

Stamps that are canceled or killed prior to being applied to a letter or circular and usually prior to being taken to the post office are known as precanceled stamps. This practice was first used in volume with the issue of 1851, most often on circulars and newspapers.



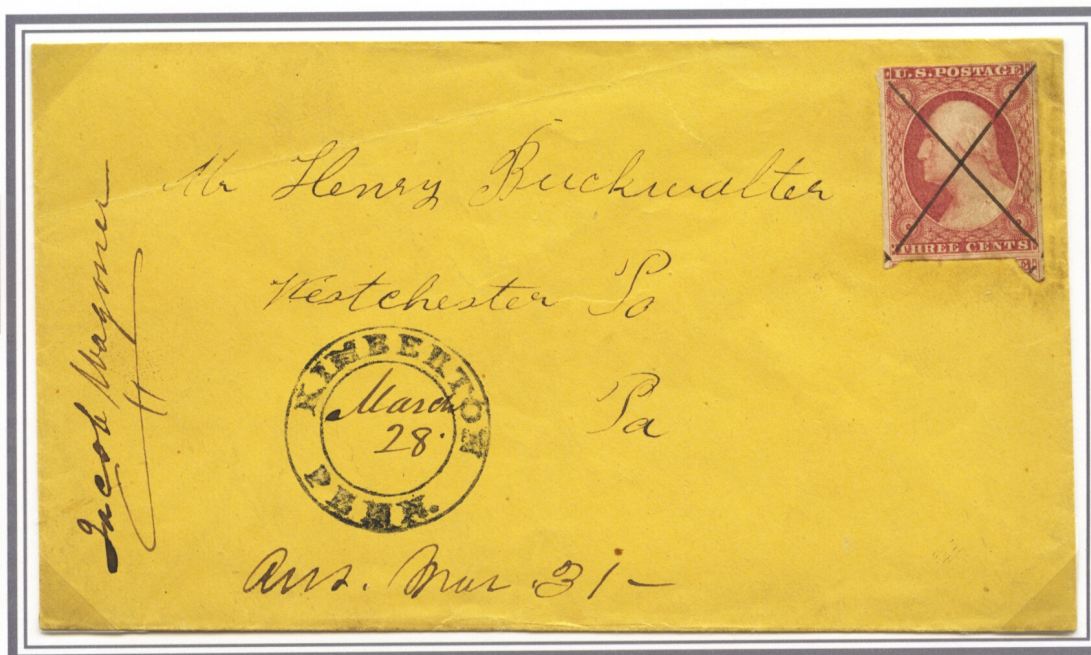
Pair of 1 cent type IV stamps on wrapper with 'PAID' and 'paid' precancels used to mail a newspaper, the 2 February 1857 American Eagle, to a subscriber. This piece is the discovery copy that proved the source of these precancels is Cleveland OH.

The font used matches that used to print the newspaper. They probably printed a sheet at a time on their press.



2X

Cover from Kimberton PA to West Chester PA. Stamp precanceled with pen. The stamp contains part of the stamp below it which shows the precancel lines extending to the additional stamps. Stamp is yellow rose red.



Forwarded by the Post Office

Letters that were forwarded to a different post office, due to the recipient's needs, were charged the same rate as if the mail originated at the forwarding post office. If it was a post office error no additional fee was charge. During part of the period forwarding with a stamp saved 2 cents.

Forwarded Free

December 1856 drop letter
to sitting congressman,
forwarded free to
Washington DC.

'Circular' in upper left
corner but envelope sealed;
addressed to town of origin
thus a drop letter.



Twice forwarded with a stamp saving 4 cents



Twice forwarded paid with stamps.
Three orange brown stamps from
three different plates.

Folded address sheet from Halifax
NC to Baltimore MD. It was
forwarded to Norfolk VA and then
to Edenton NC.

Positions 61R1^E, 72R1^E and 27L2^E

Mixed Franking from a Foreign Country

British Open Mail via British Packet from Sardinia



May 1857 cover from Spezia, Sardinia to Newark NJ. Forwarded to Chester PA. The letter was posted in Spezia where the letter was rated a single rate of up to 7 1/2 grams. The 'PD' handstamp was applied to indicate that the letter was fully paid to the US. This rate was effective 1 May 1857 the date of this letter. Three cent claret stamp applied with sealing wax and prepaes the forwarding to Chester PA. The US rate of 3 cents applied since, while over 7 1/2 grams and thus double rate in France, it was under 1/2 ounce and single rate in the United States.

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Ship letter from Havre France

US stamps pay captain's fee, over 3,000 mile rate and under 300 mile forwarding.

January 1856 folded letter to San Francisco CA. Sixty centimes in French postage paid the rate to the port of departure. From Havre the letter went to New York on New York & Havre Line steamer *Union* where it was charged 12 cents, 10 cents over 3,000 miles to California and 2 cents captain's fee.

In San Francisco 12 cents in stamps were applied to pay the 12 cents due. A fifth stamp was applied to forward the letter to Park Bar in Yuba County.

All stamps from the same strip
Stamps positions 67-70L3 for the strip and 66L3 for the single stamp.



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Forwarded to Destination by the Military

To a deployed ship in Hong Kong by the Lyceum

The Naval Lyceum served as a forwarding point for mail sent to deployed ships. Mail was sent to the Lyceum via the post office. The lyceum applied the oval handstamp depicting a full-rigged ship. This service was provided free to the sailors. Since ships were often underway moving from place to place this enabled mail to be addressed to an individual without knowing where the ship was or was going to be.



March 1852 cover from Winthrop ME to the US Ship Saratoga via the Naval Lyceum in Brooklyn NY.

This letter was forwarded to the Saratoga in Hong Kong by Coal Ship Gertrude / Macao where it was received 5 January 1853. The Saratoga was part of the East India Squadron.

To Fort Yuma CA by the Colorado Steam Navigation Company

Letters were sent to San Francisco and then carried on a military supply route by the Colorado Steam Navigation Company from San Francisco south around Baja California and up the Gulf of California to Port Isabel near the mouth of the Colorado River. There, cargo and mail were transferred to river steamers and brought upstream to Yuma.

Cover from Philadelphia PA to San Francisco CA via New York and the Isthmus of Panama. The letter was placed in post office box 771 for the Army Quartermaster Major Cross in San Francisco. Manuscript notation on the envelope '771' for the post office box has been partially erased.

One of two covers recorded carried by the military to Fort Yuma.



Unofficial Registration

Some postmasters created informal systems to track letters containing valuables.



Cover from Detroit MI to New York.

Registration Under Postage Act of March 1855

Created a standard system for registration. 5 cents to be paid in cash and no markings to indicate that the letter was a registered letter. The fee could not be paid by stamps.



Cover from Greencastle PA to Princeton NJ. 5 cents paid for registration. Faint manuscript 'No 36' on the left side of the envelope. 3 cent stamp type II.

Envelopes Create A Canvas for Visual Communications

As envelopes became more popular, and more letters were sent prepaid, the large unused area on the envelope became a canvas for messages of all sorts from political expression to artistic whimsey to commercial advertising.

British Design

Peace and Free Trade

Cover from Oberlin OH to
Indianapolis IN.
Blue town postmark.
The envelope was created by
J. Valentine of Dundee.
Stamp dull red.



French Design

Smoking Caricature



Cover from Hartford
CT to Union CT. French
caricature Les Fumeurs.
Stamp dull red type II.

Postal Reform



Unsealed cover from New York City to Medina Ohio. Stamp, position 8oLr, pays the circular rate. Barnabas Bates illustrated propaganda cover for cheap inland and ocean postage. He formed the New York Cheap Postage Association which published this envelope.

Entertainment



Cover from Ogdensburgh NY to Boston MA. Stamp type I. Spalding & Rogers were early adaptors of using railroads to move their show from town to town. They employed adjustable axles on their railroad cars to deal with the lack of standards.

Occasionally individuals would use envelopes to create unique folk art.



Cover from West Cambridge MA to New York City. Hand-drawn illustration of Washington driving a horse and wagon with Franklin in the back thumbing his nose at a dog.



Hand painted cover to Cross Creek PA.

To those who traveled to California in search of gold, mail was extremely important. Entrepreneurs supplied illustrated mining envelopes showing scenes from daily life.

Cover from San Francisco
CA to North Scituate RI.

Double weight letter
underpaid. 'DUE 10'
applied in San Francisco.

Illustration on reverse
shown below. The
manufacturer, F. C.
M. Fenn was the
only producer using
illustrations on the back.



Reverse 57% actual size



Cover from
Weaverville CA to
Boston MA.

Design of J. M.
Hutchings.

As businesses moved to envelopes and to paying the postage themselves, they found putting their own marketing material on the envelopes was an effective way to advertise.

Barnum's Museum



New York City drop letter.
Type IV stamp.
Addressed to Asher Durand, engraver of the first United States stamp and member of the Hudson River School of painting.

Manufacturing

Cover from Baltimore MD to Boston MA.



Prosthetics



Cover from Philadelphia PA to London England.

Official Carrier Departments

Mail was traditionally taken to the post office and picked up from the post office. During the late 1840's and into the 1850's major cities were growing rapidly. Private posts and official carrier departments began providing delivery services as the distance to the post office increased and customers wanted more convenient service. Private companies primarily focused on delivery to the post office while the post office provided both delivery to and from the post office. Especially in the West, express companies delivered mail between cities and mining camps. The post office often benefited from these private companies because it did not have the resources to deliver all the services desired.

The U.S.P.O. Despatch stamp, better known as the Eagle Carrier, issued in November 1851 was used principally in Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Washington DC and Kensington PA. These were officially issued by the United States Post Office to pay carrier fees.

Kensington PA



Embossed lady's cover from Kensington to West Chester PA.

Washington DC



August 1853 Cover from Washington DC to Mayville NY.
Carrier stamp canceled with magenta script 'H', carrier Thomas F. Harkness's initial.

Philadelphia PA



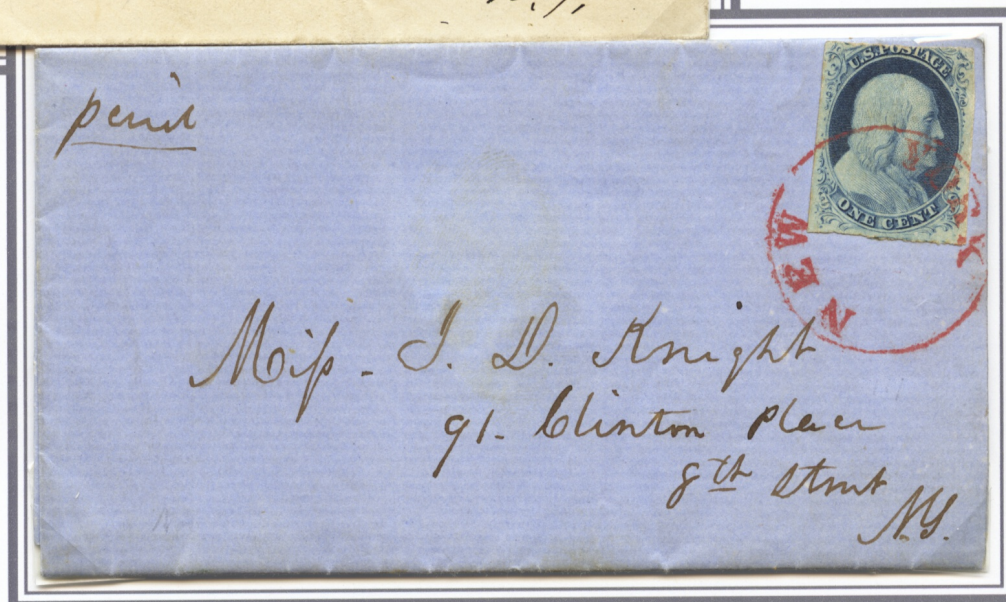
October 1853 cover from Philadelphia PA to Thoroughfare VA.

Cover front from Charleston to New York City. Delivered to the mail in Charleston by Honour's City Post.



Cover mailed in New York City. Three cent stamp overpays the combination of the 1 cent drop and 1 cent carrier fee. Paid 2 cent City Delivery postmark cancels stamp. Stamp position 28L3

November 1853 folded letter mailed in New York City. Carrier delivery to a street address. The red New York postmark was used by the Carrier department.



Official Carrier Departments

In late 1855 or early 1856, the Philadelphia Post Office ran out of the Eagle Carrier stamp. The postmaster created a 'provisional stamp' by hand stamping 'U.S.P.O./PRE-PAID/ONE CENT/DESPATCH' on selvage from 1 cent stamps. Two different handstamps were used. The examples below are the larger handstamp.



'Caspary Copy'

The selvage used for the copy on the left and image on the right show both the Toppan Carpenter imprint and the plate number 1. This copy is struck on selvage between positions 50Rr¹ and 60Rr¹ showing a small portion of the 1 cent design at top.



1.5X

August 1856
folded letter from
Philadelphia PA to
New York City.
Provisional handstamp
on selvage.



Cover from Philadelphia to Waterford NY.
U.S.P.O. Philadelphia 1 cent black carrier.

Less than five recorded carriers on cover with 3 cent 1851 stamp.

Private Posts to the Mails

Grafflin's Baltimore Despatch

Cover from Baltimore to
New Albany IN on Star
Route 5032 to Cincinnati.
Albino embossed
chemist's corner card.



Russell 8th Ave. New York



Cover from New York
City to Bloomfield NJ.
Russell 8th Avenue local
pays carrier fee to the
post office.

Moody's Penny Dispatch Chicago

September 1858 cover from
Chicago to Dover NH.

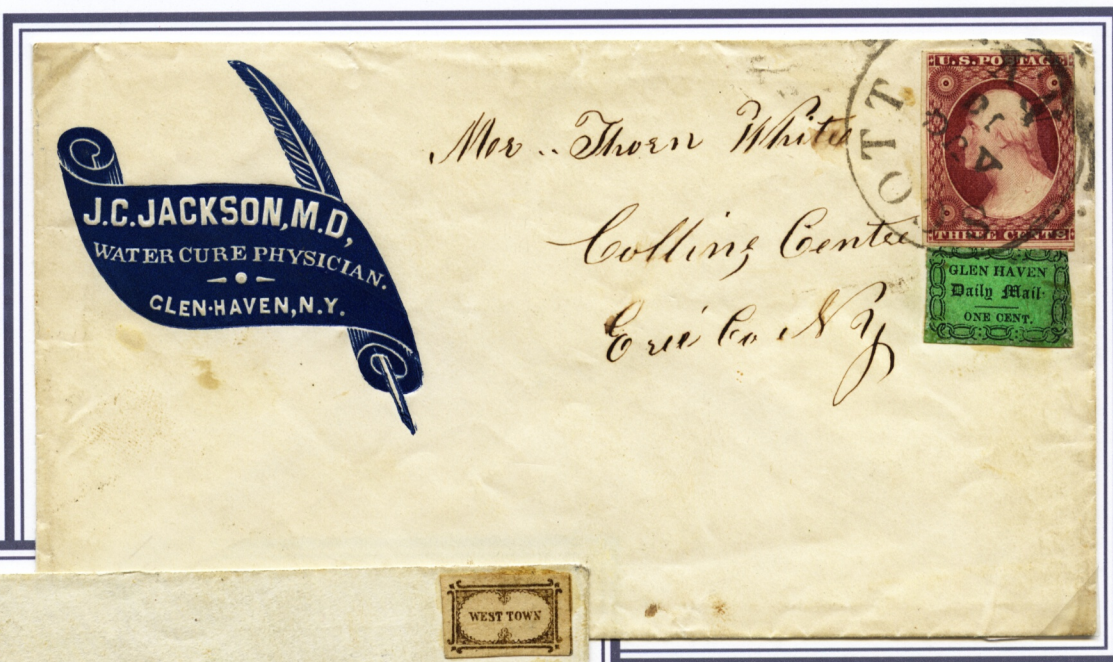


Remotely located communities, such as resorts, schools or villages without post offices occasionally provided mail delivery service to the closest available post office. In some cases they sold their own stamps.

Glen Haven Resort

Glen Haven (a 'water cure' resort) Daily Mail local paid to carry the letter to the town of Scott NY where it entered the mails.

Cover from Glen Haven to Collins Center NY.



Westtown School

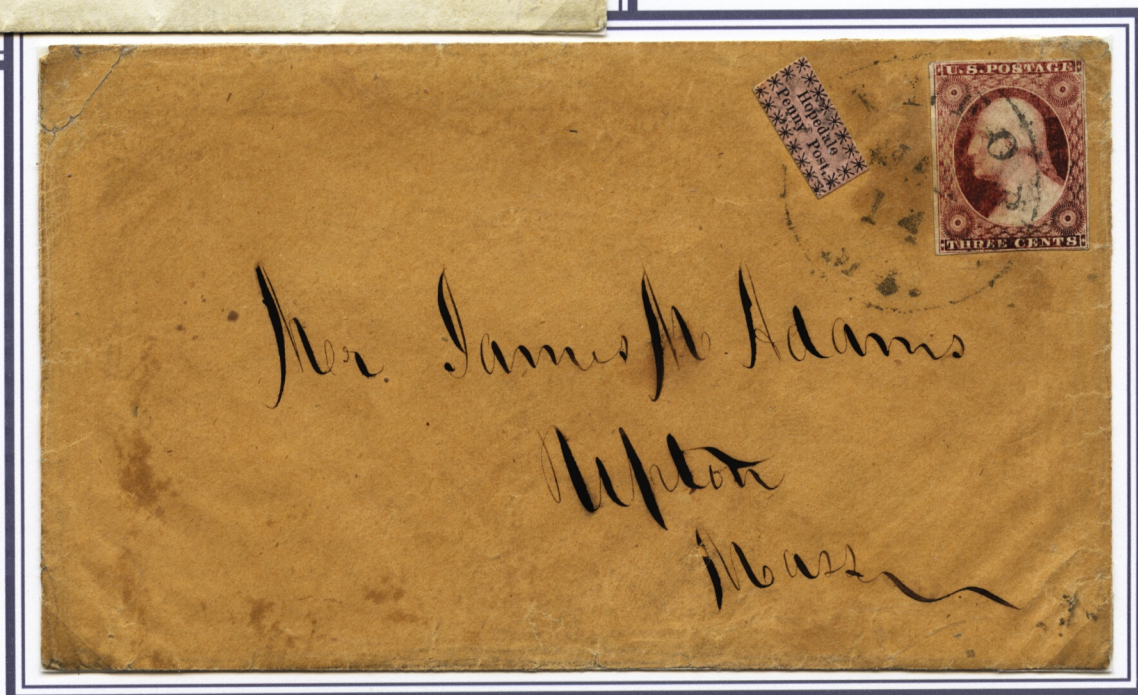
The Westtown School, established in 1799 by the Society of Friends, is the oldest secondary school in the United States and is still in operation.

The Westtown local provided delivery from the Westtown School to the town of Westchester PA. Drop letter from Westtown to Westchester PA.

Hopedale Community

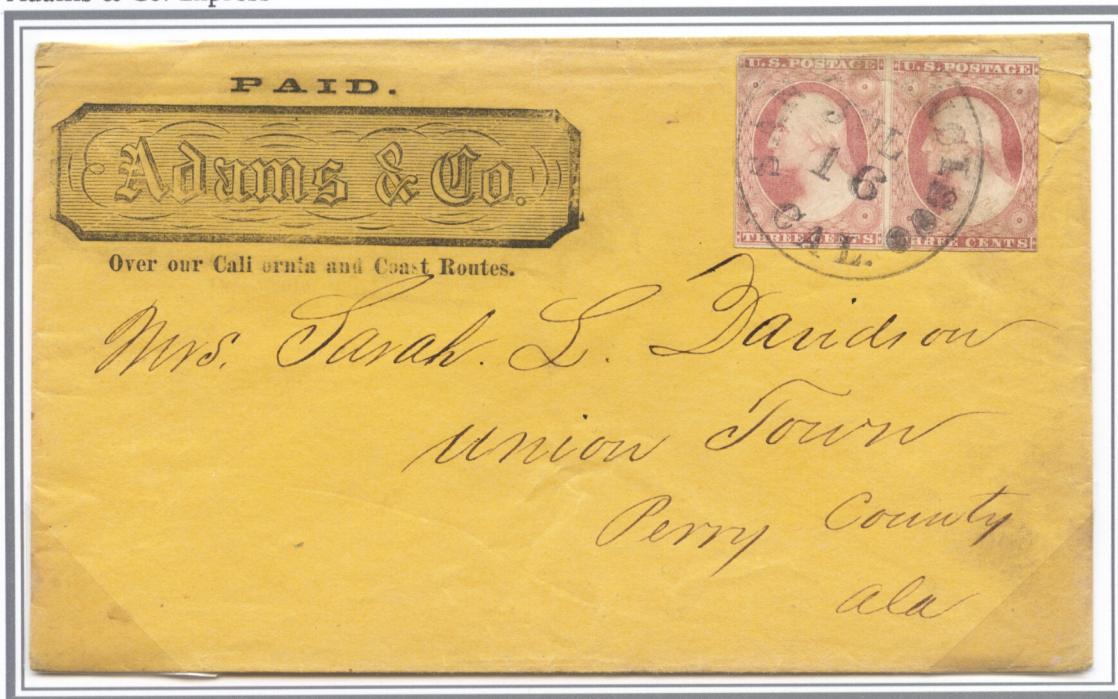
The Hopedale Community, founded in 1842, was organized as a utopian socialist commune. In 1849 residents established regular transportation of the mail to the closest town with a post office - Milford MA. This service continued until Hopedale had their own post office.

Cover from Milford to Upton MA. Local paid delivery fee to the Milford post office.



Private express companies delivered mails between Western mining towns and the US Post Office in larger cities such as San Francisco. A synergistic relationship developed between the Post Office and the private expresses that lasted until the post office had infrastructure to support the many small towns. The law required proper postage for the entire distance regardless of whether or not the letter entered the mails.

Adams & Co. Express



January 1855 cover to Union Town AL. Adams & Co. carried the letter to San Francisco. The letter entered the mail in San Francisco and traveled to Panama on the Golden Gate and then from Aspinwall to NYC on the Illinois.

One of two recorded examples of the Adams & Co. printed frank with postage stamps.

This is the earliest use of a frank printed on envelopes to allow using these envelopes for pre-payment and deposited in collection boxes outside of normal business hours.

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Pacific Express

January 1856 cover from Auburn CA to Barnard VT. Carried out of the mail from Auburn to Sacramento and then to San Francisco. Carried on the Nicaragua Route to New York City where it entered the mail. Two cent overpayment.

The letter carried completely outside the mail by the Pacific Express company until it entered the mail in New York.



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