

# PENNSYLVANIA POSTAL HISTORIAN

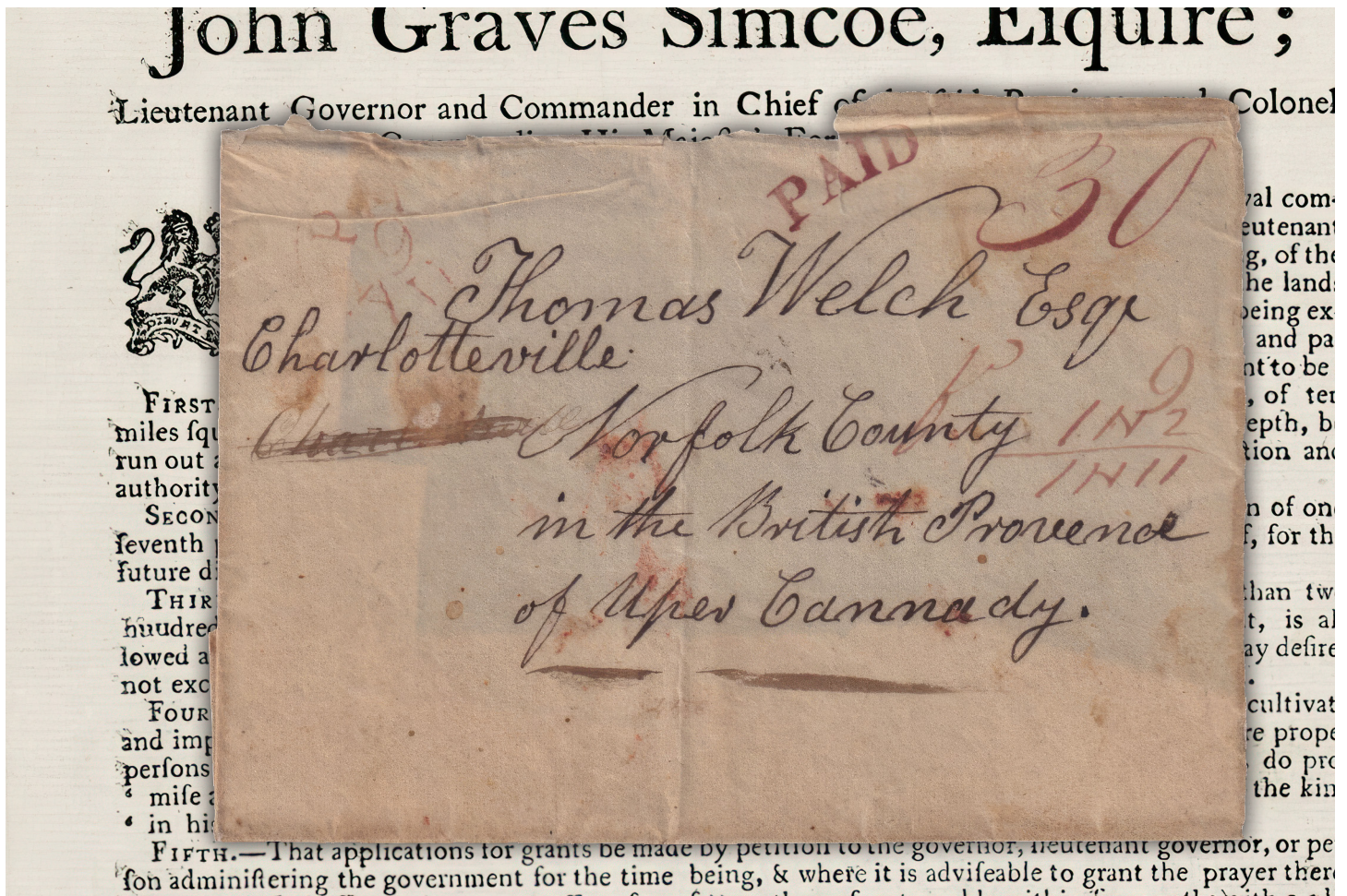
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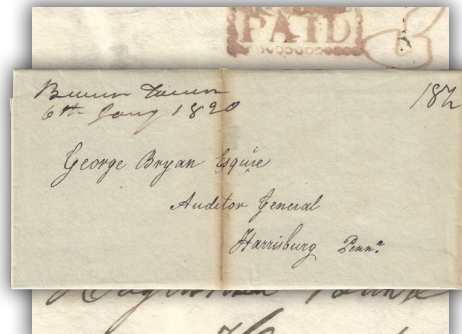


## A WAR RATE COVER TIMES TWO

— ALSO IN THIS ISSUE —



THE LADY ERSKINE



BOXED PITTSBURGH



STREET CORNERS



Figure 1. 1841-dated "Mourning paper" FLS from Munich, Germany to Philadelphia, via New York City. Sent from The Lady Erskine to her nephew George Cadwalader, Esq. on delayed learning of the passing of her brother.

## Lady Erskine and the Prominent Philadelphia Cadwalader Family

by Charles J. DiComo, PhD | PaPHS #605

This article shall explore the author, The Lady Erskine, and the contents of the stampless folded letter (SFL) illustrated in Figure 1. She penned this letter on a sheet of unwatermarked, black-edged mourning paper to her nephew George Cadwalader on her delayed learning of the passing of her brother, Thomas Cadwalader, of the prominent US military family from Philadelphia.

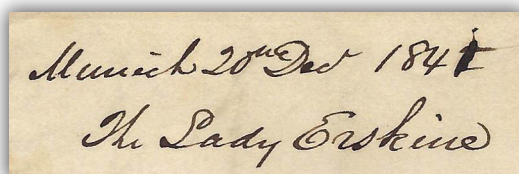


Figure 2. Docketing on the reverse confirming receipt in Philadelphia reads, "Munich 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1841, The Lady Erskine".

The stampless letter was written in Munich, Germany, on December 20, 1841, and appears to have been carried privately across the Atlantic Ocean to New York due to the lack of markings such as a vessel name, the typical red New York "SHIP" handstamp, or the proper postage (2¢ Ship Letter fee) for such a journey.<sup>1</sup> The letter is addressed to "George Cadwalader, Esq. Philadelphia United States of America" and is docketed on the reverse flap "Munich 20th Dec 1841 The Lady Erskine". Upon arrival in New York City, the letter entered the mail, and the postal clerk canceled it with a red "NEW-YORK APL 20" CDS and a black manuscript marking of "12 1/2" (to cover the US inland rate for a distance between 80-150 miles from New York to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). There is also a black wax seal typical of the period, but the FLS was roughly opened, and I cannot make out the crest.

Munich December 20  
1841

My Dear Nephew

Your Letter which conveyed the melancholy intelligence so afflicting to us all was kept from me for some time, as I was then very much indisposed, & I would have soon ~~been~~ thanked you for the affectionate manner in which you had written to me.

I agree with you that deep as our grief must be for the death of my poor Brother the loss will be still ~~more~~ heavy on you.

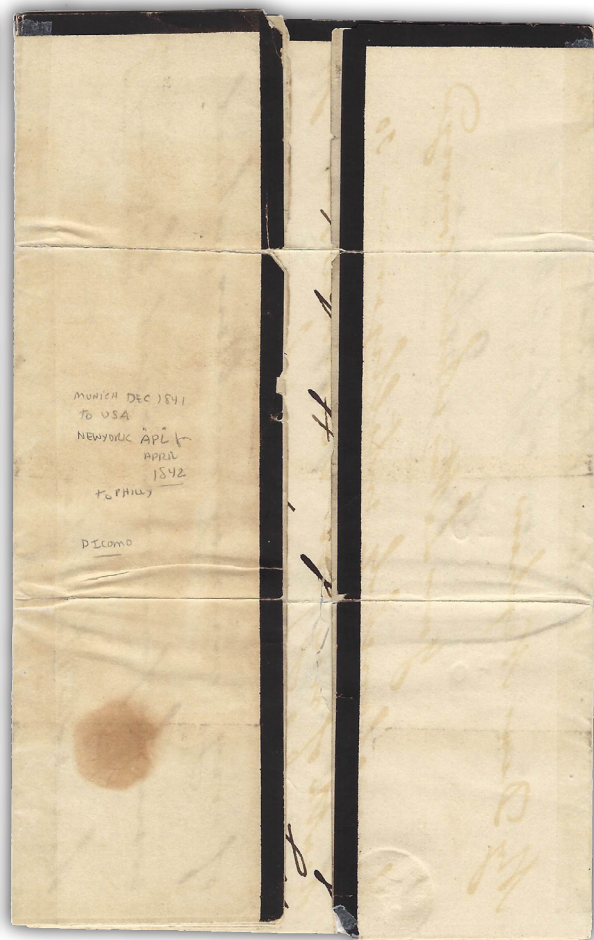


Figure 3. At left: Page 1 of the mourning letter datelined "Munich December 20, 1841". At right: Folded inner sheet illustrating the black border of the letter sheet.

unfortunate Mother, who has not only lost the most affectionate of Husbands, but the <sup>most</sup> amiable companion, & the only consolation for her must be that a certain number of years only, can separate them; and that in the mean time she will be enabled <sup>to render</sup> to her Family the same affectionate kindness, with which she brought them up; and be to them ~~be~~ a source of great consolation.

I feel very thankful to you for your kind assurances that you shall be happy to give me your assistance, in taking care

of my money matters, which were before managed by my dearest Brother =.

I should be very glad to hear from you again as I feel very anxious to hear how your dear Mother supports her severe trial.

With most affectionate love to your dear Mother and your family circle believe me my

Dear Nephew  
your affecto Aunt  
Fanny Erskine

Figure 4. The second and third pages of Lady Erskine's letter.

The unwatermarked paper is a “mourning sheet” with black edging all around, only on one side.

Below is the transcription of the Lady Erskine letter to her nephew:

*Munich December 20*

*1841*

*My Dear Nephew*

*Your Letter which conveyed the melancholy intelligence so afflicting to us all was kept from me for some time, as I was then very much indisposed, or I would have sooner have thanked you for the affectionate manner in which you had written to me-.*

*I agree with you that deep as our grief must be for the death of my poor Brother the loss will be still more heavy on your unfortunate Mother, who has not only lost the most affectionate of Husband, but the most amiable companion, & the only consolation for her must be that a certain number of years only, can separate them; and that in the mean time she will be enabled to render to his Family the same affectionate kindness with which she brought them up; and be to them [together] a source of great consolation.*

*I feel very thankful to you for your kind assurances that you shall be happy to give me your assistance, in taking care of my money matters, which were before managed by my dearest Brother-.*

*I should be very glad to hear from you again as I feel very anxious to hear your dear Mother supports his [severe] trial.*

*With most affectionate love to your dear Mother and your family circle believe me my dear Nephew.*

*Your affect Aunt*

*Fanny Erskine*

## Relevant Family Biographies

1. Penned Letter: **Frances Cadwalader Erskine** (The Lady Erskine – Figure 5), May 4, 1781 – March 15, 1843. Frances was born in Sassafras, Ment County, MD, died in Genoa, Liguria, Italy, and was buried at the Cimitero Monumentale di Staglieno. She married David Montagu Erskine, 2d Baron Erskine (1776–1855) in 1799. He was a British diplomat and minister to the United States, Wurttemberg, and finally, Bavaria. They had 12 children.
2. Deceased: **Thomas Cadwalader** (October 28, 1779 – October 31, 1841) (Figure 6). Born in Philadelphia, died and was buried at Christ Church Burial Ground in Philadelphia. Married Mary Biddle Cadwalader (1781–1850), they had five sons: John (1805–1879); George (1806–1879 and recipient of letter from Lady Erskine); Thomas (1808–1844); Henry (1817–1844); and William (1820–1875). Brother of The Lady Erskine.
3. Recipient of Letter: **George Cadwalader** (May 16, 1806 – February 3, 1879) (Figure 7) was a general in the United States Army during the Mexican–American War (1847–1848) and American Civil War (1861–1865). Civil War Union Major General, Mexican War Brigadier General. While Brigadier General of Pennsylvania Militia, he helped suppress the “anti-foreign” riots in Philadelphia in 1844. Served as a Brigadier General of Volunteers in the Mexican War, being brevetted Major General for his bravery at the Battle of Chapultepec. A successful businessman between wars, he was



Figure 5. Portrait of The Lady Erskine, by Gilbert Stuart, Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Figure 6. Portrait of General Thomas Cadwalader.



Figure 7. Portrait of George Cadwalader, by Thomas Eakins.



Figure 8. Portrait of John, wife Elizabeth, and daughter Ann, by Charles W. Peale.



Figure 9. Portrait of Williamina Bond Cadwalader in brooch.

made a Major General of Volunteers in April 1862. Served on various military and advisory boards from 1862 to August 1863, when he commanded the Department of Philadelphia. In that capacity, he oversaw the movement of thousands of Union troops through the city, which was a major rail stop on the way to the battlefields of Virginia. He also oversaw the numerous wounded men who filled the city's hospitals. His wife was the niece of South Carolina Senator Pierce Butler. He was the younger brother of Pennsylvania Congressman John Cadwalder and the cousin of Civil War Union Army officers Alexander Williams Biddle and Chapman Biddle. His grandfather was Revolutionary War Pennsylvania Militia General John Cadwalader.

4. The parents of Lady Erskine and General Thomas (Deceased)

a. **John Cadwalader** (January 10, 1742 – February 10, 1786) (Figure 8) Revolutionary War Militia General. A successful merchant in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in company with his brother, at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, he was commissioned as a Brigadier General in the Pennsylvania Militia and placed in command of the Pennsylvania troops. He led one of the divisions of General George Washington's Army that crossed the Delaware River on December 27, 1776, remaining on the Jersey side. He fought at the January 1777 Battle of Princeton, the September 1777 Battle of Brandywine, and the October 1777 Battle of Germantown. After the Battle of Monmouth, he fought a duel with fellow General Thomas Conway; Cadwalader was uninjured but wounded Conway with a shot to the mouth. In 1779, he returned to his home in Maryland and became a member of the Assembly there. He died at Shrewsbury, Maryland just past his forty-fourth birthday.

b. **Williamina Bond Cadwalader** (February 27, 1753 – September 9, 1837) (Figure 9). Parents Dr. Phineas Bond (1717 – 1773) and Wilhelmina Moore (1727 – 1809). Williamina's baptismal name was also Wilhelmina and the two spellings were used interchangeably during her adult life. Sometime around 1779, Williamina became the second wife of Revolutionary War hero John Cadwalader. They would have at least three children, Sarah Dingwell (b. 1778), Thomas (b. 1779), and Frances (b. 1781). Thomas would follow in his father's footsteps and become a General in the Pennsylvania Militia. Frances would marry David Erskine, 2nd Baron Erskine (1777–1855), the British Ambassador to the United States from 1807 to 1809. Following her husband's death in 1786, Williamina moved to England to live with her daughter Frances. Williamina died in England and is buried in the same cemetery as her son-in-law, David Erskine.

5. **David Montagu Erskine** (August 12, 1776 – March 19, 1855) (Figure 10). 2nd Baron Erskine of Restormel Castle. British Minister to the United States (1806–1809), to Wurttemberg (1824–1828), and to Bavaria (1828–1843). A member of Clan Erskine, Erskine was the eldest son of Thomas Erskine, 1st Baron Erskine, and fourth son of Henry Erskine, 10th Earl of Buchan. His mother was Frances, daughter of Daniel Moore, MP. He was educated at Charterhouse, Winchester, and Trinity College, Cambridge.

After matriculating in 1796, he was called to the Bar, Lincoln's Inn, in 1802. Pursuing a political and diplomatic career, Erskine did not practice law; instead, he was elected as Member of Parliament for Portsmouth in 1806, in place of his father, who was appointed Lord Chancellor. At the request of Erskine's father to Charles James Fox, then Foreign Secretary, he was appointed Minister to the United States later that year. In 1809, Erskine was recalled by the Foreign Secretary, George Canning, for having offered the withdrawal of the Orders in Council of 1807 against the Americans and his resolution of the Chesapeake-Leopard Affair. He thus remained out of favor and unemployed until 1824, when he inherited his father's title and was appointed Minister to Stuttgart. He subsequently transferred to Munich in 1828. He retired in 1843.



Figure 10. Portrait of David Montagu Erskine by Gilbert Stuart 1802.

## Conclusion

While the news acknowledged in this stampless folded letter was undoubtedly a sad affair for the writer, The Lady Erskine, the existence of the missive is a postal history treasure. Not only does the letter provide an interesting investigation into the methods of transit, it also serves as the catalyst for exploring details of a prominent Philadelphia family. Interestingly, the Cadwalader house (Figure 11) was the subject of a Historic American Buildings Survey. For additional photographs of the house, visit the Library of Congress website at [www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.pa1025.photos?st=gallery](http://www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.pa1025.photos?st=gallery). ▼

## Acknowledgments

Any error or omission is the author's responsibility. He can be reached at [charlesdico-mo@gmail.com](mailto:charlesdico-mo@gmail.com).

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## About the Author

Charles J. DiComo, PhD is a lifelong philatelist, postal historian and award-winning author. He enjoys researching, restoring, writing, publishing, and presenting on a broad array of philatelic and postal history topics. He is President of the Philatelic Society of Lancaster County, President of the Empire State Postal History Society, Editor-in-Chief of the USPCS Chairman's Chatter, life member of the US Philatelic Classics Society, and on the Board of the PA Postal History Society. A native New Yorker, he currently resides in Lancaster, Pennsylvania with his wife of 25 years, Kathleen, and their daughters McKenna and Mia.

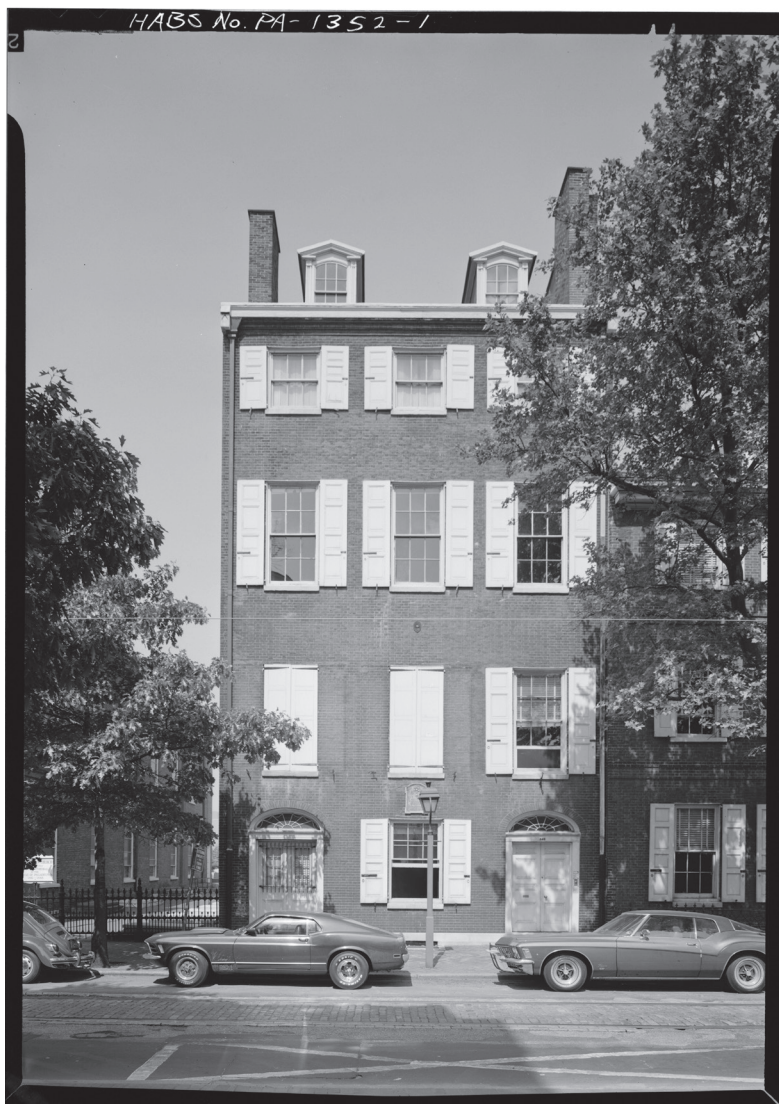


Figure 11. The Cadwalader-Norris House located at 240 South Fourth Street in Philadelphia.