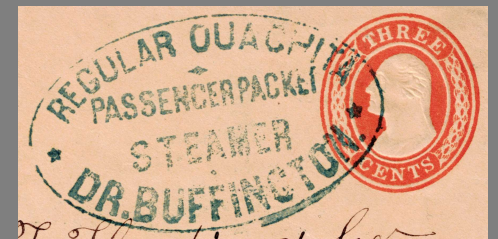
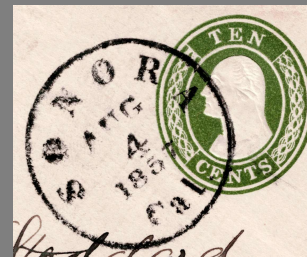


Nesbitt Envelopes 1853 - 1860



The First US Postal Stationery



The Express Mail Problem.....

1845 Postal Act established government monopoly on carriage of mail but, even after letter rate was reduced to 3c in 1851, mail continued to be carried illegally by private expresses, resulting in significant loss of revenue for Post Office Department.

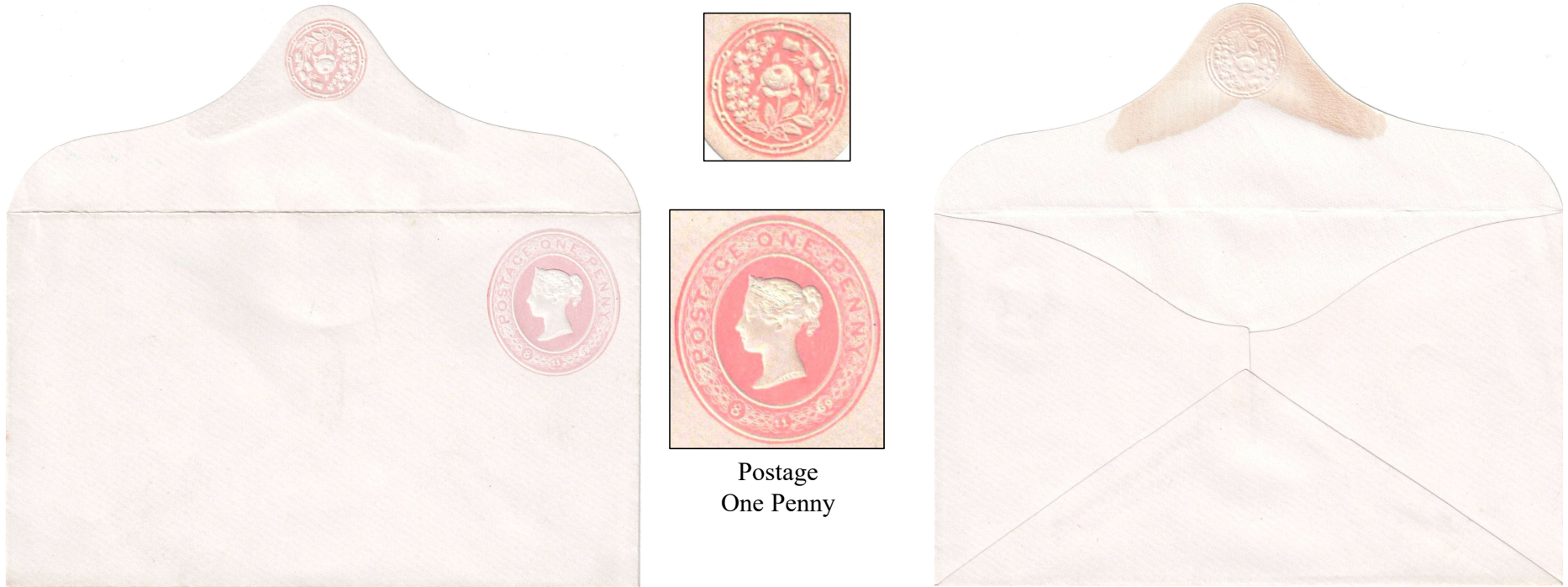
- Large volume of letters carried privately on Mississippi River steamboats without paying government postage
- Gold Rush population explosion in California led to companies such as Wells Fargo delivering letters to and from remote mining encampments (where there were no government post offices) & between major cities such as Sacramento and San Francisco in direct, illegal competition with USPOD.

.....and The Solution

1852 Act authorized PMG to sell government stamped envelopes & declared that **letters enclosed in such envelopes could be conveyed by private carriers “.....provided that said envelope shall be duly sealed, or otherwise firmly and securely closed, so that such letter cannot be taken therefrom without tearing or destroying such envelope.”**

Private carriage of letters in plain envelopes with stamps affixed was still not allowed, because affixed stamps might not be properly cancelled by the private carriers & thus might be reused, whereas once a stamped envelope had an address written on it & was sealed, it was unlikely to be used again.

Great Britain – 1d Queen Victoria stamped envelope – served as model for first US issue



Postage
One Penny

US Post Office Department furnished samples of GB envelope to potential bidders, highlighting desired features:

- Embossed stamp die
- Gummed flap
- Decorative embossed 'seal' design on rear flap
- Watermark design in envelope paper (as alternative to GB use of colored thread) as security feature

Early Nesbitt 3c Envelope



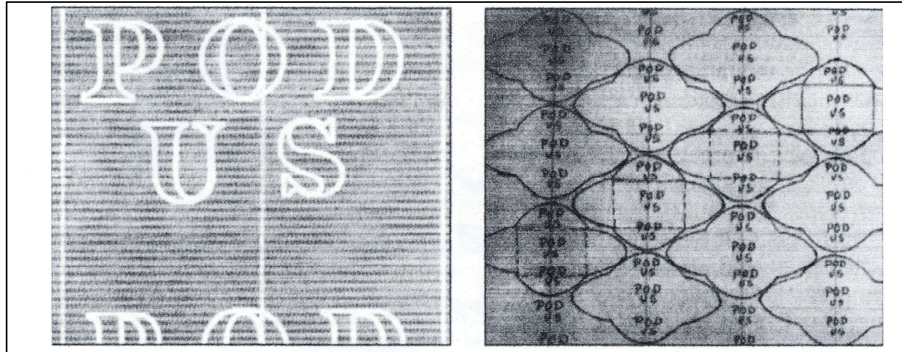
Envelope manufactured prior to July 7, 1853
when use of Nesbitt seal was discontinued



Embossed oval cameo
(above Nesbitt seal) reads:

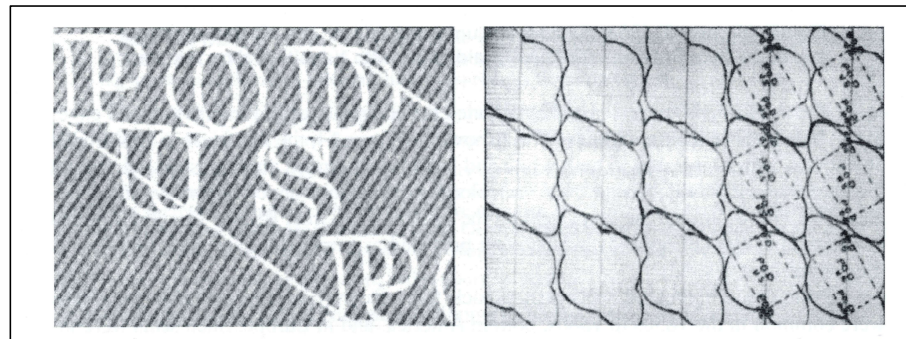
WILSON & HAYDEN
SADDLERY . HARDWARE
17 & 19 Columbia St.
CINCINNATI

Watermarks



Horizontal laid lines – only 12 envelope blanks per sheet

Discontinued prior to first shipment – only 129 recorded to date

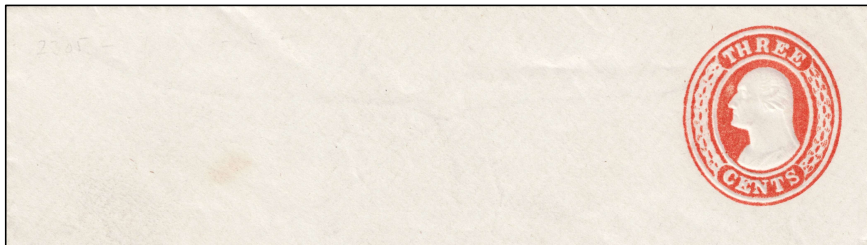


Diagonal laid lines – 15 envelope blanks per sheet

All subsequent Nesbitt envelopes used diagonal orientation



3c Envelopes – 3 different sizes



Size 7 - Letter (83 x 139 mm) issued July 1, 1853
(EDU – July 6, 1853)



Size 2 - Note (73/76 x 122 mm) issue date unknown
(EDU – October 23, 1853)

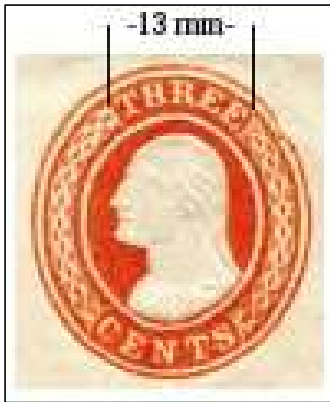


Size 1 - Mini Note (65 x 118 mm) issue date unknown
(EDU – October 18, 1860)

In addition to envelopes printed on white paper in 3 sizes,
3c envelopes were also printed on buff paper, only in Size 7

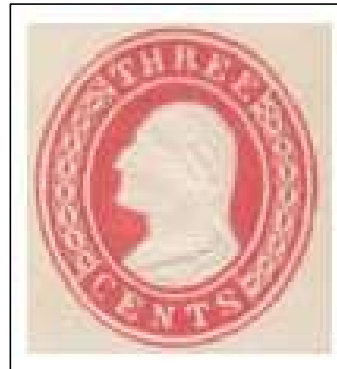
3c Envelopes – Die Varieties

Die 1



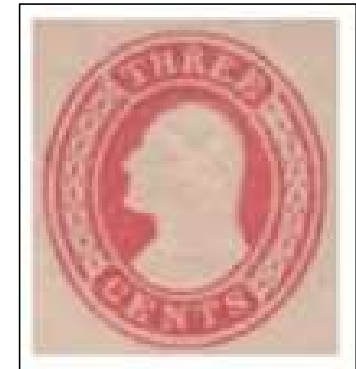
'Three' within short label (13mm) with curved ends

Die 2



'Three' within medium label (16mm) with straight ends

Die 3



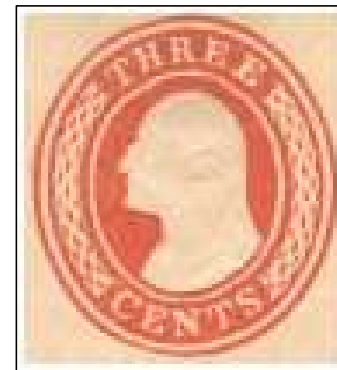
'Three' within medium label (16mm) with each end having 3 lines forming a 'K'

Die 4



'Three' within wide label (20mm) with straight ends

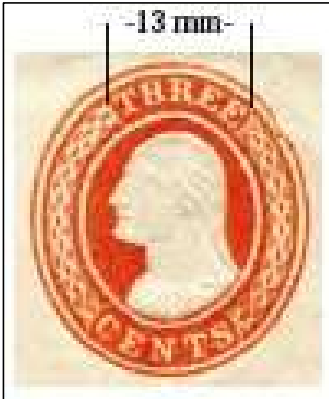
Die 5



'Three' within medium label (16mm) with curved ends

Die 1 Examples

Die 1



'Three' within short label
(13mm) with curved ends

Die 1 Envelopes on white and buff paper
– both Size 7 with Nesbitt seal

Die 1 used for bulk of initial distribution

Buff envelopes only issued in Size 7
Nesbitt seals only known on Size 7 envelopes

Both envelopes manufactured prior
to July 7, 1853, when seals discontinued



New Bedford, MA to Detroit MI
Sep 1



Effective July 1, 1851
Letter Rate 3c per ½ oz
Up to 3,000 miles

Philadelphia to Reading, PA
June 14

Die 2 Examples

Die 2



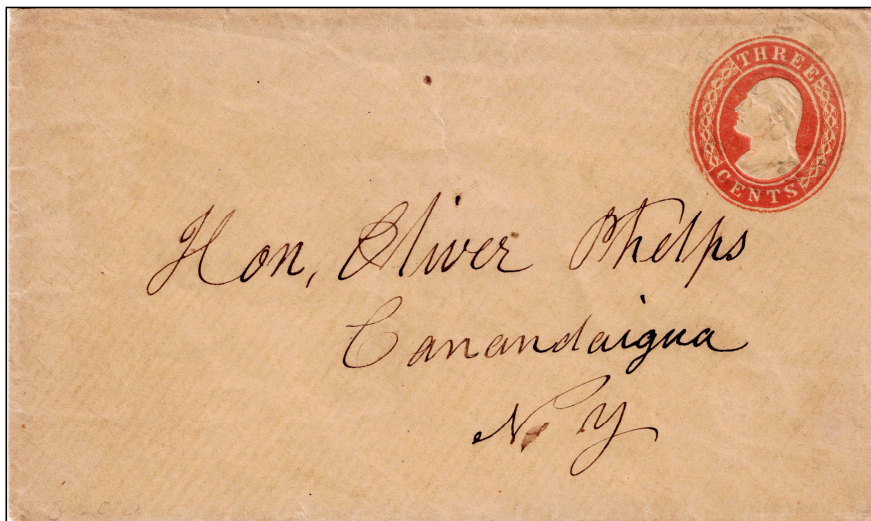
'Three' within medium label
(16mm) with straight ends

Equipment limitations in early months of envelope production resulted in lettering & grill work being engraved separately for each working die.

Quality control issues were resolved by early 1854.



Knoxville to Athens, TN
March 22 (docketed 1854)
White envelope
Nesbitt seal on flap

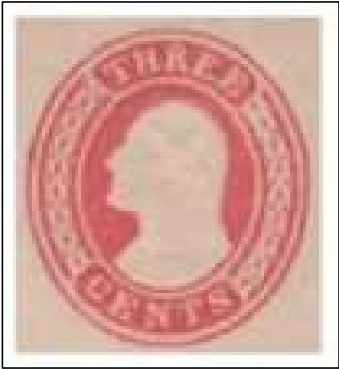


Illegible CDS to
Canandaigua, NY
Buff envelope

Effective July 1, 1851
Letter Rate 3c per ½ oz
Up to 3,000 miles

Die 3 Examples

Die 3



'Three' within medium label
(16mm) with each end
having 3 lines forming a 'K'

Die 3 (aka the "K" die), scarcest of all
the dies, particularly on white paper.

Only known on Letter Size envelopes.



New York to Mansfield Centre, CT
Aug 14
White envelope



Yazoo City, MS to Lake Providence, LA
Sep 26
Buff envelope

Effective July 1, 1851
Letter Rate 3c per 1/2 oz
Up to 3,000 miles

Die 4 Examples

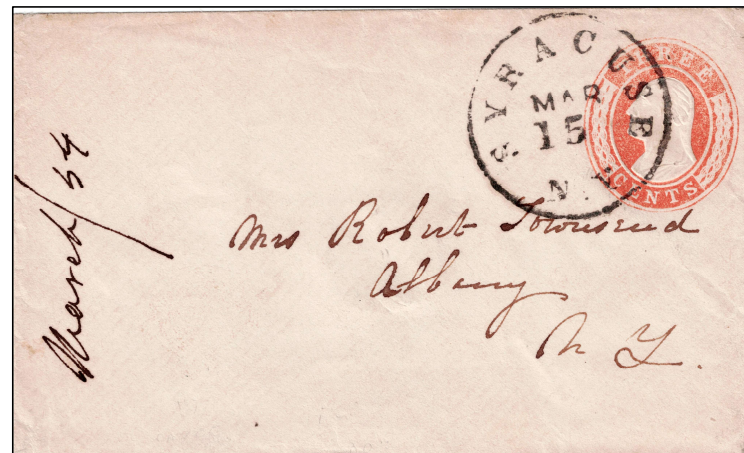
Die 4



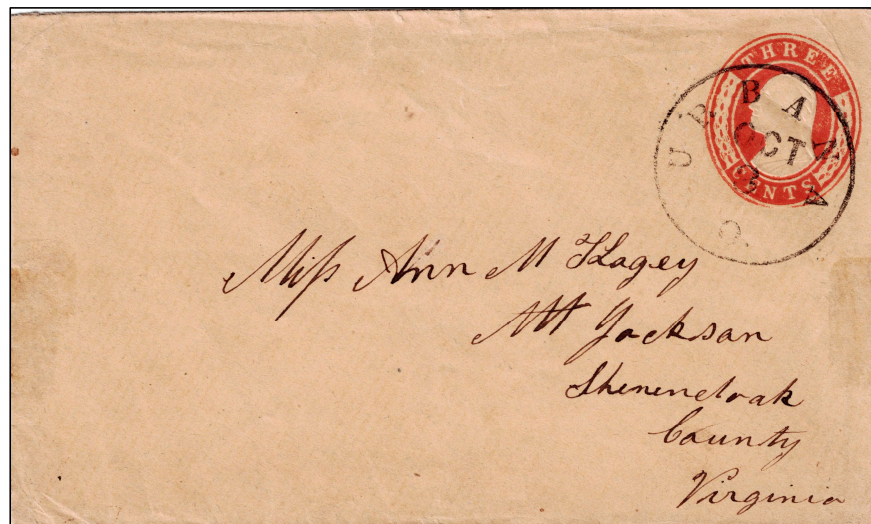
'Three' within wide label
(20mm) with straight ends

Die 4 also rare.

Dies 2,3 & 4 were destroyed (after very short production runs) & replaced by Die 5 for remainder of contract.



Syracuse to Albany, NY
March 15 (docketed 1854)
Size 2 white envelope



Urbana, OH to Mount Jackson, VA
October 3
Size 7 buff envelope

Effective July 1, 1851
Letter Rate 3c per ½ oz
Up to 3,000 miles

Die 5 Examples

Die 5



'Three' within medium label
(16mm) with curved ends

In use exclusively from early 1854 to 1860

Die 5 Letter & Note size envelopes are
most common 3c die seen by collectors.



Size 1 White envelope – mint

Size 1 – Mini-Note (Ladies' Cover) envelopes
were introduced in 1859 & are scarce
(3 mint + 3 used copies reported)

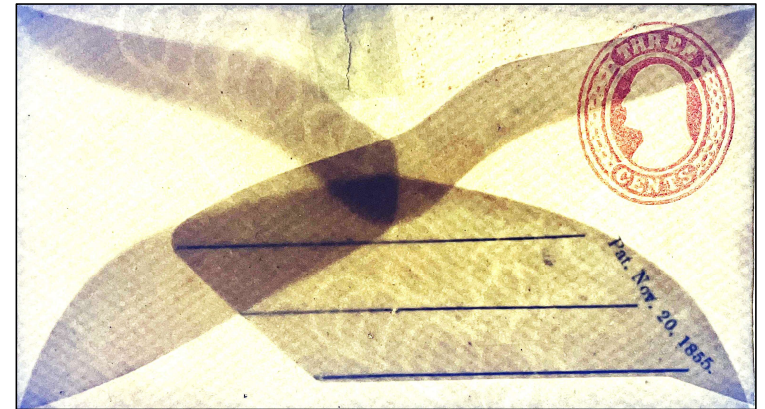
Size 7 Buff envelope - mint



Patent Lines



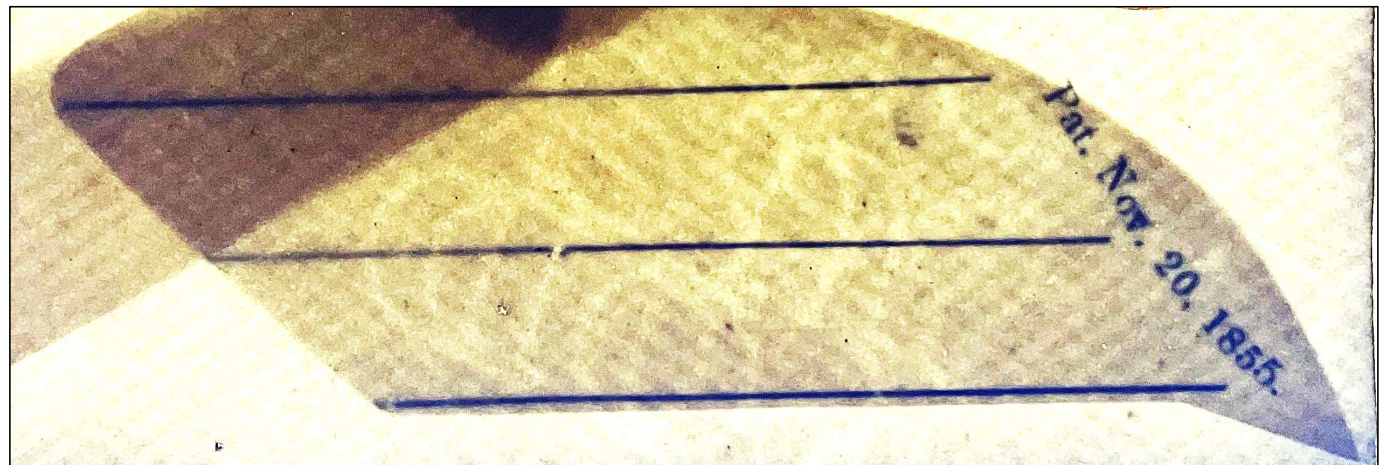
This size envelope was only available with 'Patent Lines'



Size 1 (Mini-Note) Envelope – illuminated to show 'Patent Lines' printed on interior of back flap

Beginning in October 1859, PO began ordering certain 3c envelopes printed with self-ruling 'Patent Lines' (aka 'Disappearing Lines') on both Letter & Mini-Note Size Envelopes.

'Patent Lines' were intended to be an aid in addressing envelopes & continued to be optionally available on certain envelopes issued through early 1870s, when they were discontinued.



Express Company Franks on 3c Envelopes Carried Outside the Government Mails – Pacific Express



First shipment of 3c envelopes arrived in San Francisco July 31, 1853. In January 1854 USPOD gave official notice that letters carried by express companies must have US postage prepaid.

Wells Fargo was already the major player & began to issue its own franks in August 1855. The first Wells Fargo franked 3c envelopes cost 12 1/2c each, but due to competition from Pacific Express, the price was soon lowered to 10c. By January 1858, Wells Fargo was buying 100,000 3c envelopes per month for their letter express operations.

Pacific Express operated a large regional express in California & was in business from March 1855 to April 1857, when the company failed due to lack of capital & an embezzlement scandal. With its operations centered in California, most letters handled by Pacific Express were carried to their destination without any use of the government mail.

Pacific Express was one of the first Western Express companies to add its own 'PAID' frank to the government stamped envelopes.



Express Company Franks on 3c Envelopes Carried Outside the Government Mails – Bamber / Freeman



John Freeman was one of the most active express operators through most of the 1850s, serving all the mining regions of California, as well as certain foreign locations. In 1860 his business was sold to Wells Fargo.

Bamber & Co's Express, headquartered in San Francisco, operated from 1858 to 1873 throughout the East Bay area. The 'Contra Costa' handstamp referred to the town of Contra Costa, not the Contra Costa County of today. The town of Contra Costa was situated on the waterfront where the present-day Oakland Pier is now located.



3c Envelopes used for Steamship Mail to New Orleans



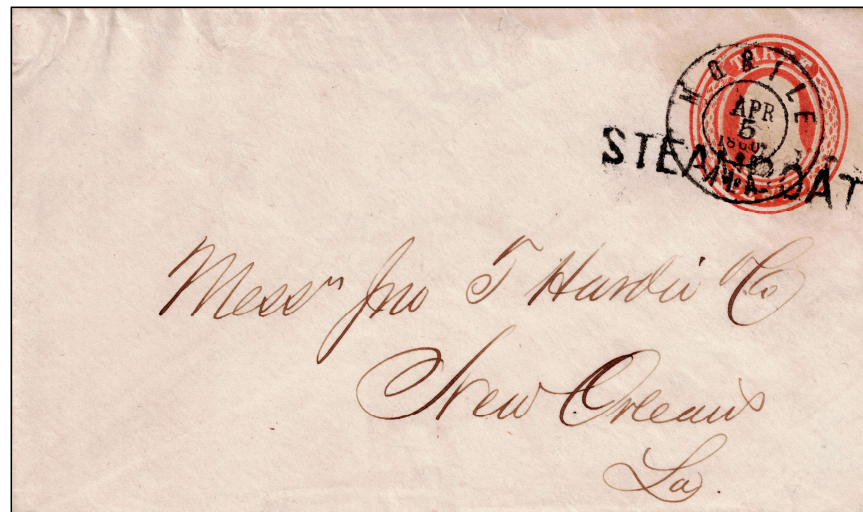
2 Covers addressed to John. T Hardie & Co, a prominent New Orleans cotton broker & commission merchant.

The mark 'STEAMBOAT' means that the letter was picked up somewhere along an inland waterway by the captain or clerk of a steamboat having no mail-carrying contract with the PO. It was carried as a favor to the writer, & the captain was required to carry it to the PO at the end of his run (in this case, Mobile, AL). There the letter was marked 'STEAMBOAT' & the captain received 2c for his trouble.

On arrival in Mobile, letter presumably carried via regular Star Route contract mail service to New Orleans.

Dr. Buffington, a sidewheel paddle steamer launched in 1857, operated an active passenger service on the Ouachita & Mississippi Rivers. It had no contract to carry the mail. This envelope was carried entirely out of the PO mail service.

The steamboat agents often took care of mail for their customers & for transient travelers, putting the letters aboard the first boat going in the right direction. Shipowners frequently struck the envelope with their handstamp as publicity for their business.



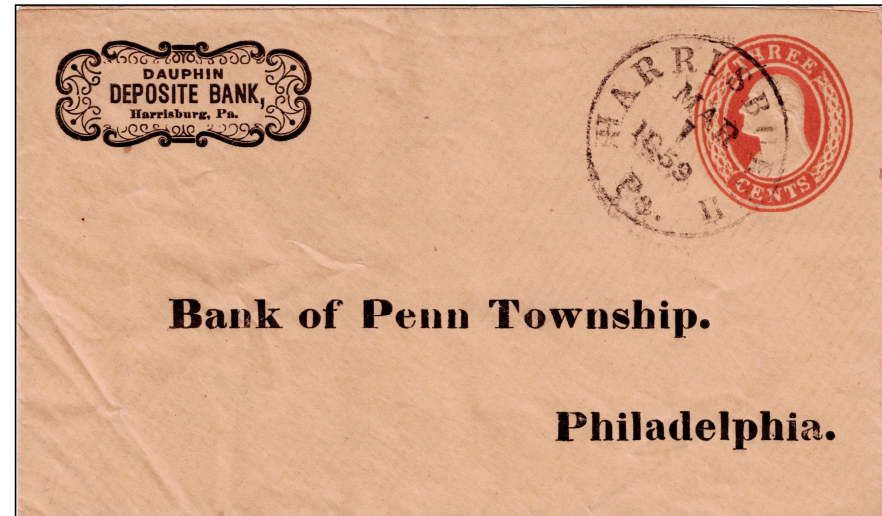
Advertising Covers – Corner Cards



Wilmington, DE to St. Paul, Minnesota Territory June 30
Minnesota became a State May 11, 1858
Cameo – J.T. Heald, Book Seller & Binder

Printed corner cards on stamped envelopes were not authorized by Congress until 1860, but many businesses already recognized that envelopes offered a useful advertising opportunity & added their own privately printed or embossed designs to the government envelopes.

Harrisburg to Philadelphia, PA March 1, 1859
Dauphin Deposit Bank decorative corner card



6c Red Envelopes

Size 21 - Official (98 x 221 mm)
Issued July 1853 – buff & white paper
(EDU – March 22, 1855)

Intended for double-rate letters

Effective July 1, 1851
Letter Rate 3c per ½ oz
Up to 3,000 miles



Henry to Princeton, Bureau Co, Ill
March 14

Official size envelopes not popular
& issued in limited quantities

Few used examples survive

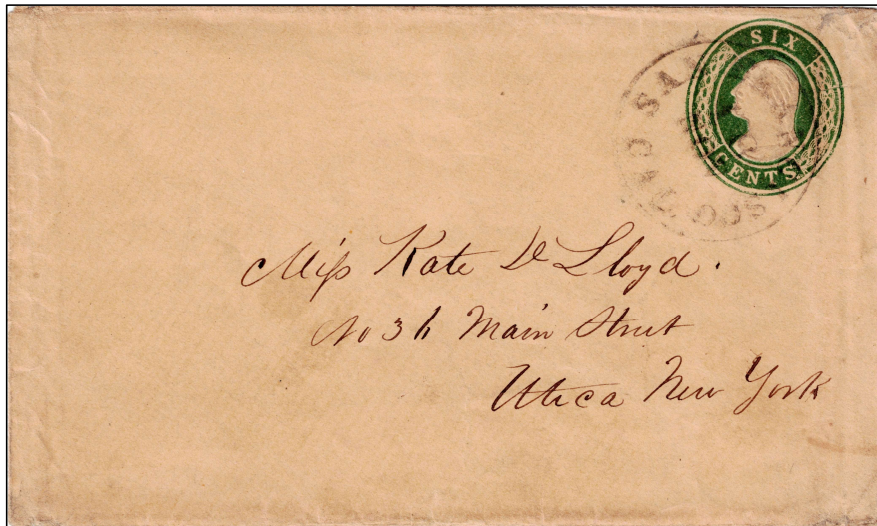
6c Green Envelopes – Transcontinental Rate

6c envelopes imprinted in green were designed for the over-3,000-mile transcontinental rate

Issued 1853 on white & buff letter size envelopes only (EDU – November 10, 1853)

Same die used for red & green 6c envelopes – no varieties

N.B No 6c stamp was produced to pay this rate



Most frequently found showing usage from California
Only one known 6c envelope showing East to West coast usage

San Francisco, CA to Utica, NY
Nov 19
Size 7 buff envelope

July 1, 1851 – March 31, 1855
Letter Rate:
3c per ½ oz - up to 3,000 miles
6c per ½ oz – over 3,000 miles

6c Green Envelopes – Transcontinental Usage after Rate Increase to 10c

After April 1, 1855 increase in transcontinental rate to 10c per ½ oz, 6c envelopes continued to be used in California, with added adhesives, until supplies of new 10c envelopes were available



Murphy's CA to Bethlehem, CT
July 13

April 1, 1855 – June 30, 1863
Letter Rate:
3c per ½ oz - up to 3,000 miles
10c per ½ oz – over 3,000 miles
Prepayment Compulsory



Stockton, CA to Steubenville, OH
June 15
Manuscript 'due' + handstamp '10'

1855 PL&R stipulated short paid amount to be collected by Delivery Office for partly paid letters (4c due in this case – presumably stamped '10' in error) (April 1, 1855 – Feb 28, 1866)

10c Green Envelopes – Transcontinental Rate (after April 1, 1855)

10c envelopes began distribution April 25, 1855, a few weeks after implementation of new transcontinental rate. Two different dies were used. White and buff envelopes were issued in Letter Size only.



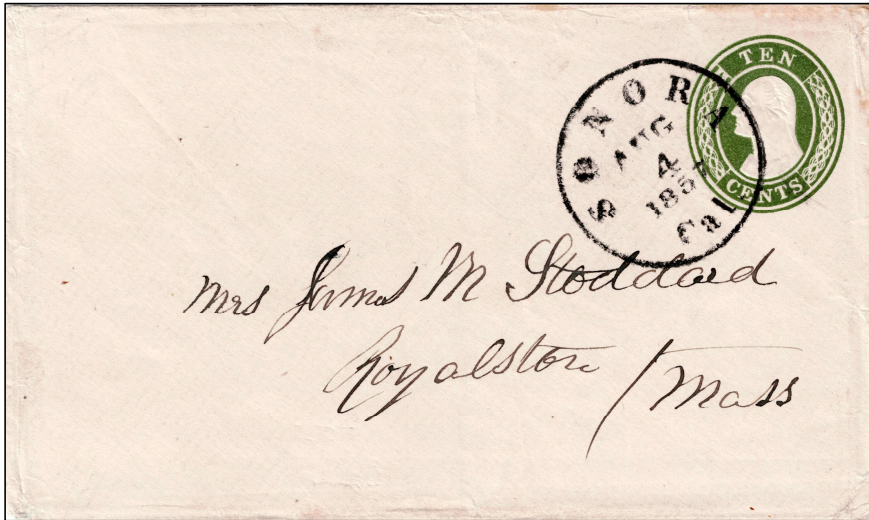
Die 7

'Ten' within medium label (16mm) with straight ends

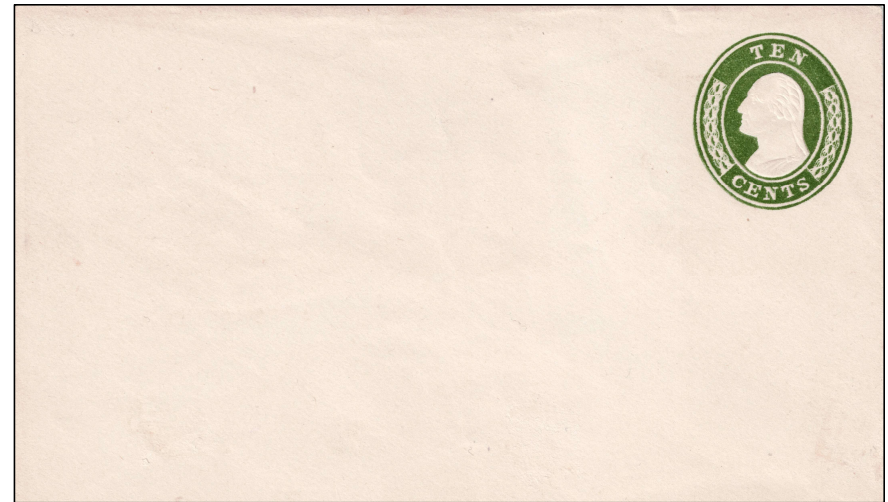
April 1, 1855 – June 30, 1863
Letter Rate:
3c per ½ oz - up to 3,000 miles
10c per ½ oz – over 3,000 miles
Prepayment Compulsory

Die 8

'Ten' within wide label (20mm) with straight ends



Sonora, CA to Royalston, MA
Aug 4, 1857



10c Green Envelopes – Color Variety & Double Rate Usage

According to Post Office records, over 80% of 10c envelopes were shipped to Western post offices, where demand was strong from postal patrons writing their families back east. Surviving 10c envelopes mailed westbound to California are much scarcer than eastbound uses.

Die 8 on buff envelope – yellow green variety
Rare westbound 10c cover



Selma, Ind to George Town, CA
Sept 8, 1856 Received Oct 20, 1856 (docketed on verso)

April 1, 1855 – June 30, 1863
Letter Rate:
3c per ½ oz - up to 3,000 miles
10c per ½ oz – over 3,000 miles
Prepayment Compulsory

Die 8 on buff envelope
Double rate franking (Sc. #9 and #11A (strip of three))



San Francisco, CA to Boston, MA
Dec 5, 1857

Located in El Dorado County (site of the 1848 discovery that sparked the Gold Rush), Georgetown grew from a small mining camp in 1849 to a town of about 3,000 people by 1854 & remained the hub of an immensely rich gold mining area throughout the 1850s. Gold production continued there until the turn of the 20th century.

Wells Fargo Franks & Handstamps – California & Transcontinental



Sacramento City to San Francisco, CA – April 4
Wells Fargo – 3rd Series Printed Frank
(centered at top of envelope - used from late 1857 onwards)
Black Frank “Over Our California and Coast Routes”

No use of government mail service

Cover addressed to Cincinnati, Ohio
Wells Fargo – 2nd Series Printed Frank
(top left corner of envelope – used early 1856 – 1857)
Red Frank “Through Our California and Atlantic Express”
Carried by Wells Fargo from San Francisco to New York (arrived Nov ?),
Then by US mail from New York to Cincinnati



Canadian Treaty Mail

Cleveland, Ohio to Collingwood, Canada West – April 23, 185?



Arrival Stamp (on verso) – Collingwood Harbor, Apr 29

10c Paid [3c Envelope + 1c Blue (Scott #9) + 3c Dull Red Pair (# 11A)]

US-Canada Postal Convention
April 6, 1851 – March 31, 1868
10c for ½ oz Letter

Originally a small settlement known as 'Hen & Chickens Harbor' on South-East shore of Georgian Bay (in present-day Ontario), Collingwood grew rapidly after being chosen as northern terminus for Ontario, Simcoe & Huron Railway. Renamed Collingwood Harbor on eve of railway's arrival in 1855 & officially incorporated as town of Collingwood on January 1, 1858.

Pre-Treaty Mail to France

Memphis, TN to Lyon, France – October 15, 1855



Processed at NY Exchange Office	Oct 23
Transferred to Boston for departure of next British Packet	Oct 24
Cunard's <i>SS Canada</i> Boston to Liverpool arrived	Nov 4
Mailbag opened in London (Unpaid letter date stamp in red)	Nov 5
French entry marking (Ambulant Calais-Paris CDS)	Nov 5
Final destination – Lyon (backstamped)	Nov 7



London date stamp
used for unpaid
letters (on reverse)

US had no postal treaty with France until April 1857

The 1848 Postal Convention between US & UK allowed US to use British mail system to convey letters to destinations beyond England - US mail to France typically sent via open mail through UK & could not be paid to destination in France.

5c Paid [3c Envelope + 1c Blue Pair (Scott #9)]

Per 1848 Convention, 5c paid US inland postage to British mail steamer in US harbor. Continued from there as unpaid letter with postage due in France.

Black manuscript '13' indicates French postage due of 13 decimes (5 decimes French inland postage + 8 decimes for British & sea transit fees)

British Government demand for ships to be used as transports during the Crimean War impaired Cunard's transatlantic mail service. Weekly sailings alternating between Boston & New York were no longer possible. Fortnightly service between Liverpool & Boston continued, but there was no New York service throughout 1855.

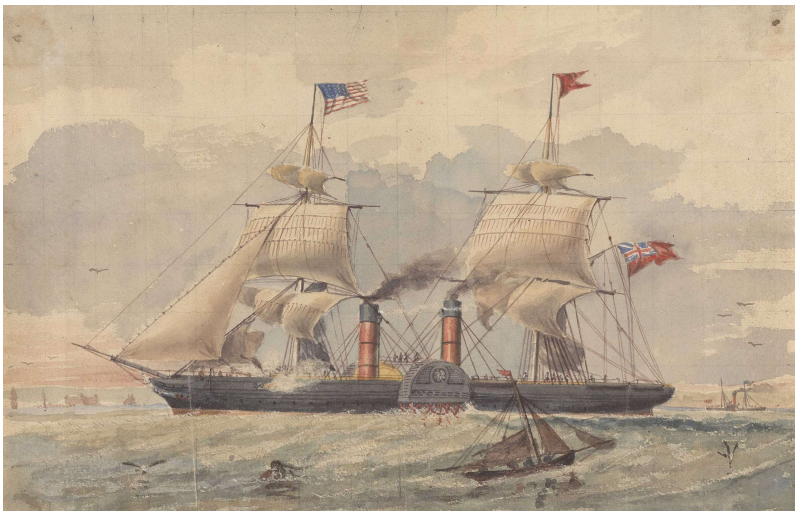
Prussian Treaty Mail

Mailed Oswego, NY manuscript marking "Per Prussian closed Mail"	Feb 9, 1856
Processed at NY Exchange Office	Feb 12
Partial payment of 3c disallowed – marked '30' in black ink	
Transferred to Boston for departure of next British Packet	Feb 13
Cunard's <i>SS Arabia</i> Boston to Liverpool arrived	Feb 24
Liverpool – London – Ostend (Belgium) – Aachen (Germany)	Feb 26
Final destination – Herrenberg, Germany (backstamped)	Feb 29

Mail transported in closed bag between Exchange Offices in NY & Aachen
 Marked '45' in blue ink at Aachen Exchange Office (45kr = 30c)



US-Prussia Postal Convention
 October 30, 1852 – December 31, 1867
 30c per ½ oz Sent Paid or Unpaid
 No credit for partial payment



SS Arabia leaving on first voyage to New York, January 1, 1853

After joining the Cunard fleet in January 1853, *SS Arabia* completed 15 round-trip transatlantic voyages over the next 2 years. When Great Britain & France declared war on Russia in March 1854, the Cunard Line had to provide steamships to carry troops & supplies to the Crimea. From November 1854 to January 1856 *SS Arabia* was used as a war transport. This voyage marked the ship's return to commercial service from the US.

French Treaty Mail

American Packet Direct to France



Single Rate Paid Letter mailed New Orleans July 15, 1858
Sailed New York to Havre (July 24 – Aug 5) - *SS Fulton* (Havre Line)
Arrived Huisseau-sur-Mauves, Loiret, France - Aug 7

15c Paid [3c Envelope + 12c Black (Scott #36)]

US-French Postal Convention
April 1, 1857 – December 31, 1869
15c per ¼ oz Sent Paid or Unpaid
No credit for partial payment

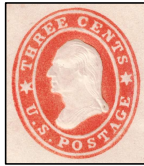
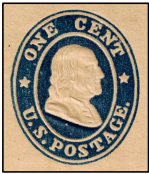
American Packet via UK to France



Double Rate Paid Letter mailed New Orleans Feb 3, 1859
Sailed New York to Calais, via Southampton (Feb 12 – 26)
SS Kangaroo (Inman Line)
Arrived Paris - Feb 27

30c Paid [3c Envelope + 1c Blue (Scott #24),
3c Red Pair (#26) and 10c Green Pair (#33)]

Later Usage & Issuance of Star Die Envelopes



The Postal Act of June 1860 reduced the charge for delivery of drop letters by carrier to 1c, which prompted adoption of a new series of envelopes, to include the new 1c denomination. Production of these Second Series of Nesbitt envelopes (known as 'Star Dies') replaced the First Series in August 1860. The 'Star Dies' were in use for less than a year until being demonetized due to the Civil War.

South Carolina seceded from US on Dec 20, 1860, followed by an additional 5 states in Jan 1861 & formal establishment of CSA on Feb 4, 1861. US PMG Montgomery Blair continued services of US POD in seceded states & Confederacy until May 31, 1861. First Series Nesbitt envelopes remained in circulation until demonetization.

Napoleon Arkansas to Auburn, Mississippi Napoleon CDS - Jan 26, 1861
Missent & forwarded from Canton, Mississippi (per blue manuscript marking)
(Die 5 Buff Size 7 3c Envelope - reduced)

Arkansas seceded May 6, 1861 & was admitted to Confederacy May 18.

Mississippi seceded Jan 9, 1861 & was admitted Feb 4.

Union usage to a seceded state.



Another Late Usage



3c Nesbitt envelope
Mailed Fayetteville, NC – 14 May, 1860
Addressed to Raleigh, NC

Another Late Usage With A Second Life



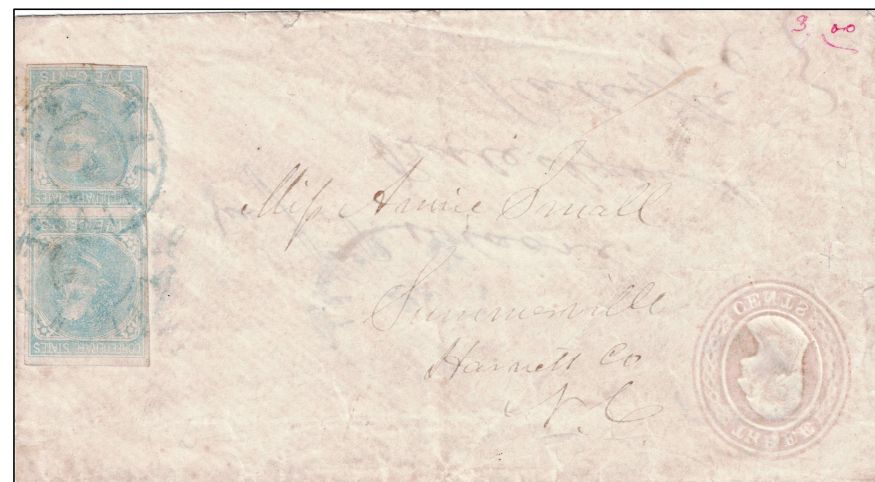
3c Nesbitt envelope
Mailed Fayetteville, NC – 14 May, 1860
Addressed to Raleigh, NC

Raleigh, NC cds (date not legible)

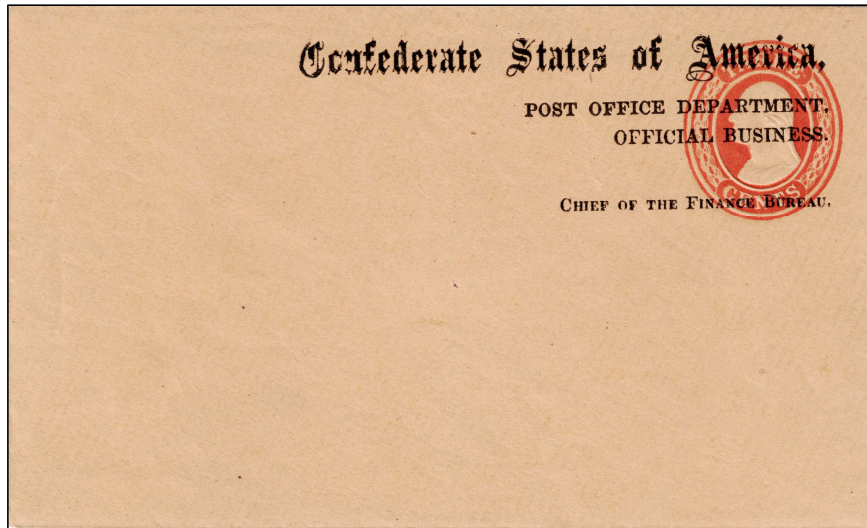
Mailed to Miss Annie Small
Summerville, Harnett Co, NC

CSA 5c Light Blue Pair (Scott # 7)
pays 10c Confederate postage

CSA Letter Rate 10c per ½ oz
Effective July 1, 1862



Confederate States – Adversity uses (Post Demonetization)



After Confederate Post Office took over postal operations in the South on June 1, 1861, designated officials of P.O. Department were authorized to send free of postage all mail relating exclusively to their official duties.

Official envelopes were prepared with imprints of the various bureaus & offices of the department, many overprinted on seized stocks of Nesbitt & Star Die envelopes remaining in Southern post offices.

Once the Confederate Post Office took over, US stamps & stamped envelopes became invalid for use in Confederacy. Paper (and especially envelopes) became scarce & unused stamped envelopes (both Nesbitts & Star Dies) were pressed into use out of necessity.

CSA Letter Rate 10c per ½ oz
Effective July 1, 1862

CSA 5c Blue Pair (Scott # 7)
pays 10c Confederate postage
used over 3c Nesbitt Envelope

Salisbury to Salem, NC
Docketed Dec 19, 1862



Useful References

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Ken Lawrence, “The first United States stamped envelopes”

Scott Stamp Monthly, September 2005

Dan Untersander, Issuance of the first US Stamped Envelope Contract”

Chronicle (USPCS) 232 (Nov 2011)

Dan Untersander (Editor), 19th Century Stamped Envelopes, Lettersheets, & Wrappers of the United States

5th Edition, 2024 (United Postal Stationery Society)