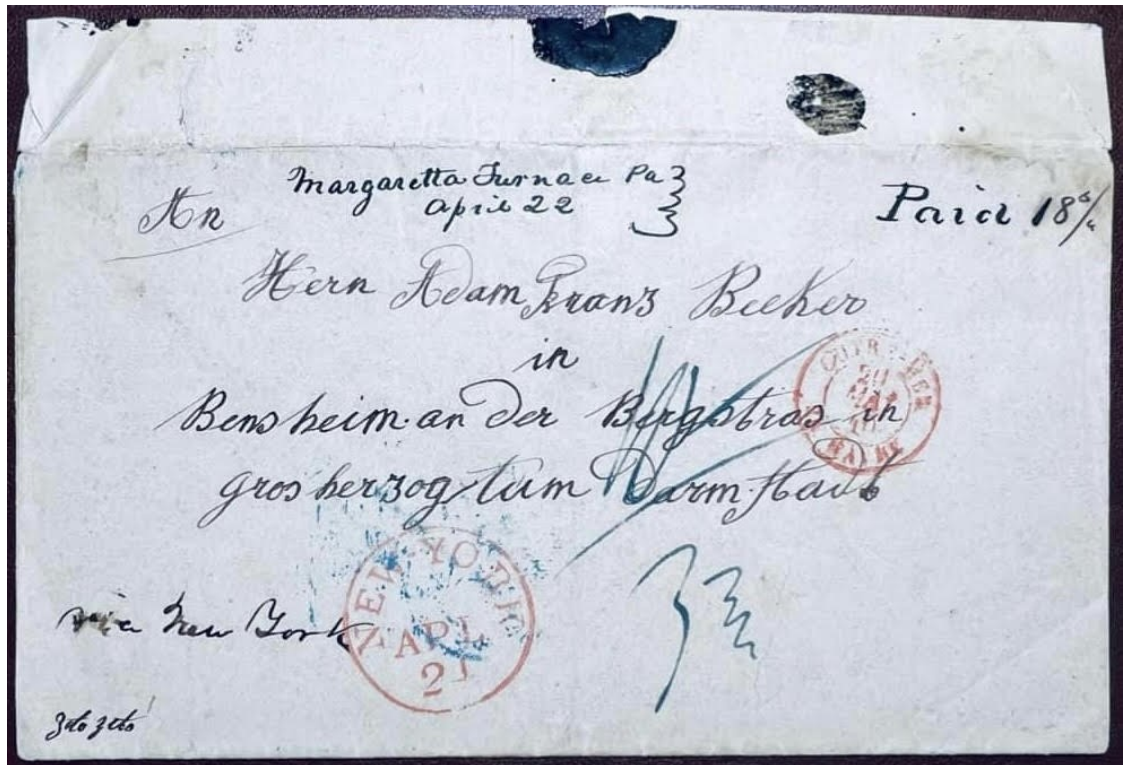


The front of a stampless letter-sheet sent from Pennsylvania to Germany, by way of New York City and France.



What's It All About?

Dissecting a foreign-bound stampless cover and its markings and rates

By Charles J. DiComo, PhD

Shown here is a folded letter with contents to Darmstadt, Hessen, Germany 1840, which was first posted at Margaretta Furnace, York County, Pennsylvania.

The letter traveled to New York City, then by Le Havre, France by the sailing vessel Louis Phillippe, before moving by train to Paris, on to Strasbourg, north through Baden, to Hessen territory, and finally to Bensheim, Darmstadt.

Wow, what a journey! Following is my full diagnosis. This is a rare use from Margaretta Furnace, where annually 1,100 tons of iron were produced for about 20 years until the production ended in 1843.

This cover entered the mail on April 22, 1840. It has a black manuscript marking of "Margaretta Furnace Pa April 22" and a manuscript "Paid 18 3/4." The rate covered the U.S. inland rate of 150 to 400 miles, which would have gotten the letter to New York City.

The cover was received April 24 at New York City, which is shown on the front via the scarce "APL" abbreviation for April instead of the standard "APR."



Close-ups of the cover's cancellation marks.