

Wafers Seals on U.S. Folded Letters & Covers, 1840 - 1860's

When writing letters was primarily reserved for Royalty, the custom was to seal letters with wax using a hand-held, wooden & brass sealer (Figure 1). In England after 1635, when the Post Office was no longer serving only the Royalty, the upper classes took up that sealing method ^{1,2}.



Figure 1. Hand-held, wooden & brass Wax Sealer and representative red wax seals.

Eventually, transparent motto wafer seals were developed as a solution to sealing letters (Figure 2). They were small, symmetrically-shaped pieces of colored paper, gummed on the reverse. Initially popular in Britain, they depicted a wide array of images, initials, mottos, phrases and scenery (Figure 3). They eventually made their way to the United States in the late 1830's.

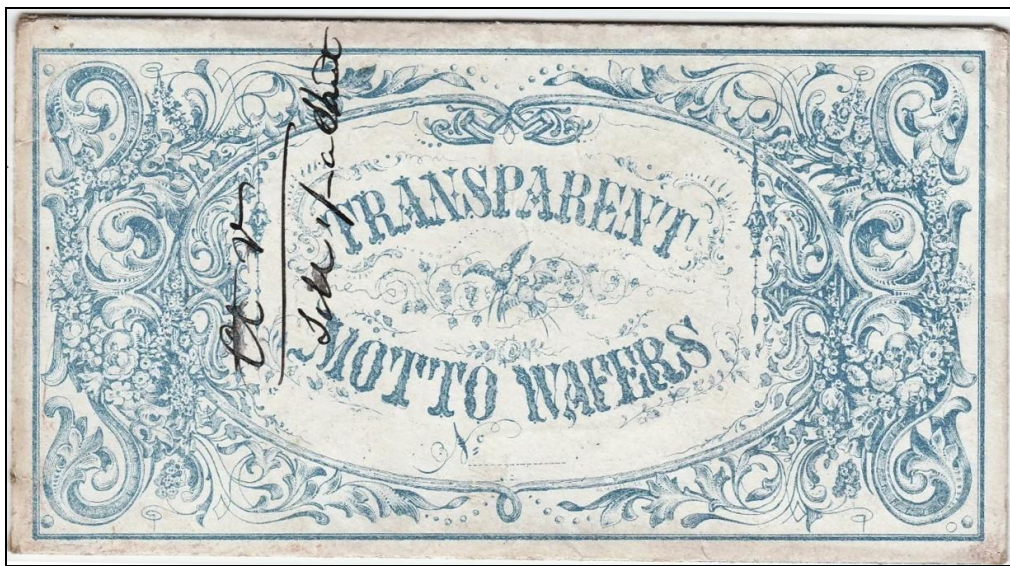


Figure 2. Transparent Motto Wafers Envelope which held sheets of Wafer Seals.

At the Great Exposition of 1851, De la Rue demonstrated a practical envelope-making machine that could simultaneously fold and gum. It was this availability of gummed envelopes that eliminated the need for wafer seals – however use continued until the 1860's.

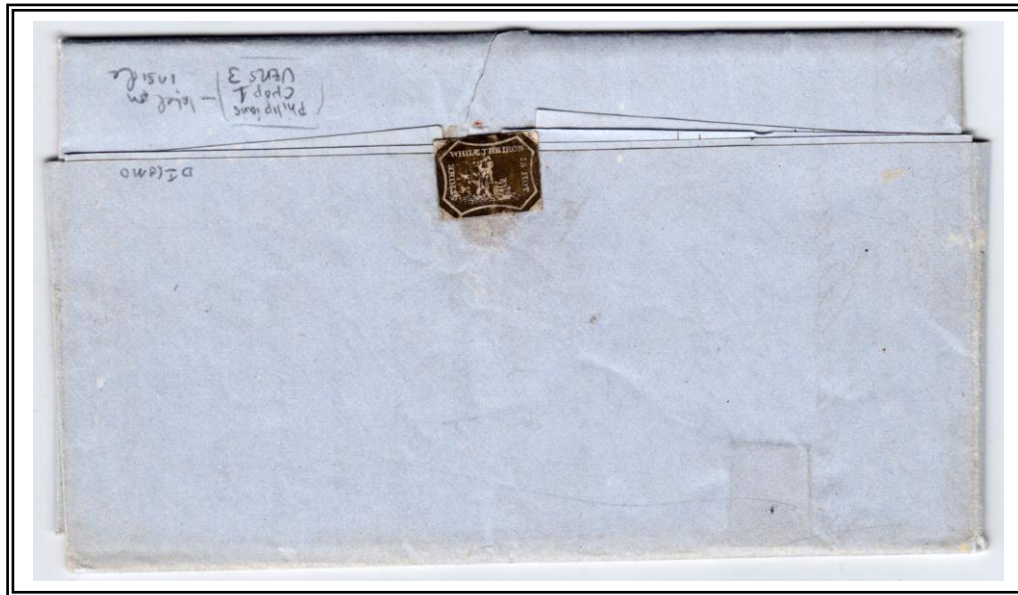
This Single-Frame Exhibit endeavors to illustrate an assortment of these wafer seals utilized in the United States from the 1840's through to the 1860's.



Fig. 3. Partial Sheet of Wafer Seals.

¹ "Early Wafer Seals", by Arthur H. Groten, MD, *The American Stamp Dealer & Collector*, pp.46-6, March 2009.

² "Wafer Seals in the Service of Political Activism", by Arthur H. Groten, MD, *The American Stamp Dealer & Collector*, pp. 52-4, January 2012.



“Strike While The Iron Is Hot” on reverse of 128 x 73 mm Folded Letter Sheet, 25 MAY 1847.
Stampless ms. “5” cents rate - Whitefield, NH to “Ms. Jonathan Ross, St. Johnsbury, VT”.

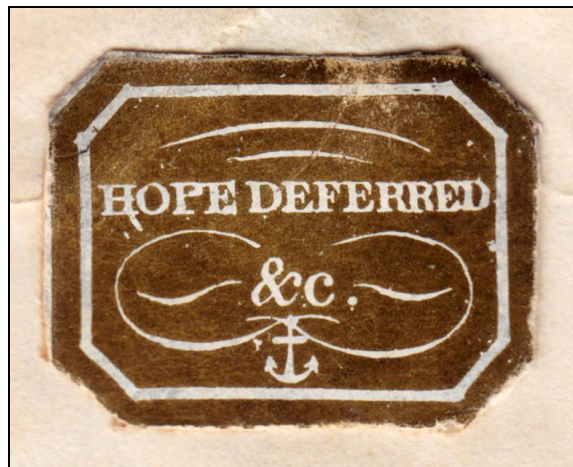


“PHILIPPIANS, Chapt. 1 Verse 3.” wafer seal.
Affixed to letter interior below sender’s signature.





“Hope Deferred &c.” with Anchor on reverse of 137 x 70 mm envelope, 10 MAY 1849. Stampless “V” (5¢ rate) from Willimantic, CT to “Rev. Daniel P. Noyes, South Andover, Mass”.

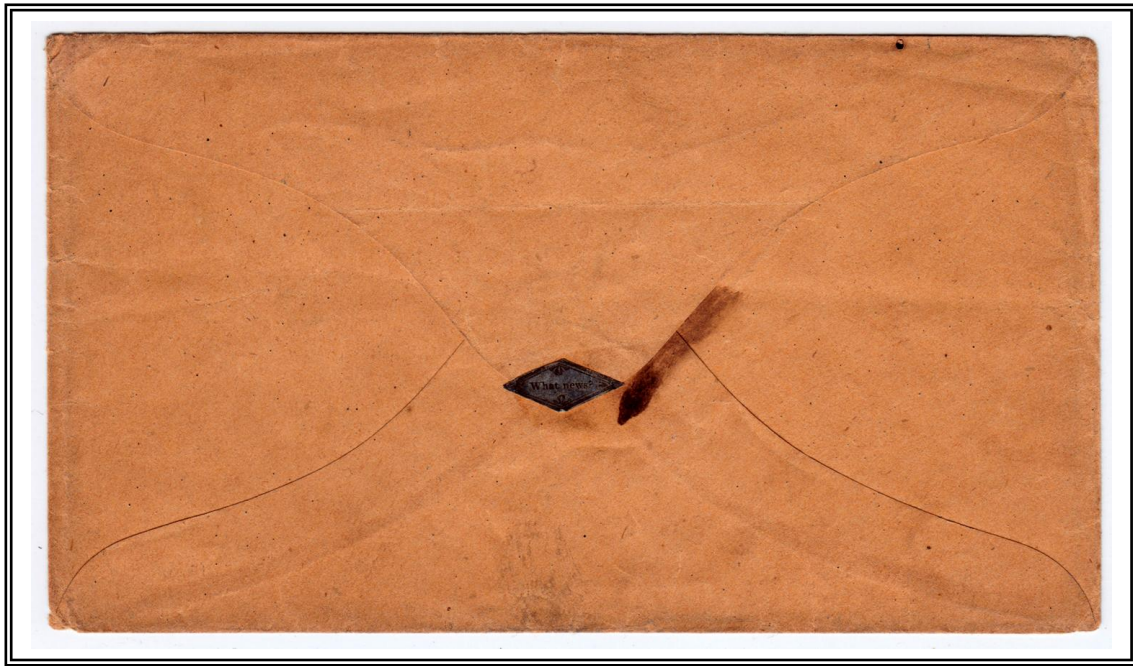


Red “WILLIMANTIC 10 MAY CT.” CDS + large hollow “V”, in S. Andover forwarded. Clerk struck red “ANDOVER MAY 11 Ms.” CDS + large “10”, ms. “Forwd” + “5”, to Brooklyn, N.Y., blue crayon “1849”.

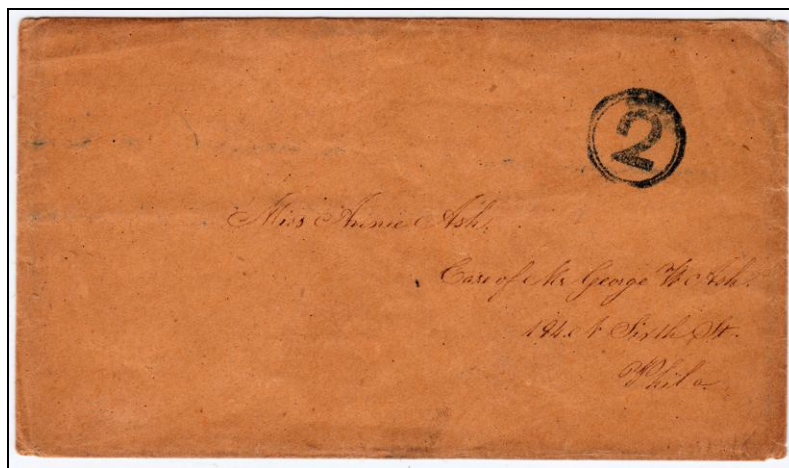


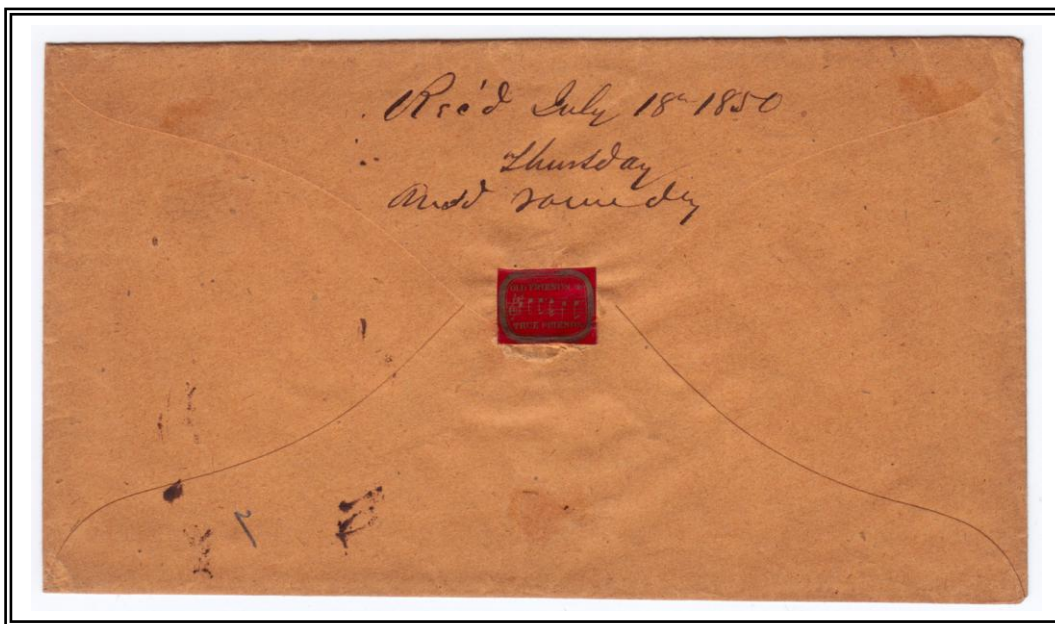
“Forget Me Not” on reverse of 125 x 72 mm Folded Letter Sheet, 1 NOV 1848.
Stampless **“5 cts.”** rate from New York City to *“Miss Mary E. Washburn, Lyme, New Hampshire”*.





“What news?” on reverse of 143 x 82 mm envelope, ca. 1847-1851.
 Stampless “Drop Rate” blue, double-circle “2” (Phila.) to *“Miss Annie Ash, 194 N. Sixth St. Phila.”*



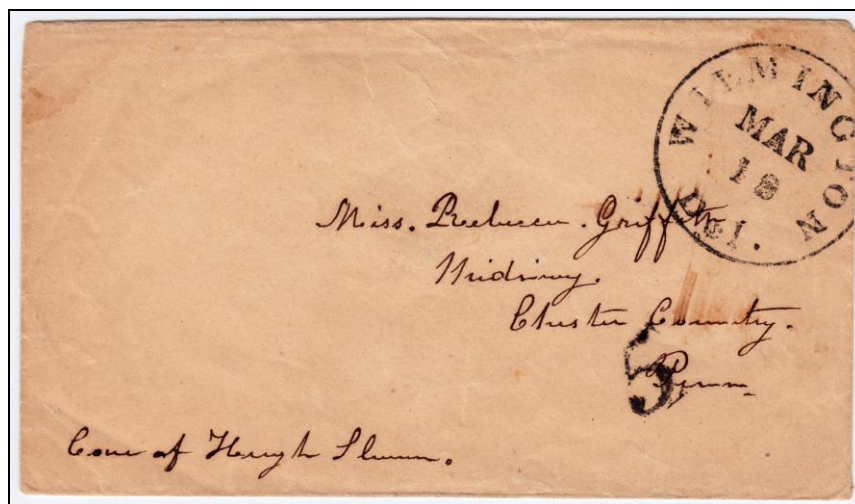


"Old Friends & True Friends" on reverse of 132 x 75 mm envelope, 15 JUL 1850.
Stampless ms. "5" rate from New Berlin, PA to "H.M. North, Esq. Columbia, PA"





“Time Flies” on reverse of 132 x 76 mm Ladies envelope, ca. 1850.
Stampless “5” rate from Wilmington, DE to “Miss Rebecca Griffith, Hicks Way(?), PA”.

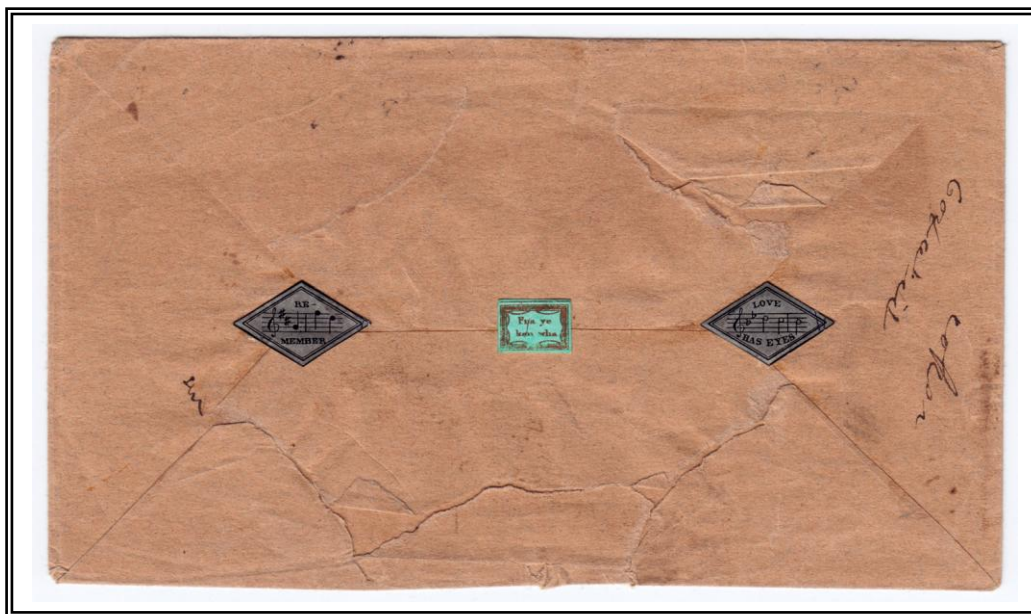




“Fondly, and With Affection Be True” on reverse of 108 x 61 mm Ladies envelope, ca. 1850. Stampless “5” rate from Thorndike, MA to “Mr. Artemas Haynes, Palmer Depot, Mass”.



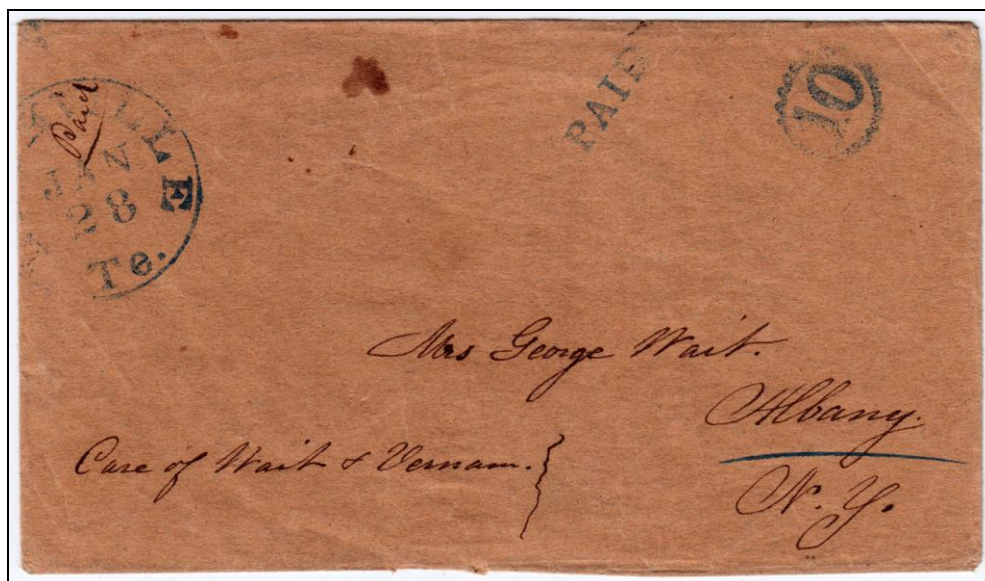
Green “**THORNDIKE FEB 14(5) MS**” CDS and matching “5” under manuscript “2”.

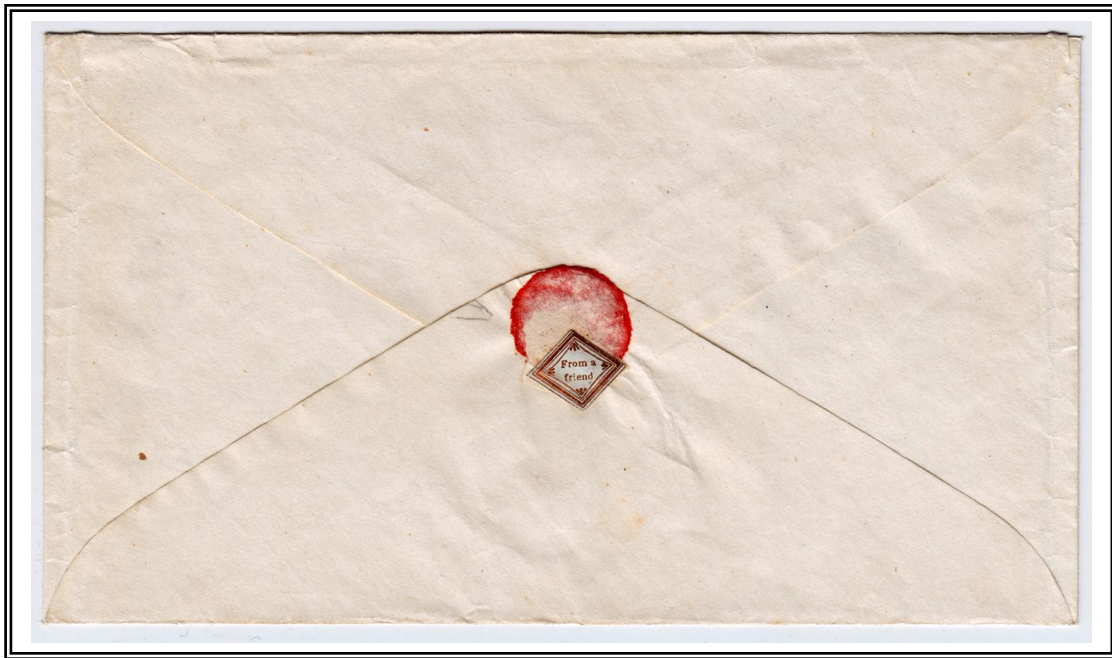


“Remember”, “Love Has Eyes” & “Fra ye ken wha” on reverse of 132 x 76 mm envelope, ca. 1850. Stampless “10” rate (double) + “PAID” from Nashville, TN to “Mrs. George Wait, Albany, N.Y.”



Scottish “From You Know Who”





"From a friend" on reverse of 140 x 82 mm envelope, ca. 1850.
Stampless "5" rate from Lancaster, PA to "Mr. M.M. Jeakle, No. 258 Baltimore St, Baltimore, MD"





“From home.” on reverse of 129 x 69 mm envelope, ca. 1852.
#11A tied by blue “Concord & Montreal JUN 23 R.R.” CDS, to “Charles H. Robertson, Keene, N.H.”





"Then You'll Remember Me" on reverse of 119 x 66 mm Ladies envelope, ca. 1853. Stampless blue "Paid 3" from Newcastle, DE to *"Miss Mary H. Voorhees Six Mile Run, NJ"*.





“Forget Me Not” on reverse of 111 x 71 mm Ladies envelope, ca. 1854.
#11A tied black CDS from Franklin, N.Y. to *“Miss Mary Hyer, Ravenswood, Long Island, N.Y.”*





“Remembrance” in Multicolored Floral Wreath on reverse of 108 x 64 mm Ladies envelope, ca. 1858.
 #26 tied blue DEC 29 CDS from Batavia, N.Y. to “*Mr. Sylvester B. Taylor, Bristol, Grafton Co., N.H.*”





“For Ever” with Hearts, Flowers & Arrow on reverse of 115 x 62 mm Ladies envelope, ca. 1863.
 #65 tied black segmented cork, from Boston, MA to “Miss Lilla Pease, Clinton, Mass.”





"Accept 10,000 Thanks"



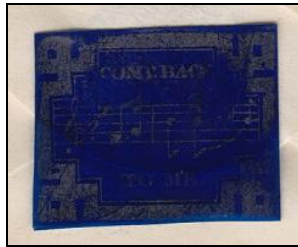
Shield



"Affection"



"Procrastination is the Thief of Time"



"Come Back To Me"



"True Love Can Ne'er Forget"



"The Road To Happiness"



"Do You Ever Think Of Me"



"Slow But Sure"



"From You Know Who"



"The Heart That Can Feel For Another"



"Haste thee."



"I cannot forget."



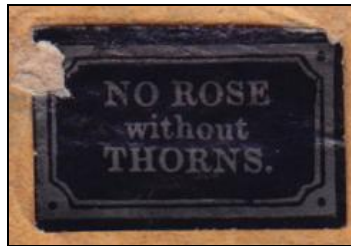
"Look within."



"I mean well."



"What's Sweet to do, to do it aptly find"



"No Rose without Thorns."



"Best Wishes"



"Caught At Last"



"Friendship Love & Truth"



"Return of Happiness"



"Justice"