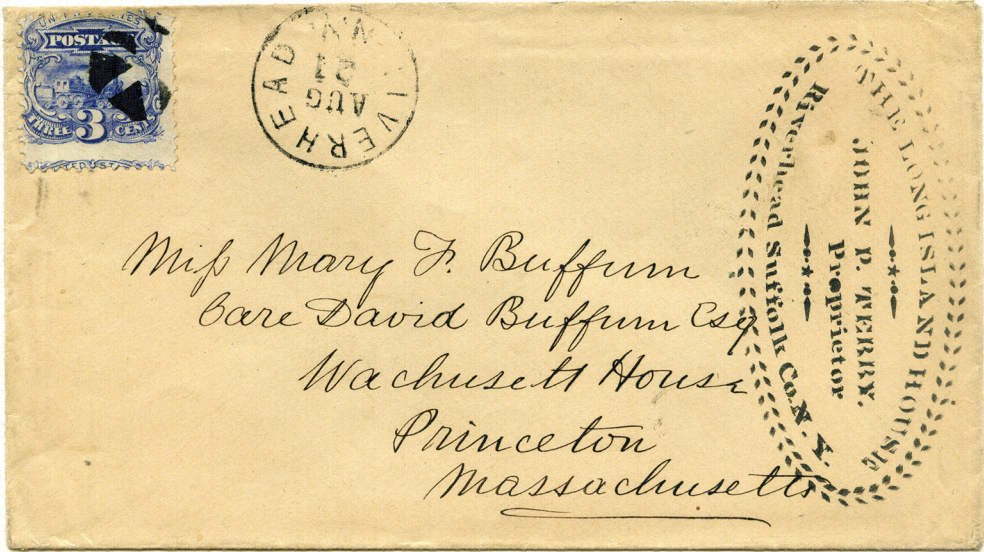


Figure 3. The only 1869 cover known to bear a stenciled hotel marking, from Long Island House, Riverhead, N.Y. The striking double-oval border is very unusual.



Figure 4. This 3¢ 1861 cover from Snyder's Hotel, North Greenfield, New York, bears a highly ornate stencil corner cachet in the shape of a shield, emblazoned with stars.



stars and fleurons. Altogether, a very striking stencil. The full legend reads: "The Long Island House, John P. Terry, Proprietor, Riverhead, Suffolk Co., N.Y."

While not particularly well struck, the stencil cornercard on the cover in Figure 4, from Synder's Hotel in North Greenfield, New York, is the most ornate hotel stencil known. The border design is a fancy shield of dots, enclosing five curving lines of type, interspersed with five large stars. The legend reads: "Snyder's Hotel by E.S. Snyder, No. Greenfield, N.Y." It is safe to assume that Mr. Snyder was the proprietor. The cover is addressed obscurely to Maltaville ("Malty Vil") in Saratoga County and franked with a 3¢ 1861 stamp. The cover also bears a "North Greenfield, July 23" manuscript postmark applied in blue pen, with the date ("23") serving to cancel the stamp.

We are approaching the end of what has evolved into an unexpectedly long series. I envision one more installment, showing unusual stencil corner ads and possibly including additions, corrections and amplifications sparked by previous installments. ■

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(EDITOR'S PAGE continued from page 11)

marks of Cumberland, Maine, which are among the earliest precanceled postal markings. And in a special feature beginning on page 52, Milgram continues his well-received series on stencil markings on 19th century covers, here with a discussion of stenciled hotel corner advertising. The article shows some of the most interesting covers and includes a plate of representative markings.

Alan Campbell, editor of our Officials section, always writes with wit and insight. His article on page 75 is entitled "90¢ and \$2 Officials: What Can Be Learned from Used, Off-Cover Stamps" and the answer to the implied question is "Quite a lot." In our 1869 section this issue (page 69) Scott Trepel looks at illustrated presidential campaign covers franked with 1869 stamps and sent to overseas destinations. There aren't many covers, and all of them are eye-catchers. In our Foreign Mail section, page 87, James Baird tells of covers carried across the Atlantic in 1848-49 on the steamship *United States*. This early steamship never had a mail contract, but it did carry ship letters and freight-money covers. Baird includes sailing data and a table of all known covers, which he hopes will expand as a result of this article. And on page 92, John Bowman provides a brief review of the new second edition of Bruce Mosher's massive catalog of private express labels and covers.

Still last but no longer least, our quarterly Cover Corner feature is flourishing under the editorship of Jerry Palazolo. This is the only regular *Chronicle* feature that is entirely dependent on reader participation; responses are essential if the column is to continue to prosper. Both components of this month's Cover Corner involve mail carriage between the United States and the Indian ocean. Please contribute to the discussion if you can. ■

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## WHAT THE BRAZER-FINKELBURG ARCHIVE TELLS US ABOUT THE LOEWENBERG ESSAYS: 1863-66

JAN HOFMEYR

### Introduction

On 23 March 1863, James MacDonough of the National Bank Note Company (NBNC) wrote an agenda-setting letter to Anthony Zevely, Third Assistant Postmaster General of the United States Post Office Department (POD). Two years earlier, NBNC had won a six-year contract to print United States postage stamps. The letter shows that the firm was already investing in new printing methods to reduce costs and prevent stamp reuse. By these means they hoped to ensure retention of the stamp contract.

The main purpose of MacDonough's letter was to inform Zevely about a meeting that NBNC had had with Abram Gibson, inventor of the safety network overprint. But the letter also brought Zevely up to date with NBNC's experiments with surface printing ("a failure", according to MacDonough); and with a new idea for creating stamps that could not be cleaned and reused. MacDonough wrote:<sup>1</sup>

... please find another plan we are experimenting with, it is to print the stamps on a transparent paper, chemically prepared, gum them on the printed side, and when they are fastened upon an envelope the paper may be removed but the ink leaves the paper...

Stuck to the back of the first page of MacDonough's letter was the object shown in Figure 1: a vertical block of eight stamp-sized impressions in a layered sandwich of substrates with a transparent top layer partly folded back to reveal a complex and indecipherable design.

MacDonough's letter is the first official mention of a Loewenberg patent for stamps. It was a test of what later became patent 40,489 for "a process for transferring prints &c."<sup>2</sup> The Brazer-Finkelberg archive has a copy of this letter. My purpose in this article is to use the archive to improve our understanding of these historically important stamp essays.

### A brief description of Loewenberg's decal patents

During the Civil War, Henry Loewenberg of New York City registered two patents for what are now called "decal" essays. Patent 40,489 (3 November 1863) was for a "Process for transferring prints &c." and patent 45,057 (15 November 1864) was for an "Improvement in adhesive postage and revenue stamps."

The main features of patent 40,489 are a method to render paper or linen transparent by the application of resinous gum, camphor, beeswax, benzene, turpentine or other similar substances; printing of a "non-reversed" design on the back of the transparent paper/linen substrate; and then gumming over the printed design. The idea was that the rendering material would soak into the paper or linen, making it transparent and relatively impenetrable by ink. Printing a design onto the back and gumming over the print would sandwich the





**Figure 1. The earliest known Loewenberg decal, stuck to the back of the first page of MacDonough's 23 March 1863 letter to Zevely. The transparent top layer of the bottom left corner, partly folded up onto itself, gives insights into the workings of the decal.**

design between the surface and the gum. When separated, the design would be inclined to stay with the gum. This would transfer the print to the surface to which the decal had been applied.

The patent was intended for transfers of all kinds, not just self-canceling stamps. With respect to stamps, self-canceling was supposed to occur because lifting the stamp for reuse would leave the design with the gum on the envelope.

The second of Loewenberg's decal patents was specifically for stamps. It involved gumming the transparent paper first and then printing on the gum. This may seem like a small change, but it leads to a very different self-canceling mechanism. Instead of transferring the design, attempts to lift a stamp should dissolve it. Although essays produced by this method are usually described as decals, they are more accurately described as back-printed stamps whose designs are made to dissolve.

### **1863: Early archival correspondence about Loewenberg's patents**

Sometime between MacDonough's March 23 letter and the end of 1863, the POD became officially interested in Loewenberg's patent 40,489. We see this in a letter written by MacDonough to Zevely on 6 November 1863. MacDonough wrote: "In accordance with your instructions, we printed plates of each denomination upon paper furnished by Mr. Loewenberg."<sup>3</sup>

The resulting essays have survived as the well-known engraved decals of 1863, printed on the gummed side of Loewenberg's transparent paper using the 1861 stamp plates. Scott mistakenly lists these as having been created in 1864, designating nine essay varieties



**Figure 2. Examples of NBNC's engraved decals, printed in 1863 on the gummed side of Loewenberg's transparent paper. The 5¢ block at left is scanned from the back (gummed side). The 5¢ essay is catalogued by Scott 79-E67P5; the 90¢ (here scanned from the front) is 79-E72P5.**

as 79-E65P5 through 79-E73P5, seven denominations in all. The Loewenberg essay set includes the 2¢ “Black Jack” design. Since that stamp was issued in July 1863, the essay printing must have occurred sometime between July and early November. Figure 2 shows blocks of four of two denominations from this printing: the 5¢ brown Jefferson (79-E67P5) and the dark blue 90¢ (79-E72P5). In the Figure 2 image, the 5¢ block is scanned from the back; the paper is transparent.

MacDonough's letter suggests that the tests did not go well. MacDonough continued: “Mr. Loewenberg wishes to have [the essays] reprinted which we are now doing and to gum them himself with his own material. Soon as they can be completed they will be forwarded together with the first lot printed.”

MacDonough explained that NBNC had gummed the stamps without Loewenberg's approval. Loewenberg must have blamed NBNC and its gum for what were apparently unsatisfactory results. The parties agreed to withhold the specimens from the POD until Loewenberg had a chance to devise a gum of his own.

Three weeks passed before the next correspondence: a letter from MacDonough to Zevely written on 28 November, responding to a letter from Zevely (not present in the archive) the day before. MacDonough's letter tells us that there had been a second printing of the decals, but that the process had soon gone awry. MacDonough wrote: “I received your favor of 27th inst. and am greatly surprised that Mr. Loewenberg should have repeated to you that this Company did not ‘afford him the proper aid to encourage his experiments.’”<sup>4</sup> This letter is so important for what it implies about the experiments of the period, that it is worth summarizing in some detail. Here is what we see:

NBNC had run a second set of experiments between 6 and 28 November, 1863. The printing could not have gone well because Loewenberg had abandoned the results in “a half-finished state.” Loewenberg had said that he would return with an improved paper and new ink. But he hadn't. Instead, according to MacDonough (quoting Zevely), he had gone to the Continental Bank Note Company (CBNC). CBNC had produced essays which Loewenberg had given to Zevely. Zevely seems to have thought that the CBNC essays were “very good” and wanted to know “what difficulties” NBNC was having. It would appear that Zevely had become impatient with the lack of progress by NBNC.

MacDonough responded by noting two significant problems. First, the transparent



paper was so hard that “the plate ink will not adhere” to it and as a result, the quality of engraved printing on Loewenberg’s paper was impossibly poor. Second, the sheets stuck to each other when warm. As a result, they were difficult and expensive to dry out and pack.

To support his point about the problems with the patent, MacDonough mentioned “counterfeit French stamps” prepared by Loewenberg. “You perhaps have one of the sheets,” MacDonough wrote. He suggested that Zevely try bending the sheet. Zevely would see that the resin “flies from the surface [of the paper]... carrying the ink and gum with it.” MacDonough argued that Loewenberg’s stamps would not survive normal postal handling.

MacDonough concluded by noting that NBNC was preparing a surface-printing die for testing with “Loewenberg’s plan”, but also with a plan devised by a Mr. Eidlitz. The Eidlitz paper was less transparent than Loewenberg’s, but also less adhesive. According to MacDonough, Eidlitz’s idea was to print the stamp on the gum instead of under it—this a year before the publication of Loewenberg’s patent 45,057 for printing on the gum!

MacDonough’s letter raises a number of questions. Let’s begin with the essays said to have been created by CBNC. No such essays have survived, but a recent discovery proves that Loewenberg took his patented process to the American Bank Note Company (ABNC).

### Loewenberg ABNC discovery

Figure 3 shows essays that were obviously created by ABNC; the firm’s name and initials constitute the only lettering in the design. The blue die proof at left is imprinted on card, backstamped “ABNC 1864.” The Scott catalog lists just one type of this design (in black with blank tablets) as 65-E7A, but the Scott listing is woefully incomplete. A full series of these essays is relatively well-known among essay collectors of this period. It includes a unique essay on India with part of the frame sketched in pencil; then the essay catalogued by Scott with tablets blank; and then the completed essay as shown on the left in Figure 3. Both the “blank tablets” essay and the complete essays are found in multiple colors: black, green, purple brown, orange brown, brown red, dull purple and blue.

Shown at right in Figure 3 is an engraved Loewenberg decal created from this same



**Figure 3. At left, an uncatalogued variety of Scott 65-7A, clearly a creation of the American Bank Note Company. It dates from 1864 and is known in a number of colors on India paper and on card. On the right is a recent discovery, a Loewenberg decal in the same design.**

die. I found this about three years ago in a lot of Loewenberg material. A decal essay in this design had not previously been known to the essay-proof community.

MacDonough’s letter implies that Loewenberg also produced samples with CBNC—

all without the knowledge of NBNC. We now have proof of an ABNC design on a Loewenberg decal, but there is no evidence of a CBNC decal. Perhaps Zevly or MacDonough confused firms, and the samples referred to in the letter were actually made by ABNC. Or perhaps there were also CBNC decals, subsequently lost or destroyed. Whatever the case, it's clear from the archival record (now supported by a surviving artifact) that Loewenberg went to at least one of NBNC's competitors to have decals made.

### “French counterfeits”

Now let's consider the essays MacDonough called “French counterfeits.” Surface-printed Loewenberg essays based on the design of the French 1-centime stamp of 1853-71 are well known. Two examples are shown in Figure 4. The same design was used for the uncatalogued surface-printed U.S.-France se-tenant essays shown in Figure 5. But the papers used for these essays are markedly better than the paper described by MacDonough in his letter. They are less brittle and their transparency varies—more in line with what one might expect from a paper by Eidlitz than by Loewenberg. The fact that Mac-



**Figure 4. Surface-printed essays in the design of the 1 centime French stamp of 1853-71. MacDonough's description of “French counterfeits” makes it clear that these essays were printed on Loewenberg's very problematic 1863 transparent paper. These surface-printed essays probably date from 1865, when Loewenberg was trying to sell his idea in Europe.**

Donough knew so much about the performance characteristics of the 1863 “counterfeits”, suggests that they must have been produced by NBNC using Loewenberg's early, very problematic paper. But nothing like them is known. All we have are the surface-printed essays illustrated in Figures 4 and 5. MacDonough's letter suggests that Loewenberg and NBNC intended to market Loewenberg's ideas in Europe as early as 1863. But the essays illustrated in Figures 4 and 5 were probably produced later, when NBNC was conducting extensive surface-printed experiments with the Washington “rod and axe” design (Scott 79-E8 and 79-E9, discussed further below). Although the French never adopted Loewenberg's ideas, the Prussians eventually did. Prussia issued a short-lived typographic Loewenberg decal in 1866 (Scott Prussia 21, 22).<sup>5</sup>

Third, there's the so-called “Eidlitz plan.” The only record of an Eidlitz patent from this period is patent 27,116 (14 February 14, 1860) for an improvement in photographic bank notes.<sup>6</sup> The inventor, Leopold Eidlitz, lived in New York. The patent is for printing by a photographic method (i.e. surface printing) on a watermarked paper that would be difficult to counterfeit. Leopold Eidlitz clearly had a deep knowledge of bank note paper and printing. As natives of New York working in the same industry, he and MacDonough would probably have known each other. Leopold is therefore most likely the Eidlitz to whom MacDonough was referring. His plan involved a transparent paper that didn't suffer from the faults of the Loewenberg paper; and printing on top of instead of under the gum. But this is exactly what we see in Loewenberg's patent 45,057 almost a year later.

Why did Eidlitz not patent his idea? It is pointless to speculate. Whatever the explana-





**Figure 5. Se-tenant essays of U.S. and French stamps. Five fragments of these lithographically-printed se-tenant essays are recorded. This material was almost certainly produced by the National Bank Note Company during the time it was collaborating with Loewenberg, who was attempting to sell his decal stamp concepts to national post offices overseas. The U.S. stamps show the “rod and axe” design which dates this piece from 1865 or later.**

tion, MacDonough’s letter of 28 November 1863 is the first mention of the idea of printing *over* the gum—subsequently tested on a wide range of transparent papers. There are many surviving examples, catalogued as Scott 79-E8 and 79-E9; these are the lithographically printed “rod and axe” Loewenberg essays, discussed below.

Finally, there’s MacDonough’s reference to the fact that NBNC was “preparing a surface-printing die with which to further experiment in the direction of self-canceling stamps.” MacDonough noted that the die would be suitable for testing either Loewenberg’s or Eidlitz’s plan, though he expressed a preference for Eidlitz. The date here (28 November 1863) is important for dating subsequent essays. The tone of MacDonough’s letter suggests that NBNC had gone from failed experiments with surface-printing at the beginning of the year to the potential for successful surface-printed experiments by year-end.

### **1864-66: Surface-printed essays and the Loewenberg Stamp Company**

By early 1864 the relationship between Loewenberg and NBNC seems to have normalized. We see this in a January 8 letter from MacDonough to Zevely in which MacDonough mentioned a package that contained “22 impressions large size and 22 impressions small size” on Loewenberg paper, printed under Loewenberg’s supervision.<sup>7</sup> We don’t know what these were. They could have been samples of the 1861 3¢ stamp printed on starch-coated paper (Loewenberg patent 42,207 of 5 April 1864, incorrectly catalogued as a decal and listed as Scott 79-E65P5b).<sup>8</sup> Or they could have been the first surface-printed decals based on the die mentioned by MacDonough. Unfortunately, the archive record is too sparse to tell. But we do know that surface-printed decals were being produced in 1864. They were created for the Treasury Department by a company called Butler & Carpenter, successor firm to Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co., the bank note printer that had created the U.S. 1851 stamps.

In 1864, Butler & Carpenter held the contract to print revenue stamps for the Trea-

surey. The Brazer-Finkelburg archive contains two important documents in this regard. The first is a letter dated 9 March 1864 from Treasury to Butler & Carpenter;<sup>9</sup> and the second is a contract dated 28 March 1864 between Loewenberg and Treasury for 1,000,000 bank check revenue stamps.<sup>10</sup> The letter informed Butler & Carpenter that Treasury intended to enter into a contract with Loewenberg for testing his plan for self-canceling revenue stamps. The contract itself is relatively straightforward. Loewenberg is to produce 1,000,000 2¢ bank check stamps in five different colors in batches of 200,000. The stamps are to be surface-printed and produced according to his 3 November 1863 patent. Loewenberg would bear all production costs and would be paid 33¢ per 1,000 stamps.

Essays for the proposed stamps were produced on Loewenberg’s “onionskin” paper in many colors in sheets that are both imperforate and perforated (Turner Essay 42).<sup>11</sup> Perforated examples are shown in Figure 6. Since they were surface-printed on the gummed side of the stamp, the images appear in reverse. These essays are listed in the Turner catalog as 42b.

The documents prove that Bank Note companies were able to create somewhat satis-



**Figure 6. Essays for bank check stamps, printed by Butler & Carpenter for the Treasury Department in 1864. Shown from the gummed side, these represent surface-printed tests of Loewenberg’s first patent for decal stamps. These items are listed in George Turner’s catalog of U.S. revenue stamp essays as 42b.**

factory surface-printed decals by 1864. But NBNC doesn’t seem to have produced any, in spite of MacDonough’s mention of a die for testing. This is proven by a letter written very late that year by a “Philip Galpin.” Galpin wrote to an unknown addressee, presumably a high-ranking POD official, on December 27, 1864. Galpin signed it as the president of the Loewenberg Stamp Company at No. 1 Park Place, New York. The letter mentions two designs for postage stamps and asks the addressee to pick one. It includes a lengthy description of one of the designs. Galpin wrote:<sup>12</sup>

**In accordance with your instructions, I have the honor to enclose two designs for postal stamps... the head of Washington will probably print better on our paper... the bound rods in the margin are intended to represent that Union of distinct States which is productive of strength to resist while the axe proceeding from them indicates that from that union comes power to attack.**

This description is an exact match for the “rod and axe” surface-printed essays listed as Scott 79-E8 and E9. Figure 7 shows a block of four of Scott 79-E8a that has been scanned from the back (the gummed side). It is blue and printed on the so-called “onionskin paper” that was probably manufactured for or by Loewenberg.

New York directories of this era do not mention a Loewenberg Stamp Company





**Figure 7. An example of Loewenberg's "rod and axe" essays, printed on transparent paper that was probably manufactured by Loewenberg (the so-called "onionskin paper"). The block has been scanned from the back (gummed) side. The enlarged portion of the design at right clearly shows the "rod and axe" described by Galpin in December, 1864. This is Scott 79-E8a.**

(LSC), but there was a lawyer named Philip Galpin with an address at 1 Park Place. He and Loewenberg must have teamed up. The deferential tone of the letter suggests an addressee in a position of authority—more likely Zevely of the POD than MacDonough of NBNC. From the philatelic point of view, the letter's importance lies in its proof of December 1864 as a start date for the Loewenberg "rod and axe" essays. Although Scott catalogues these as two series (illustrated in different sizes with the E8 scanned from the back and the E9 scanned from the front), they would all have been created by LSC from the same master design and should be treated as one series of essays.

The last Loewenberg letter in the archive was written on 20 June 1866, almost 18 months after the Galpin letter. It is from MacDonough to Zevely with a note attached by Charles Steel (inventor of the grill and head of NBNC's printing department). The letter mentions two sheets of stamps printed on NBNC paper doctored by Loewenberg. MacDonough wrote: "In accordance with your instructions conveyed to us by Mr. Loewenberg, we gave him paper to prepare and have printed upon it. We enclose herewith the impressions without comment..."<sup>13</sup>

Steel added that his department had "subjected [the paper] to exactly the same treatment as all our stamp paper." When Brazer found the letter, the stamps were no longer attached, so we can't be sure what the stamps were. But Steel's use of the words "exactly the same treatment" suggests a comparative experimental process in which ideas by Loewenberg were being compared with others. The essays that best fit this description are the lithographically printed essays adapted from the 1861 plate for the 3¢ Washington (Scott 79-E25). Although the Scott catalog attributes the starch-coated paper essays (Scott 79-E25c) to Gibson, they are actually based on Loewenberg's patent 42,207.<sup>14</sup>

And that is where the Loewenberg correspondence ends. What have we learned?

### **Summary: a reconstructed history of Loewenberg's experiments**

NBNC began testing Loewenberg's first patent without the POD's knowledge in early 1863. The fact that they also produced French essays based on the patent, suggests that they'd formed some sort of partnership with Loewenberg. Zevely saw the first result of these experiments in March. Later in the year, the POD must have decided to pursue the idea. A first printing of the engraved essays using the 1861 plates followed, probably in late

October or the first week of November. They were gummed but deemed a failure. Loewenberg appears to have blamed the gum. A second printing followed between November 6 and November 28. This too was deemed a failure and Loewenberg abandoned it “half-finished.” This would explain the discovery of ungummed essays discussed in *Chronicle* 261.<sup>15</sup> In the meantime, Loewenberg conducted tests with NBNC’s competitors. While we now know that ABNC produced engraved decals (as evidenced by the decal in Figure 3), the CBNC decals mentioned in MacDonough’s letter have never been seen.

By the end of 1863, NBNC was preparing to move forward with tests of surface-printed decals. Leopold Eidlitz had already suggested an alternative to Loewenberg’s first decal patent and all the pieces were in place for the wide-ranging experiments we see in the “rod and axe” essays, which survive abundantly in a profusion of papers and colors. But there is no definite record of surface-printed experiments in 1864. There is a letter from MacDonough written on 8 January about unidentifiable “impressions” produced under Loewenberg’s supervision. Given the early date, these could have been the 3¢ engraved essays printed on starch-coated paper, or they may have been essays using the surface-printed die mentioned by MacDonough in November, 1863. If the latter, then they are lost because the next set of essays—the “rod and axe” series—can only have followed the creation of the design referred to in Galpin’s letter of 27 December 1864.

Galpin’s letter was endorsed as answered on 29 December 1864. This suggests that NBNC would have started the wide-ranging experiments that produced the “rod and axe” essays in 1865. By that time Loewenberg had patented Eidlitz’s idea for printing over the gum; and as a previous article has shown, the essays exhibit both so-called “decal” patents.<sup>16</sup>

There is then a long gap to the last letter in the archive. The letter is terse and suggests a comparison of essays using NBNC stamp paper. The best fit for both the timing of the experiment and its implications about the process, are the lithographically-printed, starch-coated Loewenberg essays listed as Scott 79-E25c and mistakenly attributed to Gibson.

Between 3 November 1863 and 9 April 1867, Henry Loewenberg registered five patents for postage and revenue stamps. NBNC tested the first (40,489) with engraved printing in 1863 and with surface printing in 1865. They tested the third (45,057) with surface printing in 1865. They may have tested the second (42,207) for Zevely on starch-coated paper in 1864. They almost certainly tested it with lithographic printing in 1866. The other two patents were for a chemically treated paper (53,081; 6 March 1866) and fugitive ink (63,733; 9 April 1867). But there is no record in the archive of any official interest in these patents.

### Implications for the catalog

These discoveries have implications for the catalog. First, Scott currently dates the engraved decal essays (Scott 79-E65P5 through 79-E73P5) to 1864. This should be changed to 1863. It may also be worth noting that there were at least two printings and that the first was gummed, but the second was “half-finished” and probably ungummed. The essays therefore properly exist in two states.

Second, the ABNC engraved decal should be added to the catalog along with its associated engraved essay (Scott 65-E7A). Many uncatalogued essays exist in this category. The Scott listings could be greatly expanded.

Third, we can be much more precise about the dates for the wide-ranging “rod and axe” essays (Scott 79-E8 and 79-E9). As noted above, these are really varieties of the same item, viewed from front and back, which Scott confusingly illustrates in different sizes. Mason dated these to 1862.<sup>17</sup> Brazer dated them to April 1864, probably based on the April 1864 date for Loewenberg’s patent for starch-coated paper.<sup>18</sup> These dates are too early.



Scott dates the “rod and axe” essays to 1867, but this is almost certainly too late. Galpin’s letter of December 1864 suggests that they should be dated to 1865. It may also be worth adding a note that the subset that involves printing over the gum, is based on an idea by Eidlitz even though the patent belonged to Loewenberg.

Finally, for lithographically-printed essays based on the 3¢ Washington plate of 1861 (Scott 79-E25c), the archive suggests a date of 1866.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jim Lee for giving me access to this wonderful archive, soon to be scanned and made available on the website of the United States Philatelic Classics Society.

### Endnotes

1. MacDonough letter to Zevely, 23 March 1863.
2. The search page of the United States patent office can be found here: <http://patft.uspto.gov/netahtml/PTO/patimg.htm>. To look up a patent, simply type the patent number into the space provided.
3. MacDonough letter to Zevely, 8 November 1863.
4. MacDonough letter to Zevely, 28 November 1863.
5. *Scott 2017 Classic Specialized Catalogue of Stamps and Covers* (Amos Media, Sidney, Ohio, 2016), pg. 528.
6. Leopold Eidlitz, letters patent No. 27,116.
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12. Galpin letter to an unknown addressee, probably Zevely, 27 December 1864.
13. MacDonough letter with note by Steel to Zevely, 20 June 1866.
14. Hofmeyr and Lee, *op cit.*, pp. 271-272.
15. Hofmeyr and Lee, *op cit.*, pg. 262.
16. Hofmeyr and Lee, *op cit.*, pp. 264-266.
17. Edward H. Mason, *Essays for United States Postage Stamps* (American Philatelic Society, Springfield, Mass., 1911) pg. 22.
18. Clarence W. Brazer, *Essays for US Adhesive Postage Stamps* (Quarterman Publications, Lawrence, Mass., 1977) pp. 48-49. ■

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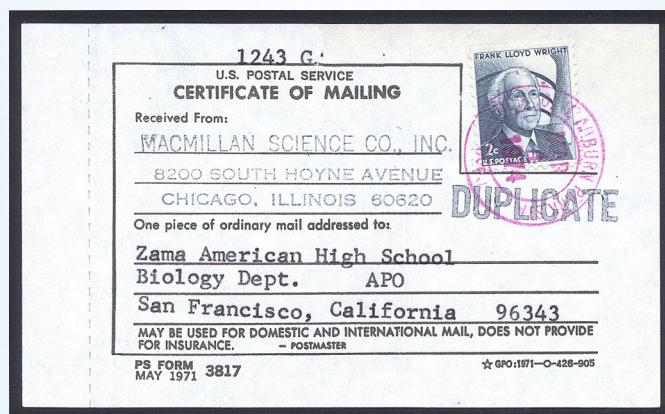
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## THE 1869 PERIOD

SCOTT R. TREPEL, EDITOR

### CAMPAIGN COVERS SENT TO FOREIGN DESTINATIONS FRANKED WITH 1869 STAMPS

SCOTT R. TREPEL

The 21st quadrennial United States presidential election was held 150 years ago, on November 3, 1868. This was the first election following the Civil War, and it turned out to be a surprisingly close contest between the Republican ticket of Ulysses S. Grant and Schuyler Colfax, and the Democratic ticket of Horatio Seymour and Francis Blair, Jr.

Emboldened by victory in the Civil War, the Republicans dropped the “National Union Party” name adopted during Lincoln’s 1864 re-election campaign and ran on a platform advocating full citizenship and civil rights for freed people, including suffrage for adult freedmen. The Democratic Party platform opposed the Radical Republican policies and promoted the concept of states’ rights, particularly the right to decide whether to allow adult freedmen to vote.

Although the slavery issue had been resolved by the bloody four-year war, there remained the hotly debated question of racial equality. Racism was evident in the speeches of Blair, the Democratic vice-presidential nominee, previously a close ally of Lincoln and a staunch Unionist whose brother, Montgomery Blair, had been Lincoln’s postmaster general. Francis Blair was so incensed by Republican suffrage policies that he realigned himself with the Democrats. On the campaign trail, he warned against the rule of “a semi-barbarous race of blacks who are worshippers of fetishes and polygamists [who wanted to] subject the white women to their unbridled lust.” While fellow Democrats blasted Blair for expressing such views, racism pervaded much of American society.

The first Reconstruction-era presidential election also involved measures to sway voting. Citizens of three former Confederate states—Texas, Mississippi, and Virginia—were disenfranchised in the 1868 election because their states had not yet been restored to the Union. In Louisiana and Georgia, the newly formed Ku Klux Klan used terror to influence voting, resulting in wins for the Democrats. These were the only two southern states that did not vote Republican in 1868.

In the final count, Grant and Colfax won, with 214 electoral votes and 52.7 percent of the popular vote versus 80 electoral votes (and 47.3 percent) for the Democrats. The Republican margin of victory in the popular vote was much narrower than had been expected, considering Grant’s fame as a war hero and the party’s national dominance after the war. In a stunning defeat for Republicans, New York State went to Seymour and Blair, a result that inspired outcries of electoral fraud.

Grant’s inaugural as the reunited nation’s 18th president took place on March 4, 1869, the month in which the first “Pictorial” issue of postage stamps was released to the public. The design and production of the 1869 stamps had taken place under the Johnson administration and Alexander W. Randall’s term as postmaster general. Upon Grant’s inauguration, the new postmaster general, John A.J. Creswell, was awaiting confirmation. He would soon appoint more African Americans to postal positions than anyone before him.

By the time the 1869 stamps were available, the 1868 presidential campaign was over, and surviving promotional envelopes emblazoned with candidates' images and party slogans were obsolete. Nonetheless, the remaining supply of envelopes continued to be used, as evidenced by the existence of 1868 election campaign covers franked with 1869 stamps.

Such covers are very scarce, presumably because the election was over before the stamps appeared and the stamps themselves had a very short life, used for only one year before being replaced by the Large Bank Note issue. The typical cover shows a 3¢ 1869 stamp paying the domestic rate, but in this article the focus is on 1868 campaign covers sent to foreign destinations with postage paid by 1869 stamps, a group gleaned from using the Power Search feature on the Siegel Auction Galleries website, a review of other firms' auction catalogs, and other sources. The list is only five covers long—one 3¢, three 10¢ and one 12¢—but the group is fascinatingly diverse.

### Two covers to England

Two of the five foreign-destination 1869 covers are addressed to England, and both promote Grant and Colfax in different designs. The earlier cover, shown in Figure 1, was mailed from New York City to Leeds on May 22, 1869, franked with a 12¢ 1869 stamp paying the U.S.-Great Britain 12¢ treaty rate. The cover crossed the Atlantic on the Inman Line steamer *City of Brooklyn*, which arrived Liverpool June 1. The woodcut design on the envelope incorporates three-quarter portraits of the two Republican candidates with patriotic slogans and images of American industry and transportation, including a train and factory at lower left, and steamship and larger sailing vessel at right.



**Figure 1. Grant-Colfax envelope from the election campaign of 1868, addressed to Leeds, England, posted at New York City on May 22, 1869 and franked with a 12¢ 1869 stamp paying the treaty rate to England that was in effect until the end of 1869.**

The second cover to England, shown in Figure 2, was mailed from Chester, Pennsylvania, to Liverpool on July 11, 1870, franked with a horizontal pair of 3¢ Pictorial stamps paying the reduced 6¢ U.S.-Great Britain treaty rate (effective January 1, 1870). Transatlantic carriage was by the steamer *Holsatia* of the Hamburg-American line, landing at Plymouth July 22. *Holsatia* then holed up in the Firth of Clyde in Scotland to wait out





**Figure 2. Grant-Colfax campaign envelope addressed to Liverpool, posted at Chester, Pennsylvania on July 11, 1870. The horizontal pair of 3¢ 1869 stamps pays the 6¢ treaty rate that became effective on the first day of 1870 and continued until UPU.**

the Franco-Prussian War. The envelope in Figure 2 is one of several overall lithographed designs with “The Nation’s Choice” slogan. By July 1870 the 1869 Pictorial stamps had already been replaced with the Large Bank Note stamps, more conventional historical portraits, ordered by Grant’s postmaster general and issued in March 1870.

### Three covers to Germany

Three 1868 campaign covers to Germany are recorded with 1869s, each a different cover design with a single 10¢ Pictorial stamp. Although all three have 10¢ postage, two different mail routes to Germany were used, which are nicely represented by the two covers on a page from editor-in-chief Michael Laurence’s 10¢ 1869 collection. The two covers are shown as Figures 3 and 4 (overleaf). Mounted and written up together, they provide a perfect comparison of the 1868 election candidates and the different routes to Germany, with the 10¢ Eagle-and-Shield stamp as the common denominator.

The first of Laurence’s covers, shown in Figure 3, is a Seymour and Blair lithographed overall envelope mailed from New York City to Berlin. It was carried on the North German Lloyd steamer *Deutschland* on April 8, 1869, the date of the red New York circular datestamp and a very early use for the 10¢ 1869 stamp. This cover was sent by the NGL direct route to Bremen, where the mail was off-loaded and datestamped; the framed Bremen transit datestamp at lower right is dated April 20. The direct mail route to Germany was disrupted by the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in July 1870, just days after the direct rate to Germany was reduced from 10¢ to 7¢. Until regular direct-mail service was restored, most mail to Germany was sent via England.

The second cover from Laurence’s collection, shown in Figure 4, is a Grant and Colfax design in the style of earlier Civil War patriotics, with Grant’s famous quote from the Battle of Spotsylvania in May 1864: “I shall fight it out on this line if it takes all summer.” The cover was mailed from Baraboo, Wisconsin, to Straslund, Prussia, on February 10, 1871, and carried from New York to England on the Hamburg-American steamer *Thuringia*, which departed on February 14, the date of the “N. YORK PAID ALL BR. TRANSIT” circular datestamp. The rate to Germany via England was 15¢ from January 1,





Figure 3. Seymour-Blair campaign envelope sent from New York City to Berlin on April 6, 1870, a very early use of the 10¢ 1869 stamp, here paying the 10¢ direct rate to Germany with transatlantic carriage via the North German Lloyd steamer *Deutschland*.



Figure 4. Grant-Colfax envelope from Baraboo, Wisconsin, to Stralsund, Prussia, posted on February 10, 1871 and carried from New York to England on the Hamburg-American steamer *Thuringia*. The 10¢ stamp and the Colfax image are both well canceled.

1869, until June 30, 1870. Effective July 1, 1870, the rate was reduced to 10¢, as reflected on this cover.

The Baraboo post office employee who postmarked the cover applied the duplex date stamp and cork killer twice, with the second strike over the portraits of Grant and Colfax. A number of campaign covers are known with the cancel or postmark struck right onto the candidate's image, clearly a political statement. In this case, the Baraboo postal employee must have been a Seymour-Blair man.



The third cover to Germany and last of the 1860s on campaign covers to foreign destinations is shown in Figure 5. It is a favorite in my personal collection of wine-related covers. As noted, the 1868 election was long over by the time the Pictorial stamps were issued. Individuals who used campaign envelopes with 1869 stamps were motivated either by politics or thriftiness or both. In the case of the cover in Figure 5, it seems certain that the sender was a frugal sort, because he had the obsolete Seymour and Blair campaign design overprinted with his corner card in huge letters covering the portraits, with the word “Wines” and grapes to the right, and the return address below. The advertising portion over the campaign design reads: “GRAPE VINES & WINES, DR. H. SCHRODER’S CHOICE GRAPE VINES!”



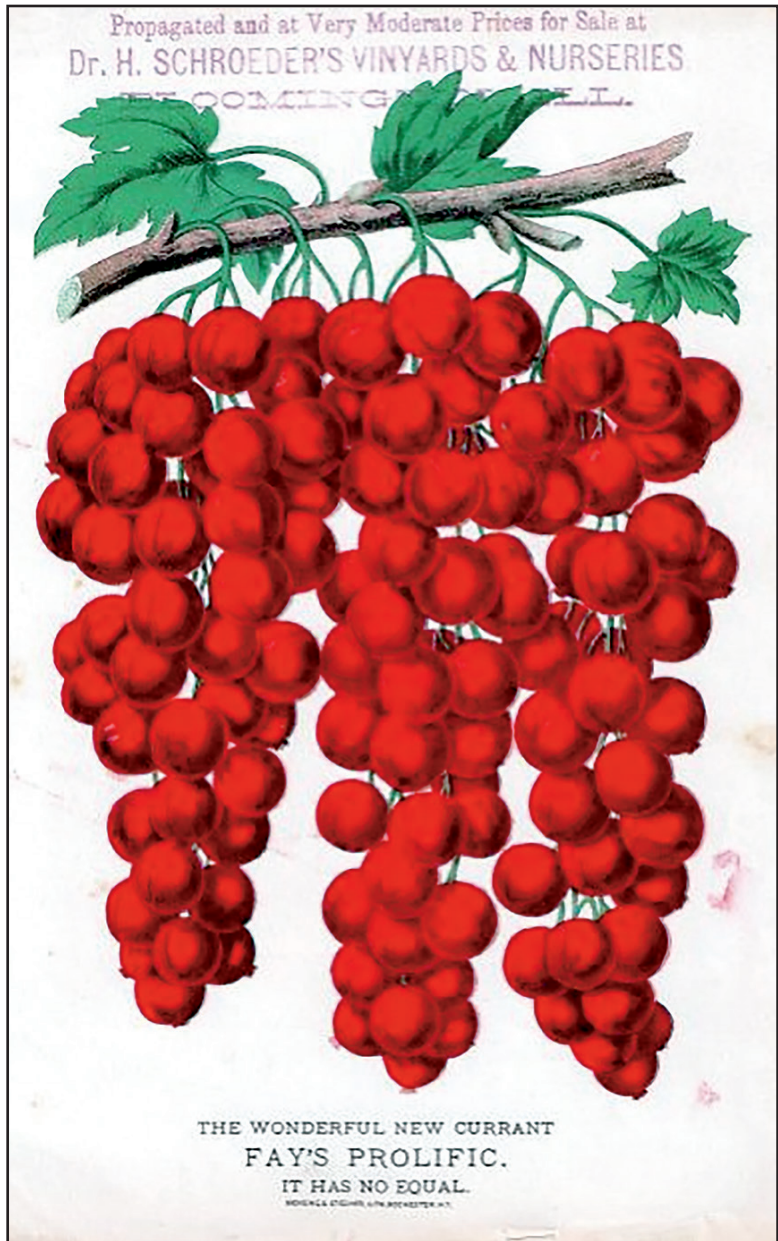
**Figure 5. Seymour-Blair campaign envelope overprinted by a frugal wine merchant, sent from Bloomington, Illinois to Germany at the 10¢ via England rate in August, 1871. The sender was an agricultural entrepreneur pioneering grape culture in the midwest.**

The 10¢ 1869 stamp is cancelled by a negative 6-point Star in circle fancy cancel (Star of David) with the duplex Bloomington, Illinois, circular datestamp lightly struck to the left. The cover was sent to Germany via England at the 10¢ rate. The exchange office datestamp is dated “AUG 3,” corresponding to the August 3, 1871 departure of the North German Lloyd steamer *Bremen*, which off-loaded mail at Southampton on August 16.

Dr. Herman Schroeder, a German immigrant, was a horticulturist who raised grape vines and manufactured wine. (He spelled his name with an “e” in all of his notices and advertisements, despite the spelling on the envelope.) After vineyards were planted in Illinois in the 1850s, the state’s wine production grew to approximately 225,000 gallons in 1868. In 1864 Schroeder won several awards for his Catawba and Isabella wines, and wine made from the Delaware grape, all well suited to the midwestern climate and *terroir*. A chromolithographic print advertising Dr. Schroeder’s produce is shown in Figure 6. He also operated a drugstore near the post office in Quincy, Illinois, according to notices in the *Quincy Daily Whig* starting in 1868.

Apart from certain Civil War patriotic covers made by overprinting the word “TRAITOR” on pro-slavery or pro-secession campaign envelopes from the 1860 election, this Schroeder envelope is the only campaign cover I have seen that shows overprinting used to obscure the candidates’ images.

**Figure 6. A chromolithographic print advertising one of the produce varieties distributed by Herman Schroeder, creator of the cover in Figure 5. Schroeder also operated a drugstore near the post office in Quincy, Illinois.**



This wine-related campaign cover first surfaced in a European auction, and I forgot to give my bid to an agent, who happened to be the successful bidder on behalf of another American client. He notified the buyer that I was interested, and shortly thereafter I received a call from Bob Markovits, who said he would be willing to sell it...for a price. Bob showed me no mercy, extracting a profit that was then equivalent to the cost of a case of good First Growth Bordeaux. I grudgingly paid the price, but told Bob his new name was Mr. Mark-up-alots. Happily, I still have the cover, whereas the wine would probably be long gone by now.

If anyone has campaign covers with 1869 stamps to foreign destinations that are not included in this article, I would appreciate receiving a scan and description to keep the record current. My email address is in the masthead. ■



## OFFICIALS

ALAN C. CAMPBELL, EDITOR

### 90¢ AND \$2 OFFICIALS: WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM USED OFF-COVER STAMPS

ALAN C. CAMPBELL

#### Introduction

The 90¢ Continental Large Banknote stamp issued in 1873, Scott 166, is very scarce on cover. Inspired by the Jay Braus auction sale in 1974, Richard M. Searing wrote a census article in the *Chronicle*, listing five solidly attributable covers and two more dubious ones.<sup>1</sup> He updated this census five years later, adding two more covers.<sup>2</sup> A guidebook printed in 1999 estimated the number of surviving covers as fewer than 20,<sup>3</sup> but Matthew Kewriga, assistant section editor for the Bank Note section of the *Chronicle* and an avid collector in this field, now guesses that the number is less than 12. The unwieldy size of most 90¢ covers, plus damage caused by heavy contents pooching out the envelopes, would have made them unappealing to early collectors.

At the same time that the 90¢ Continental stamp came out, parallel handmaiden 90¢ Official stamps also appeared for seven of the eight departments of the Executive Office (no 90¢ value was deemed necessary for the Department of Agriculture). In the early years, Official stamps constituted only 4.3% of the total postage sold in this country, so we can expect that any form of surviving cover bearing a 90¢ Official stamp will be extremely rare, which proves to be the case.

Not a single cover, not one, has survived showing the 90¢ Navy, Post Office or Treasury stamps. The 90¢ covers for the Department of the Interior (solo usage from Larned to Lyons, Kansas) and the Department of Justice (3-90¢ + 4-30¢ from Washington, D.C. to Clarksburg, West Virginia) are considered unique. There are two recorded 90¢ War “covers,” both cut-down parcel labels from Mobile, Alabama to Washington, D.C. (90¢ + four 24¢, 90¢ pair + four 24¢). Finally, there are two 90¢ State “covers,” both being large cover fronts to Matamoros, Mexico (90¢ + 30¢ + 6¢, 90¢ + 30¢ + 2-10¢). In a previous census article, the two unique 90¢ covers were illustrated.<sup>4</sup> Since that article was published in 2000, the recorded total of 90¢ Official covers has actually dropped from seven to six, since the solo 90¢ War use from Nebraska (ex-Lobdell, #43 in my census) has been deemed inauthentic.<sup>5</sup> In the past year, the predominant collector in this field, our assistant section editor Lester C. Lanphear III, has added two additional 90¢ covers to his exhibit display, and now possesses examples of all four 90¢ Official values recorded on cover. This is an historic achievement, considering that his mentor Charles M. Starnes had bemoaned his inability to obtain even a single 90¢ Official cover.

Such a paucity of surviving 90¢ Official covers can tell us little about how those controlled stamps were distributed and used. Fortunately, the cancellations on used off-cover stamps can tell us much to flesh out the story. For some departments, 90¢ stamps survive in

astonishing quantities and are relatively inexpensive. In the 2018 edition of the *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*, the value of a used 90¢ Continental stamp (166) in very fine condition is stated to be \$300. In contrast, the 90¢ Interior (O24) is \$50, the 90¢ Justice (O34) is \$900, the 90¢ Navy (O45) is \$375, the 90¢ Post Office (O56) is \$25, the 90¢ State (O67) is \$325, the 90¢ Treasury (O82) is a pathetic \$12, and the 90¢ War is \$60. How bizarre, that stamps cataloguing \$25 (O56) and \$12 (O82) in used condition have never been seen on cover.

Some months back on the Frajola chat board ([www.philamercury.com/board.php](http://www.philamercury.com/board.php)), out of the blue Bernard Biales mused about why this should be. My tentative response to him was that because Official stamps are considered “back-of-the-book” and are often ignored by general U.S. collectors, the demand for them is limited. I also suggested that since janitors at the great department headquarters in Washington, D.C. often allowed enterprising schoolboy collectors to scavenge through the wastebaskets on Saturday mornings, a very great and disproportionate number of high-value Official stamps used on package wrappings must have been salvaged this way. Ergo, demand exceeds supply, and the value is severely suppressed.

In the mid-1980s, when I first became interested in studying cancellations on Official stamps, I tended to buy mostly cheaper, lower-denomination stamps. Then, having been chastened by the polymath philatelist Ralph Ebner for this penny-pinching strategy, I chose to up my degree of difficulty by searching out attributable cancellations on high-value Official stamps. In this article, I intend to use some of these copies to demonstrate that 90¢ Official stamps were used on first class, third class, and even registered mail from many different cities and towns across the country, not just from the nation’s capital, where it is believed more of half of all official mail originated. The departments will be treated not alphabetically, as is the custom of the Scott catalog, but in order of their relative importance, a more logical sequence first introduced by Lanphear in exhibition in 1993 and observed by others since.

### Department of State

State stamps were used at the main office in Washington, D.C. and also by the dispatch agent in New York City. The dispatch agent, a Department of State employee, had an office in the foreign department of the main NYC post office, and was tasked with expediting the heavy mails of diplomats, who sent personal possessions off to their different postings. There was also a dispatch agent in San Francisco, but it doesn’t appear that he was furnished with Official stamps. Two 3¢ State stamps have been reported with red and violet San Francisco transit markings, presumably applied to covers headed across the Pacific.

A total of 6,643 copies of the 90¢ State stamp were requisitioned for the fiscal years 1874-84. Figure 1 shows, from left to right, five copies used from Washington, D.C.: a red cancellation used on local mail, 1873-75; an iron cross killer used in November, 1873; a violet quartered cork from 1878; a leaf killer from November, 1874; and a fishtail numeral “3” in ellipse from 1882-84.

Figure 2 shows two handstamps from D.C. (a third class double oval from 1880-84, and a blue “RECEIVED” favor cancel) and two from New York City (a red NYFM supplementary mail killer and a third-class foreign-mail double oval from 1883).

A total of 3,208 copies of the \$2 State stamp were requisitioned in the fiscal years 1874-77, and an additional 300 copies in 1882, for a grand total of 3,508.

Figure 3 shows four copies used from Washington, D.C.: a geometric killer from August, 1873; a violet quartered cork from 1878; and numerals “2” and “6” in three-ring targets, 1880-84.

Figure 4 shows three more copies used from Washington, D.C.: third class single and double oval mute postmark killers, also 1880-84, and a blue ‘RECEIVED’ favor cancel.





Figure 1. 90¢ State, first-class uses from Washington, D.C. From left: red cancellation used on local mail; iron cross killer; violet quartered cork; leaf killer; numeral “3.”



Figure 2. 90¢ State, handstamps from Washington, D.C. and NYC. Third-class oval from D.C.; D.C. “RECEIVED” favor cancel; red NYFM supplementary mail killer; NYC third-class foreign-mail double oval.



Figure 3. \$2 State, first-class uses from Washington, D.C.: geometric killer, a violet quartered cork, and numerals “2” and “6” within three-ring targets.



Figure 4. \$2 State, two third-class uses from Washington, D.C. and a blue “RECEIVED” favor cancel at right.



**Figure 5. \$2 State uses from New York City. Red NYFM geometric marking used on supplementary mail; NYFM “3” in vertical-barred ellipse; and a third-class foreign-mail oval.**

Three copies from New York City are shown in Figure 5: a red NYFM geometric marking used on supplementary mail; an NYFM “3” in simplex vertical-barred ellipse; and a third-class foreign-mail double oval. Taken all together, these ten copies concisely demonstrate how the \$2 State was used from Washington, D.C. and New York City on first- and third-class domestic and foreign mail.

In the current specialized catalog, the \$2 State stamp is valued at \$1,750 unused with original gum, \$850 for unused no gum, and \$3,000 used. As of this writing (9/16/18), on the eBay site there are 36 used copies for sale, versus 13 unused copies, and none of the used copies are priced at more than 50 percent of catalog value. I agree that it is difficult to find a fault-free used copy of this double-sized stamp with a neat cancellation and fully intact perforations all around that would grade VF 80, the benchmark for Scott valuation. Nevertheless, I am concerned that the huge pricing discrepancy here (\$3,000 used vs. \$850 unused no gum), which has widened in recent years, may incentivize fakers with a daub hand. In the past, when I was a consultant for the catalog, I was told by the editor that Scott was very cautious about pricing a used copy of any given stamp higher than an unused copy, precisely for this reason. For the \$2 State, this policy may need to be reaffirmed.

With respect to the \$5, \$10, and \$20 State stamps used, these are all given italicized prices higher than for unused examples. Aside from a few attractive favor-cancelled copies, most of these used stamps—presumably originating on bulky parcels—have such smudged cancellations that poor William Seward appears heavily disguised, as if to conceal his true identity.

### **Treasury Department**

By a wide margin, the 90¢ Treasury saw the heaviest use of all the 90¢ Official stamps, with a total of 312,500 copies requisitioned from the Stamp Agent for the fiscal years 1874-79. The current catalog value for the hard-paper stamp (O82), \$12, seems quite humble compared to the \$375 value for regularly issued 90¢ stamp (166), for which the quantity issued has been estimated at 197,000. The scarce 90¢ Treasury stamp on soft paper (O113) currently carries a catalog value of \$750 used. Years ago, W.V. Combs was able to prove that this stamp (along with the 3¢, 6¢, and 30¢ Treasury and the 6¢ Justice soft-paper stamps), was actually printed by the Continental Bank Note Company, not the American Bank Note Company.<sup>6</sup>

Scouring through my mounted cancellation studies assembled over many years, I was dismayed to find only 12 worthwhile singles, two pairs, and two used blocks of the very common hard-paper stamp. The 90¢ Treasury was chiefly used east of the Mississippi, in many cities and towns. Based on some large surviving used multiples and an old report of



a wooden crate-top plastered with a sheet of 90¢ stamps, many of these stamps were used on heavy mailings that received disfiguring roller cancellations. Also, the dark brown color of the Treasury stamps is a terrible substrate for showing off cancellations, at the opposite end of the spectrum from the luminous golden yellow of the Agriculture stamp. Frankly, this legibility disadvantage may have caused the Treasury stamp to be under-represented in my holdings.

Figure 6 shows a red D.C. killer used on local mail (1873-75); a Boston negative “E” in circle (1878-83); a blue New Orleans shield; a black New Orleans fancy geometric; and a black New Orleans radial geometric.



**Figure 6. 90¢ Treasury uses. Red Washington, D.C. killer used on local mail; Boston negative “E” in circle; blue New Orleans shield; black New Orleans fancy geometric; and a black New Orleans radial geometric marking.**



**Figure 7. 90¢ Treasury uses. Blue Cincinnati CDS; blue Rochester registry postmark; unusual leaf killer; and a pair with two strikes of a double-outlined star.**

Figure 7 shows a blue Cincinnati circular datestamp; a blue Rochester, N.Y. registry postmark; an unusual leaf killer; and a pair with two strikes of an elegant double-outlined star. This last item, a very beautiful cancellation of unknown origin and often seen socked-on-the-nose, has so far been found mostly on the higher values of five departments, but this is the only recorded pair.

### War Department

For the fiscal years 1874-84, a total of 48,172 copies of the 90¢ War stamp were requisitioned, with the largest orders coming in the last four years. This bizarre phenomenon, unique to this department, was caused by the War Department’s failure to embrace the conversion to penalty-clause mail. One day, research may shed light on the thinking behind this odd policy, which caused the War Department to keep buying Official postage from the Stamp Agent, and forced their clerks to keep weighing mail and affixing the necessary stamps in accordance with prevailing rates.

While many War values needed to be reprinted by the American Bank Note Company (1¢, 2¢, 3¢, 6¢, 10¢, 12¢, 30¢), for the 90¢ stamp, the printings delivered by Continental to the Stamp Agent in the calendar years 1873 and 1875 were more than sufficient (216,400 total). As a sidebar, to see that the War Department requisitioned pointless 7¢ Official stamps in every single fiscal year, 1874-84, beggars belief. The War Department had facilities all across the country, most romantically in the forts west of the Mississippi,

established to protect settlement routes from Indian predations. At this time in the far West, the use of War Official stamps far exceeds that of all other departments combined.

Combing through my mounted pages for distinctive cancellations on the 90¢ War, I came up with 29 singles, a pair, two strips of three, and a strip of four. In the interest of keeping a balanced presentation, I've done some judicious editing here, but make no mistake, off-cover used stamps give us a fuller picture of how the 90¢ War was used, than for any other 90¢ Official stamp.

Figure 8 shows oval and double oval cancellations from Washington, Philadelphia, Chicago, Cincinnati and St. Louis. In Figure 9, we show from New York City a third-class oval cancellation from Branch A, a boxed registry cancellation, an "N.Y.P.O" in vertical-barred ellipse, and another double-outlined star. This cancellation has been very tentatively attributed to New York City based on one example showing the "K" in a partial circular datestamp. The final stamp is a numeral "1" in a target from Philadelphia, 1880-82.

Figure 10 shows postmarks from Craig and Santa Fe, New Mexico; an "S" in "U" killer probably from Jefferson Barracks, Missouri; an obsolete "10" rate marker, and an entwined POD struck in violet from a marker made of commercial vulcanized rubber.



Figure 8. 90¢ War stamps showing third-class mostly oval killers from Washington, Philadelphia, Chicago, Cincinnati and St. Louis.



Figure 9. 90¢ War uses from New York and Philadelphia. Third-class oval cancellation from NYC's Branch A, boxed registry cancellation, N.Y.P.O in vertical-barred ellipse, double-outlined star, and numeral "1" in 3-ring target from Philadelphia.

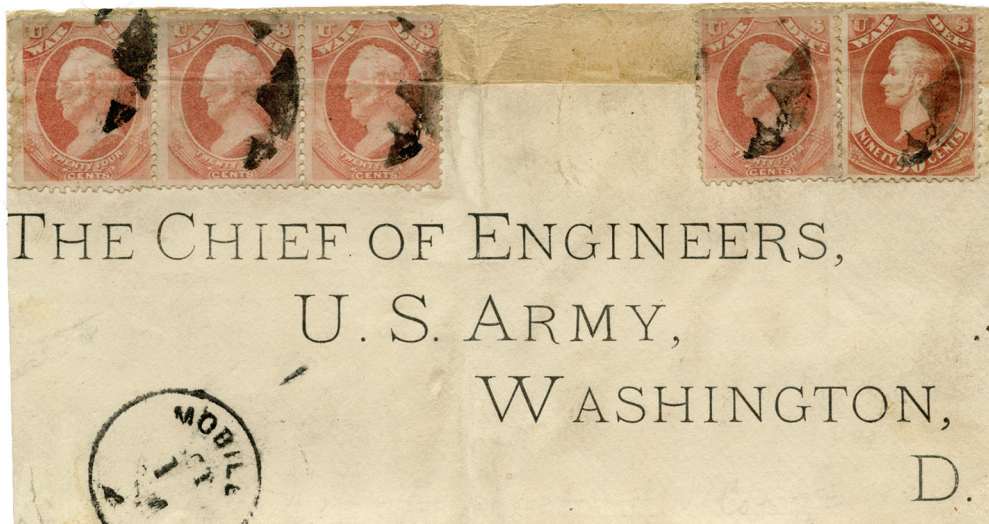


Figure 10. 90¢ War first-class postmarks and killers from smaller towns. Craig and Santa Fe, New Mexico; an "S" in "U" killer from Jefferson Barracks, Missouri; an obsolete "10" rate marker; and an entwined "POD" struck in violet from a commercial marking device made of vulcanized rubber.





**Figure 11. 90¢ War first-class killers. Pair from Washington, D.C. with violet quartered corks; Boston negative “2”; New Orleans fancy circle of “V’s”; and a honeycomb killer from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.**



**Figure 12. Preprinted address label from Mobile, Alabama to the Chief of Engineers, Washington, D.C., franked with four 24¢ and a 90¢ War stamp.**

Figure 11 shows first-class killers: a pair from Washington, D.C. with violet quartered corks (1878); a Boston negative “2”; a New Orleans fancy circle of “V’s”, and a honeycomb from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Figure 12 shows a pre-printed address label to the Chief of Engineers in Washington, D.C., franked with a 90¢ and four 24¢ War stamps (ex-Knapp, Waud, Markovits, and Lobdell).<sup>7</sup> The total of \$1.86 in postage is presumed to pay 62 times the 3¢ domestic first-class

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rate, based on the presence of a dated Mobile, Alabama circular date stamp. It is worth noting that had these War stamps been soaked off, their survival would have told us nothing about how and where they were used. In this era, most killers are not attributable, and postal regulations discouraged canceling stamps with the postmark.

### Navy Department

The 90¢ Navy, with 12,270 copies requisitioned in the fiscal years 1874-79, is the third least common 90¢ Official stamp. It would chiefly have been used from Navy yards along the Eastern seaboard and in the Gulf of Mexico. Figure 13 shows a D.C. violet quartered cork (1878); a D.C. third-class mute oval (1880-84); the enigmatic “N.Y.P.O.” in ellipse; and two complex geometric killers from New Orleans. Figure 14 presents a Boston small negative “E” (1875-78); another double-outlined star; a crossroads killer; an elegant blue negative star; and an indistinct blue killer. The last stamp, of undistinguished appearance, shows a small preprinting accordion pleat across the value tablet at bottom.



Figure 13. 90¢ Navy uses from major cities: D.C. violet quartered cork; D.C. third-class oval; “N.Y.P.O.” in ellipse; and two geometric killers from New Orleans.



Figure 14. 90¢ Navy with first-class killers: Boston small negative “E”; another double-outlined star; a crossroads killer; blue negative star; indistinct killer in blue.

### Department of the Interior

For the 90¢ Interior, 64,377 copies were requisitioned for the fiscal years 1874-84, with the largest orders placed in the first four years. A total of 75,400 copies were delivered by the Continental Bank Note Company to the Stamp Agent in the calendar years 1873 and 1876. In the current Scott catalog for the soft-paper ABNC printings, the numbers jump from O103 (24¢ Interior) to O106 (3¢ Justice). The missing numbers, O104 and O105, had originally been assigned to purported soft paper copies of the 30¢ and 90¢ Interior. These apocryphal stamps were eventually delisted, but it seems odd that they were included in the first place, since the statistics cited above from Luff had been readily available for years. The soft-paper printings of all the lower Interior values, 1¢-24¢, were necessitated by the January, 1882 Attorney General’s ruling that penalty envelopes could not be used for field-office correspondence with private individuals, which greatly affected the widely-dispersed Land Offices.

On my mounted pages, for the 90¢ Interior I found 14 used singles, a pair, and a strip of five. Figure 15 shows a red Washington local (1873-75), a Chicago third-class oval, a





**Figure 15. 90¢ Justice with first-class killers: red Washington local, Chicago third-class oval, a blue Louisville masonic; violet circular datestamp from Reed City, Michigan; blue Denver CDS.**



**Figure 16. 90¢ Interior stamps with unattributable killers: negative “H”, negative “O”, a negative year date “77”, negative star, and a radial geometric.**

blue Louisville masonic incised compass-and-dividers, a violet Reed City, Michigan circular datestamp, and a blue Denver CDS. Figure 16 shows unattributable killers: a negative “H”, a negative “O”, a negative year date “77”, a negative star, and a radial geometric.

### Department of Justice

Of all the 90¢ Official stamps, the 90¢ Justice is by far the least common, with only 3,200 stamps requisitioned for the fiscal years 1874-79. Continental delivered 10,000 copies of the 90¢ Justice to the Stamp Agent in 1873, which proved more than enough for the entire 12-year span of its postal validity. The current catalog value of \$900 used seems oddly low, especially when compared to the slightly more common \$2 State (\$3,000 used). Outside of Washington, D.C., the 90¢ Justice stamp would have been distributed to the offices of U.S. district attorneys, U.S. marshals, court clerks, and referees in bankruptcy. Their typical mailings, mostly consisting of legal documents, would not have required much high-value postage.

Figure 17 shows a D.C. violet quartered cork (1878), a Cincinnati blue “2” in double-barred circle, a New Orleans black 8-point rosette, a blue grid of unknown origin, and a circled negative star. This last stamp is most unexpected, since it had to have come from some anonymous small town where the postmaster had been forced to buy a commercial



**Figure 17. 90¢ Interior killers: D.C. violet quartered cork, Cincinnati blue “2”, New Orleans black 8-point rosette, a blue grid of unknown origin, and a negative star.**

vulcanized rubber canceller. Not shown is a watery magenta cancellation which has been seen on many values of Justice stamps, but whose origin has never been pinned down.

### Post Office Department

The 90¢ Post Office, with 65,200 requisitioned for the fiscal years 1874-79, is the second most common 90¢ Official stamp. It would have had widespread distribution, going to any postmaster in the country anticipated to be sending heavy mail. Figure 18 shows a fancy NYFM killer, an NYFM third-class double oval, an NYC double oval registry cancel, a blue Boston “M.O.B.” cancel, and a Pittsburgh pentagon star. Figure 19 shows an amorphous magenta killer, another double-outlined star, an unattributed positive letter “P,” a socked-on-the-nose bullseye, and a Maltese cross struck from commercial vulcanized rubber marker.



Figure 18. 90¢ Post Office uses from major cities: fancy geometric NYFM killer; NYFM third-class double oval; NYC double oval registry cancel; blue Boston “M.O.B.” cancel; Pittsburgh pentagon star.



Figure 19. 90¢ Post Office stamps showing unattributable first-class killers.

Searching through my mounted pages (which are not organized by department, but by city and cancel type) for examples of the 90¢ Post Office, I found 13 eligible singles, a pair, and two used blocks, and then had to edit my results. During this process, my eyes bugged out when I came across a beautiful example of a heretofore-unreported 9¢ Post Office stamp. Upon closer examination, though, my hopes were dashed, when this proved to be a 6¢ Post Office mounted upside down so as to make the blue Boston M.O.B. handstamp more legible. Never mind.

### Conclusion

In this tour through the 90¢ Official stamps, I have tried to demonstrate that their distribution and usage was far-flung. Without studying off-cover copies and only relying on the few surviving covers, one might easily have assumed that the 90¢ Official stamps were reserved exclusively for use at the great departmental headquarters in Washington, D. C.

In previous articles here, I have made extensive use of off-cover Official stamps for various purposes: to show where the Agriculture stamps were used (all surviving covers derive from Washington, D.C.), how most departmental foreign mail went through the New York foreign office (only three Official covers with classic NYFM cancellations have come



to light), and to show for many values the earliest known use when so few Official covers survive.<sup>8</sup> This is the crux of the problem—the dismal survival rate for Official covers—which makes it impossible to tell a convincing postal history story without filling in the gaps with used off-cover stamps.

I began this article discussing the scarcity of 90¢ large Bank Note regular issue covers. The only surviving classic NYFM cover with a 90¢ stamp is the famous 1872 Consolidated Coal Company cover, with 15¢ and 90¢ stamps paying seven times the 15¢ packet rate to Rio de Janeiro, (ex Braus and Metcalfe), which William R. Weiss characterized as “the undisputed ‘king’ of NYFMs”.<sup>9</sup> This now belongs to my friend Nicholas M. Kirke, whose original exhibition collection covered only the large Bank Note era, featuring covers, sets of used singles, pairs, strips, and used blocks. Kirke was persuaded to downplay the marcophilately focus and emphasize postal history instead, which eventually resulted in him expanding the storyline back to 1845, telling the entire history of the New York foreign mail department through covers alone. The reincarnated exhibit has now won large gold in international competition, but what was stripped out in the process included many beautiful and rare strikes of classic NYFM geometrics on 90¢ large Bank Note stamps, and I regret their loss.

In competitive philatelic exhibitions over the past 30 years, I have watched entries in the field of marcophilately steadily dwindle. Over the same span of time, judges have come to frown upon including a selection of off-cover fancy cancellations in traditional exhibits. Just as cut squares long ago came to be disparaged as mutilated stamped envelopes, off-cover fancy cancellations are now regarded—at least by judges—as feeble substitutes for intact covers. Never mind that this is a compact, efficient and economical way of displaying, for example, the full range of the famous and popular Boston machine-engraved wood negative numerals and letters. In this article and some of its predecessors, I have tried to make a strong rear-guard argument for the value of employing off-cover stamps in postal history research whenever the documentary evidence from intact covers proves too sketchy and incomplete.

### Endnotes

1. Richard M. Searing, “90¢ (1870-1888) Stamp Used on Cover,” *Chronicle* 88 (November, 1975), pp. 244-248. Searing was an early advocate of the careful census, and produced many useful articles on high-value classic U.S. stamps on cover.
2. Richard M. Searing, “Ninety Cent Bank Note Company Stamps on Cover,” *Chronicle* 106 (May, 1980), pp. 124-127.
3. *Linn’s U. S. Stamp Facts, 19th Century*, 1999, pg. 138. I am told this number was spiked by Eliot Landau reporting that an unidentified Chicago-area collector was hoarding 90¢ Large Bank Note covers.
4. Alan C. Campbell, “High Value Official Stamps on Cover,” *Chronicle* 188 (November, 2000), pp. 293-295.
5. PFC #494068, issued 1/24/2011: “the stamp did not originate on this cover, and the tying portion of the postmark is drawn in.” My thanks to Lewis Kaufmann for helping me locate this opinion, since the search engines on the PF website mysteriously could not find it without the actual certificate number.
6. Captain W.V. Combs, “United States Departmentals—Quantities Issued,” *The Collectors Club Philatelist*, November, 1964, pp. 344-360.
7. Siegel Auction Galleries, sale 1003, lot 5526, December 16, 2010.
8. Alan C. Campbell, “Off-Cover Usage of Official Stamps in Washington, D.C., 1873-74,” *Chronicle* 182 (November, 2001), pp. 278-286; “Usage of Department of Agriculture Official Stamps,” *Chronicle* 194 (May, 2002), pp. 130-146; “New York Foreign Mail Cancellations on Official Stamps, 1873-1884,” *Chronicle* 203 (August, 2004), pp. 223-235.
9. William R. Weiss Jr., *The Foreign Mail Cancellations of New York City 1870-78*, 1990, pg. 22. ■

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TRANSATLANTIC COVERS  
CARRIED BY THE STEAMSHIP *UNITED STATES*, 1848-49

JAMES BAIRD

Over the years, I have collected United States flag steamship covers, pretty much because no one else seemed to be doing it. I got started in postal history late in life, in my seventies. I wasn't sophisticated enough to begin by collecting rates or routes, and there didn't seem to be covers enough to collect just one steamship line. So I latched onto something simple: if a ship was American owned I collected it, at least in theory. As I gained in "sophistication" I added one more test: the auctioneer or dealer description needed to have the word "first" in it. My second wife, who was Swiss, had a saying that seems apropos: "The dumbest farmers have the biggest potatoes." I have decided to write about some of my potatoes, keeping the pieces short—as perhaps befits American-flag vessels.

Where better to start than with the steamship *United States*? A few facts about her seem in order. She was owned by a syndicate of more than 30 investors, most without any knowledge or experience in operating ocean steamships. The largest shareholder was Charles Marshall of the Blackball Line of sailing packets. There were a few other recognizable shipping men: Henry Chauncey of Pacific Mail; Charles Morgan, who had extensive experience in coastal steam lines; William Webb, the ship's builder; and William Hackstaff, who would be the ship's master.

The vessel's design was far ahead of that of its contemporaries, particularly the Ocean Line ships *Washington* and *Hermann*. Rather than hold to the lines of sailing ships of the day, which had deep V-shaped hulls, Webb built a stout 245-foot vessel with a very nearly flat bottom and 40-foot beam. The flat bottom made it possible to install the heavy propulsion machinery much lower than in earlier designs, yielding far greater stability in the open North Atlantic. This and other design changes (the transom stern replaced by a counter, the bow greatly sharpened) would be incorporated in later steam vessels built by Webb, including *Cherokee* and *Tennessee* for the Mitchell Line and Pacific Mail's *California* and *Panama*.

To set the time frame, Ocean Line's *Washington* had departed New York for Southampton (and Bremen), on her fourth round voyage five days before *United States*' first sea trials on February 26, 1848. *Hermann* would not depart on its maiden voyage for another three weeks. So the *United States* was a very early American steamship; and would commence making trans-Atlantic voyages without a mail contract.

I have written before about the travails of steamship operators running one or two ships on the transatlantic route on revenues generated solely by passengers and freight.<sup>1</sup> The revenue of postal contracts shored up virtually all long-running shipping companies of the day, foreign and domestic.

The *United States* would make four round voyages before the syndicate was delivered from a likely business nightmare by selling her to the Deutsche Reichsflotte, the nascent German navy. They subsequently removed the ship's three top decks and installed guns, turning her into the *Hansa*, a vessel of war. Perhaps the story was not a sad one for the syndicate. The sale price was reported to be \$260,000—against a cost of \$200,000.

It's time for postal history. I will show four covers. There were seven sold in the Richard Winter collection of transatlantic mails when it was auctioned by Schuyler Rumsey on February 4, 2013. I have scans of three others that Winter owned as well as his census

**TABLE 1: TRANSATLANTIC COVERS CARRIED BY THE STEAMSHIP UNITED STATES: 1848-49**

Date	Voyage	From/to	Notes
4/6/48		Baltimore/Liverpool	
4/8/48	1st	New York, Carpentras, France	"p United States" (upper left)
4/8/48		New York/Francomont, Belgium	"p United States" (upper left)
4/8/48		New York/Leghorn, Tuscany	Figure 1
5/15/48	1st Return	London/Providence, R.I.	"Steamship/United States"
5/15/48		Liverpool/not known	Zimmerman sale 3/74, lot 584
5/16/48		London/Petersburg, Va.	Figure 2
6/6/48	2nd	Philadelphia/Cognac, France	"Steamer United States"(top)
6/9/48		New York/Francomont, Belgium	Figure 3
6/10/48		New York/Cognac, France	"Steamer United States/for Havre"
6/10/48	2nd Return	Havre/not known	Zimmerman sale 3/74, lot 585
7/24/48	3rd	New York/London	"p United States" (top)
7/24/48		Philadelphia/Cognac, France	"Steamer United States"
8/1/48		New York/Cognac, France	
8/2/48		Philadelphia/Sondershausen, Ger.	Figure 4
8/5/48		New York/Cognac, France	"United States" (upper right)
8/5/48		New York/Cognac, France	"Steamer United States" (upper left)
8/30/48	3rd Return	Geneva, Switz./Middletown, Ct.	
1/7/49	4th Return	Paris/Beardstown, Tenn.	"Par le United States"

**TABLE 2. SAILING DATA FOR S.S. UNITED STATES, 1848-49**

DEP		ARRIVE		DEPART			ARR	NOTES
NY	LP	SO	HA	LP	HA	SO	NY	
8 Apr 48	22 Apr	-	-	17 May	-	-	31 May	
10 Jun 48	-	23 Jun	24 Jun	-	12 Jul	13 Jul	25 Jul	1
5 Aug 48	-	18 Aug	19 Aug	-	2 Sep	12 Oct	26 Oct	2
6 Dec 48	-	-	20 Dec	-	8 Jan	9 Jan	5 Feb	3
31 May 49	16 Jun							4

**NOTES:** 1. After returning from her maiden voyage, *United States* was put on the New York-Southampton-Havre route in hopes it would be more profitable. 2. *United States* left Cowes, Isle of Wight, on 3 September, but returned to Southampton on 5 September having developed machinery damage off the Scilly Isles. Her repairs were completed and she sailed again from Southampton on 12 October. 3. *United States* put into Halifax for coal, having faced a succession of westerly gales on her Atlantic crossing. She resumed her voyage from Halifax on 3 February. 4. *United States* sailed for Liverpool to be renamed *Hansa* and serve in the Deutsche Reichsflotte. After complete economic failure of this command, she was bought by W.A. Fritze & Co. and made several voyages from Bremen to New York for that company as a mail steamer.



of known surviving covers carried by *United States*. Table 1 presents his census. It shows the 19 covers recorded to have been carried across the Atlantic (either way) by the *United States*. Table 2 presents sailing data for the *United States* (1848-49) in the familiar Hubbard-Winter format.

The *United States* departed New York on her maiden transatlantic voyage bound for Liverpool on April 8, 1848. She carried 46 passengers paying fares of around \$120 each. The \$5,500 so derived, plus whatever freight income was received, could hardly have paid for the 34 crew members and the coal consumed, estimated at 48 tons per day. The voyage was uneventful but slow—at an average speed of 9.3 knots, probably because of a fouled bottom. Copper was installed at the dock in Liverpool after arrival on 22 April. Passage time was 13 days and 20 hours.

The cover shown in Figure 1 was carried on this first crossing. Its dateline reads “New York, April 4” and the addressee is a company in Leghorn (Livorno), Tuscany. The writer penned the directive “Stmr United States 8th April” at top. An almost indistinct pencil “25” written just below the box hand-stamp “Detained for Postage” with “No 12099” indicates a prepaid freight-money fee. It must be remembered that this ship was not on contract with the Post Office Department, so there are no New York postal markings. The letter would have been put in the ship’s letter-bag when the 25¢ freight money was paid. There are back-stamps “Liverpool Ship/22 April 1848” and “London 4.23.” Once in London the letter was held for payment of foreign transit fees of 2/1 (2d more than required) for carriage through France and the Kingdom of Sardinia at Boulogne (per the black double-circle French transit marking at lower left). The lightly applied manuscript marking that covers much of the center of the cover calls for 12 crazie postage due in Leghorn. Winter’s album page reads “Rare freight money cover from New York showing fee payment and rare steamship voyage.” Amen. Four covers are known to have been carried eastbound on this voyage (see Table 1).



**Figure 1. Maiden voyage:** Carried across the Atlantic on the first crossing of the *United States*, this cover is datelined New York, April 4, 1848, and addressed to Leghorn (Livorno) in Tuscany. The *United States* had no mail contract, so this cover shows no New York postal markings. It was carried as a freight money cover (faint pencil “25” above the address at left) and put into the British mails at Liverpool.



**Figure 2. First return voyage: Dated London, May 17, 1848 and addressed to Petersburg, Virginia. The endorsement at lower left reads "per 'United States' steamer from L'pool." New York arrival May 31; 12¢ was collected from recipient in Virginia.**

The cover shown in Figure 2 was carried on the westbound maiden voyage of *United States*. The dateline of the letter reads "London May 17, 1848." The addressee is in Petersburg, Virginia, and there is a directive "pr 'United States' steamer from L'pool." The cover was placed in the mail in the Fenchurch Street postal station (indistinct straight-line handstamp above "Robert.") The red manuscript "1/-" shows pre-payment of a shilling, the so-called discriminatory rate established in 1847. This rate was intended to be assessed on contract American packet vessels. As I have said, the *United States* was never a contract mail carrier so the fee was probably assessed (and paid) in error; perhaps because of the "per United States" directive. *United States* departed Liverpool on May 17 (affirmed by the black diamond handstamp at lower left) and arrived in New York May 31 with 12¢ postage due at Petersburg (2¢ ship fee and 10¢ domestic postage for a distance over 300 miles). Winter's album page says this cover was the only non-contract steamship cover showing the discriminatory rate that he had ever seen. Three covers are known to have been carried on this voyage.

The date-line within the cover shown in Figure 3 reads "New York, June 9, 1848" so it was carried on the second eastbound voyage made by the *United States*. There is the usual steamship directive ("p United States") and a "25" in pencil indicating payment of the 25¢ freight money fee. The double circle red handstamp indicates the ship's arrival at Havre on June 24. A green handstamp on the back indicates arrival in Belgium at Quievrain on a railroad; and another, in red, arrival at Verviers and Francmont on June 26. The French post office marked the letter 16 decimes postage due (for a letter under 7½ grams, so marked at upper left) in Francmont consisting of 10 decimes due to France and 6 decimes to Belgium. Three covers are known to have been carried on this voyage.

I will finish up with the cover shown as Figure 4, which was carried by the *United States* on its third eastbound voyage, New York to Havre, and then on to Germany by rail. The letter within was written and posted in Philadelphia where the inland fee to New York of 5¢ (blue circular datestamp with integral 5) was shown PAID by a double line octagonal handstamp. The New York postmaster put the letter on *United States* as a ship letter. She



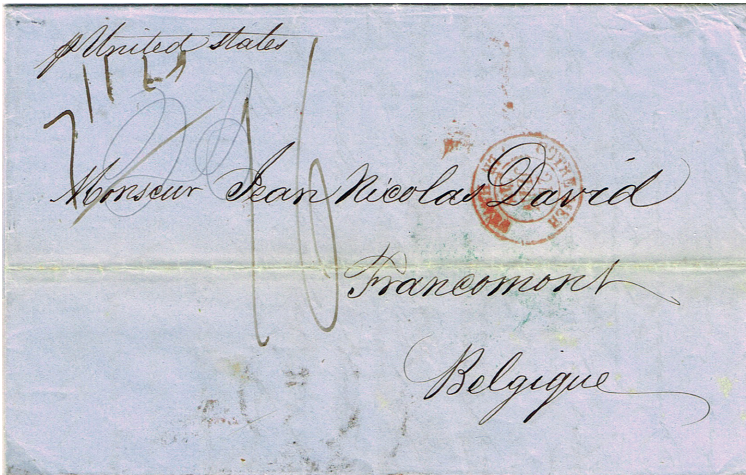


Figure 3. From the second eastbound voyage of the *United States*, this cover is dated "New York, June 9, 1848" and endorsed (at upper left) "p. United States." Sent to Belgium via France. Three covers are recorded from this voyage.



Figure 4. From the third eastbound voyage of the *United States*: cover posted at Philadelphia on 2 August 1848 and sent to Sondershausen in Thuringia.

arrived at Havre on August 19 and the letter was put on a railroad to Paris. It arrived at Sondershausen, in Thuringia, on August 25, 1848. For their part, the French were owed 10 decimes under the Prussian-French Postal Convention. This was equivalent to 8½ silbergroschen (manuscript "8½" in red). Prussia added a 5 sgr. transit fee (red crayon "5") and marked 13½ sgr. due at destination.

There you have it. Interesting covers carried by a short-lived, non-contract, American-flag steamship. I wish to tip my hat to Dick Winter, the dean of maritime postal history and so much else, for his contributions to what is written here. Additional covers to add to the record would be most welcome.

#### Endnote

1. "U.S. Transatlantic Steamship Lines that Failed," *Chronicle* 254, pp. 184-203. ■

**CATALOG OF PRIVATE EXPRESS COVERS, LABELS AND STAMPS,  
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REVIEWED BY JOHN D. BOWMAN

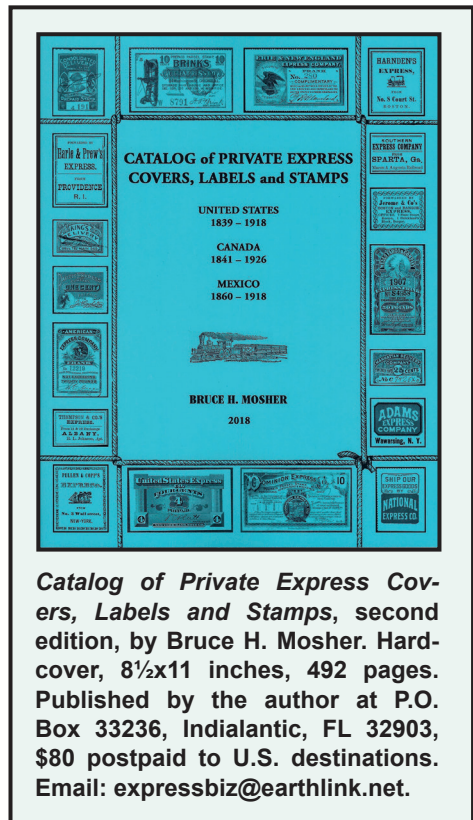
In *Chronicle* 196, Gordon Stimmell reviewed the innovative *Catalog of Private Express Labels and Stamps* by Bruce H. Mosher. That was in 2002. Fast forward to 2018, and Mosher’s second edition has now been published. At 492 pages, the new version is more than twice the size of the original, a “must have” for collectors interested in those colorful express company labels and fascinating preprinted covers that can be found in dealer stocks at nearly all major stamp shows.

The author’s criteria for inclusion in this edition are broad: the presence in company imprints of one of the words “express,” “delivery,” or “messenger” (plus related terms).

Mosher’s extensive original research is evident throughout, with references provided from city directories, newspapers, philatelic literature, auction sales, collector input, and even G.H. Grinnell’s collection notes. Extensive cross-referencing is invaluable. One example is a table comparing Mosher’s listing of New Jersey Express Co. corner card envelopes with Elliott Perry’s types and those identified by Larry Lyons and myself in a 2002 article (Mosher points out an error we made).

Also noted are phantom and bogus labels that resemble express or parcel labels, and identification guides where needed. The British North America section has doubled in size, and a section on Mexican express labels is new to this edition and includes the Wells Fargo offices in Mexico. Among the most notable additions is a new 111-page section which lists and illustrates over 800 express covers that exhibit express-related corner cards. Mosher excludes areas that have been well-covered already, such as printed prepaid frank covers from private express companies (Wells Fargo, for example).

In summary, thousands of newly uncovered North American express items are included in this second edition catalog, destined to be the leading reference on this topic for many years to come. ■



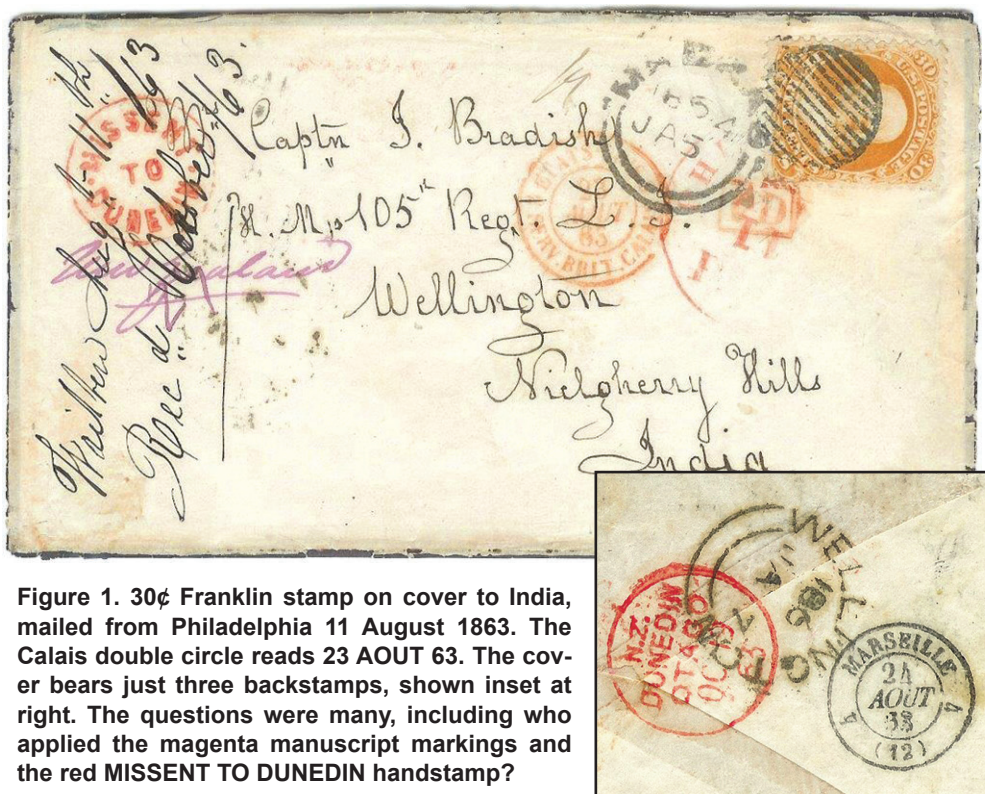
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### EXPLANATION OF PROBLEM COVER IN CHRONICLE 260

Our problem cover from *Chronicle 260*, shown (with backstamps) in Figure 1, was submitted by John Barwis, who once owned it. Originating from Philadelphia in 1863 and appropriately franked with a 30¢ Franklin stamp (Scott 71), the cover is addressed to Wellington, India but somehow veered thousands of miles off course along the way.

First I must offer an apology to Barwis. Due to my error the year date of the original mailing from Philadelphia was improperly transcribed. The error was carried forward with each subsequent postal marking. To further compound the problem I described the circular marking in red at the upper left as “MISSENT TO QUEENSLAND”. In point of fact that marking clearly reads “MISSENT TO DUNEDIN”—as was pointed out by all who responded. These errors made solving the problem more difficult, but not impossible.



**Figure 1.** 30¢ Franklin stamp on cover to India, mailed from Philadelphia 11 August 1863. The Calais double circle reads 23 AOUT 63. The cover bears just three backstamps, shown inset at right. The questions were many, including who applied the magenta manuscript markings and the red MISSENT TO DUNEDIN handstamp?

Labron Harris was the first to catch the mistakes. His interpretation of how events unfolded is as follows: “The name ‘Wellington’ in the address confused the postal clerk handling the mail. He erroneously routed it to New Zealand where, upon arriving at the port city of Dunedin, it was marked ‘MISSENT’ and forwarded on to India with a Dunedin transit mark on the back.”

Our frequent Australian contributor Geoffrey Lewis provided a more detailed version. According to Lewis the French entry mark indicates that the letter was carried across the Atlantic by a British steamer that entered France at Calais. Specifically, it was carried by the British Cunard steamer *Scotia*, which left New York on August 12, 1863. When it arrived in France, the letter was routed by British steamers to the more-familiar Wellington in New Zealand, even though it was clearly addressed to the Wellington in India. Lewis agreed with Harris that the “MISSENT” marking is inscribed “DUNEDIN”—which he pointed out is consistent with the Dunedin backstamp.

Swedish resident Anders Olason is in general agreement with Harris and Lewis, but added more details including an explanation of the U.S. credit to France and what we believe is the correct interpretation of the manuscript “27” and the source of the manuscript “New Zealand” marking.

This cover was intended to travel via French mail to India and was sent at the 30¢ per-quarter-ounce rate effective April 1, 1857 through December 31, 1869 under terms of the U.S.-French postal treaty. On such covers the United States retained 3¢ domestic postage and credited 27¢ for carriage beyond the U.S. This credit was then shared by the onward carriers according to the duties they performed.

Here follows a mildly edited version of Olason’s analysis:

The letter is posted from Philadelphia Aug 11, 1863. One problem is the postal rate. Lot 1199 in the Donald Richardson collection of U.S. postal rates 1851-63 (Schuyler Rumsey sale, December 2015) contained a similar French-mail cover to India, to the same addressee, dated April 1861. Philadelphia apparently lacked a “27” handstamp, because on the Richardson cover too the 27¢ U.S. credit was expressed in magenta manuscript. From that evidence we can deduce that the magenta “27” on the problem cover, as well as the matching magenta “New Zealand,” were both applied at the Philadelphia exchange office. Though the cover was clearly addressed to India, the Philadelphia clerk did not recognize Wellington in the Nilgiri Hills in the Madras Province. But he knew Wellington, New Zealand, adding the mistaken magenta notation at left and underscoring it for emphasis.

The cover travelled via Great Britain, entering France at Calais on August 23, 1863 and arriving Marseille the next day. My guess is it started to go in the wrong direction here at Marseille, mis-bagged by a French postal clerk who was understandably led astray by the “New Zealand” notation. Posts to India were sent via Egypt to Bombay or Calcutta. Mail to New Zealand could go the same way initially, but via Galle, Ceylon, and then on to the destination. Depending on the destination the mail would be sorted into different pouches. New Zealand was included with Australia mail, which never landed in India.

The cover reached Dunedin, Otago Bay, New Zealand on October 19, 1863. A clerk there recognized the mistake, marked the letter “Missent to Dunedin” at upper left, and forwarded it on to India, where it finally arrived in Madras January 5, 1864, and then on to Wellington, where it was received January 7.

Barwis, the former owner of the cover, filled in details of the transit beyond Marseille. Based on the backstamp, he determined that the letter departed Marseilles August 28, 1863 aboard the Peninsular and Oriental (P&O) steamer *Euxine* which arrived in Alexandria, September 4. From there, it was sent out via the P&O steamer *Bengal* to the port city Galle in the then-British colony of Ceylon, where it arrived September 20. It departed the same day by way of the P&O steamer *Madras* and arrived in Melbourne 21 days later. From there it was a two-day transit to Sydney and then on to New Zealand where the rare (only three recorded) “MISSENT TO DUNEDIN” marking was applied.

These added facts confirm both Lewis and Olason’s assertion that this letter was mistakenly sorted to the wrong mail pouch before it left France, based on the misleading “New Zealand” notation that had been applied at Philadelphia. Those errors set in motion an odyssey that took the cover on a 10,000-mile detour before it reached its addressee! It’s ironic that the letter was actually within 1,000 miles of the correct town of Wellington when the *Bengal* made port in Galle. This was excellent detective work by three contributors with the addition of key elements provided by the former owner. Thanks to all!



## PROBLEM COVER FOR THIS ISSUE

Having achieved excellent response with a foreign-mail cover to the East Indies, we'll double down with another. Our problem cover for this issue, shown in Figure 2, was once in the famous Leonard Kapiloff collection. This remarkable cover, franked with a seldom-seen combination of 6¢ and 30¢ 1869 stamps, was mailed from Hampton, New Hampshire on October 4 (1870) and is addressed to Anjer, Java, in the Dutch East Indies.



**Figure 2.** Cover from Hampton, New Hampshire, franked with 6¢ and 30¢ 1869 stamps and sent to Anjer, Java, Dutch East Indies. Date of mailing is October 4, 1870. The cover bears the sender's directive "Via Marseilles" along with New York and London transit markings. The cover appears to bear two credit markings: a red crayon "32" and a red handstamped "12½ CENTS". The challenge is to explain the rate and markings.

The sender's directive in the upper left is "Via Marseilles." Other postal markings on the front of the cover include a red New York foreign-mail datestamp ("OCT 5") and a red London "PAID" marking dated October 17. There is also a 12½ CENTS credit marking in red and a manuscript "32." The only marking on the reverse is a receiving backstamp.

The questions relate to the two credit markings. Where were they applied and what do they represent? Extra points will be given for background information about the specific mail services and ships involved, with an added bonus for observations on historical aspects of the destination and the addressee. ■

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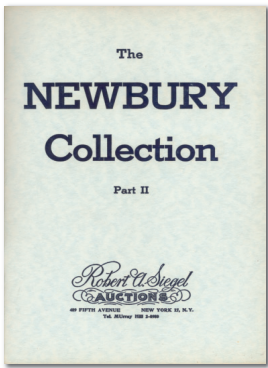
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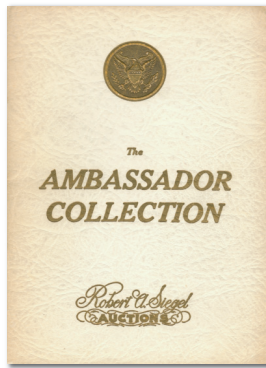
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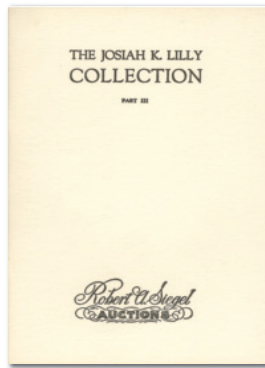
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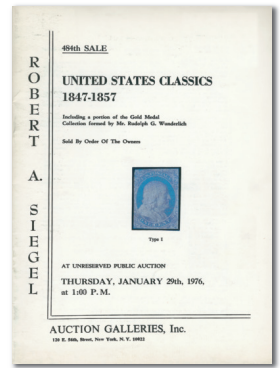
Newbury 1961



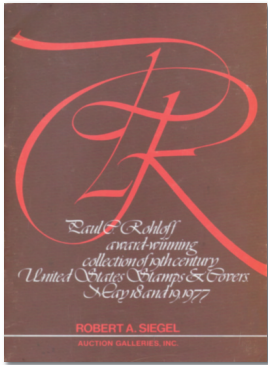
Ambassador 1966



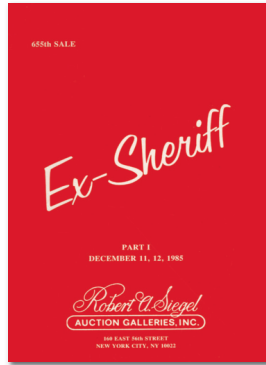
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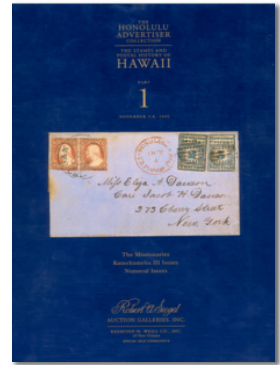
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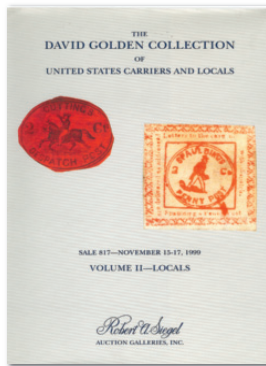
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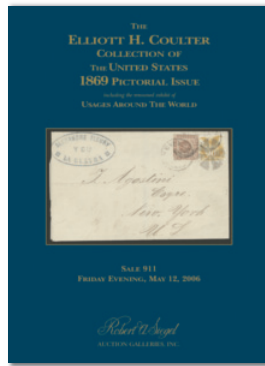
Honolulu Advertiser 1995



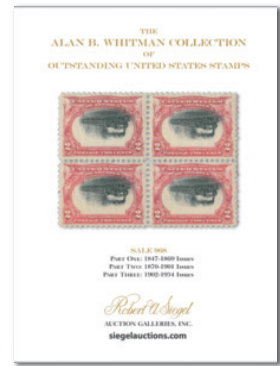
Zoellner 1998



Golden 1999



Coulter 2006



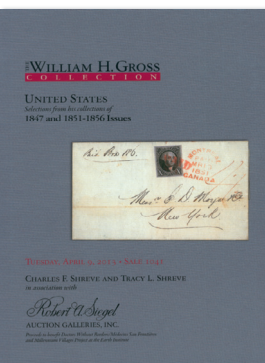
Whitman 2009



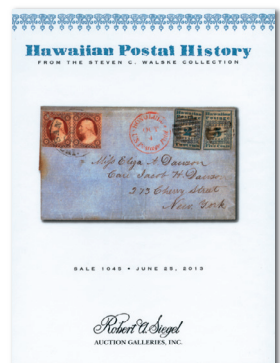
Twigg-Smith 2009



Frelinghuysen 2012



Gross 2013



Walske 2013

Great collections have ONE NAME in common.