

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

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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.