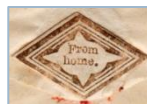
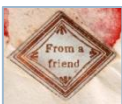
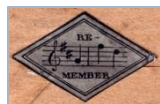




Wafers Seals on U.S. Folded Letters and Envelopes, 1840–1860s

By Charles J. DiComo, PhD | charlesdicomo@gmail.com | ©2021



Introduction – Wax and Sealers



- ▶ When writing letters was primarily reserved for Royalty, the custom was to seal letters with wax using handheld, wooden & brass sealers (*below*).



- ▶ 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}

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.

The Wafer Seal is Developed



- ▶ Eventually, transparent (and non-transparent) wafer seals were developed as a solution to sealing letters.
- ▶ They were small (~15x12 mm), symmetrically-shaped pieces of colored paper, gummed on the reverse.



Forever



Do You Ever Think of Me



Procrastination is the
Thief of Time



Friendship Love & Truth

- ▶ Initially popular in Britain, they depicted a wide array of images, initials, mottos, phrases and scenery.
- ▶ They eventually made their way to the U.S. in late 1830s.

Transparent Motto Wafers Envelope: *Housed the gummed sheets, circa 1840*



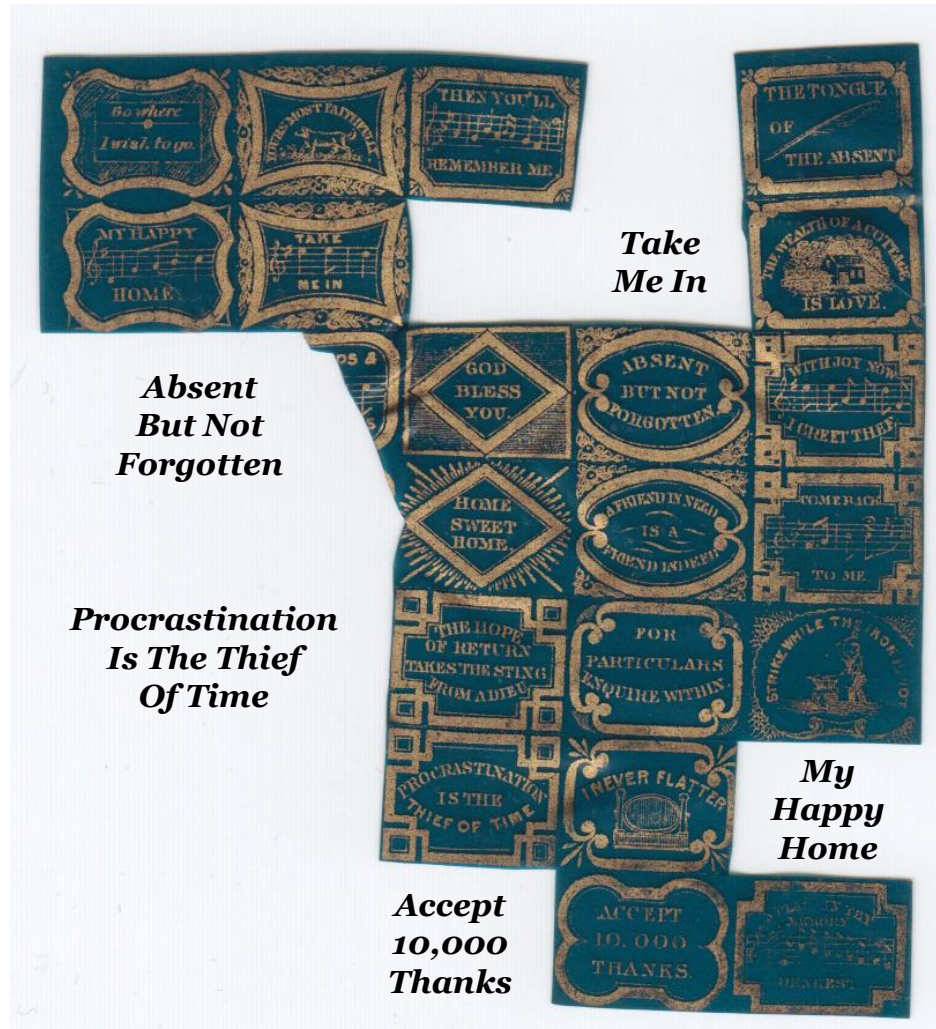
Measures:
145 x 78 mm

Transparent Motto Wafers Envelope: *Blue Design on glossy outer on bond*



Manufacturer
unknown

Sheets of Gummed Wafer Seals: *Came in Wafer Envelope – Gold on Blue*



***Absent
But Not
Forgotten***

***Procrastination
Is The Thief
Of Time***

***Accept
10,000
Thanks***

***Take
Me In***

***My
Happy
Home***

Sheets of Gummed Wafer Seals: *Came in Wafer Envelope – Gold on Red*



- Sheet measures:
65 x 52 mm
- Wafers measure
~13 x 10 mm

Near Complete Sheet, circa 1858

Multicolored Scenes on gummed paper



107x76mm



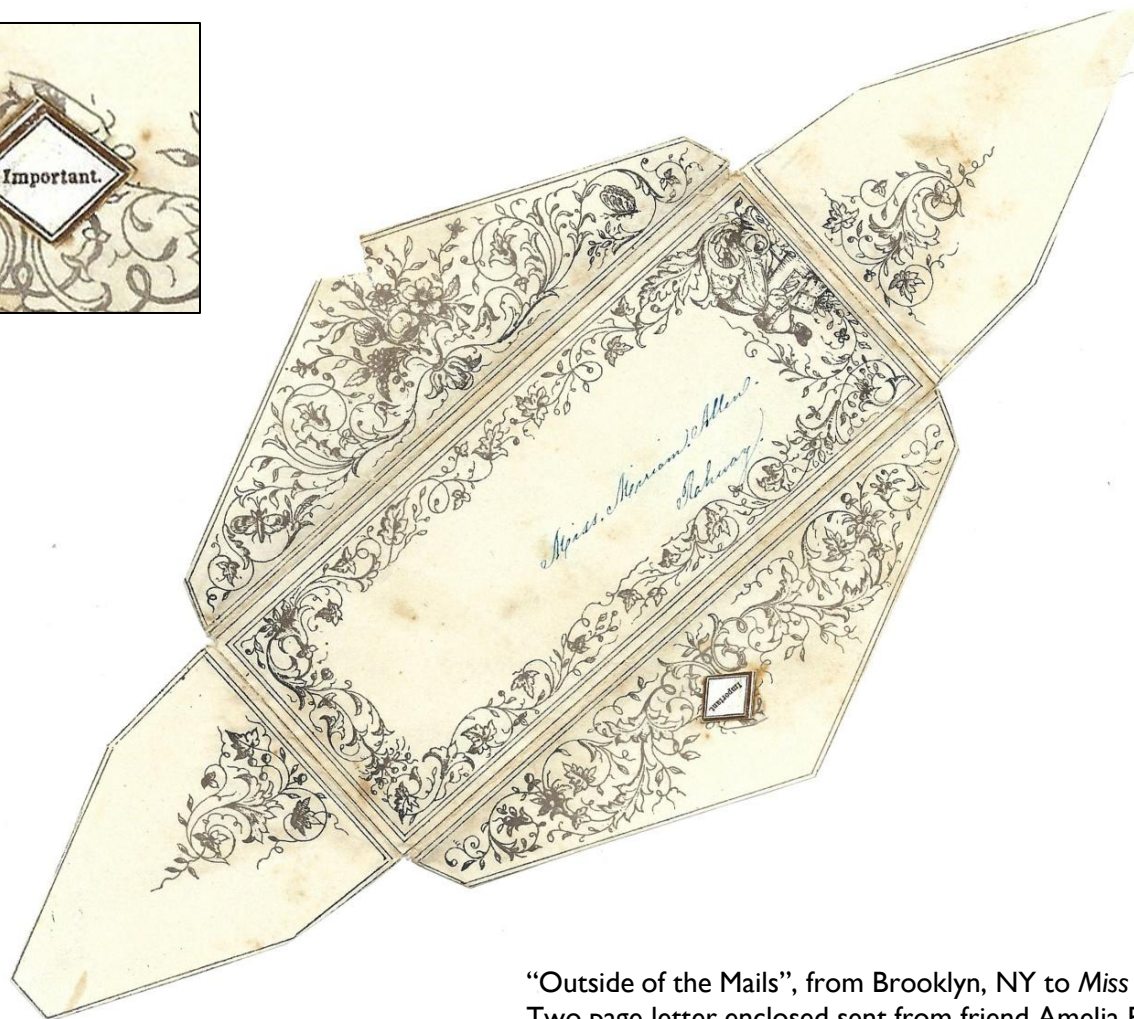
Top Half of Multicolored Sheet: *Hope, Affection, Forever, From A Friend...*



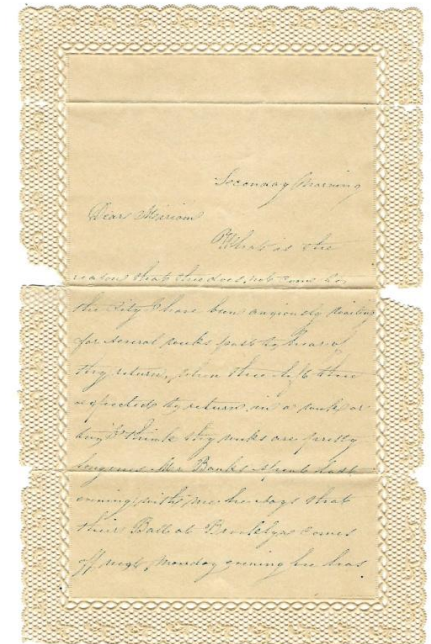
Bottom Half of Multicolored Sheet: *Accept, Forget Me Not, Friendship...*



A Sampling of Folded Letter Sheets & Envelopes: 1840's to 1860's



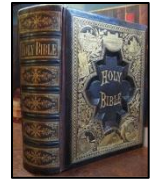
Ungummed Envelope when closed measures 125x50 mm



"Outside of the Mails", from Brooklyn, NY to Miss Miriam Allen, Rahway, (New Jersey).
Two page letter enclosed sent from friend Amelia Everil. Stationery by Addenbrooke.

Strike While The Iron Is Hot

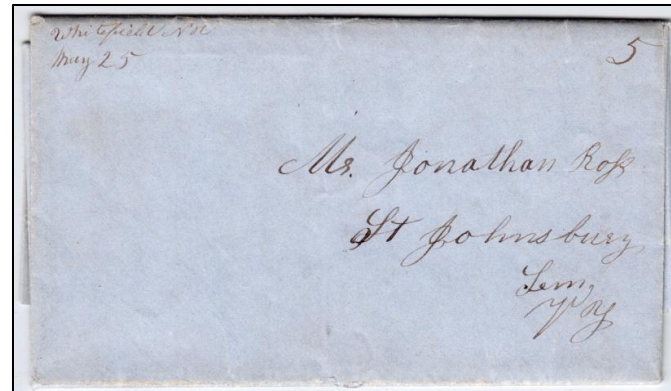
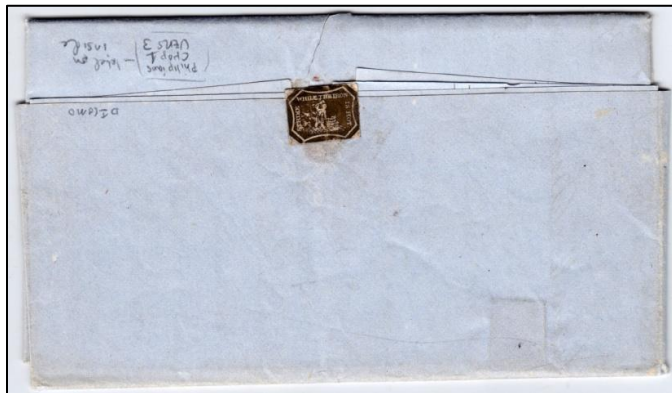
Philippians, Chapt. 1. Verse 3.



**“PHILIPPIANS,
Chapt. 1. Verse 3.”**

This seal is affixed
to the letter
interior below
sender's signature.

*“I thank my God
every time I
remember you.”*

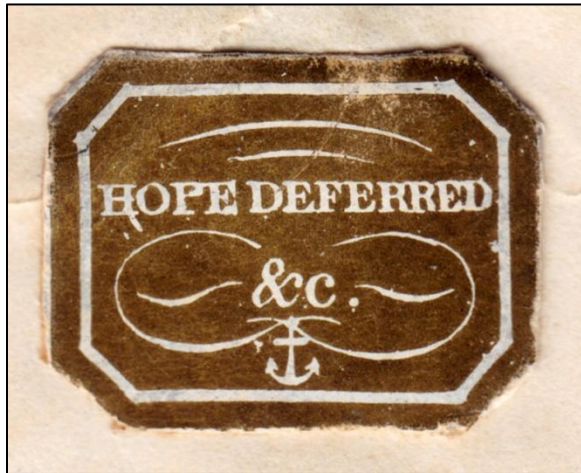


“Strike While The Iron Is Hot” on reverse of 128x73 mm Letter Sheet, 25 MAY 1847.
Stampless ms. “5” cents rate - Whitefield, NH to “Ms. Jonathan Ross, St. Johnsbury, VT”.

Hope Deferred &c.



Post Office, Willimantic CT

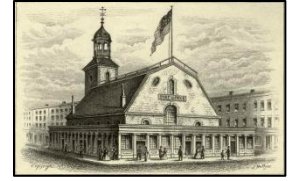


Red **“WILLIMANTIC 10 MAY CT.”** CDS and large hollow **“V”**, (5¢ rate) to S. Andover. In S. Andover was forwarded, where clerk struck red **“ANDOVER MAY 11 Ms.”** CDS and large **“10”**, ms. **“Forwd”** + **“5”**, added **“Brooklyn, N.Y.”**

The blue crayon **“1849”** added upon receipt in NY. In manuscript at bottom, **“Please forward this immediately”**



Forget Me Not



Old NYC Post Office 1850



"Forget Me Not" on the reverse of a 125x72 mm Folded Letter Sheet, 1 NOV 1848.

Stampless **"5 cts."** rate from New York City to "Miss Mary E. Washburn, Care of Mr. J. Washburn, Lyme, New Hampshire".



What News?

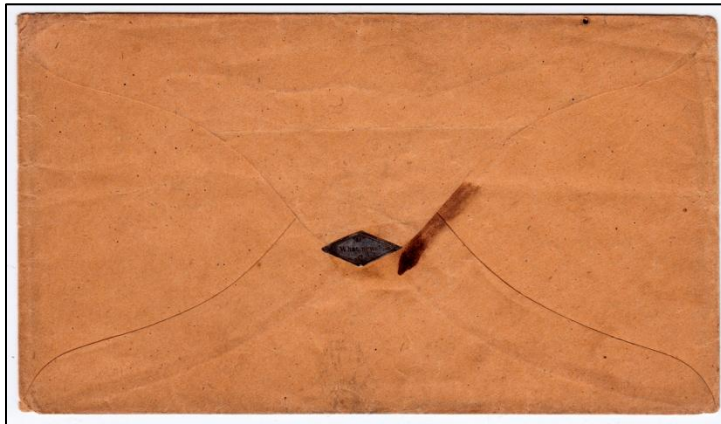


A Tavern, Philadelphia



“What news?” on reverse of 143x82 mm envelope, circa 1847-1851.

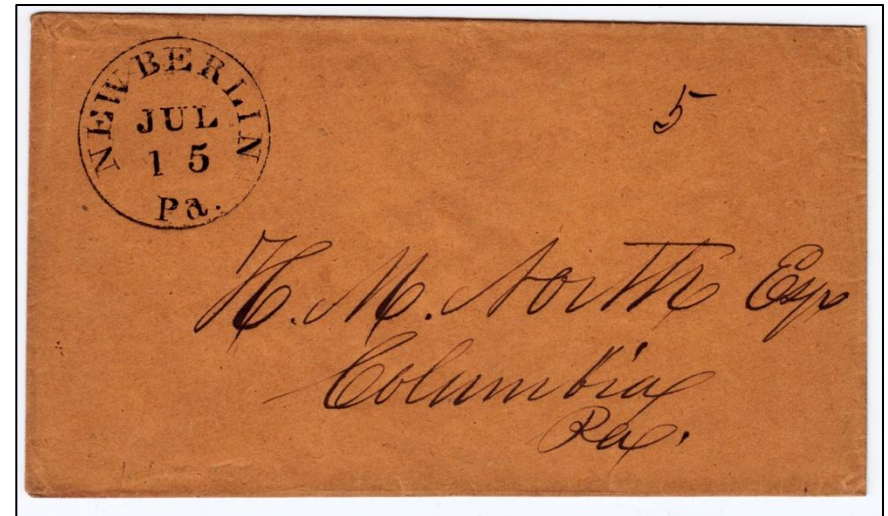
Stampless “Drop Rate” from Philadelphia with prominent strike of blue, double-circle “2” addressed to “Miss Annie Ash, Care of Mr. George W. Ash, 194 N. Sixth St. Phila.”



Old Friends & True Friends



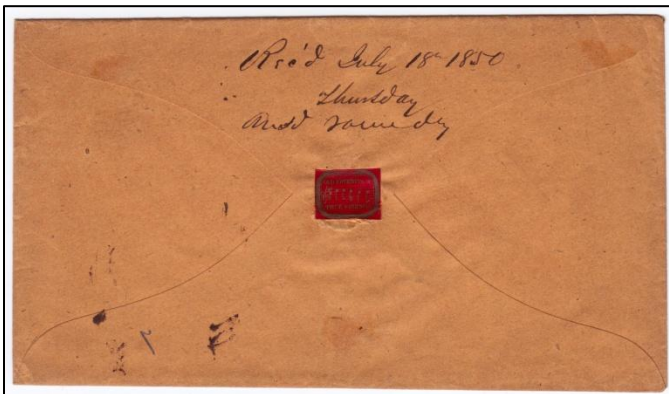
Main St., New Berlin, PA



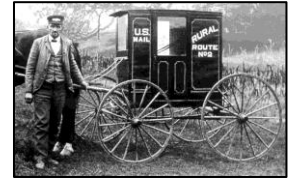
“Old Friends & True Friends” with musical scale on reverse of 132x75 mm envelope, 15 JUL 1850.

Stampless ms. “5” rate from New Berlin, PA to “H.M. North, Esq. Columbia, PA”

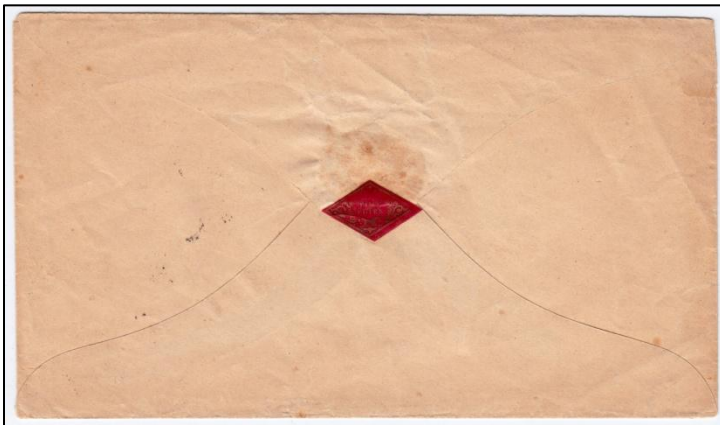
Docketing on reverse flap: “Rec’d July 18 1850 Thursday Answ’d Monday”



Time Flies



Rural Free Delivery Route 2



“Time Flies” on reverse of 132x76 mm Ladies envelope, circa 1850.

Stampless **“5”** rate from Wilmington, DE to “Miss Rebecca Griffith, _____, Chester County, PA”.

Fondly And With Affection Be True



Post Office, Thorndike, MA



“Fondly, and With Affection Be True” on reverse of 108x61 mm Ladies envelope, circa 1850.

Stampless with green **“THORNDIKE FEB 14(5) MS”** CDS and matching **“5”** rate under manuscript **“2”** from Thorndike, MA to *“Mr. Artemas Haynes, Palmer Depot, Mass.”*



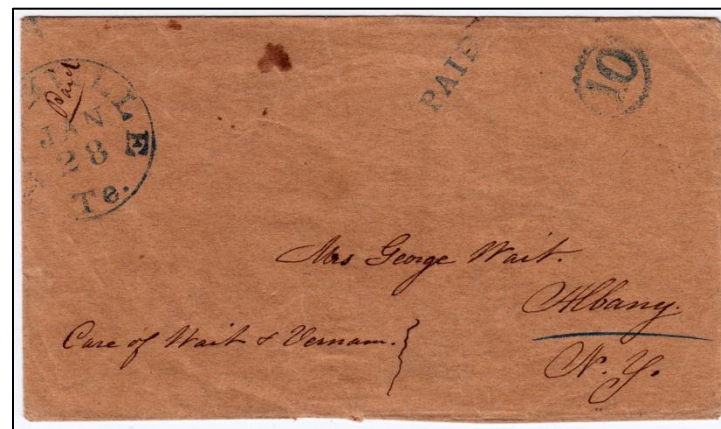
Remember | Love Has Eyes and Fra ye ken Wha



Downtown Nashville, TN



Scottish “**From You Know Who**”

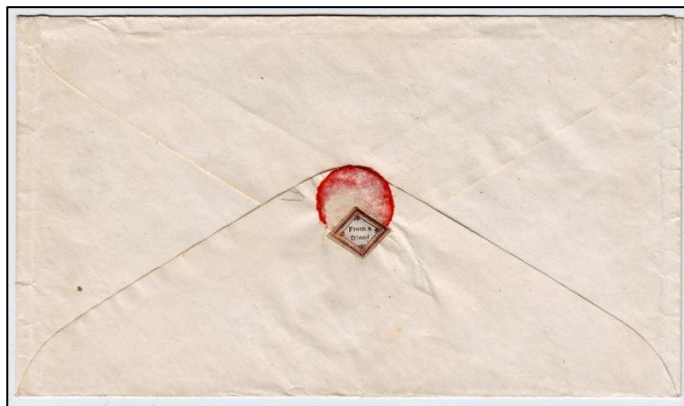


“**Remember**”, “**Love Has Eyes**” & “**Fra ye ken wha**” on reverse of 132x76 mm envelope, circa 1850.
Stampless “10” double rate + “**PAID**” from Nashville, TN to “Mrs. George Wait, Care of Wait & Vernon, Albany, N.Y.”

From A Friend



Lancaster City, PA



“From a friend” on reverse of 140x82 mm Ladies envelope, red sealing disc, circa 1850.

Stampless “5” rate from Lancaster, PA to “Mr. M.M. Jeakle, No. 258 Baltimore St, Baltimore, MD”

From Home.



The General Peaslee



“From home.” on the reverse of a 129x69 mm envelope, circa 1852.

#11A tied by blue “Concord & Montreal JUN 23 R.R.” CDS, address to “Charles H. Robertson, Keene, N.H.”



Then You'll Remember Me



Newcastle, DE



“Then You’ll Remember Me” on reverse of 119x66 mm Ladies envelope, circa 1853.

Stampless with circular blue arced “Paid” over “3” from Newcastle, DE to “Miss Mary H. Voorhees Six Mile Run, Somerset County, New Jersey”.



Forget Me Not



Post Office, Franklin, NY



“Forget Me Not” on reverse of 111x71 mm Ladies envelope, circa 1854.

#11A tied by black 25 AUG-dated CDS from Franklin, N.Y. to “Miss Mary Hyer, Ravenswood, Long Island, N.Y.”

Remembrance



Fish Malt House, Batavia



“Remembrance” in multicolored floral bouquet on reverse of 108x64 mm Ladies envelope, circa.1858.

#26 tied blue DEC 29 CDS from Batavia, N.Y. to “Mr. Sylvester B. Taylor, Bristol, Grafton Co., N.H.”

For Ever



Dock Square, Boston 1860



“For Ever” with Hearts, Flowers & Arrow on reverse of 115x62 mm Ladies envelope, circa 1863.

#65 tied by black segmented cork, entered mails January 29 from Boston, MASS to “Miss Lilla Pease, Clinton, Mass.”

The Great Exposition of 1851



- ▶ The Great Exposition of 1851 (aka the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations or the Crystal Palace Exhibition), was an international exhibition which occurred in Hyde Park, London from May 1 to October 15.

- It was the first in a series of World's Fairs and Exhibitions that became popular in the 19th century.
- The event was organized by Henry Cole and by Prince Albert, husband of the reigning monarch of the United Kingdom, Queen Victoria.
- Six million people—equivalent to a third of the entire population of Britain at the time—visited the Great Exhibition.

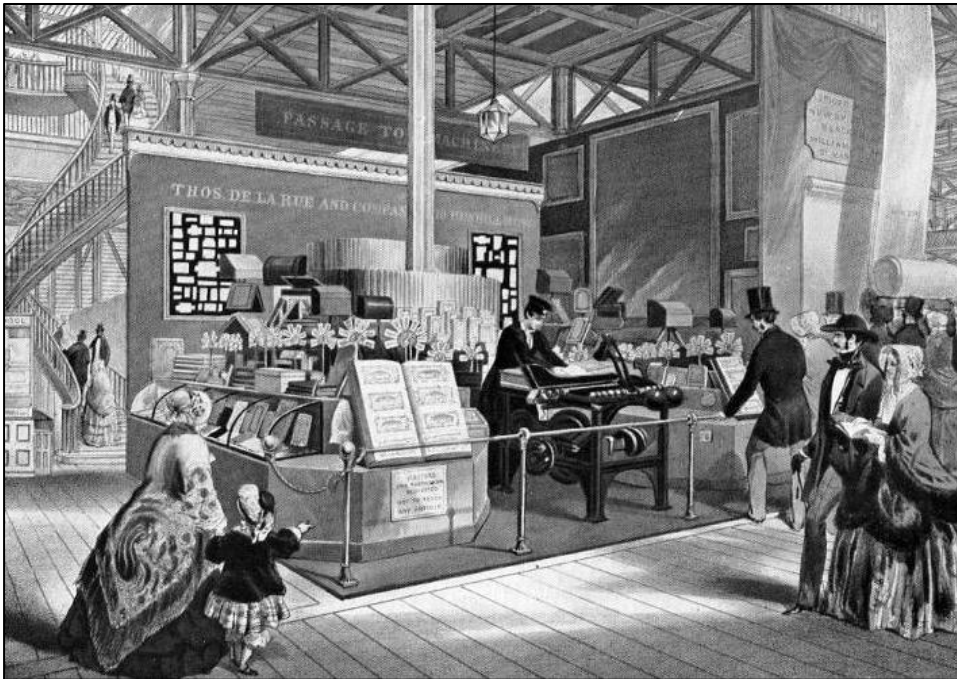


View from the Knightsbridge Road of The Crystal Palace in Hyde Park for Grand International Exhibition of 1851. Dedicated to the Royal Commissioners. London: Read & Co. Engravers & Printers, 1851.

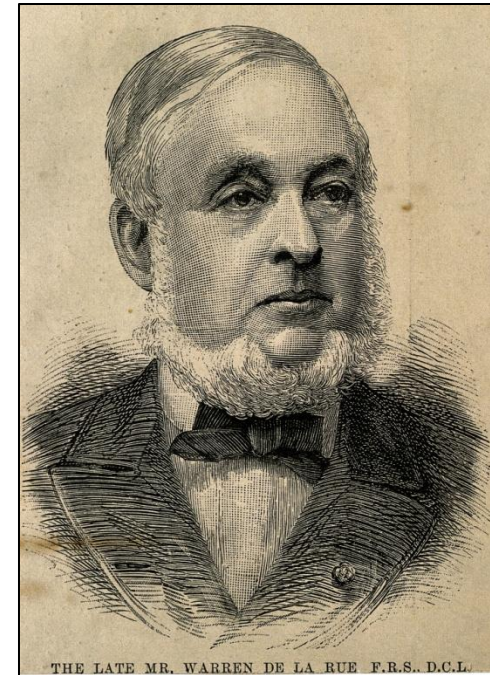
Warren De la Rue Demonstrates his Envelope-Making Machine



- ▶ At the Exposition, Warren De la Rue demonstrated a practical envelope-making machine that could simultaneously fold and gum.

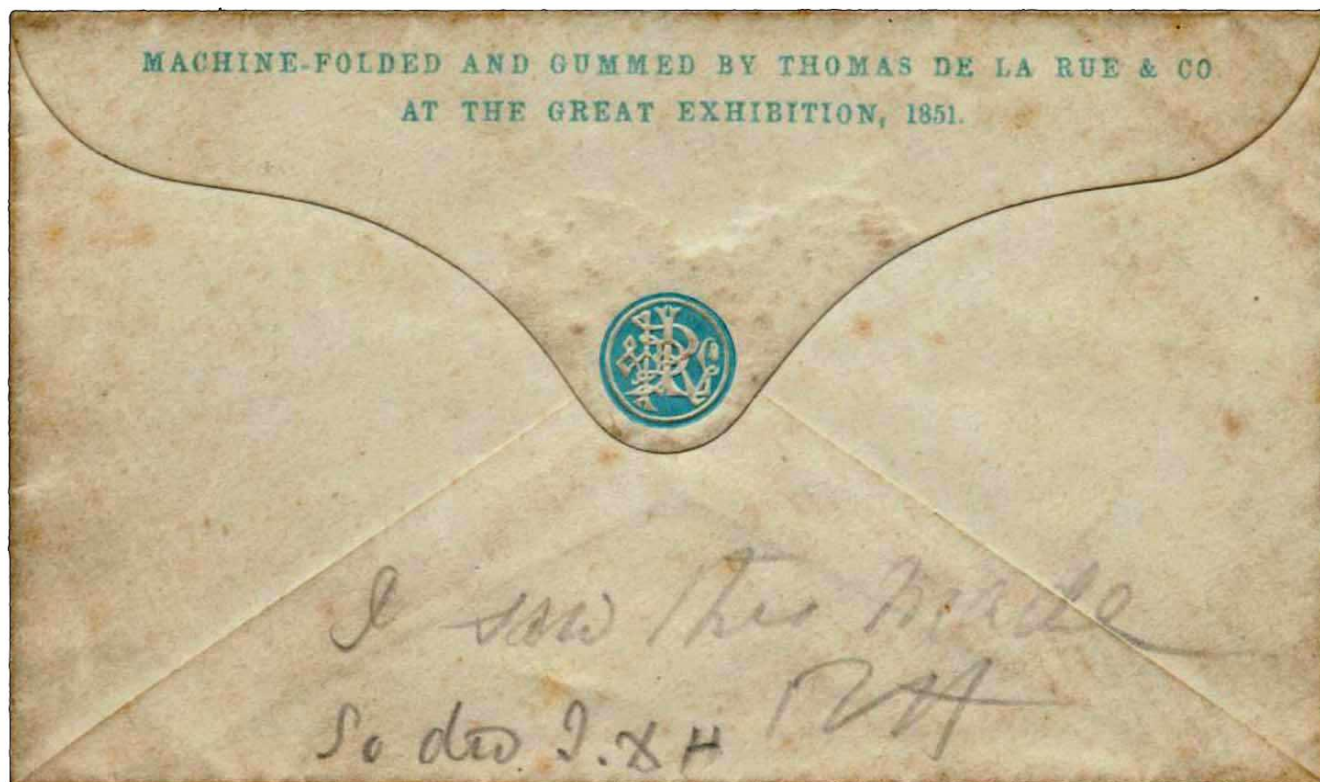


The envelope-folding machine invented by Warren de la Rue and Edwin Hill at the 1851 Great Exhibition in London. The machine was displayed at Thomas de la Rue & Co.'s booth.



Warren de La Rue, F.R.S., D.C.L.

De la Rue Machine-Folded and Gummed Envelope from the 1851 Great Exhibition



Unused plain envelope with two line “MACHINE-FOLDED AND GUMMED BY THOMAS DE LA RUE & CO AT THE GREAT EXHIBITION, 1851”. Letter press-printed in pale blue on the flap, pencil notations “*I saw this made*” and “*So did I*” with initials “RM” and “XH”.

Conclusion

From Wax to Seals to Gummed Flaps



- ▶ This presentation endeavors to illustrate an assortment of Seals from the author's collection of over 125 artifacts utilized in the United States from the 1840's through to the 1860's.
- ▶ The Seals are imperforate, having to be cut apart like postage stamps.
- ▶ The Seals are not common, and multiples are markedly uncommon.
- ▶ The Seals are more valuable on cover properly used than off cover.
- ▶ The invention of the gummed envelope by De la Rue & Co. and its broad availability by the early 1850's eliminated the need for Seals.
- ▶ The use of Seals persisted into the late 1860's.

