

The Journal of the Empire State Postal History Society

March 2007

Whole No. 8/ New Series

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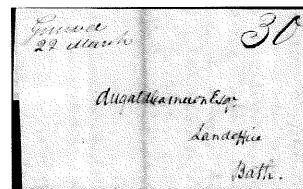
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EXCELSIOR!

The Journal of New York State Postal History

Published March and September by the

EMPIRE STATE POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

P.O. Box 482

East Schodack, NY 12063-0482

Web site: <<http://www.esphs.org>>



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Future Publication

This March 2007 issue is what I plan to be the first of, hopefully, quarterly publications over the next 15 months. With this publication schedule *Excelsior!* should be back on schedule with the September 2009 issue. This aggressive schedule will only be possible with the assistance of the membership. Articles, both long and short are needed on an ongoing basis. At present, the articles you see in this issue represent the only articles I have received to date. If there is to be a September 2007 *Excelsior!* published this September, I need your articles as soon as possible. You don't have to write a long article. I need medium and shorter articles as well. Do you have an interesting cover? Then supply the scan and a brief write-up to go with it and it just might become the *Cover of the Issue*. Do you specialize in a particular county or town postal history? How about considering a series of articles similar to George Dekornfeld's *Columbia County Corner*? Do you need help? Please contact me and let's work together to get you published. *D.E.W.*

MAIL FORWARDED THROUGH SCHENECTADY

By Bob Bramwell

In almost two years of collecting Schenectady stampless letters, I have acquired exactly three covers that appear to have been forwarded by the Schenectady Postmaster. This seems to me a very small number for a town the size of Schenectady in that era and I would enjoy hearing from people based on their own collecting results. But I am able to find something interesting in the three letters because each represents a little difference in the circumstances under which the letter was forwarded.

Figure 1 shows a letter originating in Johnstown, N.Y. postmarked May 7 addressed to Mrs. Maria Alexander in Schenectady. Mrs. Alexander was widowed in the early 1800's and carried on her husband's business dealing in "western land" – anything beyond Amsterdam, it seems. Mail from Johnstown to Schenectady in 1831 most likely traveled through Fonda, which might account for a slight delay; but it was not until May 11 that the Schenectady Postmaster obliterated the Johnstown CDS, PAID handstamp and 6¢ rate, applying the red Schenectady town circle and 6¢ rate due upon receipt forwarding the letter to Mrs. Alexander in Albany.

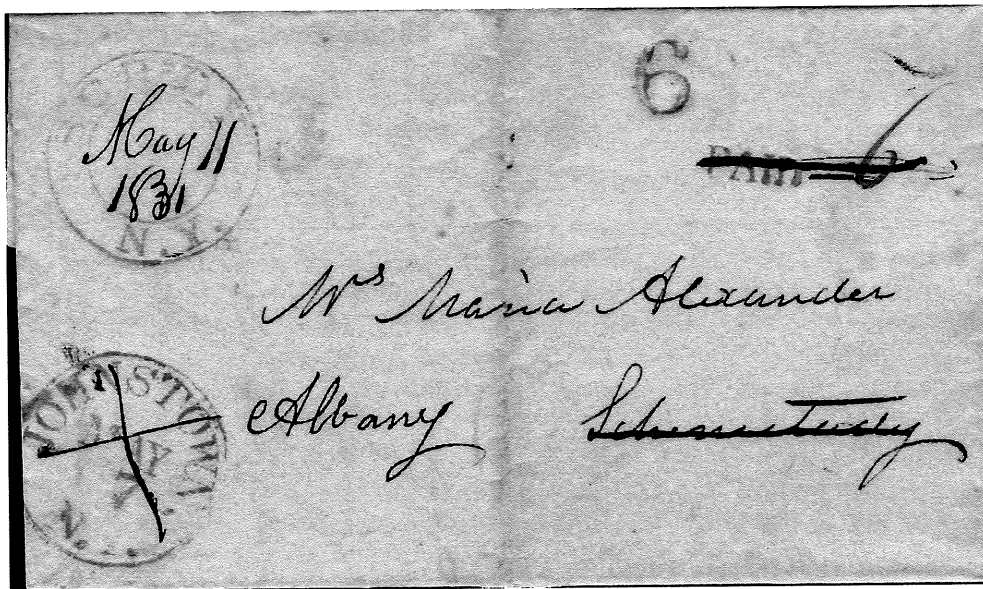


Figure 1. Prepaid letter sent on May 7, 1831 from Johnstown to Schenectady at 6¢ rate. It was forwarded on May 11 to Albany with 6 cents due as indicated by the red 6 handstamp.

I suggest that, as a noted long-time resident, the Postmaster had little trouble in determining after a day or so that Mrs. Alexander was in fact at Albany and would be there long enough to make it worth forwarding the letter. Not knowing the contents of a sealed letter, how would he know this? I'll go out on a limb since I know the letter was written by Daniel Cady, member of a prominent Schenectady family, that his handwriting and business dealings with Mrs. Alexander were known to the Postmaster! So in this case my interest is piqued if the Postmaster used his "local knowledge" to forward the letter.

Figure 2 shows a letter addressed to Justin M. Clark, a student at Union College, originating in Ottawa Ill., January 20th 1835. All of the original address is obliterated and, in a hand not that of the Schenectady Postmaster, a new address to Mr. Julius T. Clark in Minaville, N.Y. is added. On February 12th the Schenectady Postmaster obliterates the manuscript Paid 25 of Ottawa, Ill. and applies the red 6c rate handstamp indicating due on receipt.

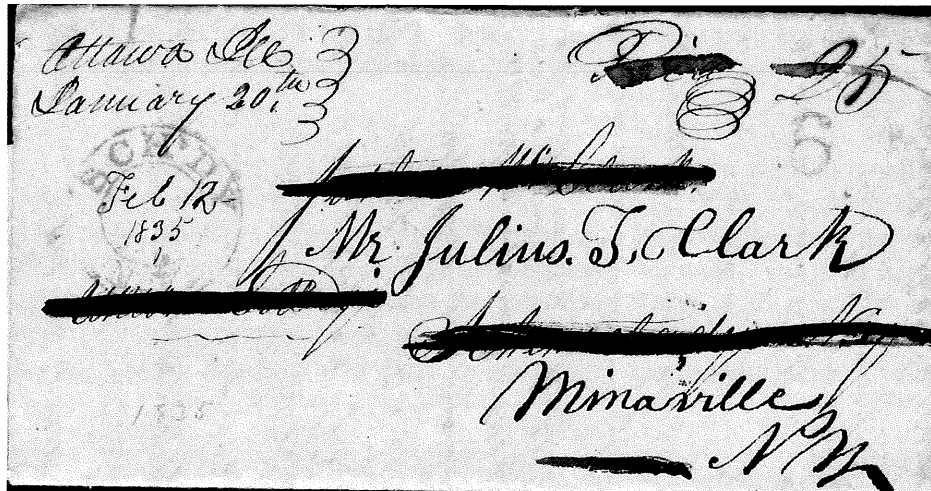


Figure 2. What initially appears to be a forwarded letter turns out to be a re-mailing of the original. Sent on from one brother to another at the 6¢ rate, the father was able to communicate with both sons more cheaply than by sending two individual letters.

Reading the letter explains that this is in fact a “round robin” letter from the student’s father in Illinois with family news intended for his two sons, one at school in Schenectady and the other in Minaville just a few miles away. The student son adds his own news and sends the letter on to his brother. So what might be misinterpreted as *forwarding* is really a simple matter of circulating news in an economical manner – the father avoids copying his letter onto a fresh letter sheet and avoids paying 25 cents to send a letter that is later sent for 6 cents!

Figure 3 presents a letter originating March 15 (1849) in Townsend, Mass. addressed to Mr. Samuel B. Bertram in Schenectady and received there postage unpaid. Without delay, the letter is forwarded on March 18th to Utica and the Schenectady Postmaster adds the required 5¢ rate, noting that 10¢ is due upon receipt.

Without contents, this cover would draw no particular interest beyond the nicely struck blue green Townsend CDS. However, the letter was written by Mrs. Bertram bemoaning her long separation from her dear husband and wishing him soon returned home. I am left to surmise that Mr. Bertram, not a resident of Schenectady and perhaps a traveling salesman on his route, left instructions at the Post Office in Schenectady that letters should be forwarded to him in Utica. From other letters, I have found that this was not an unusual practice when someone was traveling a predictable route, such as a salesman, a preacher or a circuit judge, where the traveler expected some time would be spent at each stop along the route.

While much of this interpretation is surmise on my part, the fact that letter contents are almost always present in postal history prior to the rate changes of July 1, 1845, and the subsequent popularization of envelopes, makes collecting this period doubly interesting.

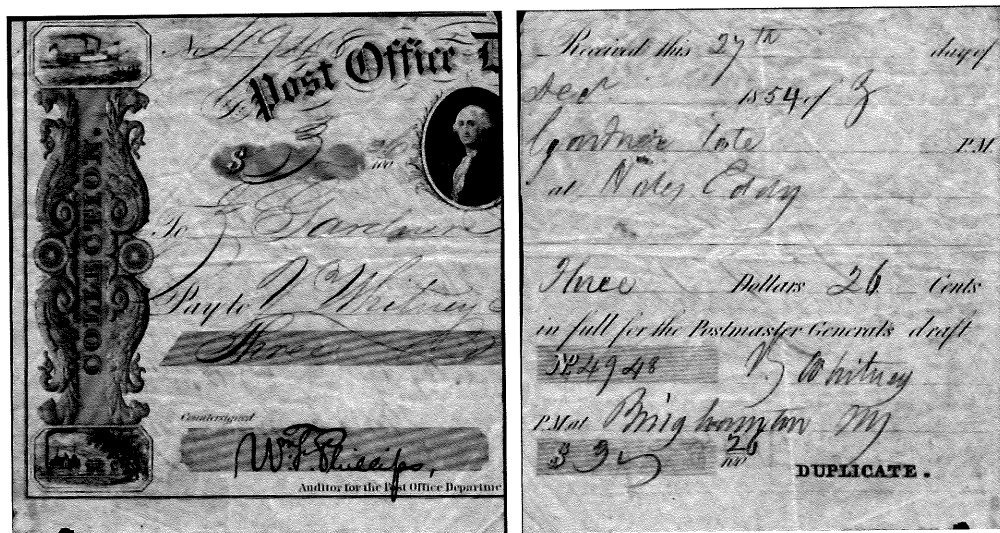


Figure 3. A letter from a wife to her traveling husband forwarded to him in Utica. Manuscript “forwarded” and “5” added by the Schenectady postmaster.

[Bob Bramwell is always interested in letters to and from Schenectady, if anyone has them to spare. If anyone has any questions, or comments on this article, Bob can be contacted by email at rbramwell@nc.rr.com, or via snail mail at POB 4150, Pinehurst, NC 28374.]

COLLECTION RECEIPT

Below is the front and back of a duplicate half of a Post Office Department Collection receipt signed by Virgil Whitney, Binghamton, New York postmaster on December 27, 1854. Binghamton was a *collection* post office, which meant that it collected the receipts from the surrounding smaller post offices and forwarded the same to the Postmaster General on a periodic basis. This document verifies the receipt of \$3.26 from the Postmaster of Hale’s Eddy (Delaware County DPO 1854 - 1894). D.E.W.



FOREIGN MAIL FROM BROOME COUNTY, NEW YORK

By David E. Williams

Introduction: Having collected the postal history of Binghamton and Broome County, New York for over twenty years, I have had the opportunity to accumulate many hundreds of covers from the area. The time period represented by these covers is more than two centuries, from 1799 to the present day. The majority are of domestic usage, but every once in a while I am lucky enough to run across a few that were mailed from the area to various destinations across the globe. This article will share some of these covers with international destinations and will examine both the rates and various postal markings found on them. Rather than being presented by post office of origin, they will be presented chronologically.

Figure 1 shows a folded letter mailed from Triangle, New York in 1839 to Hamilton, Upper Canada. The cover, dated July 9, bears a manuscript townmark of Triangle as well as a manuscript "Paid 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ " rate marking. The 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ cents paid the rate for 150 – 300 miles to the Queenston Exchange Office (aka "to the lines"). The letter was received there on July 13. It was here that the Queenston DCDS was applied and the "Paid 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ " was crossed out and replaced with the manuscript "4 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". The 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ represented the postage that was due from the recipient at Hamilton: 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ pence. Triangle is a DPO (1818 – 1954) with service now provided by the Greene, NY post office.



Figure 1. Cross border mail from Triangle, New York to Hamilton, Upper Canada via the Queenston Exchange Office.

The cover illustrated in **Figure 2** is another example of cross border mail. This one was mailed from Binghamton, New York to Brantford, Canada West in the early 1850s. The cover bears the black, 31mm, "B" close to "N" variety of the Binghamton CDS and the black 11mm italic style "10" handstamp. The CDS variety is known to have been in use from July, 1852 until March, 1855, while the italic "10" is seen as early as June, 1850.

The 10 cents represents the postage to the US-Canadian border. In the case of mail going to Canada West (now Ontario) this would have been the Exchange Office in Buffalo, New York.



Figure 2. Cross border mail from Binghamton, New York to Canada West via the Buffalo, New York Exchange Office.

The blue "U^s STATES in framed arc was added at the Buffalo, NY Exchange office as was the blue "6d". This marking reflected the 6 pence (10 cents) postage that was due upon receipt in Brantford. Since the postage was not pre-paid, a total of 12 pence was required to be paid by the recipient. This cover possibly traveled on the Buffalo and Brantford Railroad or across Lake Erie via ship.

Figure 3 below shows a cover which bears the 24mm black CDS of Binghamton. A black cork killer ties the 10 cent yellow orange issue of 1869 (#116) which paid the 10¢ per ½ ounce rate via American Packet to Aspinwall, New Grenada (Columbia). This rate became effective December 1856 and was in effect until July 1, 1875.

The letter was sent to Jared Linsly, Jr., the Passed Assistant Paymaster on the U.S.S. *Seminole*, a Navy ship which, according to Navy records, was on active sea service from April, 1869 to February, 1870. From this, the year of mailing can be determined to have been 1869.

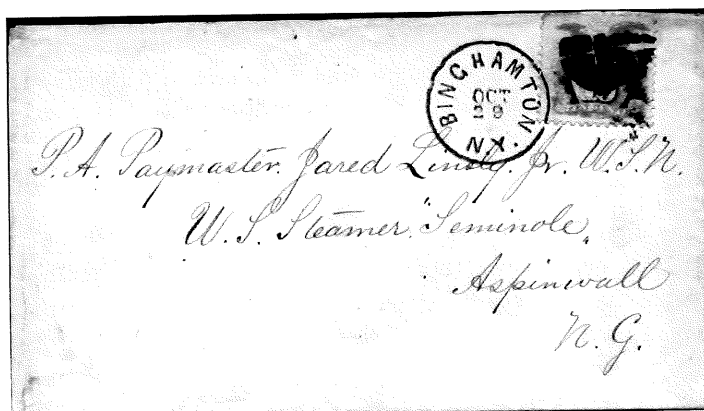


Figure 3. 10¢ Pictorial Usage to Aspinwall, New Grenada.

The author has seen three other Pictorial issue covers sent to Jared Linsly, Jr. at Aspinwall illustrated in older auction catalogs, one cover being from Binghamton and the two others having been mailed from New York City. A future *Excelsior!* article will explore my research of the U.S.S. *Seminole*, Jared Linsly, Jr. and Aspinwall.

The cover shown in **Figure 4** bears the 26mm black rimless CDS of Binghamton, which was in use in the mid 1870s. Black cork killers tie a pair of 3 cent green banknotes which paid the 6 cents per 1/2 oz letter rate to the North German Union, direct by any North German Lloyd or Hamburg-American steamers. Red Port of New York Transit marking dated April 26. The S.S. *Deutschland* sailed on this date for Bremen via Southampton, England. Red Bremen Franco (Paid) marking shows the letter arrived May 9, 1873 at Bremen, home port of the *Deutschland*. Letter arrived in Vienna on May 10 and was directed to Care of Anglo-Austrian Bank where it was forwarded to London c/o Morton Rose & Co., Bankers. Black WIEN/11/5/3 M./73 CDS on face indicates that the letter re-entered the mail stream at Vienna on May 11. Red London arrival backstamp indicates that the letter arrived in London via Newcastle on May 14. Routing to London via Newcastle is extremely scarce. Normal routing would be via Liverpool.

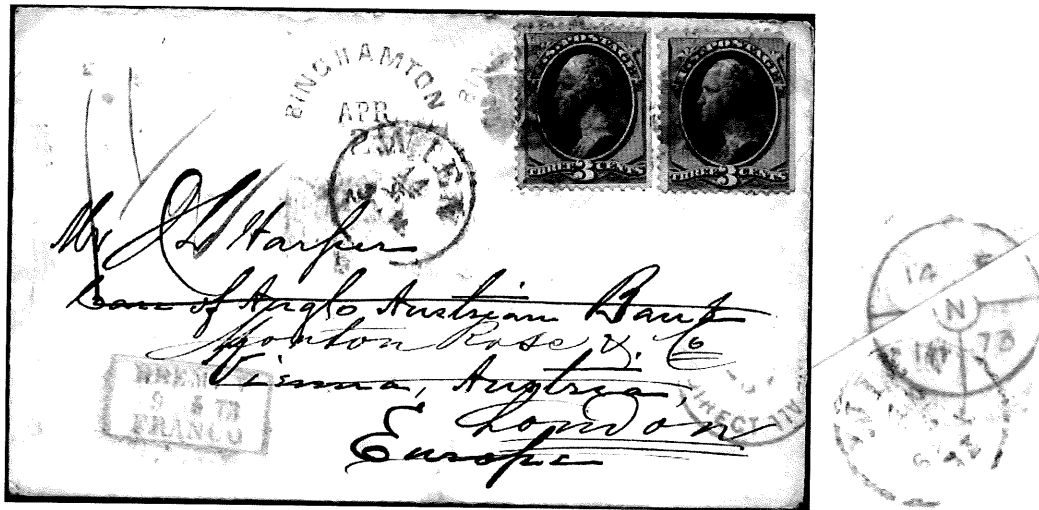


Figure 4. 1873 Transatlantic mail from Binghamton, New York to Austria, and forwarded to London. To the right is a scan of the black Vienna and the red London via Newcastle receiving backstamps.

The 6 cent direct mail letter rate to Germany became effective October 1, 1871 and existed until July 1, 1875 when it was replaced by the 5 cents per 15 grams (1/2 ounce) UPU rate. An example of this rate mailed from Binghamton in 1894 is shown in **Figure 5**. The cancel is the standard 26mm Binghamton CDS and barred duplex killer which first appeared from Binghamton in 1890.

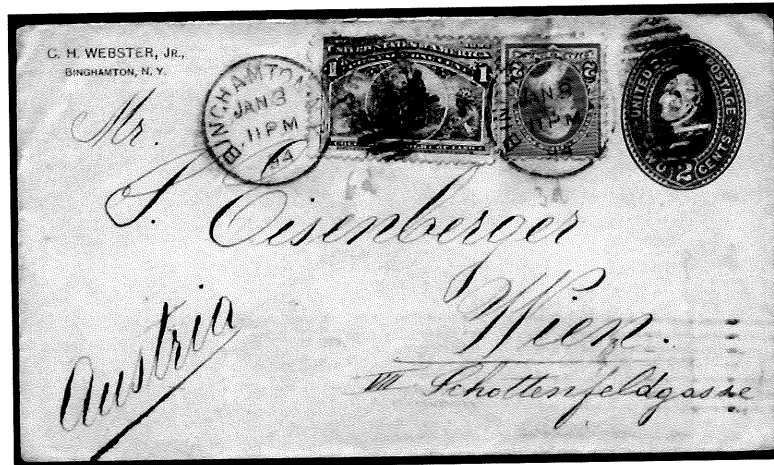


Figure 5. 5¢ UPU Rate from Binghamton, New York to Vienna, Austria.

Figure 6 pictures a mourning cover mailed from West End, New York to Paris, France sometime in the early 1890s. It bears the 5 cent chocolate small banknote (#223) which paid the 5 cent UPU surface rate to France. The cancel is a 27mm CDS with a vertical bar killer. West End is a DPO (1889 – 1896) which had future service provided by the Binghamton post office.

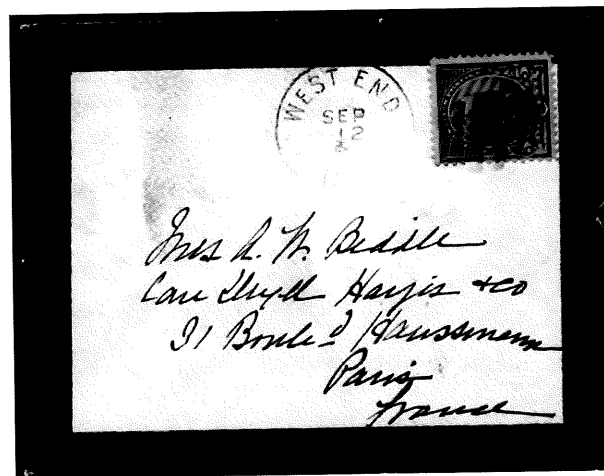


Figure 6. Mourning Cover to Paris, France from West End, New York.

The cover exhibits a very wide black border, as well as wide black strips across the back flaps of the envelope. Traditionally, in the case of mourning covers, the wider the black borders, the more the death is mourned.

The cover in **Figure 7** was mailed to Quebec, Canada from Castlecreek, New York on August 17, 1898. It bears a 1 cent blue First Bureau issue of 1895 (#264) which paid the less than 2 ounce, 3rd class printed matter rate established January 1, 1875. It was received in Sherbrooke, Quebec and was forwarded to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on August 22, 1898.

By UPU agreement, forwarding of mail from one country to another was to be done at no additional charge. The 29mm CDS has Castle Creek as two words, although the official name was Castlecreek from December 1895 until December 1905. At that time the name reverted to Castle Creek and remains so today.



Figure 7. Cover sent in 1898 from Castlecreek, New York to Sherbrook, Quebec, Canada and subsequently forwarded to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

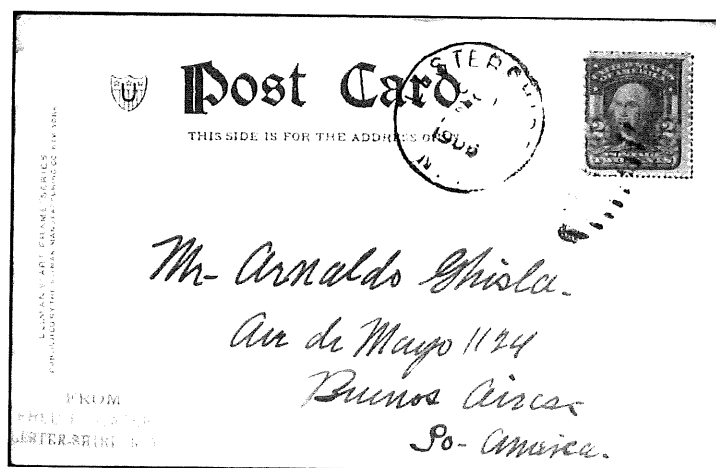


Figure 8. Postcard mailed to Buenos Aires, Argentina from Lestershire, New York in 1906.

The postcard shown in **Figure 8** was mailed from Lestershire, New York to Buenos Aires, Argentina in October of 1906. The Lestershire duplex ties the 2 cent carmine stamp (#319)

which paid the UPU international postcard rate. Lestershire is a DPO (1889 – 1915). The name was changed to Johnson City on September 20, 1915.

Figure 9 illustrates a registered cover mailed from Station A (Binghamton) to Markshul, Germany in 1920. Station A, now a DPO, existed from 1919 to 1935. This cover serves as an example of the UPU agreements for registered mail among its members. The combination of the 2 cent postal stationery and the 3 cent violet Third Bureau issue paid the 5 cents surface rate to Germany, while the 10 cent Third Bureau paid the 10 cent international registration fee for 50 francs (\$9.65) indemnity.

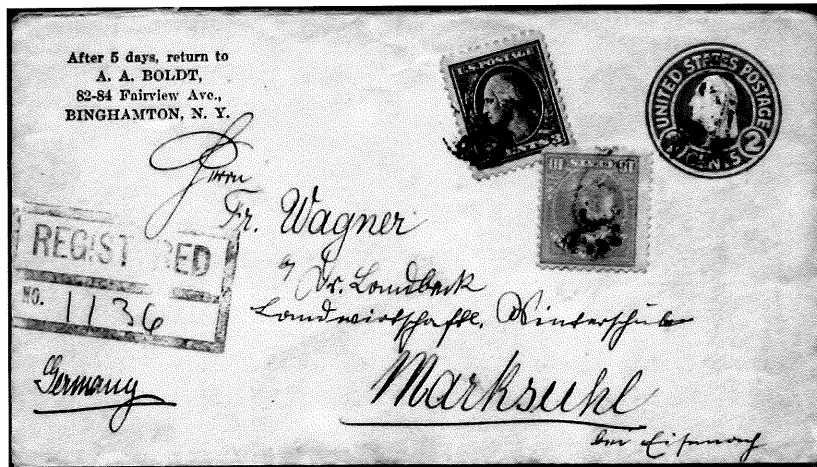


Figure 9. 1920 Registered cover to Germany from Station A (Binghamton)

Another registered cover from Station A is seen in **Figure 10**. It was mailed in May of 1928 to Zurich, Switzerland. This cover bears a “Return Receipt Requested” service marking which required an additional fee upon mailing.

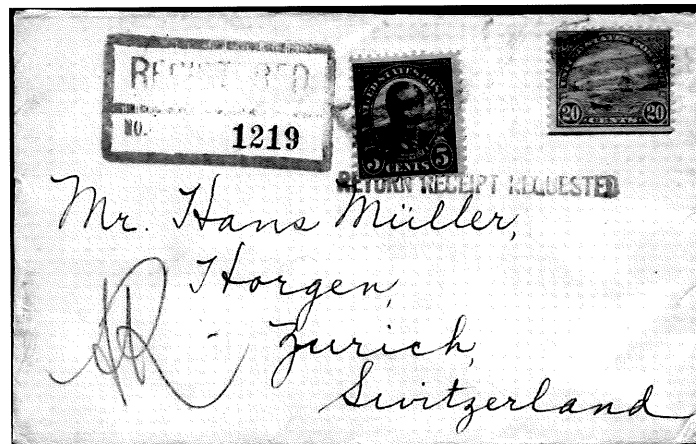


Figure 10. 1928 registered cover sent to Zurich, Switzerland from Station A (Binghamton) with return receipt service requested

The 25 cents postage can be broken down as 5 cents UPU surface mail rate, 15 cents international registration fee for 50 francs (\$9.65), and a 5 cent fee for return receipt service. The registry fee increased from 10 cents to 15 cents on December 1, 1925.

Figure 11 shows another 5 cent UPU surface rate cover to Zurich Switzerland and mailed from Binghamton in 1936. It is an illustrated advertising cover from the Arlington Hotel and bears a slogan machine cancel.



Figure 11. 5 ¢ UPU Rate to Zurich, Switzerland on an illustrated advertising cover from Binghamton.

An unusual 1941 combination rate censored cover to Melbourne, Australia is shown in **Figure 12**. It bears a 30mm black Binghamton CDS with duplexed (1) killer. A magenta "VIA AIR MAIL" marking would have one believe that this letter went airmail to Australia. However the handwritten "AIRMAIL/IN USA" notation means letter was sent by airmail within the United States (probably to the west coast), but then went to Australia via surface (ship) mail. The cover was opened by censor and bears examiner markings. According to Wawrukiewicz and Beecher on page 106 of *U.S. International Postal Rates, 1872-1996*, the 8 cents postage represents the 5 cent UPU surface rate to Australia plus the 3 cent surcharge for domestic airmail service to the U.S. Exchange Office. This rate was in effect from June 21, 1938 until March 26, 1944.

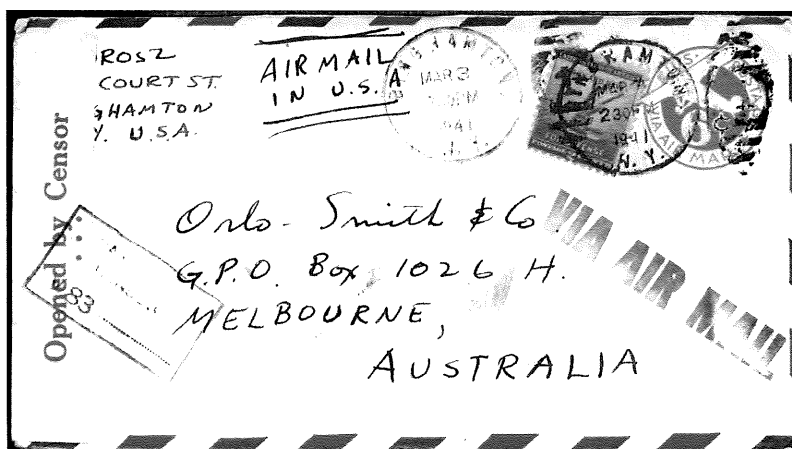


Figure 12. 1941 combination air/surface rate cover from Binghamton, New York to Melbourne, Australia.

In **Figure 13** we see a cover sent from Bible School Park, New York to London, England in May, 1942. This patriotic cover was sent as printed matter under the UPU guidelines, which accounts for the 1 ½ cent postage. Printed matter weighing up to 2 ounces could be sent at the lower rate. The patriotic slogan killer appears to be from a rubber stamp or mechanical hand stamp.

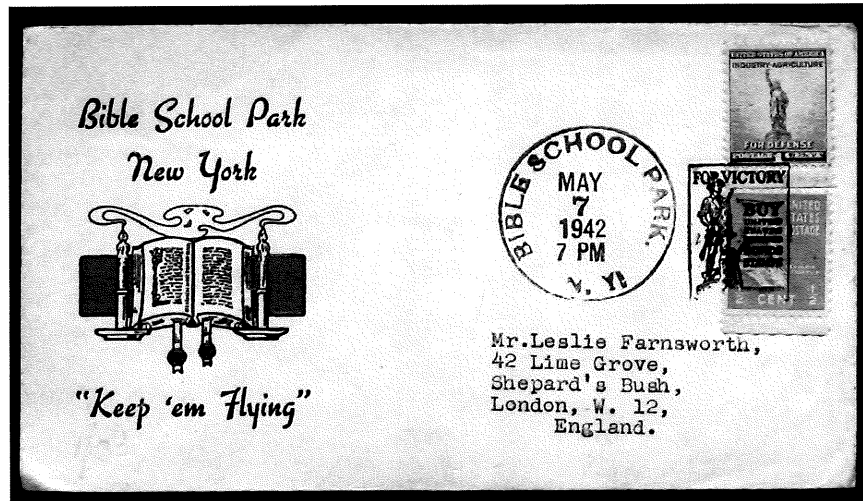


Figure 13. Patriotic cover sent as printed matter from Binghamton, New York to London, England in May, 1942.

Three other censored covers mailed from Binghamton are shown in **Figures 14, 15 and 16**. The first one, from 1942, is a wartime censored cover to Barbados, British West Indies. It bears the 30mm black CDS with duplexed (2) killer and a magenta "VIA AIR MAIL" handstamp. It was opened for examination and then resealed with tape bearing the examiner's number. It is franked with five 3 cent violet prexies (#807), three 2 cent carmine defense issue (#900), a single 1 cent green defense issue (#899), and a single 3 cent Win The War issue (#905) paying the 25 cents per 1/2 ounce airmail rate effective January 15, 1941.

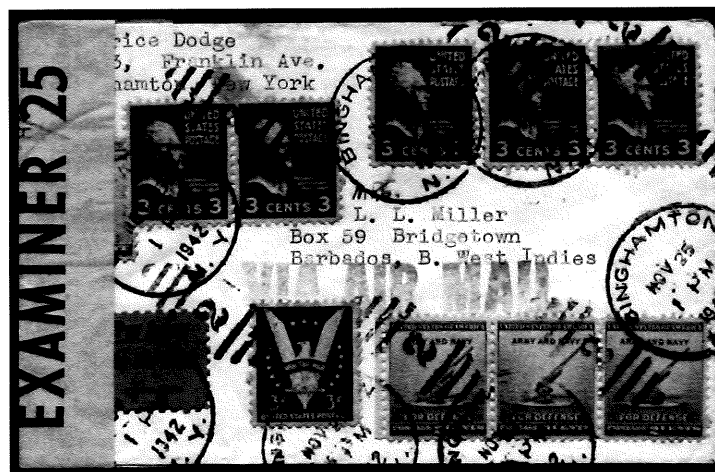


Figure 14 Censored 1942 airmail cover from Binghamton, New York to Barbados, British West Indies.

The cover in **Figure 15** was sent via surface mail from Binghamton to Beyoglu (Istanbul), Turkey in April, 1943. Although the addressee is missing from the window envelope, the pencil notations indicate that it may have been intended for the Bible House in Beyoglu. This was operated at the time by the Protestant Church.



Figure 15. 1943 censored surface rate mail from Binghamton, New York to Beyoglu (Istanbul), Turkey.

The notations and pointing arrows would imply that the letter was either misaddressed or had to be forwarded to the recipient. The cover was opened, inspected, and resealed with censor tape, and I am guessing that the "T.5565" handstamp indicates that the inspection was performed by the Turkish authorities.

The cover in **Figure 16** was mailed from Binghamton, New York on June 9, 1943 to London, England. The cover was sent via airmail and bears the 30 cent blue Transport issue of 1941 (#C30) which paid the airmail letter rate to Europe effective April 28, 1939.

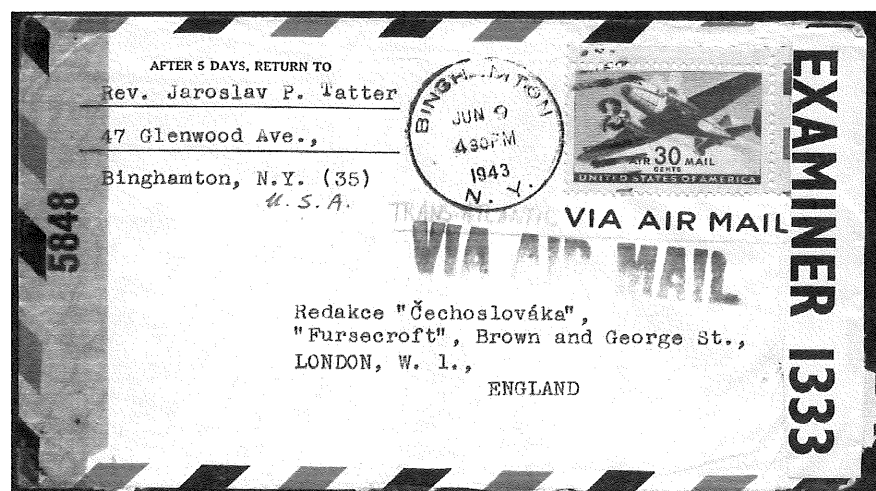


Figure 16. Censored airmail cover to London, England mailed from Binghamton, New York in June, 1943.

Figure 17 shows a patriotic cover sent from Binghamton via surface mail to Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada in September, 1944. The 3 cents postage was the rate established through the special postal treaties between Canada and the United States. The 3 cent rate became effective on September 1, 1931 and remained in effect until August 1, 1958, when the rate increased to 4 cents. Interestingly enough, although sent during wartime, this cover was not censored or opened for inspection.

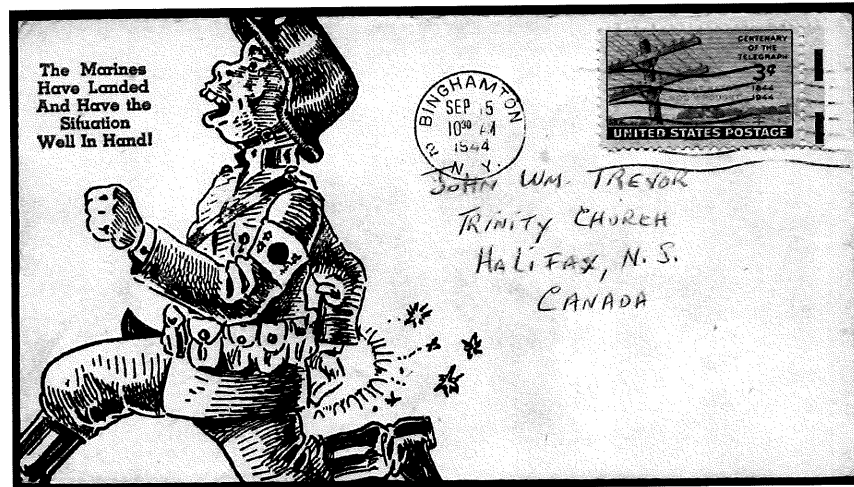


Figure 17. World War II patriotic cover mailed to Canada from Binghamton, New York in 1944.

A censored surface rate cover from Binghamton to Sussex, England is seen in **Figure 18**. The cover, bearing a 5 cent “prexie”, was mailed in February, 1945 to the Windsor Stamp Company. Censor tape reseals the right hand side of the cover, partially obscuring the stamp. The 5 cent UPU surface rate remained in effect until November 1, 1953, when it was raised to 8 cents.

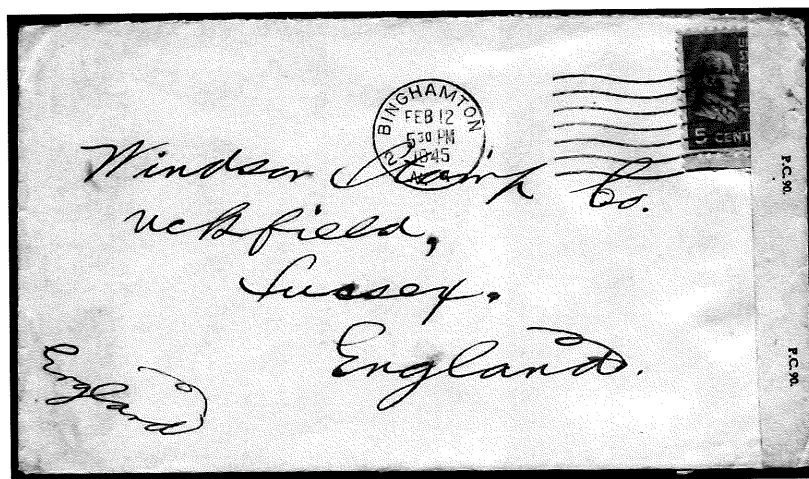


Figure 18. 1945 censored surface rate cover to Sussex, England mailed from Binghamton, New York.

Figure 19 shows a registered airmail cover that was mailed from Johnson City, New York to Romania in May, 1951. There is a magenta Johnson City DCDS on back of envelope. Black "dumb" double ovals tie 15 cent blue green airmail (#C35) and 5 cent blue and 20 cent blue green "prexies" (# 810 & #825) to registered cover mailed to Lugaj, Romania. Postage paid the 15 cent international airmail rate plus the 25 cent registration fee.

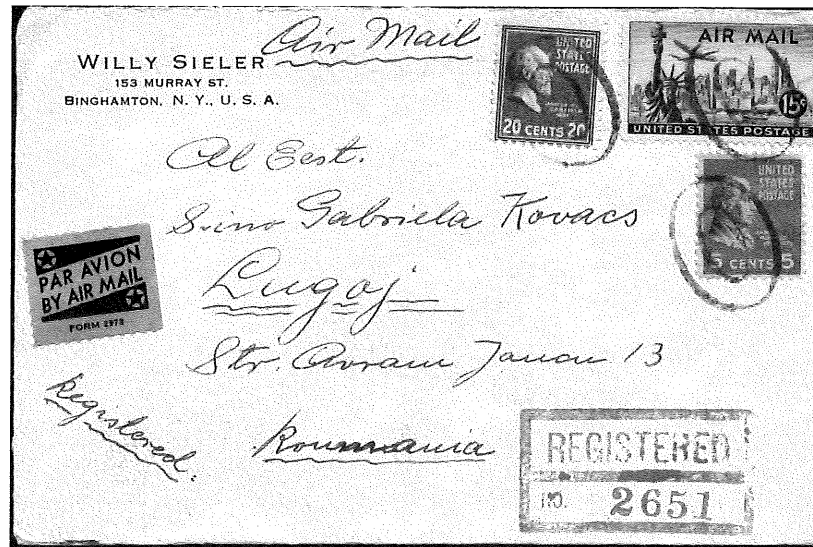


Figure 19. Registered Airmail cover sent from Johnson City, New York to Romania.

The article concludes with a more recent item from 1976. This airmail cover in **Figure 20** was sent from Binghamton, New York to Berlin Germany. It is franked with a pair of the 26 cent airmail issue of 1974 (#C88) and a pair of the redrawn 5 cent Washington definitive of 1967 (#1283B). The 62 cents postage paid reflects the international airmail rate to Europe for a one ounce (double weight) letter.

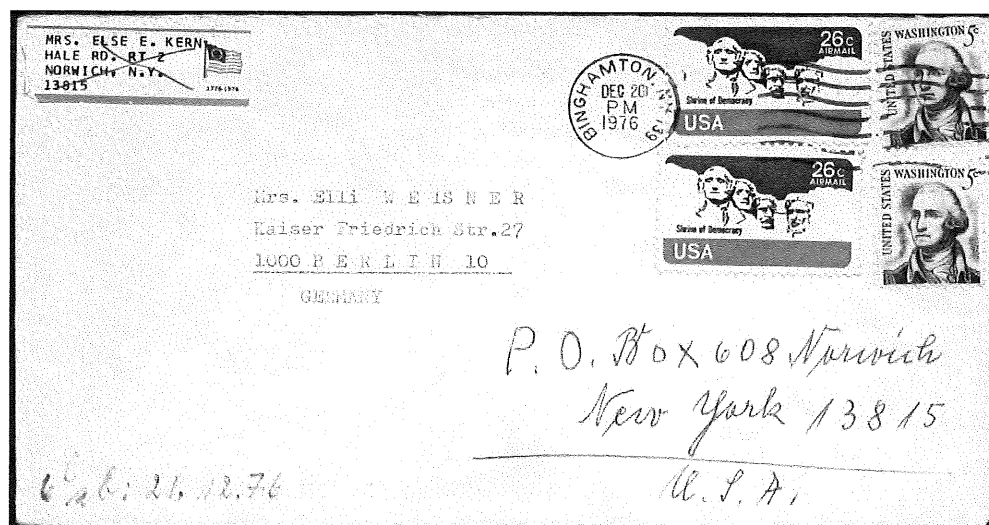


Figure 20. Double weight airmail cover sent from Binghamton to Berlin, Germany in 1976.

New York State Postal Routes (1837 - 1841)

By Bob Bramwell

Like many postal history collectors, I have wanted on occasion to understand how a particular cover in my collection got from its origin to the addressee. Fairly early on, Society member John Lange, Jr. pointed me in the direction of a very useful resource:

The Postal Route Gazetteer

Robert Dalton Harris compiled and published in *Postal Route Gazetteer, Part I: New York State 1839* the proposed New York State postal routes put out for bid in accordance with the Post Office Act of July 1836¹. After the bids were evaluated and awards made, the Act required the Postmaster General to report to Congress "...the contracts made for the transportation of the mails within the year preceding the 1st of July 1837, under the annual lettings of mail contracts in May, 1837; together with ... [an] abstract of the offers made for carrying said mails."

Information Available

Harris' compilation reproduces the detailed report to Congress by the Postmaster General about the contracting for each postal route. Thus, it shows the route of travel, the distance from start to finish one way, the frequency together with time of day standards – the schedule to be adhered to – that bidders were expected to comply with and the mode of transportation to be used, be it four-horse post coaches, horse-drawn wagon, one-horse sulky, post rider or steam boat. Next, the bidders are identified, the amount of their bid per annum for the contract, and any proposed deviation from the Postmaster General's specifications are shown. Lastly, the approved contractor, his compensation, and any agreed-upon modification of the schedule are shown.²

There were more than 375 such routes in New York State, some of which involved no more than travel from one post office to another and back. Some, however, involved stops at as many as two dozen intermediate post offices. There were approximately 1,800 post offices in New York State in 1837³ and a student of mail service of that time can be forgiven for having some difficulty remembering the route or routes serving each one of them.

Excel Spreadsheet

Not being overly familiar with New York State geography, I needed an aid to reconstructing the path a letter will have most likely traveled from the originating post office to the destination along this network of routes, so – with great appreciation for Harris' work – I compiled an Excel spreadsheet that displays each of the proposed 1837 postal routes in New York State (numbered 501 to 879) into its beginning and ending points with all intermediate stops listed in order. For example:

Route:	From:	To:	By:	By:
677	Painted Post	Hornby	Erwin	Hammond's Mills

Route No. 677 originates in Painted Post, NY, stops first at Erwin, stops second at Hammond's Mills and ends at Hornby, NY, 15 miles distant. As in most cases of short routes,

the contract calls for the route to be traveled in reverse on the same day; on longer routes (generally over 30 miles) return would typically be the following day.

Information Not Available

For tracking the flow of mail, the spreadsheet helped considerably link “route connections” – those Post Offices where mail moved from one route to another⁴. But it became clear studying the Burr map that many routes intersected each other, vastly increasing the complexity of the postal network. For example, Route 607 originates in Schenectady and terminates at Oneonta, 77 miles to the southwest. The third intermediate post office on this route, Schoharie, is the sixth intermediate post office on route 547. Route 547 is the Albany to Oneonta route, so my first question was: why not end both Routes 547 and 607 at Schoharie and establish a single route from Schoharie to Oneonta?” I found my answer by looking at the two routes and their respective schedules.

Route 607 leaves Schenectady each Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 12 mid-day (except at 6 a.m. in winter) and arrives at Oneonta the next day by 6 p.m.—77 miles in 30 hours, except in winter 36 hours. The return leaves Oneonta each Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 6 a.m. and arrives at Schenectady the next day by 12 mid-day (except by 6 p.m. in winter).

Route 547 leaves Albany each Tuesday and Friday at 2 p.m. (except at 5 a.m. in winter) and arrives in Oneonta the next day by 4 p.m.—80 miles in 26 hours, except 31 hours in winter. The return leaves Oneonta each Tuesday and Friday at 2 p.m. (except 10 a.m. in winter), and arrives at Albany the next day by 4 p.m. (except 5 p.m. in winter).

Between Schoharie and Oneonta, the post offices served by Route 547 are: Punchkill, Cobleskill, Mann’s Valley, Richmondville, East Worcester, Worcester, Jacksonboro’, Maryland and Colliersville. Between Schoharie and Oneonta, the post offices served by Route 607 are: Middleburg, Fultonham, Brackabeen, North Blenheim, Jefferson, North Harpersfield, Davenport and Davenport Centre. Plotted on a map, the two routes form an elongated figure 8, crisscrossed with other routes.

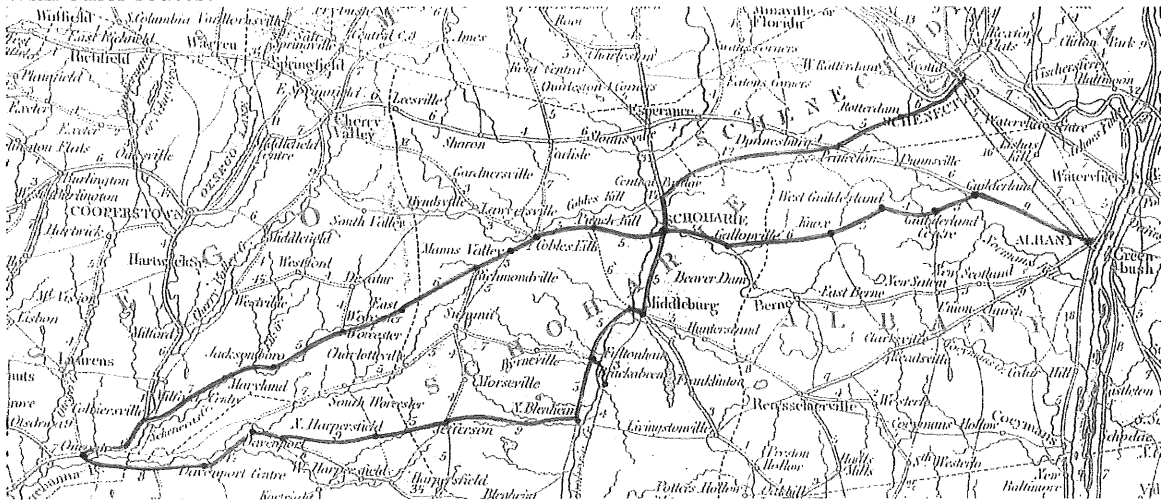


Figure 1. A portion of Burr’s 1839 map showing Route 547 in blue and Route 607 in red.

Therefore, Schoharie’s postmaster probably had mail to re-route *in both directions*. In addition, the Oneonta postmaster most likely had mail coming in on the Albany stage that would go out on the return trip by the Schenectady stage. Since there are other Routes that intersect

some of these intermediate points, I was impressed with how complicated the logistics of mail service in Schoharie County must have been in 1837.

The distance between each post office on a route may also be of interest, especially on longer routes that could not be traveled in the course of one day. This information can be gleaned from the reproduction of David Burr's map of Post Offices and Post Roads included with the *Gazetteer*, although at one point I worried about going blind doing so.

Limitations of the Spreadsheet

The spreadsheet brings basic route information into a simple format, especially for those who have developed a good grasp of New York State geography. The spreadsheet, however, does not have schedule information, which for some routes has seasonality as shown above in the case of routes 547 and 607. Also, the spreadsheet format of rows and columns would not portray bidder/contractor information well. Finally, this spreadsheet has no "temporal" aspect, as when a route or schedule is modified during the contract period. In fact, this spreadsheet covers only 4 years when I have covers (as most collectors do) dating from almost 1792 to the Civil War years. I have no source of route information comparable to the *Gazetteer* for any other time period.

The Possibility of a Database Application

A computer database of this information would overcome most of these limitations, and probably allow for enhancements I am unable to imagine. Such a database can be thought of as an unlimited number of formatted sheets where a single piece of information (I will call it "the correct answer") is placed in one of an unlimited number of "boxes" on the formatted sheets. To use that data, an "engine" of database software allows questions, or tasks, to be formulated and directed at the data. It is helpful to picture a database as three dimensional in the sense that a pile of "correct answers" can be elicited by posing an inquiry to the database.

The first task in tracing the path a letter followed is to identify the postal route that serves the post office from which the letter originated. Using the spreadsheet (but assuming no geographic knowledge of New York State), one must start at the beginning and scan every postal route until the post office name comes into view. A properly designed database program returns as many "correct answers" as exist within the data. When one poses a question such as "**Which postal routes serve Painted Post?**" a properly filled database will return "**585, 676, 677, 678**". Of course, if the question "Which postal routes serve Painted Post?" is posed, the correct answer will be obtained but it will not seem helpful.

How does the database application do this? This is a "two box" inquiry: Post Office is box 1 and every one of our infinite number of formatted sheets has the name of one Post Office in that box. Route No. is box 2 and every one of our infinite number of formatted sheets has one Route No. in that box. All the database engine has to do is look at every one of those infinite number of formatted sheets and set aside for display only those that have Painted Post in box 1. If I have done my homework correctly, the database engine will find only four sheets with Painted Post in box 1 and sheet one will have 585 in box 2, sheet two will have 676 in box 2, etc.

The data I have is limited to 1837-1841, but for that period I could populate a database such that every post office served by any route would exist in sufficient detail so that I could identify route intersections as easily as I now can identify route connections. I could perhaps incorporate a "traveling salesman" algorithm to find the shortest route between two post offices. That would be an industrial strength database application!

Disclaimer and Appeal

I know just enough about databases and Boolean logic (a tip of the hat to technophiles who **really** know this stuff!) to know that designing and filling them with data is a job for professionals, or at least very talented hobbyists. So I encourage computer-heavyweight members to come forward with suggestions for taking this project to a new level of usefulness. Is there a readily available database program that one or several of our members could use to develop a postal history tool?

By the same token, I encourage exhibitors and students of mail service to describe and share source material they have found that would broaden my timeframe for this research. It would be a great accomplishment if the Society were to one day publish a companion to *New York State Post Offices Extant by County & Year, 1792 – 1969* entitled *New York State Postal Routes by Year, 1792 =>*.

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Footnotes:

¹ Richard R. John's very entertaining history "*SPREADING THE NEWS: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse*" details the importance placed on a rapid and disciplined postal system by the Founders, Congress's mandate for expanding the postal system *in advance of profitability*, and the political reality that this resulted in the thousands of postmasterships being the largest repository of patronage available as political parties beginning in the early 19th century became self-perpetuating "organisms." A turning point was reached during the second Jackson presidential term as PMG Barry bankrupted the Post Office (with help from Congress, to be sure) through award of exorbitant contracts to carry the mails given to stage coach operators and others with Jacksonian connections. Extensive use for personal purposes of the postmaster's franking privilege contributed to this revenue problem as well. The political purge of some one-quarter of all postmasters in the early 1830's also adversely impacted the reliability and performance of mail service. To rectify this situation, the Jackson administration brought in Amos Kendall as PMG in 1835 and Congress passed the 1836 Act to gain a necessary degree of control over Post Office operations.

² The *Gazetteer* also reproduces reports to Congress of "net revenue" contracts awarded, reports of changes to contracts made during each of the first three years of the four year contract period, the report of Post Office Net Postages and Postmaster Compensation for the two years to 1841, a useful Perpetual Calendar, and an extraordinary reproduction of David Burr's 1839 map of New York State Post Offices and Post Roads. While most routes were awarded to mail contractors in strict accordance with this specification, not all were. Some routes were never awarded, some were modified at the suggestion of a successful bidder and some were modified or rescinded during the contract period of 1837 to 1841. The postal network of New York State evolved greatly during the four year contract period and the reports to Congress contained in the *Gazetteer* should be consulted when precise information is demanded. Copies of the *Gazetteer* may be ordered from Subway Stamp Shop, Inc, Altoona, Pa. (www.subwaystamp.com), which owns the publisher Postilion Publications.

³ *New York State Post Offices Extant by County & Year, 1792 – 1969*; edited by Chester A. Wilcox (Empire State Postal History Society, 1980).

⁴ Generally speaking, the routes start in New York City and are numbered higher as the "hub" post office is farther and farther west. Robert Dalton Harris, Jr.'s analysis of the postal network that resulted from the Post Office reorganization of 1836 entitled *The Three Postal Networks of the United States in the 1830's* discusses this "hub and spoke" design in detail. Business History Conference 2004.

A Misdirected Auction Lot

By Alan Parsons

Postal history collectors, especially those collecting by geographical area, are always looking for misdirected covers into or out of their area. While not common, such covers are not overly scarce. How many collectors, however, have acquired from a reputable auction house a cover **misdirected** in its auction catalog description even though correctly delivered by the Post Office?

The Post Office (a/k/a Postal Service) has gotten much grief over the years for errors in delivery. In this case the shoe is on the other foot!

The auction took place earlier this year. The lot description read as follows:

Geneva, 22 March (New York), manuscript postmark on 1815 folded letter to Bath Maine, matching "30" rate representing the 20¢ per sheet of paper in the 300-500 miles postal zone, with a 50% increase from 1-Feb-1815 through 30-March-1816, **Very Fine**.

Bath, **Maine**? I collect the postal history of three contiguous upstate New York counties: Chemung, Steuben and Schuyler. Bath, NY is the county seat of Steuben County and its first settlers (other than Iroquois, if any) arrived in 1793. Its Federal post office opened in 1800 and its first Federally appointed postmaster was, of all people, **Dugald Cameron**, the addressee on the cover in question.

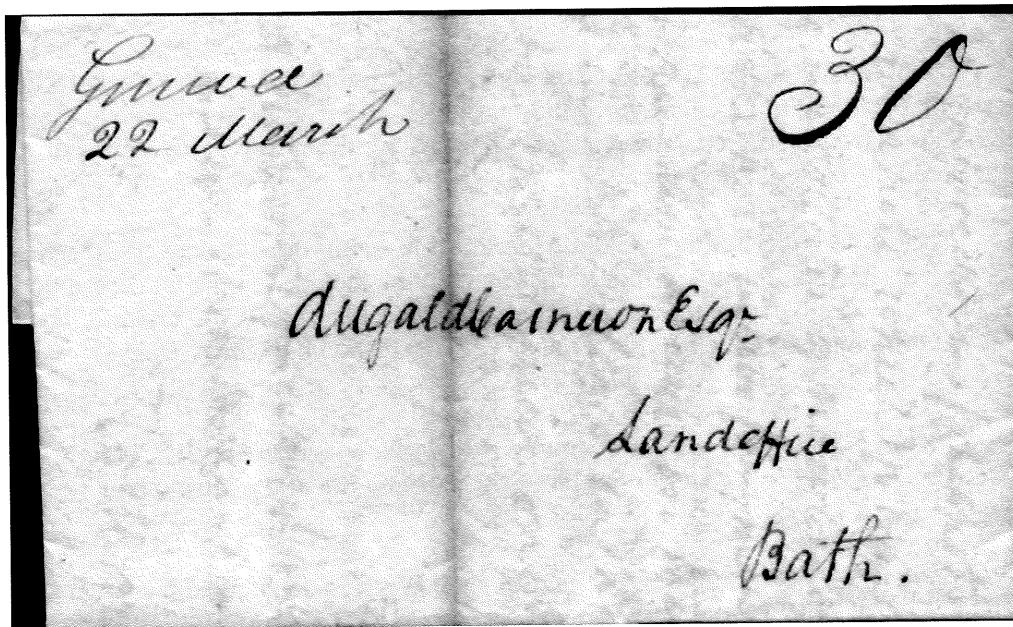


Figure 1. An 1815 War rate cover addressed to Bath, NY.. By 1815, there were five U.S. post offices with the name of Bath.

For the record, I don't memorize names of first postmasters in my three counties; I do, however, belong to the Dugald Cameron Chapter of the Steuben County Historical Society in Bath, NY, so when I saw the name of the addressee on the cover photo in the catalog a dim light went on in my tired old brain telling me that the true destination was probably Bath NY and not Bath, ME.

A serious problem remained, however. The lot describer had arrived at Bath ME as the true destination by virtue of the 30¢ rate on the cover, accurately set forth in the lot description for the distance from Geneva, NY to Bath, ME. The distance from Geneva to Bath, NY is approximately 50 miles. The basic rate per sheet for a letter traveling a distance over 40 and not over 90 miles in March 1815 was 10¢; adding the 50% War of 1812 surcharge, the full rate became 15¢ per sheet.

With the help of the USPS web site, I determined that Dugald Cameron left the office of Bath NY postmaster in 1805. Had he moved to Bath ME after a relatively short stint as postmaster of Bath, NY? It didn't make sense, but a lingering doubt remained and I needed to know more.

There had to be a way to make 30¢ the correct rate in March 1815 for the distance from Geneva to Bath NY. Was there an enclosure, i.e., a second sheet of paper, thus doubling the one-sheet rate of 10¢ before applying the 50% war rate surcharge? This would make 30¢ the correct rate from Geneva NY to Bath NY in March 1815.

With no mention of an enclosure or second sheet in the lot description, I called the auction house to see if the letter itself referred to an enclosure. Unfortunately, it was the day of the auction and although the auction hadn't started yet, it would have been difficult for anyone to find time for a careful reading of the letter. Assuming there had been an enclosure, it was no longer there. In answer to my question, and my explanation for asking it, the auction house said it was sticking with Bath ME as the correct destination.

I took a chance that Dugald Cameron was still living in Bath, NY in 1815 and that the letter to him referred to an enclosure. I bid on the lot, and won it. Sure enough, there is indeed reference to an enclosed letter, not only in the text of the cover letter itself but also in the docketing on the back of the cover.

The lot describer for the auction house must have unfolded the cover; otherwise the year 1815, clearly shown at the top of the letter, would not be included in the lot description. It would have been easy to miss the reference to "...enclosed letter from Col. Troup..." buried in the somewhat difficult text of the letter, but not so with the docketing, which reads:

Joseph Fellows 22 March Subject money paid by Nowland to Sam'l S. Haight – enclosing Col. Troup's letter subject Mrs. Pulteny interest ---ans. 4 Apr.

The lesson to be learned from all this is quite simple: When in doubt, read the letter, and don't overlook the docketing, if any!

THE BINGHAMTON "PAID" CIRCULAR STAMP

By David E. Williams

In his article *Binghamton, N. Y. Postal Markings During The Stampless Period*, which appeared in the June 1986 *ESPHS Bulletin*, Chester Wilcox noted the existence of a 30mm black circular postal marking from Binghamton, NY which was similar to a typical circular date stamp (CDS) of the period, but with the word "PAID" where the date would normally be. Wilcox listed the earliest use of this dateless marking as October 22, 1856. Since the marking is dateless, the date of use had to come from either docketing on the piece or from the date shown on any contents.

Some time ago, I was lucky enough to obtain an example of this marking on a stampless folded letter. The letter, seen below in **Figure 1**, is sent to Ezekiel Dubois at Tioga Centre, NY (Tioga County DPO 1838 – 1893).



Figure 1. Black 30mm circular PAID handstamp of Binghamton, NY. and an enlarged view of same.

Upon opening the letter, I found myself looking at a printed circular dated October 22, 1856. As seen in **Figure 2**, this must have been the same document that Chester had used as his reference as to the earliest reported use of this particular handstamp! The circular, sent from the Office of the Peoples's College in Binghamton, is a notice of a meeting of stockholders on the 26th day of November next (1856) for the purpose of electing three Commissioners. The Commissioners were to then select the location for the College. By paying a minimum of a dollar on or before the meeting date, persons would be entitled to cast a vote as to the location of the college. At the bottom of the circular was a form which could be returned to the Secretary for the purpose of designating another as a proxy.

The lack of a date in the circular handstamp now seemed quite logical. Much like other circular rate mail, or more recently, third class mail, most is postmarked with "dumb" town markings. That is, dateless postmarks that usually only give the place of mailing, but not the day

or year. The marking above would indicate prepayment of 1¢, which was the printed matter rate for up to 3 ounces as established by the Postal Act of August 30, 1852

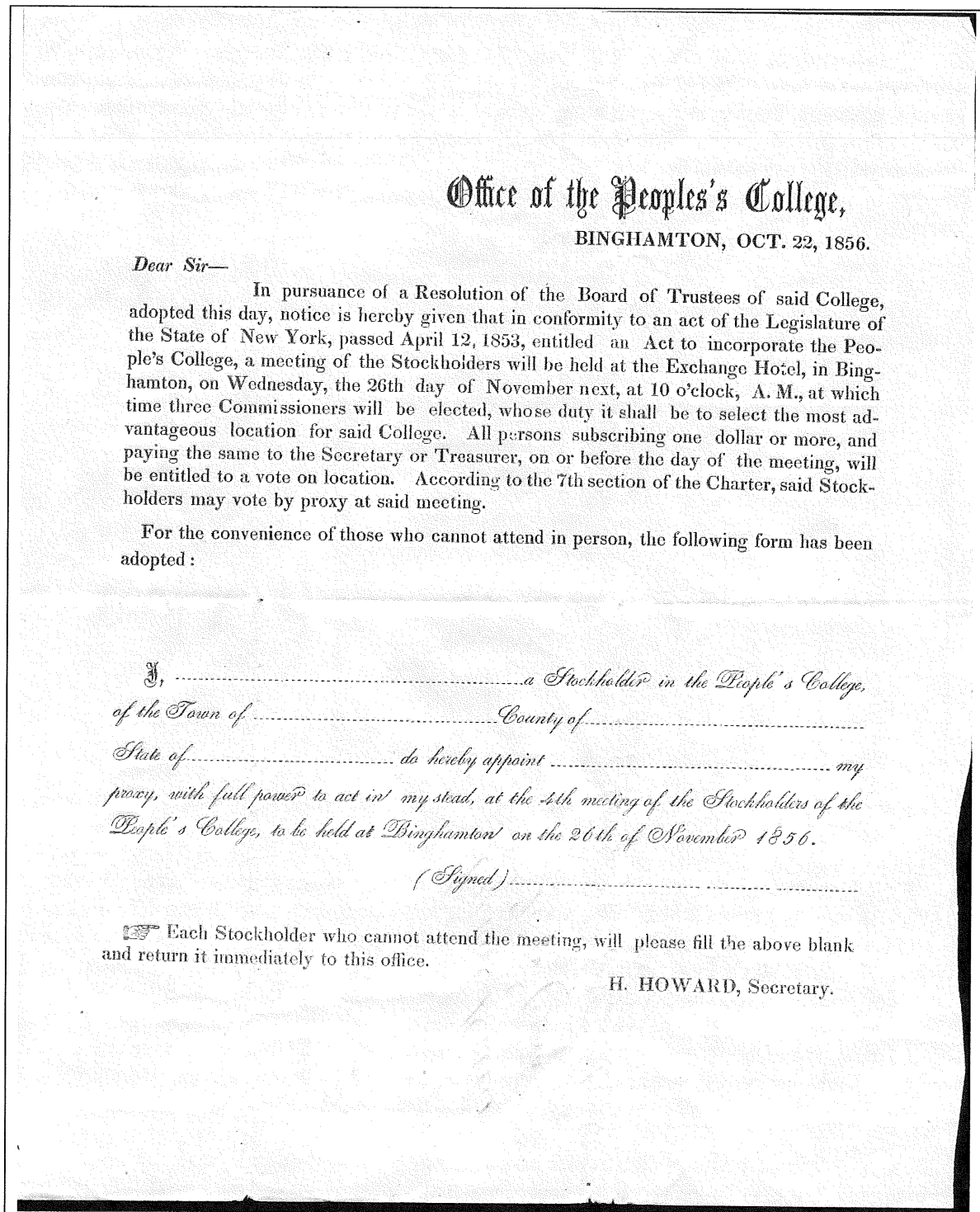


Figure 2. Printed circular dated October 22, 1856 from the Peoples's College in Binghamton, NY.

POST OFFICE OF THE ISSUE

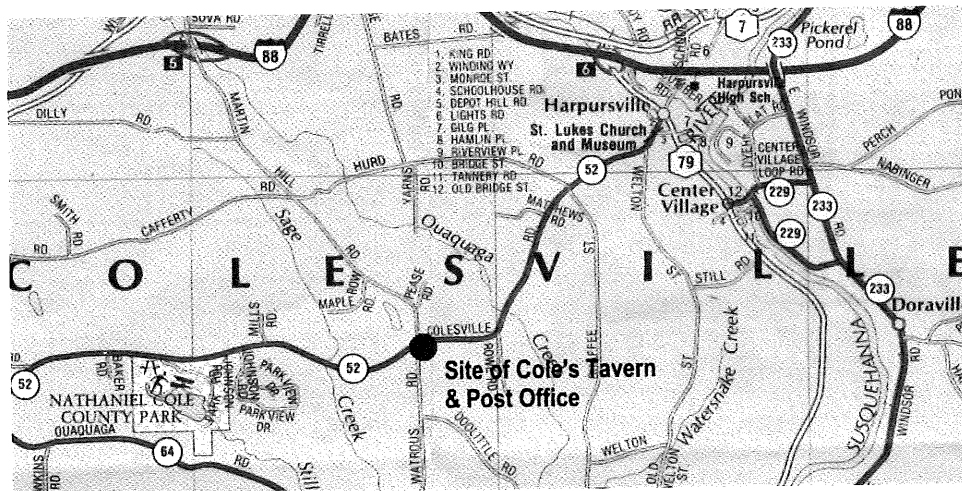
COLESVILLE, BROOME COUNTY



Nathaniel Cole Tavern on Cole's Hill.

Photo from "A History of Colesville 1785-1978" by R. Leone Jacob, 1978

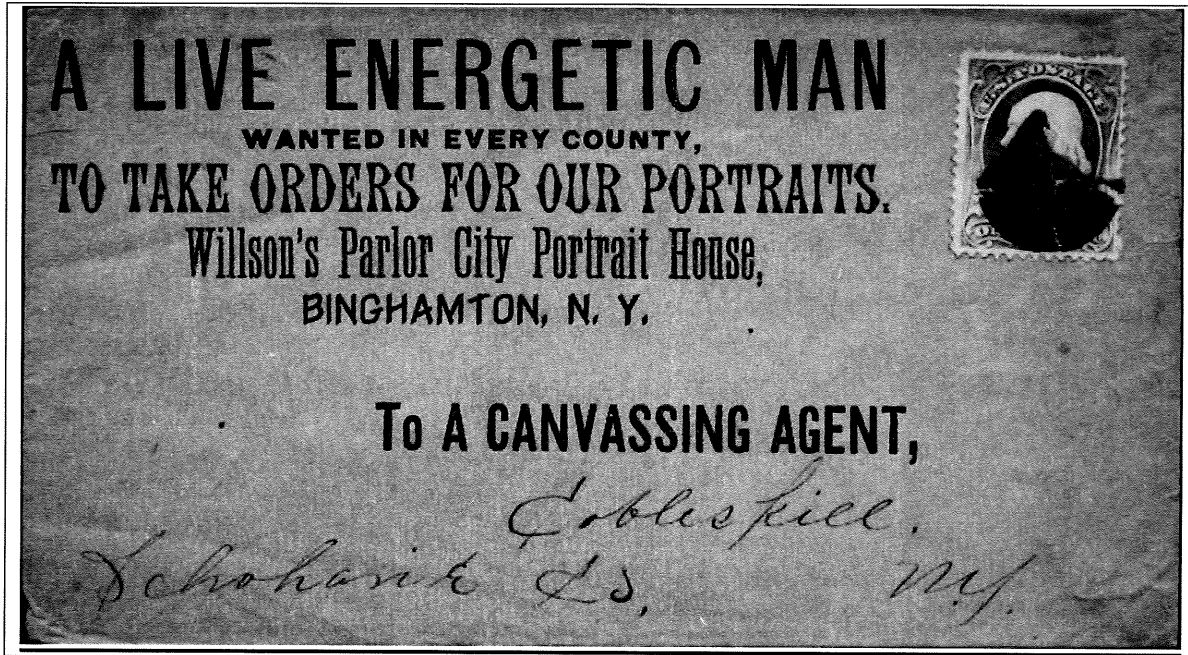
Nathaniel Cole's Tavern served as the location of the Colesville post office. The tavern became an overnight stopping place for the stage coach which ran from Binghamton to Albany. The tavern, in operation by 1800, was located at the corner of what is now Colesville Road and Watrous Road.



The post office was established here in 1806 with Nathaniel Cole Sr. as the first postmaster. He died in 1832, and was succeeded by his son, Nathaniel Cole Jr., who died in 1844. His son, James Henry Cole succeeded him. The post office was discontinued on May 9, 1876. The tavern was demolished in 1925.

COVER OF THE ISSUE

The Postmaster As Employment Agent



Wilson's Parlor City Portrait House in Binghamton, NY was relying on the Cobleskill postmaster to forward this advertising circular to someone that the postmaster thought to be a potential candidate for employment as the Schoharie County canvassing agent for the company. In those days, since the postmaster and post office were pretty much the center of business and every day life, companies would frequently ask for the postmaster's help in finding reliable individuals that the companies might employ. In this case, the candidate for the job had to be a live, energetic man. I wonder how many dead energetic men the postmaster of Cobleskill knew.

(From the collection of the Editor)