

Excelsior!

October 2022

Whole No. 36 New Series



A stampless letter mailed April 6, 1841 from New York City to Michigan has several interesting facets.

Single Cover Shares Many Tales

By Charles J. DiComo, PhD

Though it looks somewhat innocuous at first glance, here is a somewhat wild and impressive piece from the stampless era with links to New York City, Canandaigua, Massachusetts and Michigan. It's amazing how a single piece can take us down so many paths.

So, let's unravel this piece of postal history.

The single-sheet folded letter entered the mail stream on April 6, 1841 in New York City. A postal clerk added the 27 millimeter red circular datestamp with an abbreviated month of "APL," instead of the more widely used "APR," for April.



A black wax seal (coloring slightly enhanced) shows a sailing ship, very appropriate to come from a

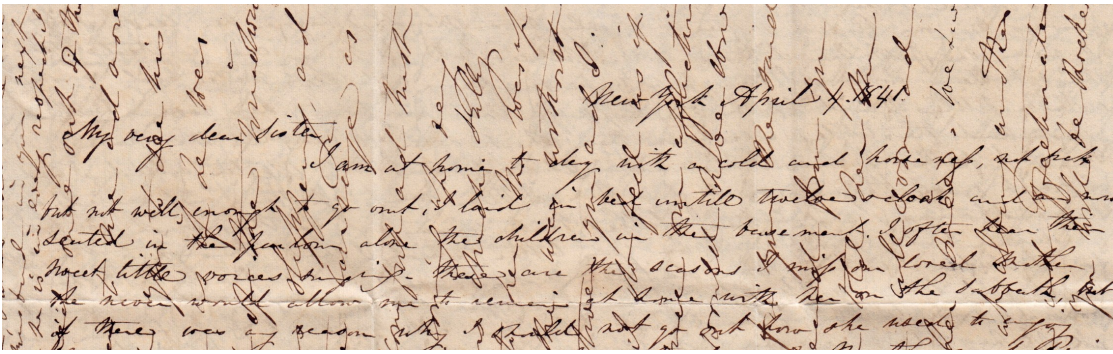
There is a manuscript "25" (cents) at top right to pay the U.S. inland rate for more than 400 miles.

The letter is addressed to Mrs. Taylor, in care of Henry W. Taylor,

Esq., Marshall, Calhoun County, Michigan. It is sealed with a handsome black wax seal with an image of a sailing vessel in the center and the business name of Masters & Markoe & Co. New York.

The letter writer, Thomas Masters – well, at least one of the letter writers – was a distinguished shipping merchant, hence the black-wax seal.

Masters & Markoe was a mercantile house that operated throughout the early 19th century, primarily involved with the importation of sugar from Santa Cruz (St. Croix). It operated in New York City from about 1825 to 1836, when the firm became Masters, Markoe & Co.



A detail (left) from the letter below shows the crisscross writing. Below left, portrait of Henry W. Taylor (Courtesy

CRISSCROSS, FROM COVER

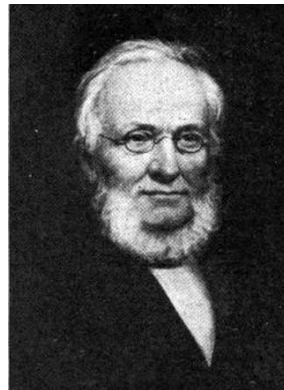
and Francis Markoe Jr., and by Jeremiah Wilbur, a son-in-law of Masters. The firm of Masters, Markoe & Co. continued until 1846, when it became Markoe, Wilbur & Scott.

Upon unfolding the lettersheet we find an expansive use of crisscross writing to help cover every inch of paper. Every additional page in a letter added weight, and costs.

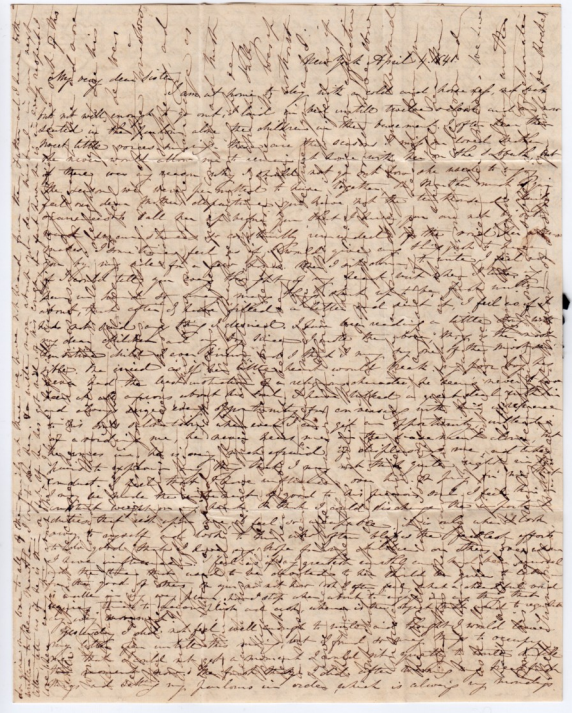
Criss-cross writing may have driven some folks mad, but this is how frugal people saved money before cost-savings postage measures were introduced on July 1, 1851.

The letter was mostly written by Thomas Masters and another – the writing is in two different hands – in a crisscross pattern, using as much of paper as possible. Details included are about family, business and looking around Orange and Dutchess counties to purchase a farm, etc. The letter-writer started on April 4, and ended on April 6, when it was posted.

Research led to all sorts of background material about those in this correspondence.



On the recipient side, there is Henry Wyllis Taylor (February 2, 1796–December 17, 1888), who was born in Deerfield, Massachusetts, to the Rev. John



Taylor and Elizabeth Terry. After graduating from Yale University, he was admitted to the bar in 1819 and a year later he opened his own law office in Canandaigua, New York, where he became a prominent attorney and judge.

In 1832, Taylor married Martha Caldwell Masters, the daughter of Thomas Masters and Isabella Caldwell. Henry Taylor was elected to the New York State Assembly annually from 1837 to 1840. Taylor and his family moved west in 1840 and lived in Marshall, Michigan until 1847. Taylor was elected to the Michigan Senate in 1846.

The Taylor family returned to Canandaigua around 1848 and Henry Taylor served as a justice of the New York State Supreme Court from 1856 to 1860. In 1869, he received an honorary law degree from his alma mater,

SHOWS, FROM PAGE 13

Pennsylvania November 5-6

Pittpx 2022, Philatelic Society of Pittsburgh, South Fayette Fire Hall, 661 Millers Run Road, Bridgeville.

Contact: Bryan Gross

Email: maxaugust@aol.com

Website: <https://www.pittsburghstampclub.org/>

New York November 19

Syracuse Stamp Show, Holiday Inn (formerly Maple Wood Inn) 400 Seventh North St., Liverpool (off Exit 36 of NYS Thruway, I-90)

Features dealers to buy, sell, or trade stamps. Door prizes, free admission and parking.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Contact: <http://syracusestampclub.org/syracuse-stamp-show/>

New York November 19