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EXCELSIOR!



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Editor's Box

First of all, I must apologize for the late delivery of this September Excelsior! A combination of time constraints on my part, as well as a lack of articles submitted, both contributed to a delay of over one month. For future reference, and for the editor's sanity, I would like to have articles submitted to me no later than six weeks prior to the first of the month when Excelsior is due to be published. This would mean a deadline of January 15th for the March Excelsior and a July 15th deadline for the September issue. We need your articles; even a single page can make a difference by encouraging someone else to contribute their knowledge. Thank you to all of the contributors whose articles appear herein. I hope that you find them to be of interest and enjoy reading them.
D.E.W.

SAMUEL F. B. MORSE: THE MAN, HIS INVENTION, AND A COVER

By: Drew A. Nicholson

Introduction

This article is the result of the purchase of an SFL in a recent internet mail sale. It was of French origin and addressed to Samuel F. B. Morse, but because it had undergone readdressing and contained numerous postal markings on which I was primarily focused, I at first failed to detect his name. Needless to say, when I took a second, more careful look—and Morse’s name became obvious—my interest in the cover increased exponentially and I adjusted my bidding accordingly. When I received the cover and read the contents, I immediately began to research the event revealed therein: specifically, what was meant by Morse’s “gratuity” and how did it fit into the historical record?



Samuel Morse in 1840

(from

Wikipedia)

The Man

Samuel F.(inley) B.(reese) Morse was born in Charleston, Massachusetts on April 27, 1791, the son of Reverend Dr. Jedidiah Morse, at the Congregational parsonage located at the foot of Breed’s Hill. If one mentions his name to most Americans who have a modicum of historical interest, they will likely respond in one of two ways: 1. “He invented the telegraph,” or ”He invented the Morse Code.” A few may also be aware that Morse was a world-class painter as well as, according to many, the “Father of American Photography.” [1]

Morse graduated from Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts and he attended Yale College, in New Haven, Connecticut. From the very beginning he was recognized as a talented painter; while at Yale he supported himself through painting—but that was not his only interest. While at Yale he attended lectures on electricity presented by Benjamin Silliman and Jeremiah Day, which laid the foundation of his future interest. In whatever activity he was involved, Morse strove to be the best and to win world-wide recognition for his accomplishments.

In 1811, Samuel Morse left for England accompanied by the noted artist, Washington Alliston. Morse was an outstanding painter but was attracted to an artistic theme—Neo-Classical Art of the Renaissance [2]; unfortunately it was a theme not then popular in the United States. This along with his inability to “handle” money led him to becoming a typical “starving artist.” Fortunately, as time passed he began to make a good living at painting, particularly as a commissioned portrait artist. [3]

The Invention

In 1833, while returning from Europe after completing some commission work, Morse struck up a series of conversations with passengers during the voyage that would lead his fertile mind to the development of the electric telegraph. He began thinking about sending “numerically coded messages from one magnetic device to a similar receiving magnetic device, in other words the telegraph.”[4]

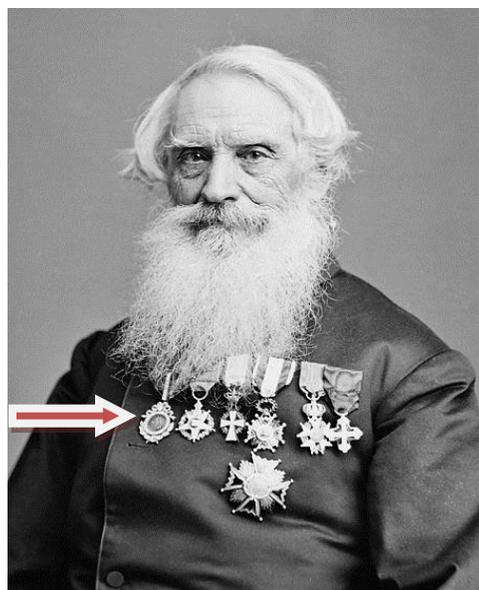
Like other great American inventors [5], Samuel Morse walked in the footsteps of others. His observation of experiments by Charles Thomas Jackson led him to developing the single-wire telegraph; he constructed a model and submitted it with his patent application. In addition, theories developed by Prof. Joseph Henry (the first Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution) were incorporated into the model. The most nagging problem of early telegraphy—the loss of signal over distance—was solved through the input of Prof. Leonard Gale, of New York University; they were later joined by Alfred Vail “who had excellent insights and money.” [6] (Vail is also credited with making great contributions to the development of the Morse Code.) None of these persons received much (if any) public recognition for their contributions. So many people contributed to “Morse’s” telegraph and code inventions that, according to Carney Rhinevault, Morse “could more properly be called a great organizer than a great inventor.” [7]

In 1843, after conducting an experiment in the Capitol Building for members of Congress, Morse received a \$30,000 appropriation to construct an experimental 38-mile telegraph line along the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad right-of-way between Washington, DC and Baltimore, MD. The line was officially opened on May 24, 1844, with the transmission of the now-famous words, “What hath God wrought.” In May 1845 Morse formed the Magnetic Telegraph Company which strung lines connecting the major cities of the Northeast and also west to the Mississippi River.

What is interesting to note is that Samuel Morse never received a U.S. Patent for the telegraph, only a foreign (Ottoman) patent issued by Sultan Abdulmecid in 1847, which was largely ignored and regularly contested in the United States. In 1853 the patent case came before the U. S. Supreme Court; after a lengthy investigation, “Chief Justice Roger B. Taney ruled that Morse had been the first to combine the battery, electromagnetism, the electromagnet and the correct battery configuration into a workable practicable telegraph.” [8] However, in spite of this clear ruling, Morse still received no official recognition from the United States government. Morse’s domination of telegraphy in Europe—with the exception of the United Kingdom which used another system—became evident in 1851 when his apparatus was officially adopted as the European “standard.” Because of the importance of the Morse telegraph to European communication, he received a number of honors and awards from various countries and academies.

The telegraph made Morse wealthy: the estate he at his death in 1872 exceeded \$500,000.

Photograph of Samuel Morse taken by Matthew Brady in 1866, in which Morse wears the medals he received from several European countries honoring his accomplishments. The medal to the viewer’s left (arrow) is the Nichan Iftikhar of the Ottoman Empire. (from Wikipedia)



The Cover

Figure 1 originates with Cal Hahn's collection and was accompanied by his usual blue-bordered label, which contained his analysis of the postal markings appearing on the cover. The description provided below the cover has been generally drawn from the auction lot description, which in turn was taken from the information supplied by Cal on the label.

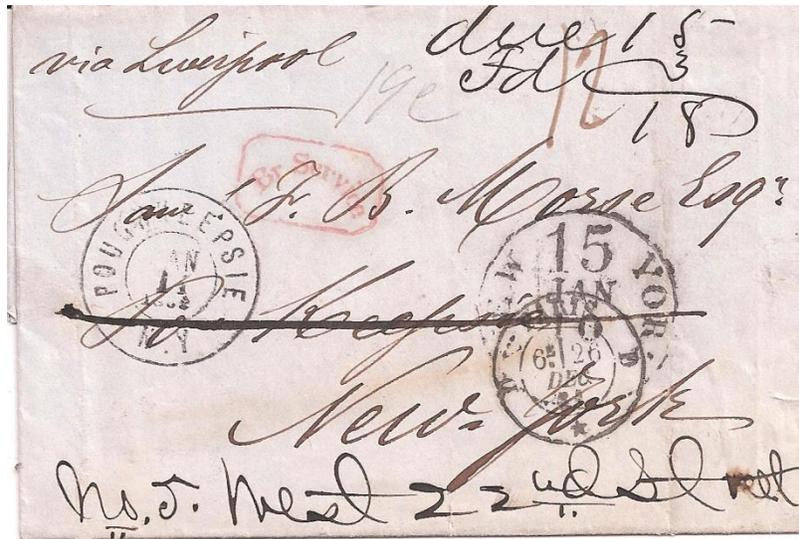


Figure 1

1861, from France to the U.S. (Poughkeepsie, NY). A folded letter with the manuscript instruction "via Liverpool" and bearing the double circle cds of Paris, dated December 26 (18)61, and manuscript "12." Red octagonal boxed "Br(itish) Service," NEW 15 YORK foreign mail due marking, with a double circle Poughkeepsie, NY cds, and forwarded to New York City with manuscript "due 15/Fd 3/18." A lightly penciled "19c" (the sum) to the left suggests an additional 1c collected for the NYC carrier delivery fee. The cover was received at the Poughkeepsie, NY post office, and according to Samuel Morse's on-file instructions it was readdressed forwarded to No. 5 West 22nd Street (New York City), his winter address.

But what is especially remarkable about this cover is the content of the message it conveys! Not often does one find such a direct connection with an actual historical occurrence. While reviewing sources to remind myself of basic historical information, the following paragraph literally jumped off the page. As the reader will see its connection with the message content is phenomenal:

Assisted by the American ambassador in Paris, the governments of Europe were approached about their long neglect of Morse while their countries were using his invention. There was a widespread recognition that something must be done, and 'in 1858 Morse was awarded the sum of 400,000 French francs (equivalent to about \$80,000 at the time) by the governments of France, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Piedmont, Russia, Sweden, Tuscany and Turkey (the Ottoman Empire, which had issued the original patent), each of which contributed a share according to the number of Morse instruments in use in each country.' [9]

In the 19th century even governments usually paid obligations of this magnitude in installments, especially when they were to be paid to an individual who was not a citizen. And the choice of payment in French francs also was normal, since the international language of diplomacy and currency for hundreds of years was (and still is) French. As Samuel Morse did not live in any of the countries which owed him funds he would need to employ a firm to collect, record and pay to him any monies received. The payment procedure is laid out below for all to view:

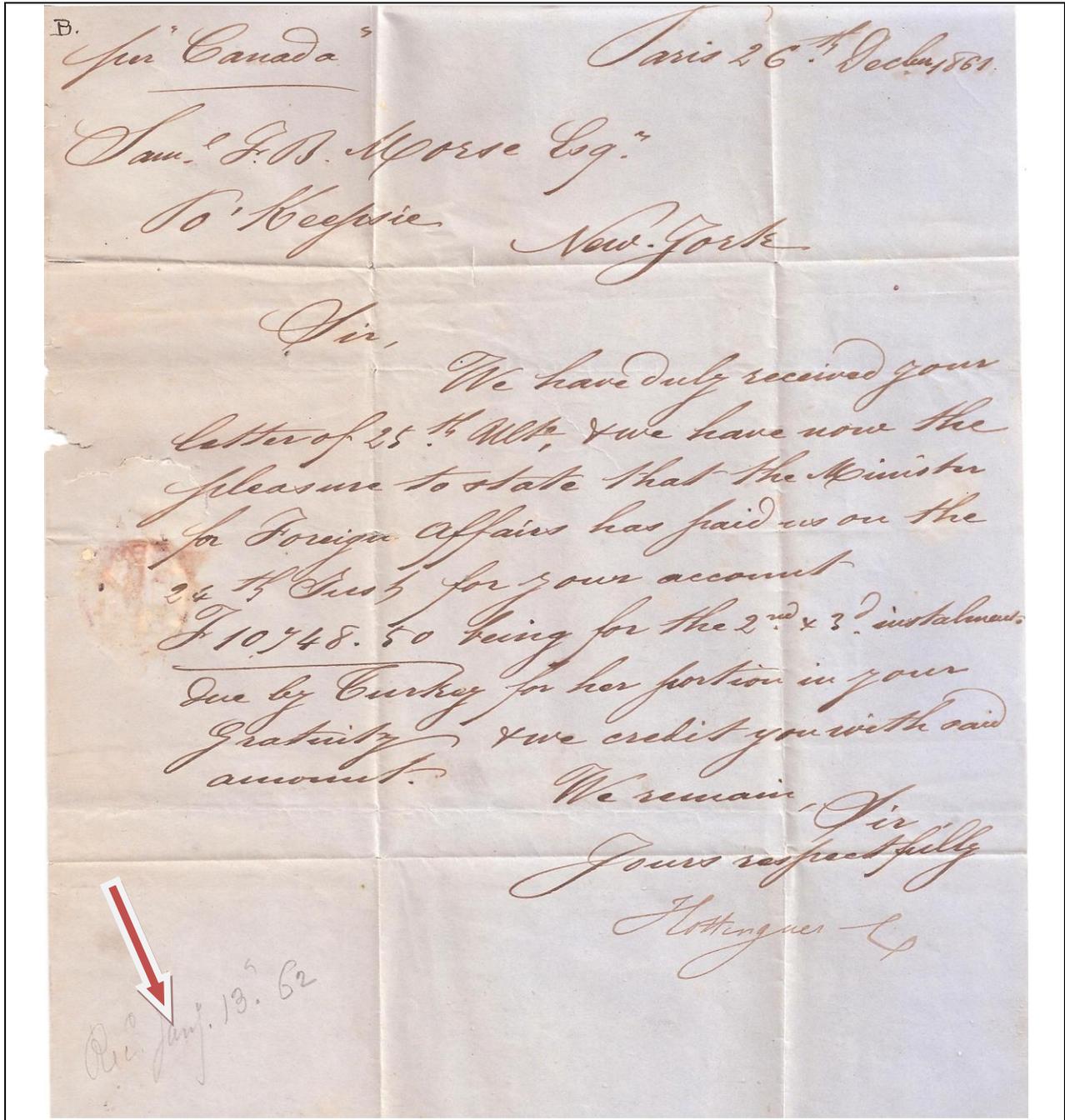


Figure 2

Transcription of the contents:

per Canada (a Cunard Line ship)

Paris, 26th Dec 'bre 1861

Sam'l F. B. Morse Esq.

Po'Keepsie, New York

Sir

We have duly received your letter of 25th (October?) and we have now the pleasure to state that the Minister for Foreign Affairs has paid us on the 24th Inst for your account F10748.50 for the 2nd and 3rd instalments [sic] due by Turkey for her portion in your gratuity & we credit you with that amount.

We remain, Sir

Yours respectfully,

Hottinguer & Cie (Co.)

Hottinguer & Co. was Samuel Morse's banker-representative in Europe. There is a penciled notation at the lower left (arrow): "*Rec'd Jany. 13.62*"

Locust Grove

If the letter had been received during the summer, there would have been no need to forward it; Samuel Morse lived in New York City during the winter months only. His summer home was at Locust Grove, a 200-acre estate located on a bluff overlooking the Hudson River (on the outskirts of Poughkeepsie), which he purchased in 1847 from John and Isabella Montgomery. The name derives from a stand of black locust trees that had existed on the site when the original owner purchased it in 1771. In 1852, Morse had a 40-room Italianate villa constructed which served as his summer residence for the balance of his life. [10]

Morse was attracted to the site because of its proximity to the Albany Post Road (Rt. 9, today), which gave him easy access to New York City. The mainline of the New York and Hudson River Rail Road had been constructed at the foot of the bluff; a telegraph line originating at Morse's home was strung along the roadbed giving him direct connection to New York City. And it is well-known that he was beloved by the populace of Poughkeepsie and was cheered more than once upon his arrival home after being away for a prolonged period. [11] Locus Grove actually supported a post office between 1855-1864 because so much mail was generated to and from Morse during that period..

Locust Grove today is a National Historic Landmark Site visited annually by thousands of tourists who come to tour the great estates that line the east bank of the Hudson River in Dutchess County. It is administered by a private trust which a number of years ago had the foresight to construct a visitor's center containing large conference rooms that are regularly for a variety of purposes. I am confident that Morse would appreciate the public's continued interest in the beauty of his home as well as their recognition of his role in the growth and prosperity of the Nation.

Coinclusion

It is a rare letter that presents important postal as well as economic history—and is attributed to such a significant personage. I was fortunate to be in the right place at the right time. Copies of the cover, including contents, will be donated to the Locust Grove Historic Trust, George Lukacs (the City of Poughkeepsie municipal historian), and the Dutchess County historical archives.

Endnotes

[1] Rhinevault, 97-98: While in Paris in 1839, Morse developed an interest in photography. He met with Daguerre and purchased one of his photographic apparatuses. Upon returning home he opened a studio on the top floor of New York University. He established a program to take in students who were interested in learning about the photographic process. One of these student became so well-known in the field of photography that his name would far eclipse that of Morse—Matthew Brady!

[2] “Samuel Morse,” Wikipedia: Samuel F. B. Morse is considered as one of the greats of American painting; his paintings today sell for considerable sums. *The Dying of Hercules* and *Judgment of Jupiter* are the premier works from this period.

[3] A Portrait of the Marquis de Lafayette in old age (painted when Lafayette visited the U.S. in 1824-25) is his most famous. As a hero of the Revolutionary War, Lafayette’s visit to America brought about the renaming (or naming) of many communities throughout the fledgling nation. Lafayetteville (near Red Hook) and Lagrangeville (after Lafayette’s estate) are two such examples here in Dutchess County.

[4] Rhinevault, 96.

[5] Two classic examples are Alexander Graham Bell, who had a long-standing struggle with Elisha Gray over who first submitted a patent application for the telephone; and Thomas Edison, whose experiments and inventions relating to electricity are clouded by the presence of Nikola Tesla as an assistant in his workshop—many credit Tesla and not Edison with some key discoveries, for which Edison took credit.

[6] Rhinevault, 96

[7] *Ibid.*, 97

[8] “Samuel Morse,” Wikipedia

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] “Locust Grove,” Wikipedia

[11] Rhinevault, 99-100

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“Locust Grove,” Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia
([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Locust_Grove_\(Samuel_F._B._Morse_House\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Locust_Grove_(Samuel_F._B._Morse_House)))

Rhinevault, Carney and Tatiana Rhinevault. *Hidden History of the Mid-Hudson Valley: Stories from the Albany Post Road*. (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2011).

“Samuel Morse,” Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Morse).

Drew Nicholson is the municipal historian of the Village of Pawling, NY; he is also the Publications Chair of the ESPHS. Drew specializes in the postal history of Dutchess Co. NY and is always interested in viewing unusual items from that county – and especially from his hometown, Pawling. He can be contacted at dan.ddn@comcast.net.

A HUDSON POST OFFICE CLERK: SLOPPY OR PRECISE?

By: George DeKornfeld

There seems to be (an admittedly un-scientific) correlation between Post Office size and busyness with the placement of handstamps by clerks in the pre-machine cancel era. The busier offices obviously had greater volumes of mail passing through their doors, and the clerks there must have felt considerable pressure keeping the customers and their letters moving along at an acceptable pace. It is not uncommon to find postal markings from these offices that are blurry, slipped, or incomplete as a result of the haste involved in their application.

By 1850, the Hudson, New York Post Office had already been in existence for some sixty-eight years and although not a large office compared to, for example, New York City's, the letters entering the mail stream there flowed steadily albeit it not at a particularly tremendous volume. In this edition of CCC we're going to take a look at the circular date stamps used on two stampless folded letters, one mailed at Hudson in 1851 and the other in 1853, both coincidentally addressed to The Honorable Josiah Sutherland at 54 Wall Street in Manhattan. We will of course also take a brief look at the writers and the recipient as well as the contents of the letters since postal history isn't, in my opinion, limited to just routes, rates, markings and such but should tell the larger, human story as much as possible.

As the original stimuli for this article are the accompanying Integral Rate Circular Date Handstamps, we will need some sort of baseline to begin with before we decide how our clerk(s) at Hudson fared in their markings placement. These handstamps are recorded as having been used in Hudson between 1851 and 1854, are known in red, blue, and green, and measure 32mm in diameter (Bernadt; Hudson Type 18). In **Figure 1** we see a tracing of a typical example in red ink. Note the '3 PAID' at the bottom of the marking which not only indicates the pre-payment of postage, but, as we shall see, is also intimately related to our evaluation of our dear clerks' aim.

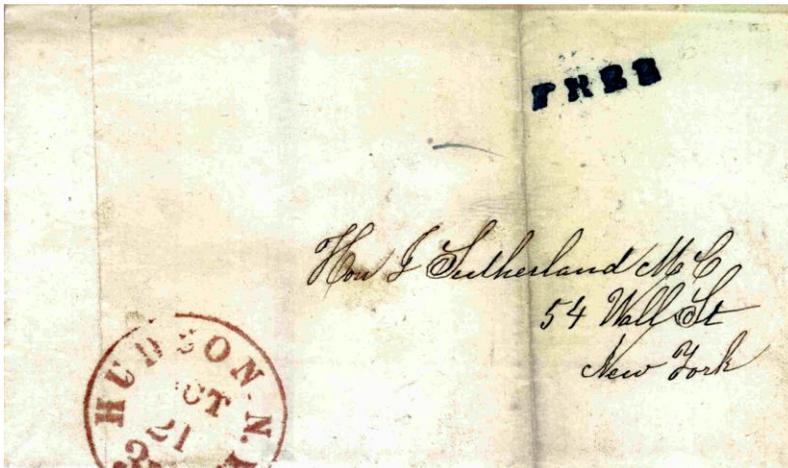


Figure 2 brings us to our first stampless letter, mailed at Hudson to Josiah Sutherland by his daughter Emma in 1851. Our Integral Rate handstamp can be seen in red at the lower left, and at the top right a 20x4mm 'FREE' handstamp in navy blue. The use of the free frank is occasioned by Josiah's tenure in the 32nd United States Congress between 1851 and 1853.



Josiah (**Figure 3** at left) was born on June 12, 1804 in the Township of Stanford near Stissing in Dutchess County. After graduating Union College, he studied law both in Waterford and Hudson, and ended up first practicing in Livingston Township. He acted as the Columbia County District Attorney between 1832 and 1843, moving to Hudson in 1838 presumably to be centered at the county seat to facilitate his duties. In 1851 he was elected as a Democrat to the 32nd Congress' House of Representatives where he served but a single term after the end of which he moved to New York City to resume his practice of law. Also serving as an associate justice for the NY Supreme Court's 1st District between 1857 and 1871, Josiah passed into eternity on May 25, 1887.

The writer of our letter, Emma (1836 – 1883), was one of five children Josiah had with his second wife, Jane McClellan Sutherland (1811 – 1876), daughter of Dr. John McClellan and Maria Wilbor McClellan of Johnstown Village, at the time the largest village in Livingston, Columbia County. Emma being 15-years old when she wrote this letter to her Father, away in New York City, used prose that in many ways is typical of such messages between a child separated from a parent yet provides a snippet that catches the eye:

We are all very well and have been pretty good children I believe at least Mrs. Courow (presumably the Nanny) says so but I do not like living alone as well as we expected for since the Post Office has been robbed we are a little afraid and keep the doors locked all the time.

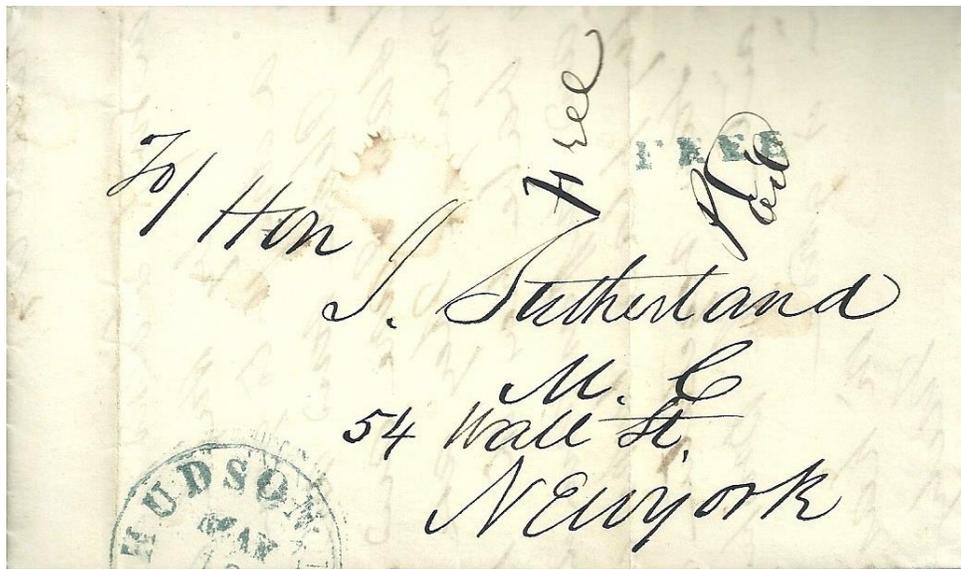
Emma also mentions a quilt she is making for her father, a 'peeping tom' that frightened her, and her brother's progress at college, signing off with *Your affectionate Daughter, Emma.*

Although the Sutherland family was large, respected, and influential in Columbia County, not much more information can be unearthed on our letter-writer (possibly because her life was somewhat relatively short in length), so in saying goodbye to this family for now, **Figure 4** (seen to the right) shows us the Old Sutherland Inn run by the family in the 1800's, currently located on County Route 66 just outside of Chatham Center.



OK, so let us move on to item two in our story, the 1853 folded letter mailed from Hudson to Manhattan and authored by a Robert McClellan whose surname should sound familiar to the reader at this point.

Robert (October 2, 1806 – June 28, 1860) was the son of Dr. John and Sarah Jones McClellan also of Livingston, who after graduating Williams College studied law being admitted to the bar in 1828. He served twice as a democratic representative to Congress (the 25th 1837 – 1839, and the 27th 1841- 1843), but in between, in 1838, partnered with his brother-in-law (our earlier-mentioned Josiah Sutherland) at his Hudson law practice, which as we now see, makes Robert the (step) brother of Emma!



As seen above in **Figure 5**, again we have our '3-Paid' Integral Rate handstamp, an example in a mixed ink color making it appear a dirty blue, this one also struck to the lower left. This time we have two 'frees,' one a handstamp and the other reading 'free paid' in manuscript, the 'paid' portion of which is superfluous (which is likely why the 'free' handstamp version was struck over it).

Robert's short letter starts with his mention of sending a \$1000 draft outside the mails to Josiah in New York City for which he asks a receipt, and continues:

*I saw Jane and John (Josiah's wife and her father) this morning --- they are well
--- My babe has the hooping (sic) cough and suffers much by it.*

He closes by describing his vegetable garden and the local crops both of which appear to have had an exemplary growing season.

Well, we've looked at two stampless letters, mailed a couple of years apart, that are genealogically inter-related almost to the point of confusion when trying to sort out all of the players. Interestingly, these two letters were purchased by this collector years apart and from two different venues (which always causes some astonishment as these letters circulate amongst their collector-owners and eventually resurface). What is it about the markings that first caught my eye? By now the reader has probably noticed that in both cases, the Integral Rate Handstamps were both struck low, essentially partially or fully hiding the '3 Paid' portion of the indicia. Was the mail clerk in a hurry, sloppily striking the letters with an incomplete marking, or was the clerk acting in a precise manner, eliminating the '3-Paid' part of the handstamp since this mail was to be sent by Free Frank? Extra credit question: Was the same clerk on duty when these letters came through the Hudson Post Office two years apart, or were these applied by two different clerks following some custom regulating the marking of free mail with possibly the only date stamps available at the time? We will never know for sure, but this writer prefers to believe these handstamps were applied this way on purpose...and precisely.

George DeKornfeld may be contacted at Gdekornfel@fairpoint.net

BACKGROUND OF THE SCHENECTADY POST OFFICE EXHIBIT **By Bob Bramwell**

The 16 pages that follow constitute a one frame exhibit prepared for non-competitive display – truly *for the fun of it*. It is titled *The Schenectady Post Office Under Its Earliest Postmasters*. What it attempts to do is use both letter mail and documents required of a postmaster to demonstrate the staffing and equipment employed by each of Schenectady's first three postmasters to perform their duties.

A postmaster was first appointed under federal authority for the town of Schenectady, NY – then in Albany County - in April 1793. His name was Joseph Shurtleff and he was well known to President Washington from his service during the Revolution as the Quartermaster to the Northern Department of the Continental Army. Subsequent postmasters were silversmith/watch dealer Jacob Thurston and ex-Sheriff James Van Slyk Ryley.

In this electronic era, learning the history of Schenectady is easy. But understanding the postal history of Schenectady as a collectible is not so easy. I have collected Schenectady postal history for 7 years, and I am not aware of anyone who has exhibited Schenectady. But I know that in the 1960's there was a study group of four local collectors plus archival holdings at Union College in Schenectady that created a census of stampless markings. This made its way into the *American Stampless Cover Catalog* but more importantly into George J. Bernadt's *Postal Markings of New York State, 1792 to 1856* published by this Society in 1993. One of Bernadt's contributions was to summarize the Schenectady census information (and similar information for other NYS post offices) into "known populations" for postal markings. As a collector, it helps to have a feel for what may be "out there".

As you view this exhibit it may help to know what my predecessors understood the world of Schenectady postal history to contain:

1. A locally type-set SCHEN*MMM*DD straightline known for dates 1797 to 1802, of which between 16 and 40 examples then survived;
2. Manuscript postmarks showing an unstated number of abbreviations and the full spelling of *Schenectady* known for dates 1800 to 1829, of which over 40 examples then survived;
3. A locally fabricated 33mm circular town mark with SCHENECTADY N. Y between double lines known for dates 1824 to 1825, of which between 6 and 15 then survived, all but one known in black and the one other in orange-red ink;
4. A locally fabricated 30mm circular town mark with SCH'DY N.Y. between double lines known for dates 1827 to 1829 in black ink, of which between 16 and 40 then survived; for dates 1829 to 1836 in red or red-orange ink, of which over 40 then survived;
5. A USPOD-supplied 30mm circular date stamp showing year dates 1835 and beyond in red ink, of which well over 40 then survived.

Finally, keep in mind that postmasters – like any bureaucrat – had panoply of forms controlling and standardizing his efforts. Most ended up being sold as waste paper and are very hard to find. In this exhibit I am able to match two related forms: a quarterly Account Current (Form 8) filed in 1819 and the postmaster's List of Letters Remaining in the Post-Office for the same quarter as published in the Schenectady *Cabinet*. Both documents, in their own ways, tell us a lot about the business a postmaster was in charge of, if not quite as much about how each postmaster approached that job.

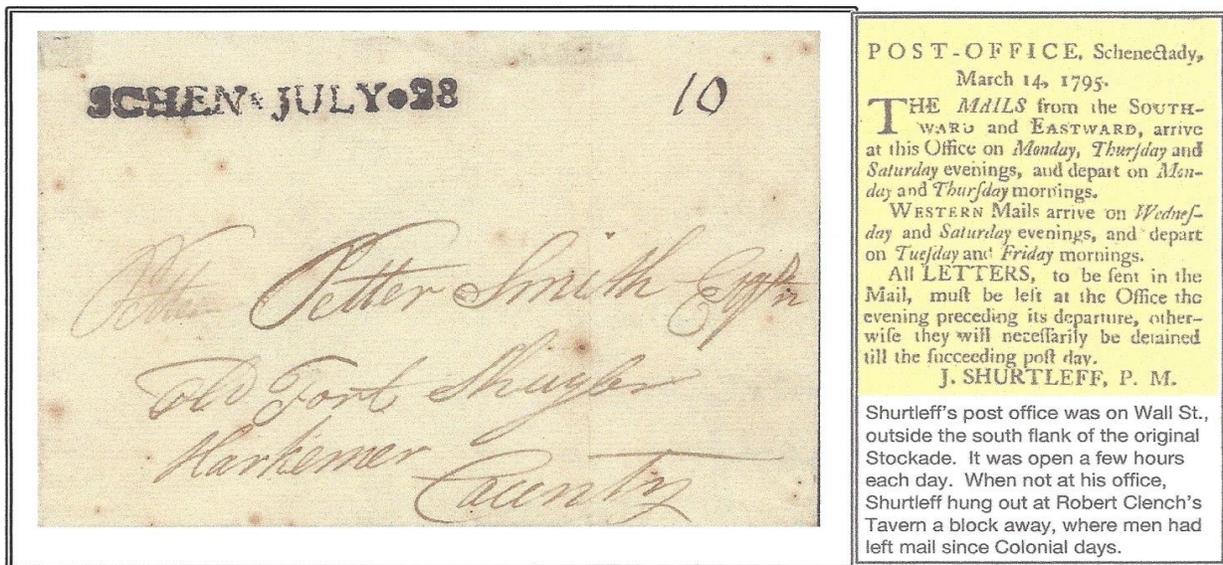
The Schenectady Post Office Under Its Earliest Postmasters

This is a story about Schenectady's first three postmasters and what philatelic and related material discloses about how each postmaster ran his post office. These men served from 1793 to 1837. As postmaster, each man decided who beside himself would process the Mails and what postmarking equipment would be employed. The exhibit shows these early hand stamps, but focuses on pen-and-ink markings since they are more prevalent from this period – and more indicative of who was actually doing the clerking.

Among other reproduced material, the exhibit features on page 8 a fortuitous pairing of documents: the List of Letters Remaining at the Post-Office, and the Account Current for the 2nd Quarter of 1819.

Major Joseph Shurtleff

Term: April 1793 to April 1810



POST-OFFICE, Schenectady,
March 14, 1795.

THE MAILS from the SOUTHWARD and EASTWARD, arrive at this Office on *Monday, Thursday and Saturday* evenings, and depart on *Monday and Thursday* mornings.

WESTERN Mails arrive on *Wednesday and Saturday* evenings, and depart on *Tuesday and Friday* mornings.

All LETTERS, to be sent in the Mail, must be left at the Office the evening preceding its departure, otherwise they will necessarily be detained till the succeeding post day.

J. SHURTLEFF, P. M.

Shurtleff's post office was on Wall St., outside the south flank of the original Stockade. It was open a few hours each day. When not at his office, Shurtleff hung out at Robert Clench's Tavern a block away, where men had left mail since Colonial days.

July 28 [1797] Second earliest surviving example of the SCHEN hand stamp.
10¢ rate for distances of 60 to 100 miles under the 1792 Act.

from *The Mohawk Mercury*
Issue of Tuesday, March 31, 1795.

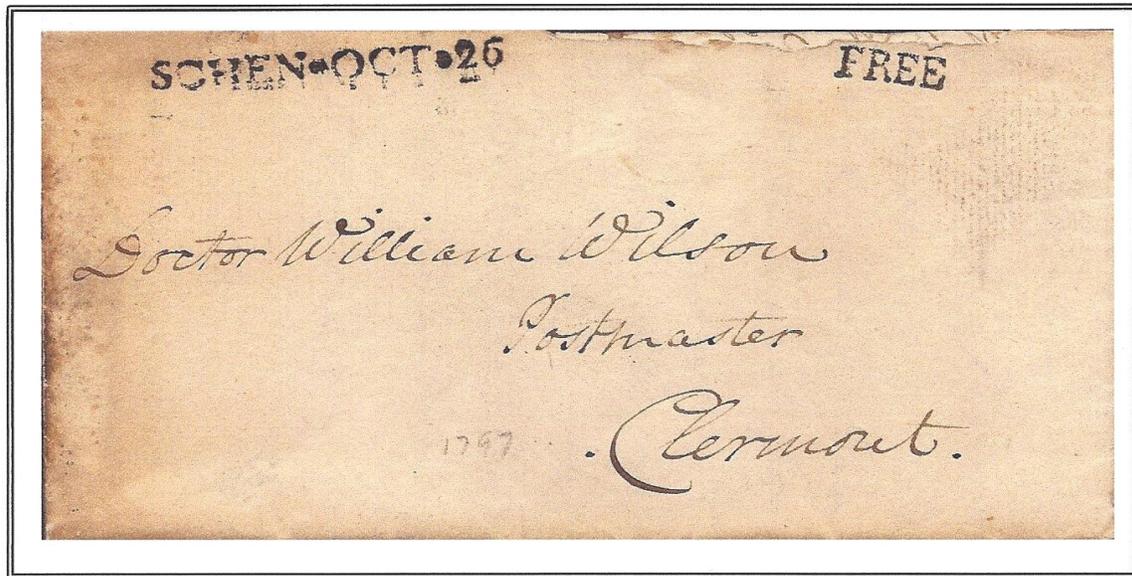
About Schenectady

- Schenectady was already 130 years old in 1793.
- 1790 Census: 695 families; 3,769 free persons – more of Dutch descent than Other; 459 slaves.
- Farming was predominant but boat-building for river freight transportation on the Mohawk River flourished.
- First Colonial mail to the western N.Y. frontier from Albany passed through Schenectady on April 3, 1763.
- In the spring of 1793 Schenectady hotel owner Moses Beale started running 2 coaches for passengers and mail between Albany and Canajoharie on weekly runs from each place.

About Joseph Shurtleff

- He served during the Revolution as Quartermaster of Washington's Northern Army under Gen. Phillip Schuyler.
- Appointed April 1793 to establish Schenectady P O; opened P O as a free-standing building that year.
- Served in the N.Y. Assembly while being postmaster.
- Appointed County Clerk February 1810 after Schenectady County was separated from Albany County; resigned as Postmaster in April 1810.
- After a two year gap, Shurtleff was re-appointed County Clerk from March 1813 to February 1815 (see page 4).

Rhetorical Question: Isn't it a pity that the first 4 years' mail leaving Schenectady is lost to philately?



October 26 [1797]

Free to a fellow postmaster, with type 1 FREE stamp.



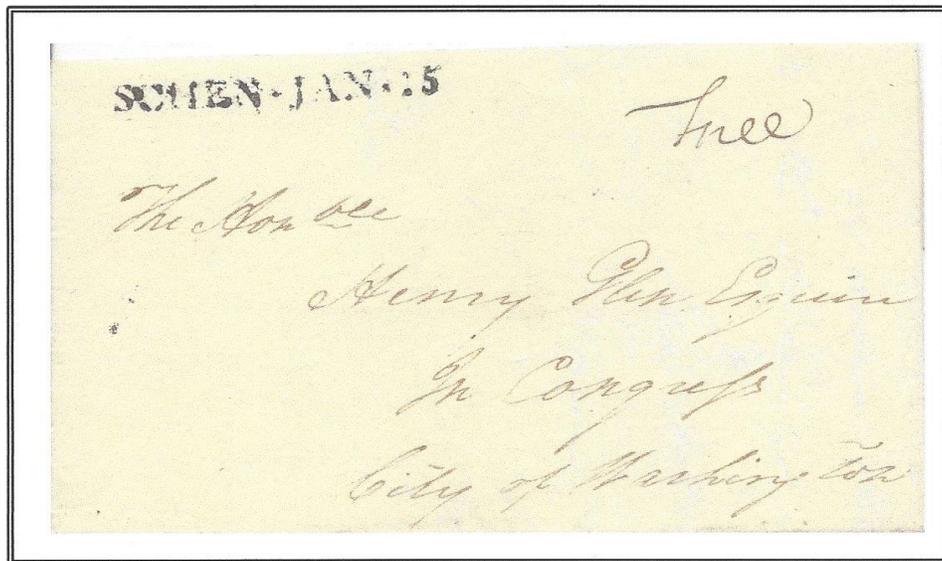
May 10 [1798] Free to a sitting Member of Congress, with type 2 FREE stamp.

Shurtleff concocted the straightline device and a FREE stamp early in his tenure. The first FREE was replaced in 1798 and both the SCHEN and large FREE were abandoned by 1802.

Was it just plain too much trouble given the volume of mail?



June 28 [1799] Second of 2 known covers bearing SCHEN postmark with a rate of postage. Double the 17c rate for distances of 150 to 300 miles under the 1799 Act.



January 15 [1801] Only know cover to combine SCHEN postmark and manuscript Free.

Is this Joseph Shurtleff's "hand"?



March 26 [1809]

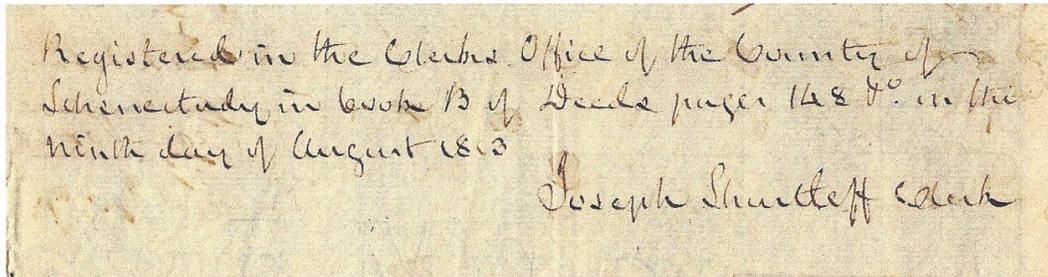
Are these Postmarks, made 7 years apart, from the same Hand?

Probably:

- *Schen* letters very similar
- All on one line style is consistent
- Letter case sizes are consistent
- Different quills and paper change the pen's motion

Perhaps Not:

- *Schen* changes to *Schen*
- Capital *M* form changed
- Month-Date order changed



Reproduced from an oversized document

As County Clerk in 1813, Joseph Shurtleff certified that a particular deed was recorded.

Does this answer the Question?

Jacob Thurston

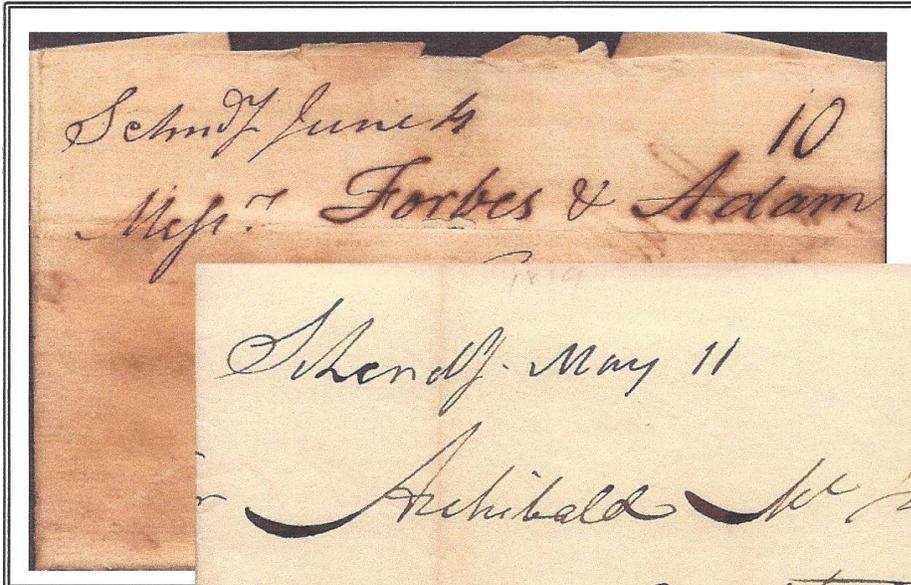
Term: April 1810 to April 1820

About Jacob Thurston

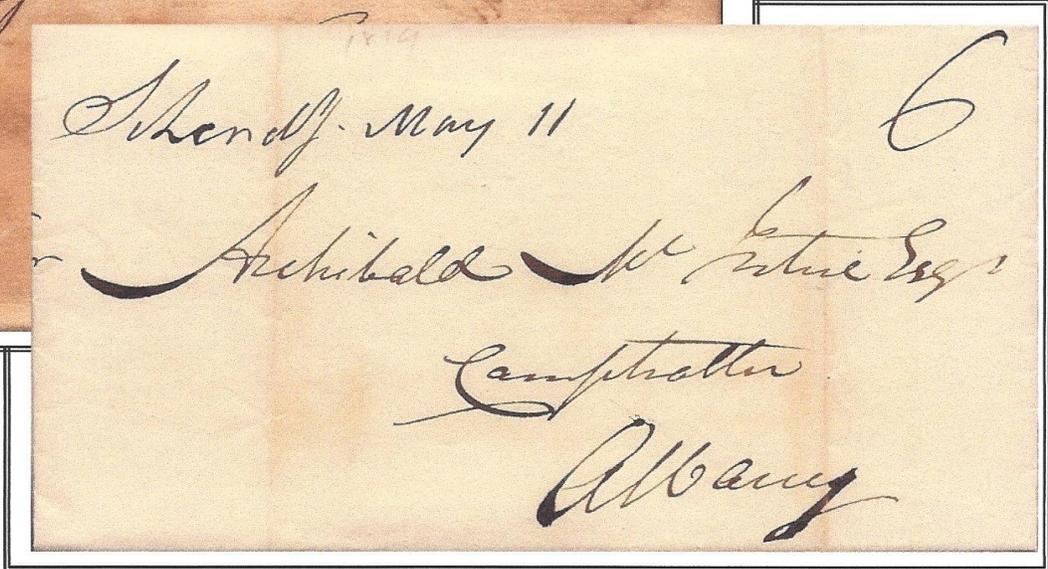
- Settled in Schenectady about 1798.
- Owned a watch and jewelry store (like a bank).
- Resigned due to illness; died shortly thereafter.

About Schenectady

- Schenectady County was formed in March 1809.
- * Western migration through Schenectady and land speculation had become important businesses.

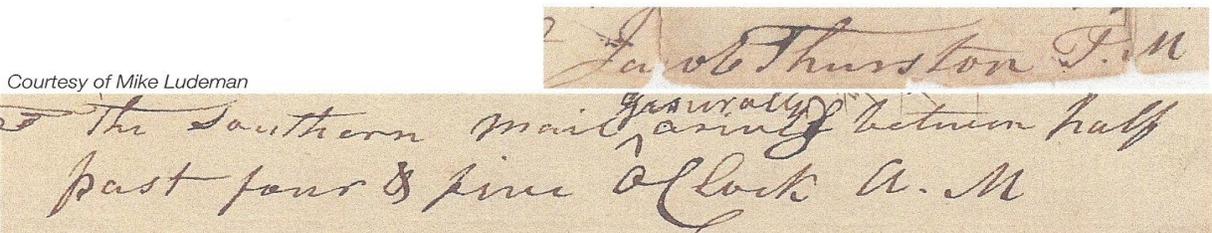


June 4 [1811]



May 11 [1819]

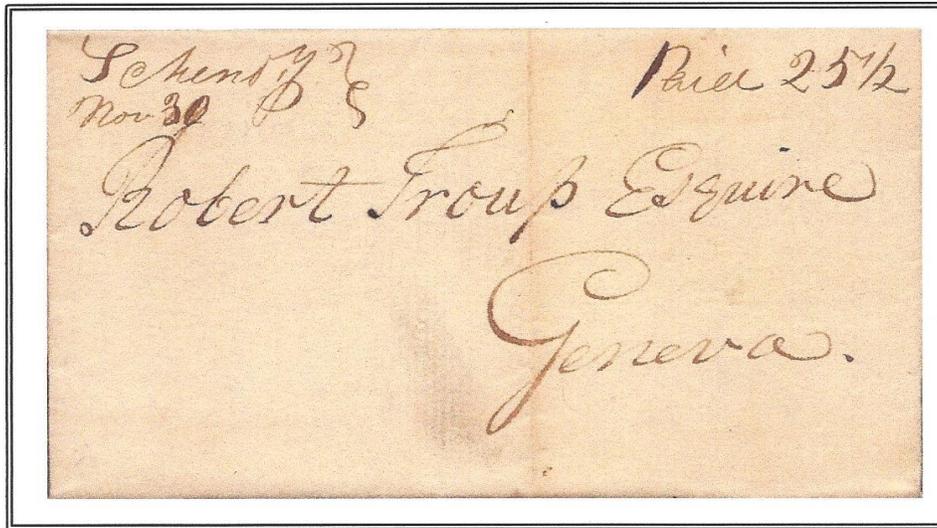
From a total of 9 postmarked by Thurston.



Courtesy of Mike Ludeman

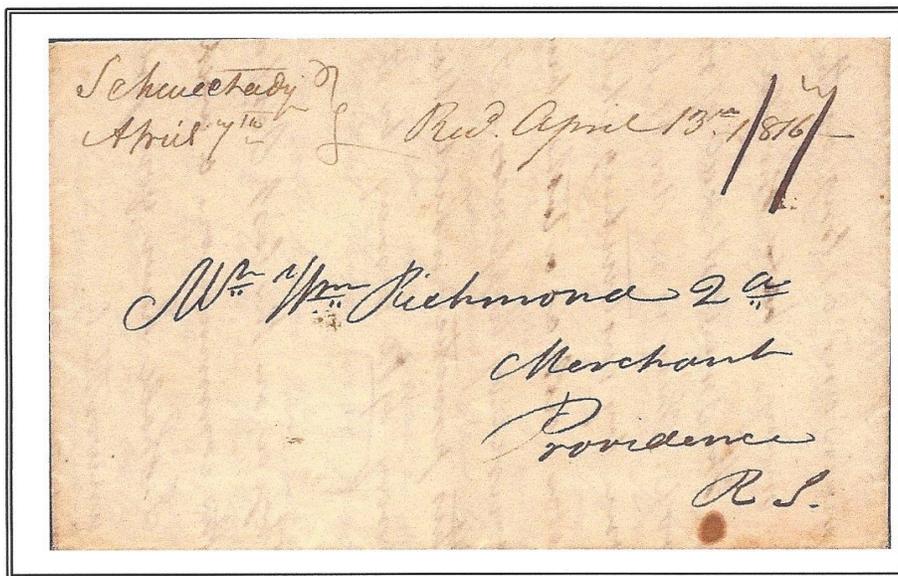
Signature and marginal notation of Jacob Thurston on his quarterly report, April - June 1819.

In Schenectady, the Southern Mail was that which arrived from New York via Albany; imagine getting up every morning at 4:05 to dress and wait for the mail stage – you'd hire a clerk to do that, wouldn't you?



November 30 [1815]

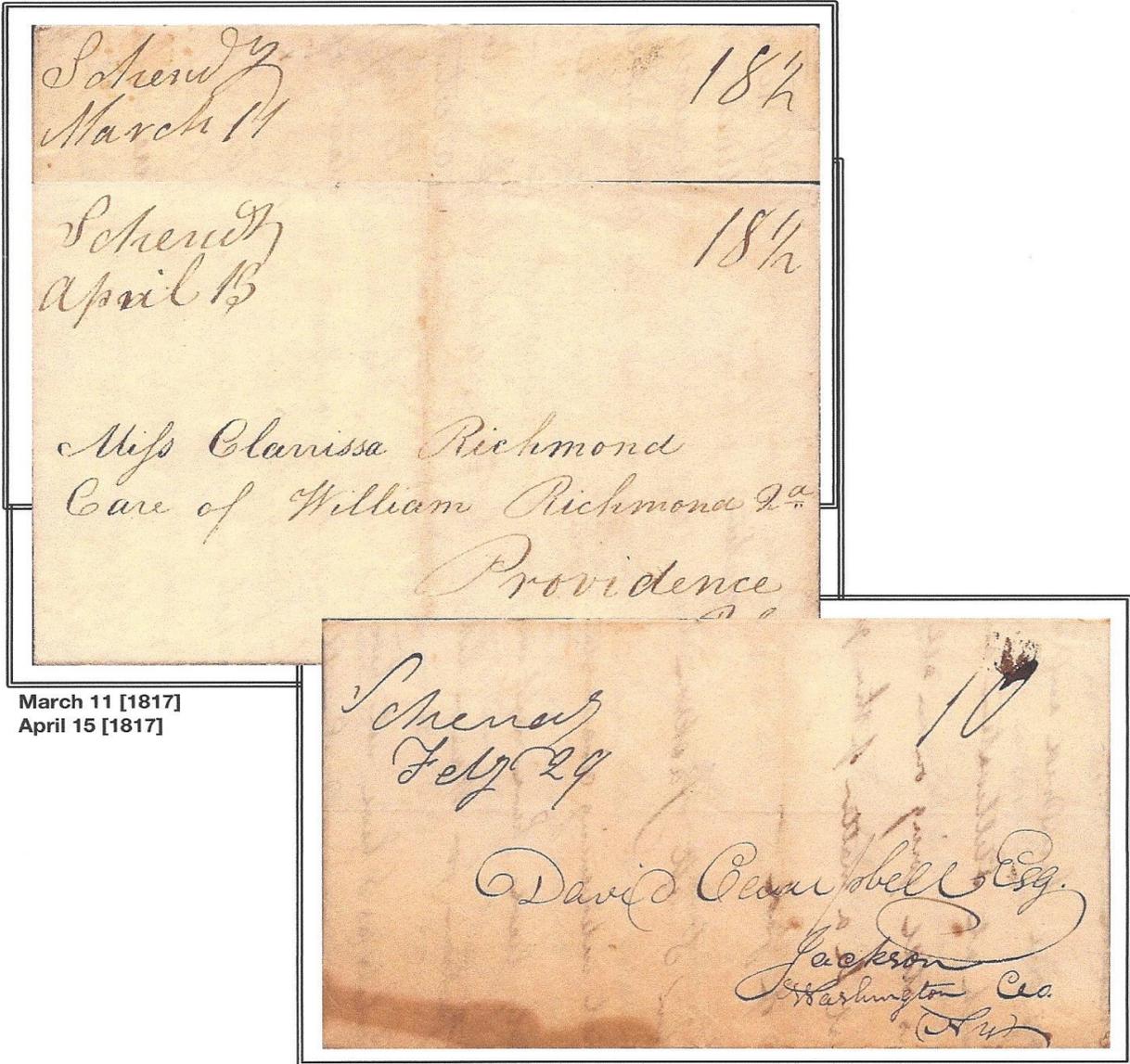
Hand of a Clerk



April 7 [1816]

Hand of a Clerk

Stacking the date under the town name is a common element of both postmarks.
 Then there is the little squiggle – like a closing parenthesis.
 But why would the same clerk go to the trouble of spelling out *Schenectady N.Y.*?



March 11 [1817]
April 15 [1817]

February 29 [1820]

Attributing postmarks on the top two letters to the same clerk is easy.
But does the third set of postmarks come from the same hand?
If so, what do you see that makes you think so?

THE CABINET.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY I. RIGGS, FIRST DOOR EAST OF THE DUTCH CHURCH, UNION-STREET, SCHENECTADY.

[VOL. VIII.]

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 1819.

[NO. 4.]

APPROVED
WARRANTED
RELIABLE

Which are celebrated for their effect of most diseases to which the human body is liable.

Prepared only by the sole Proprietor,
T. W. DYOTT, M. D.

Grandson of the late Celebrated Dr. Robinson, of Edinburgh
AND FOR SALE IN PHILADELPHIA ONLY,
AT THE
**PROPRIETOR'S, WHOLESALE AND RETAIL DRUG
MEDICINE WAREHOUSE,**
NO. 57, NORTH EAST CORNER OF SECOND AND RACE STS.
And by retail of his agents throughout the U. States.

A LIST OF LETTERS
Remaining in the Post-Office at Schenectady, June 30, 1819.
Persons calling for any of the following letters, will please to say they are advertised.

Where the name of the place is not mentioned they are for Schenectady.

A—Benezer Atkins; Robert Abell, Lowrance Alford, 4th ward.

B—Justus Bell, Daniel Bassett, Nathan Burdick, Sally Burdick, Peter Banker, Mr. Bingham, Elizabeth Banker, James Byce, Lewis Bixby, Henry S. Bixby, John G. Bixby, Peter Brumaghin, Samuel Brewer, Ellis Balloch, Aronson Bhop; Samuel Bond, President; Charles Deaver, Princeton.

C—Hugh Cox, Frederick P. Clute, Nicolas Clute, Isaac Coley, Jesse T. Conklin, Frederick P. Clute, Sophia Clark, Mr. Clark, Frederick Cox, Elizabeth Condon, William Coyle, C. Calvin Chesman, Henry S. Crosby, Daniel Case, Silvester Chapman, David Cassel, Henry A. Carter, William P. Case; Silvester Chapman, Aaron Carrill, Gildred Crandell, Sylvester Chapman, Benjamin Chamberlin, Isaac Christiant, Esther Carpenter, John Chamberlin, 4th ward; Nathan Calkins, 5th ward; Richard Case, Nicholas Samuel Cole, Orange; Calvin Chesman, Alexander Clouston, Princeton; James Cumming, Duaneburg; Corvay Clapp, Glendon d.

D—George Director, Nathan Daley, Richard D'Gantillon, Richard DeCastillon, Richard De Castillon, Messrs Day & Co.; Dav DeLaybry, Sel's Patent; John Dancer, Samuel S. Davis, The W. Master of Duty Lodge No. 262, 2, Princeton.

E—Eliza S. Everett; John Elwell, 4th ward.

F—John M. Fowl, Rowing Fisher, John L. Fisher, Martin Freeman S. Giza Fowl, David Fowl; Peter Ferguson, ward; Jacob Fulmer, Oysterpark; Ebenezer Frisbee, 4th ward.

G—Abraham S. Grant, Wilim, Goodly, John Gackson, Richard Gibson, Cornelius A. Grant, Timy Gally, John V. Gles; Robert Gally; Messrs I. Guyling, Princeton; Derrick C. Great, Wilkane.

H—John Hiltzeth, Eliza Henderson, Edward Warren Hove, John Hove, Jane Hiltzeth; John W. Hewson, 4th ward.

I—Thomas Inoit.

J—Saml. W. Jones, S. W. Jones; Thomas Jones, Schenectady.

K—Herbt, Kelley; Mildred Knight, 4th ward; Solomon Kelly, Princeton.

L—Isaac Leckward, Nancy Lightbody, Elijah Lake, Isaac Leroy, Mary L'Assureux; John Lassing, Jun. Jacob Lyport, 4th ward; James A. Lightball, Patent; Alexander Liddle, Duaneburg.

M—Robt. Maw, Isaac N. Merrell, Eliza McCrellin, Benjamin Mils, Thomas Maguly, George Miler, John W. McIlmney, Jane Mirece, James Marshall, John McNea; William May, 5th ward; John McCallum, Duaneburg; James or William McConnell, Maria M. Coe, Alexander McIntosh, Princeton.

N—John Newell, John Newell, Edward Newell.

O—Moses Patton, Charles Patton, Jonathan Purce, Sarah Packard, Ann Pease, John Pangborn; Christopher Peck, 5th ward; Nancy B. Vetter, Harcom Potter, 4th ward; Lois Peck, 6 miles east Schy; John Postage, Princeton.

R—Artemus Redford, Edward Redfield, James Rogers, Gilbert Reid, Pascale Reynolds; Wellington W. Tison, Princeton.

S—Lena Scharrillan, John Still, Cornelius Schenectady, Daniel Skields S, Simon I. Schenectady, George Shaw, William Summers, I. Shaw, Andrew Smith, Wm. H. Seward, Elizabeth Shaw.

Since the above Invaluable Medicines were first discovered, upwards of SEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND PERSONS have experienced their happy and salutary effects many of whom from the lowest stage of their disorder.

A FRESH SUPPLY of the above medicines, just received and for sale, by the following agents, of whom pamphlets containing certificates of cures, etc. may be had gratis.

Schenectady, JACOB THURSTON,
Onondaga, JASPER HOPKIN,
Bath, GEORGE MCLURE,
Schoharie, JAMES GLOVER,
Hartford, SAMUEL GORDON,
Essex, A. VAN DUSEN,
Whitewater, ELIZABETH MOSELEY,
Geneva, WILLIAM TIPPETTS,
Coopersburg, LAWRENCE PHAMRE,
Leedsburgh, HARRIS and COOK,
Canastota, Dr. ROBERT HART,
Canton, PAUL DENNIS,
Dix, MARCUS HITCHCOCK,
Albany, THOMAS G. WYMKROF,
Troy, SAMUEL and WILLIAM GALE.

Dr. T. W. DYOTT, respectfully informs the public that he above mentioned General Medicines, are prepared and put up in bottles or by the Wholesale and Retail Family Medicine Warehouse, No. 157, N. E. corner of 1st and Race streets—where he has constantly for sale and general assortment of Fresh Drugs and Medical every description, warranted genuine.

Those who purchase by the quantity for cash, allowed a very liberal discount.

N. E. Cantor's Storekeeper, as authorized the agency for the above Medicines, on commission, by address proprietor, accompanied with satisfactory references, Princes, most part, from any part of discounters attention.



THE subscribers beg leave to inform their friends, and the public in general, that a new and improved mode of **PAINTING, GILDING, GLAZING, SIGN & HOUSE-PAINTING** has been discovered, which will be found in the office of Mr. **A. B. SAND-PAPER**, equal to any other, can be had at the above place, Schenectady, June 10, 1819.

NOTICE.
The Co-partnership heretofore existing between the subscribers in the business, under the firm of Solomon St. John & Co. is dissolved. All persons who have accounts unsettled, will please call at the Office and adjust them immediately.

The Stage Business is conducted by the subscribers under the name of **Thurston, Riggs & Co.** and will remain, as at present, under the care and direction of S. St. John.

Drugs, Medicines, Dye-Woods and Dye-Stuffs.	THE SUBSCRIBERS	Bar	Office	Other offices	Office last quarter
H. H. TEN BYCK, 1st door East of Dutch Church, Schenectady, N. Y.	401 90	37 1/2	3 05 1/2	3 05 1/2	37 1/2
14 By commission on 100 D. ... C. Letter Postage, at fifty per cent. ... 87 1/2	401 90	37 1/2	3 05 1/2	3 05 1/2	37 1/2
15 By ditto on 15 D. ... Letter Postage, at twenty-five per cent. ... 15 1/2	401 90	37 1/2	3 05 1/2	3 05 1/2	37 1/2
16 By 1/10 free letters delivered out of this office this quarter at two cents each.	401 90	37 1/2	3 05 1/2	3 05 1/2	37 1/2
17 By — ship letters paid for this quarter at two cents each.	401 90	37 1/2	3 05 1/2	3 05 1/2	37 1/2
18 By cash paid the mail carrier for 40 way letters, at one cent each.	401 90	37 1/2	3 05 1/2	3 05 1/2	37 1/2
19 By contingent expenses as by receipts herewith.	401 90	37 1/2	3 05 1/2	3 05 1/2	37 1/2
20 Balance due to the General Post-Office.	401 90	37 1/2	3 05 1/2	3 05 1/2	37 1/2

Per No charge for contingent expenses can be paid at the Treasury, without a receipt for the same.

James Thurston

at the Southern mail carrying between half past four & five o'clock A. M.

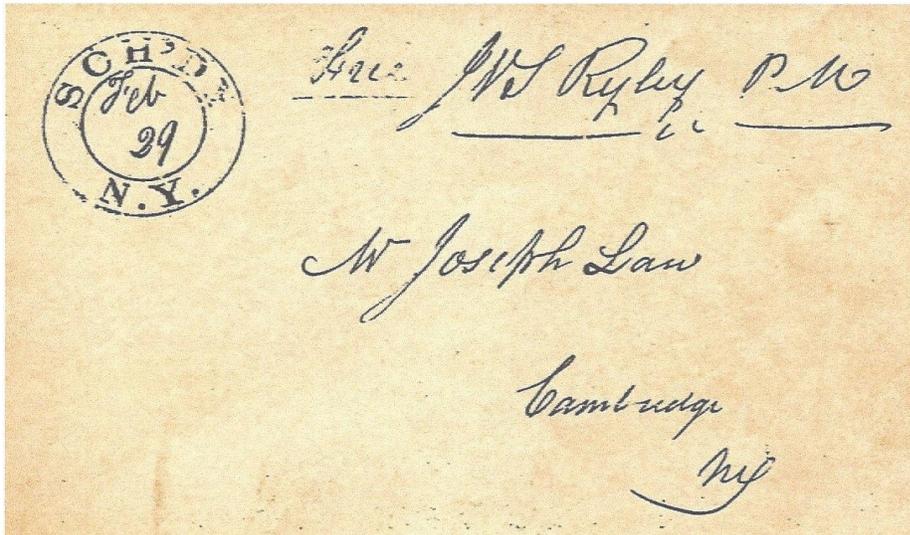
ABOVE: Col. 1 of the July 7 issue of THE CABINET Carried Jacob Thurston's quarterly notice, A LIST OF LETTERS Remaining in the Post-Office at Schenectady, June 30, 1819 as required by PL&R §23, Act of 1810, continued from 1792. The list identifies 223 letters, many distant from Schenectady

RIGHT: A portion of the **Account Current** (Form 8) of the Schenectady post office for the April to June quarter, 1819. It bears hand-written notations by PM Thurston justifying his calculation of 50% commissions at line 14 (see *Pointing Hands*). Notice also the elegant hand that made entries on Form 8; clearly **not** Postmaster Thurston's hand.

I strongly suspect there was a thriving industry for copyists in Schenectady and elsewhere. Lads with a big, round, hand; a hand so free

James V.S. Ryley was probably the most colorful Postmaster in Schenectady history. Born October 1761, he was the son of a local smith (gun and black) whose client base included the Mohawk people. James grew up fluent in English, Dutch and the Iroquois tongues. He served in an Albany County militia (1778-9), fighting at the battle of Stone Arabia. He was appointed the first county sheriff when Schenectady County was created in March 1809, serving 3 one-year terms. In 1819 Ryley served as a translator to the Cass Commission that negotiated Articles of Treaty with the Chippewa Nation at Saginaw, Michigan Territory, signed by some 48 chiefs.

On returning to Schenectady, he was appointed postmaster and served almost 17 years, extending into the period of partisan political appointments. In 1832 he was also appointed a judge in the county Court of Common Pleas. At the same time, he was an Elder of the Dutch Reformed Church and was appointed in 1836 to the Standing Committee "On the State of Religion" by the Reformed Church in America General Synod. Ryley died in 1848.



Letter used as cover art on George Bernadt's compilation Postal Markings of New York State 1792 - 1856.

February 29 [1828] Only known use of his franking privilege endorsed by PM Ryley.

Schenectady – Important Events:

- Steam Boats ply Hudson River between New York City and Albany/Troy; era of rapid transit begins.
- Benjamin Mumford arrives in 1817; opens charge account at the Schenectady post office.
- Erie Canal enters Schenectady in 1825; due to geography, Schenectady becomes its useful eastern end point.
- A passenger & freight railroad, from Albany to Schenectady, begins operation in 1831 avoiding 20 canal locks.
- Immigration from Europe increases dramatically; Schenectady becomes the St. Joseph of its era.
- Peter Clute opens a foundry to work Iron ore found nearby, leading to industrialization before 1850.

66 year old PM Ryley wrote a letter, franked it, then dropped it off at the post office. His clerk added *Free*, completed the postmark and included the letter in the Northern Mail bundle sent that day to Albany. Wouldn't this be a common approach to managing a decent-sized post office in the day?

May 25 [1820]

Phineas
May 25

Phineas
Dec 9th

John Lavey Esq
Comptroller of the State
of New York

December 9 [1822]

February 28 [1825]

Feb 28th

John Jan 29th

Hon Elisha Powell
Ballston Spa
Saratoga county
N. York

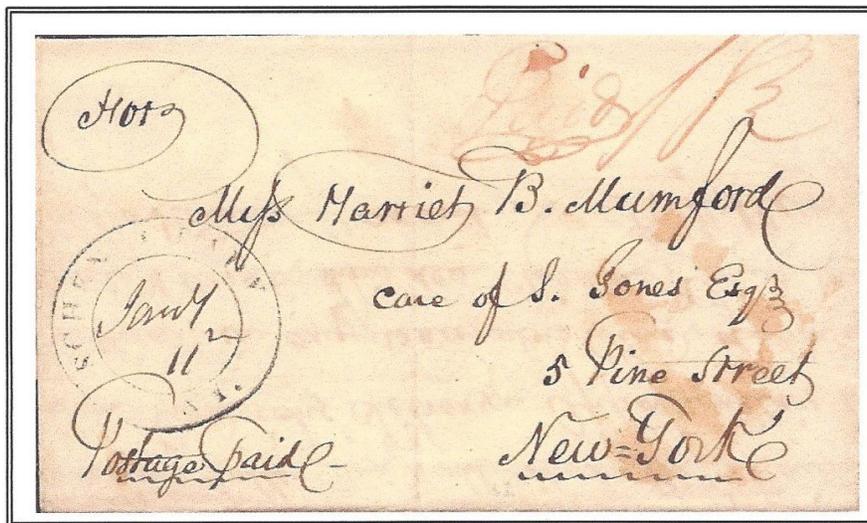
These four hands appear in the first five years of PM Ryley's tenure, the bottom piece postmarked January 29 [1825].

Do any of them appear to be that of the postmaster himself? Do they all seem different?



Jun 23 [1824]

An early use of this short-lived town mark.

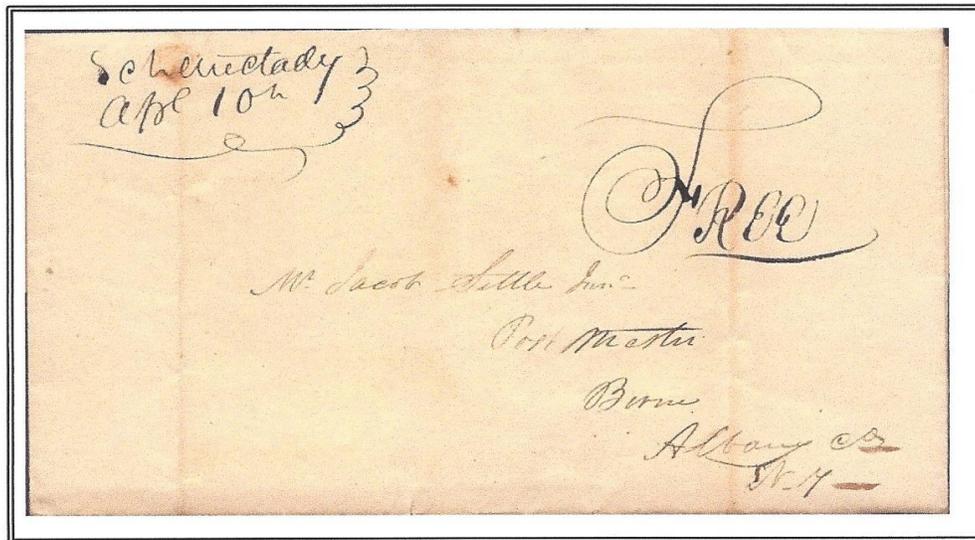


January 11 [1825] 6 months later, one letter E fell out and was not replaced.

Why did it take 4 years for PM Ryley to purchase a postmarking device?
Consider the possibility that his clerks paid for it, and shopped accordingly.

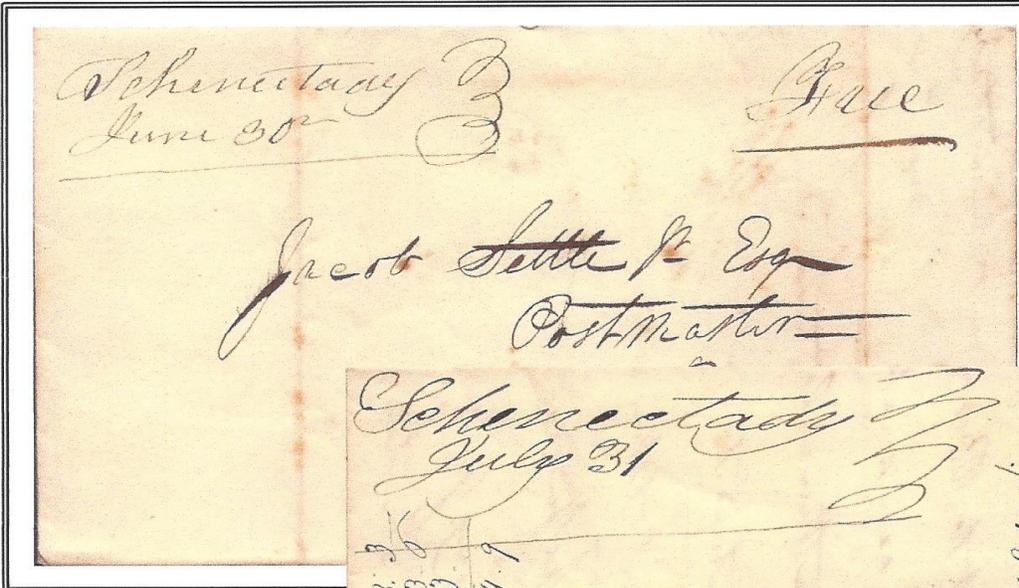


December 23 [1824]



April 10 [1826]

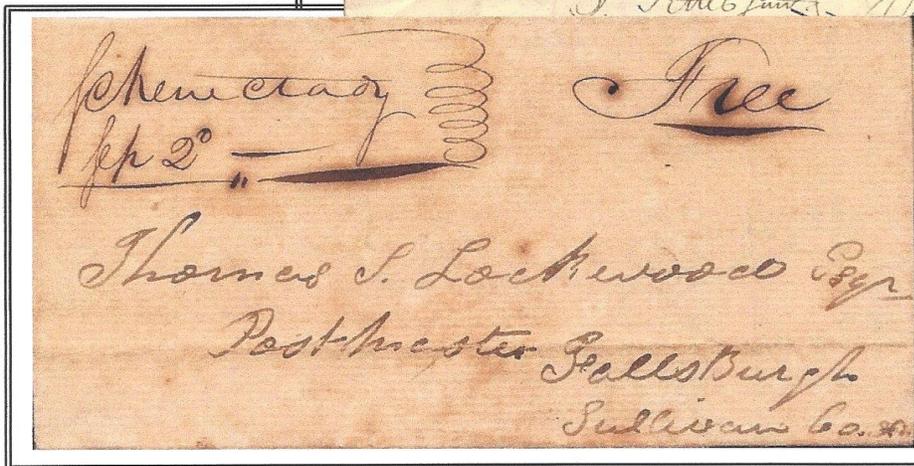
If not the postmaster, who created these works of art?
Do they come from any of the hands we've seen?



June 30 [1826]



July 31 [1826]



September 2 [1828]

Last known manuscript town name postmark

What? Does all the mail from Schenectady go out Free?
Or is this the first evidence of a team Chess-by-Mail Tournament among post offices in New York State?



October 6 [1827]

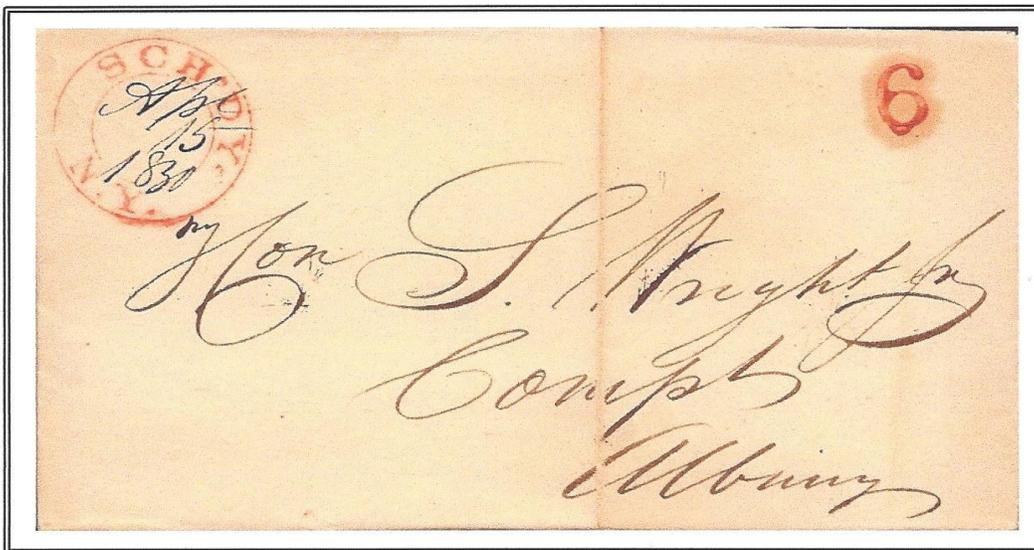
Earliest Known Use



March 25 [1828] By Hand, Paris to Le Havre; 6° Ship and 18¾ ° to Schenectady at New York; 25° at Schenectady to forward to Petersburg, Ga. (How could I not sneak this one in?).

This locally fabricated town mark appears – and must have been – very sturdy, but it lacks the mortise and key feature necessary to handle dates.

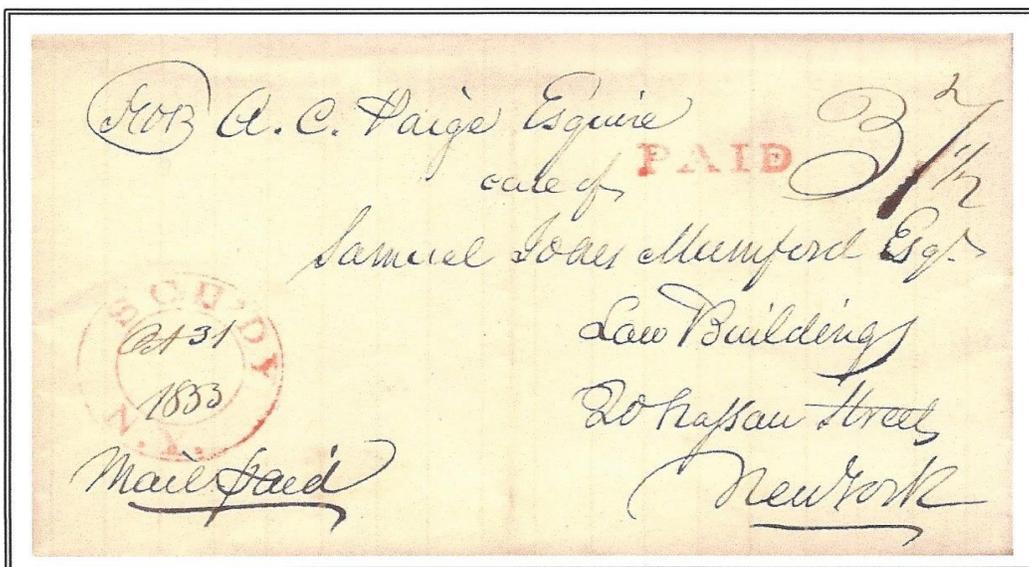
The clerks learned their lesson back in 1824.



April 15 1830

First appearance of the heavily used 6 rate stamp.

The set of postal rate stamps purchased in the spring of 1830, 10 years into PM Ryley's term, covered only the 5 distance bracket single rates of 1816 (as affirmed or modified in 1825), but did include a FREE and a PAID stamp.



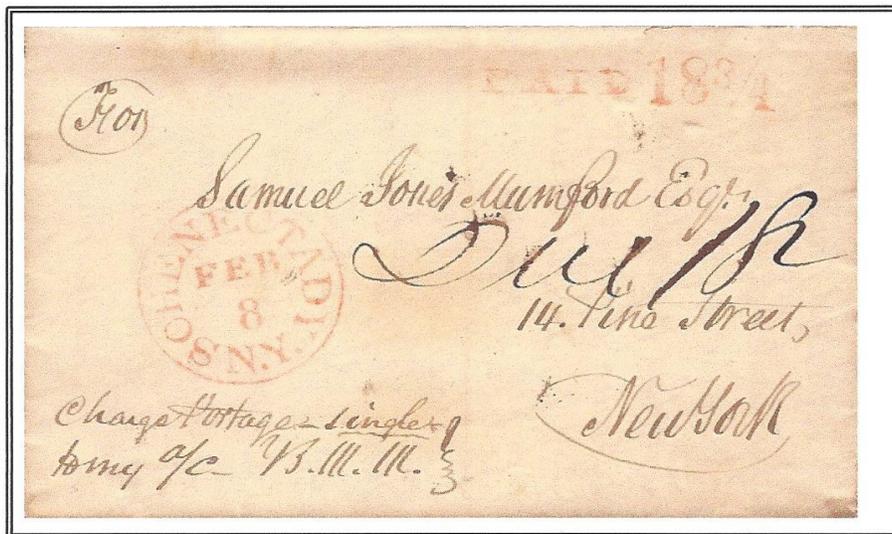
October 31 1833

Double rate of 37½¢ applied in manuscript in the absence of a hand stamp.

PM Ryley changed to red ink and instructed his clerks to add year to the manual dating task after New Year 1830.

James V. S. Ryley
John J. Yates

Hand Stamps Only
First POD-Supplied Circular Date Stamp (1835 to 1845)



February 8 [1836] A difference of opinion on rating the letter. New York wins.....
..... and the letter *is* pretty fat!



April 6 [1837] On this date, John J. Yates replaced James V S Ryley as Postmaster.

Little did the clerks know, but they weren't going to see much of Mr. Yates, either,
and in a couple of years he was going to take their rate stamps away from them.

COVER OF THE ISSUE

By: Glenn Estus

Thanks to Doubleday Postal History, I can show a previously unreported New York State Postmaster cancel from the mid-1870s.

Fishers Landing is a post office in Jefferson County on the St. Lawrence River. Covers from Fishers Landing at this period must not be too common. In Child's Gazetteer of Jefferson County, N.Y. (1890), he writes: "FISHER'S LANDING (p. o.) is situated on the south bank of St. Lawrence River, six miles below Clayton, and contains one hotel, one general store, a grocery, blacksmith shop, several boat builders, a few summer cottages, and about 150 inhabitants."



The cancel on the cover was a little light as well as being in blue, but thanks to retroReveal.org we are able to show the how cancel looks. For those unfamiliar with retroReveal, it is a website sponsored by the University of Utah. Although mainly for the use of researchers working with old documents, it has found a use in the philatelic world by enabling us to enhance postal markings many times hidden by the dark colors of the stamps. At the current time the website use is free.

According to Kay and Smith's "New York Postal History: The Post Offices and First Postmaster from 1775 to 1980", George S. Newton was the first postmaster when Fishers Landing was established on March 3, 1874. I was not sure how long Mr. Newton continued as postmaster since the USPS's website, Postmaster Finder, only lists postmasters since October 1968. However, a little bit of searching found a webpage which has appointment dates for Jefferson County postmasters. The site, <http://www.jefferson.nygenweb.net/pmorle.htm>, says that a new postmaster, Linus J. Pierce, took office on January 11, 1881. Thus, I assume that Newton was postmaster from 1874-1881.

Interestingly, Fisher's Landing has had no postmaster since May 2008. At the present time, there is a notation on the Postmaster Finder site that Fishers Landing was "Converted to a Remotely Managed Post Office under the direction of the postmaster of the Clayton Post Office on June 1, 2013."

When I reported this new listing on an internet message board, one person replied "Nice: looks like it may have been a self-inking ribbon handstamp, similar to those used as revenue cancels during and after the Civil War and frequently seen used by railroad agents, but not very often in regular postal use."