

The

JOURNAL of

New York State Postal History



Volume 26

Summer 1994

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President

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Editor

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The **JOURNAL** of New York State Postal History

is published by the
EMPIRE STATE POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY
373 Root Road
Ballston Spa, New York 12020-3227
APS Affiliate #28

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RICHFIELD SPRINGS: A HEALTH SPA

by Roy Ahlquist

Communities generally evolve around some natural phenomenon. Richfield Springs is no exception though its natural quality is tied to what apparently was an erroneous health belief, specifically, that sulphur springs are a curative. Nevertheless, according to an article written about the time of the Civil War by a man named Hedges, which was published in an 1888 unidentified publication some twenty years later, a General Spinner had written a letter in which he said that some fifty years earlier the sheriff of Herkimer County was riding from Little Lakes to Mohawk. As he passed through the area which would become Richfield Springs, he noticed the strong smell of sulphur. He dismounted and, after a brief walk, he found a spring covered with logs. The wood was the color of ebony, and attractive enough for him to take a piece and place it in his pocket. He continued on his way.

A short time passed, and he had been home several days when he noticed that the piece of wood had eaten through the cloth. The odor was the natural smell of sulphuric acid. The mineral spring came to be known as White Sulphur Spring. The word reputedly spread and, in time, some other springs were found. Since the springs were reputed to have curative power, especially for rheumatism, the area began to draw people.

I have found nothing more than Mr. Hedge's article to support that story; however, the 1824 Gazateer by Spafford places the first settlement circa 1791. The 1816 Melish map showed no settlement in the area, nor is there a post road. By 1824, Spafford records that the third most significant road to the west passed through Richfield Springs.

In order to avoid confusion, keep in mind that this article is about the village of Richfield Springs and not the town of Richfield Springs. Unfortunately, in New York State we do not use the term "township" to separate one from the other. The town of Richfield Springs in 1820 had a population of 1,791 people, but the village had not yet come into being. It is likely that the village gained its name from the post office designation which, in turn, derived from the town.

There seems to be some question about the year that the first hotel was built. A chamber of commerce flier reprinted an unidentified newspaper clipping in which it is claimed that the original Hotel Earlington was built in 1830. Mr. Hedges, however, records that the hotel was built at a later date by Uriah Welch. Welch owned another hotel, the Mitchell House, in Thomasville, Georgia. In 1865 a second sulphur spring was discovered in the Richmond Springs area. This, according to Hedges, resulted in Welch building the original hotel in 1865. They may both be true as the original may have been replaced by a new hotel. On February 17, 1830, a post office was established in Richfield Springs with James Hyde postmaster. At the time the designation was East Richfield.

On March 5, 1842, the post office was redesignated Canandaraga. Three months later it was redesignated Richfield Springs. Horace Manley was postmaster when the first change was made and he continued as postmaster when the post office became Richfield Springs.

I do not have a complete list of postmasters, but, for the record, and according to the New York State Legislative Manuals James Davenport was postmaster in 1854, 1861, and again in 1890. Eugene Hinds is shown as postmaster in 1867 and 1870. The location of the post office during the nineteenth century has not been established.

In the 1860 Gazateer of New York State, French cites the population of the village as 368 inhabitants, and the make-up of the village as three churches and a flouring mill. It is recorded that many "invalids" go there for the springs, and an analysis of the water is shown, but there is no mention of hotels. Undoubtedly, it was not until the arrival of the railroad that the tourist business became significant.

A stage line passed through the area early. The 1816 Melish map shows a route out of Albany through Cherry Valley to Sangerfield where the route branches. Just north was the main route from Buffalo to Boston while to the south another route linked Cherry Valley to Union via Cooperstown. (There were probably other stops but the Melish map does not mark them all.)

According to Mr. Hedge's article, most vacationers came from Boston or New York City via coach. The trip took about twelve hours. Those who came from New York could have breakfast in New York. They would then board the coach and ride up the east side of the Hudson River to either Rhinebeck, or the village of Hudson. After 1851 this leg of the trip could be accomplished by Hudson River Railroad. (A third choice would be steamboat.) At Rhinebeck, there would be a one mile trip to Rhinecliff where the traveler was carried to Kingston by ferry. From Kingston, the route was to Oneonta (later via Ulster and Delaware Railroad), and then north to Richfield Springs. When the crossing was made at Hudson, the traveler would cross to Catskill, and then to Richfield Springs. Either route made it possible to have supper in Richfield Springs. The traveler from Boston was required to change coaches at Albany.

The Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad reached Richfield Springs in 1885, but it was a terminus of a western route. By 1905 a branch of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad joined Cherry Valley with Cobleskill.

Cancellations from Richfield Springs toward the end of the nineteenth century should be fairly plentiful considering the number of people who vacationed at the reputed twenty-seven hotels which existed at one time. However, only one manuscript cancel (which has no year date) has been reported according to Henry Chlanda and Chester Wilcox. By the 1860s a cancellation device was in use. Illustration 1 is a cover of the 1860s with a spokes fancy cancel on a Scott 65, and reasonably is the work of Postmaster Davenport. The second cover is a Scott 114 (also proof that a well centered of this stamp does exist) with a wedge type cork cancel. Eugene Hinds would have been postmaster at that time.

Mail continued to come to Richfield Springs by coach into the early years of this century. In 1900 the proposed contract was 7744 which had been paying \$194 a year. The route was from Richfield Springs to Cherry Valley via Warren, Springfield Center, Springfield, and East Springfield. The distance was eleven miles and a round trip was to be made each day for six days. The departure from Richfield Springs was to be at 9:00 a.m. and arrive at Cherry Valley by 12:30 p.m. The mail train probably arrived at that time. He would then leave Cherry Valley at 2:00 p.m. and be back in Richfield Springs at 5:30 p.m.

Richfield Springs must be rich in hotel covers, considering the large number which existed. One of the main hotels was the New American Hotel mentioned earlier. According to Mr. Hedges, in the 1880s the New American Hotel was sold to E.M. Earle of Earle's Hotel in New York City. Earl modernized it by adding an elevator, a billiards room and a cafe. He also changed the name to the Hotel Earlington. Several postcards of this hotel were made, one of which is shown in illustration 3. The card was published by rotograph and is dated 1905. An earlier Leighton card shows changes which had been made to the stonework under the veranda.

About the time of World War I, the Earlington Hotel was sold and renamed the Bloomfield. This is shown in illustration 4. By the 1930s, the hotels no longer drew guests though tourism does still play a part in the economy of Richfield Springs. Today a part of the hotel is still standing, but it is not used as a hotel.

The message, I suppose, is that the Richfield Springs I saw in the dozen or so covers I received, and some thirty viewcards was not there when we visited Richfield Springs several years ago. Yet, it was a place where the people were friendly and the scenery attractive.

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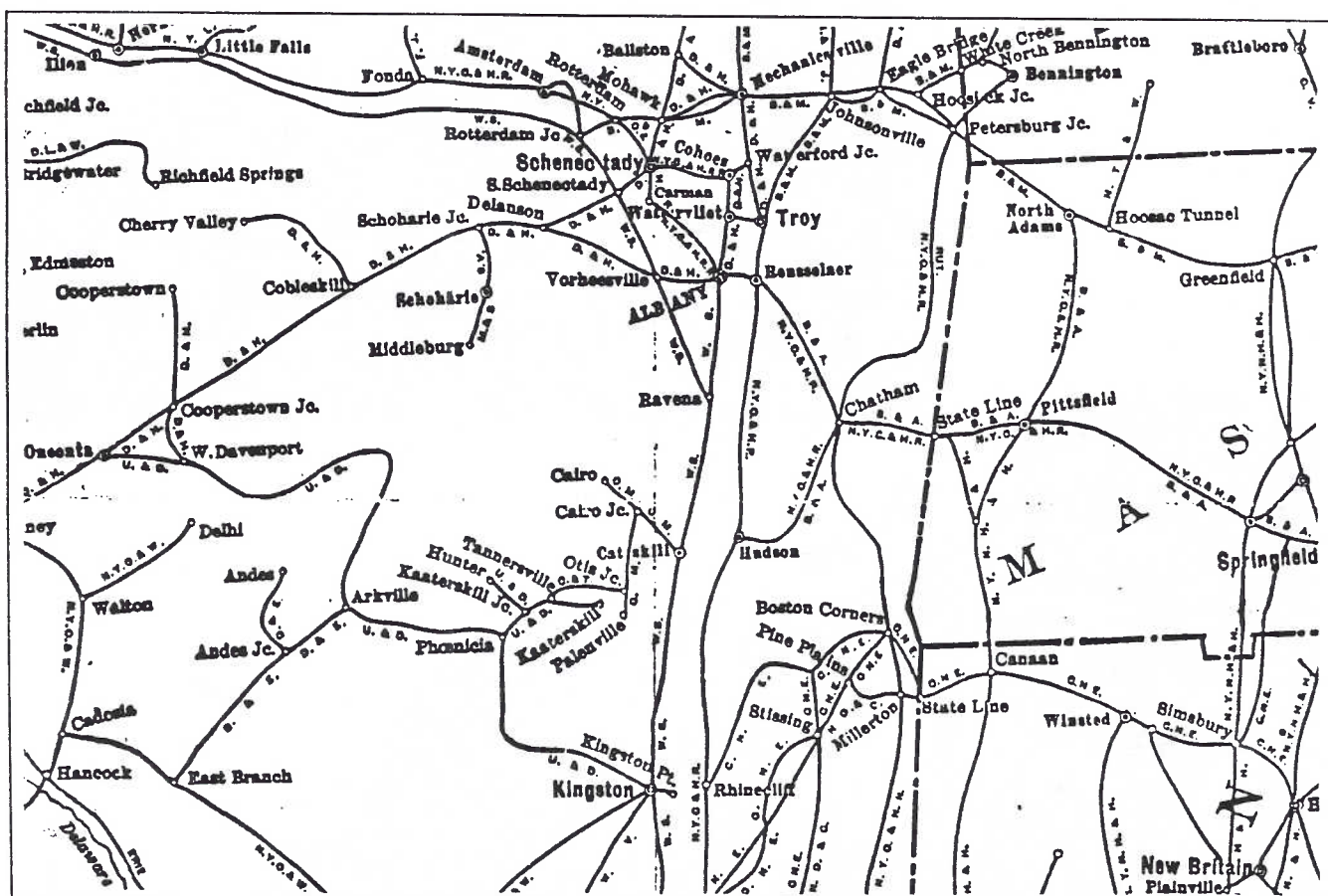
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Spafford, H.G., Gazateer of New York State, 1824, Heart of the Lakes reprint
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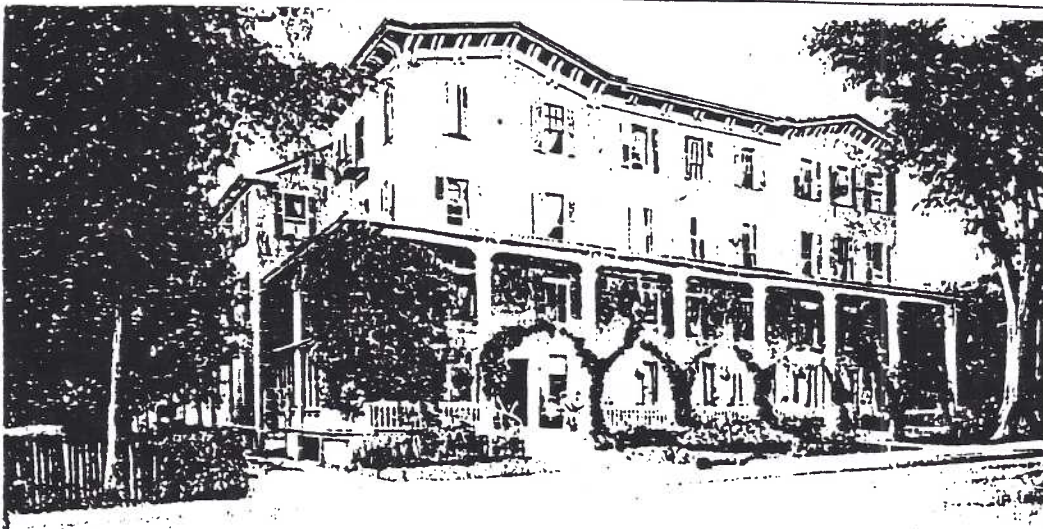
Maps:

Melish, John, *Northern Section of the United States Including Canada*, 1816, Sturbridge Village reprint.

Second Division, Railway Mail Service, International Correspondence Schools, Scranton, Pennsylvania, 1908.



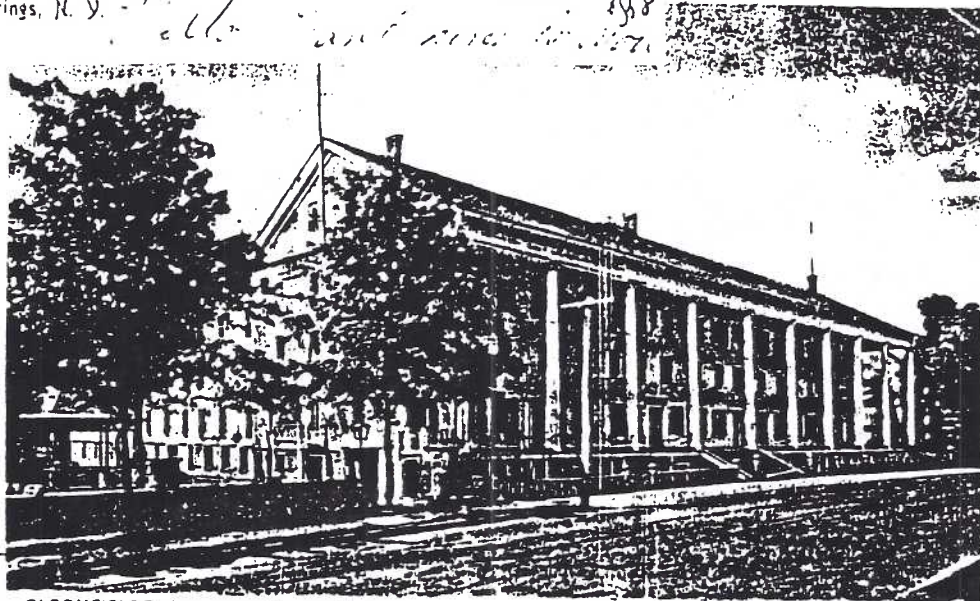
A portion of the 1909 Railway Mail Service map



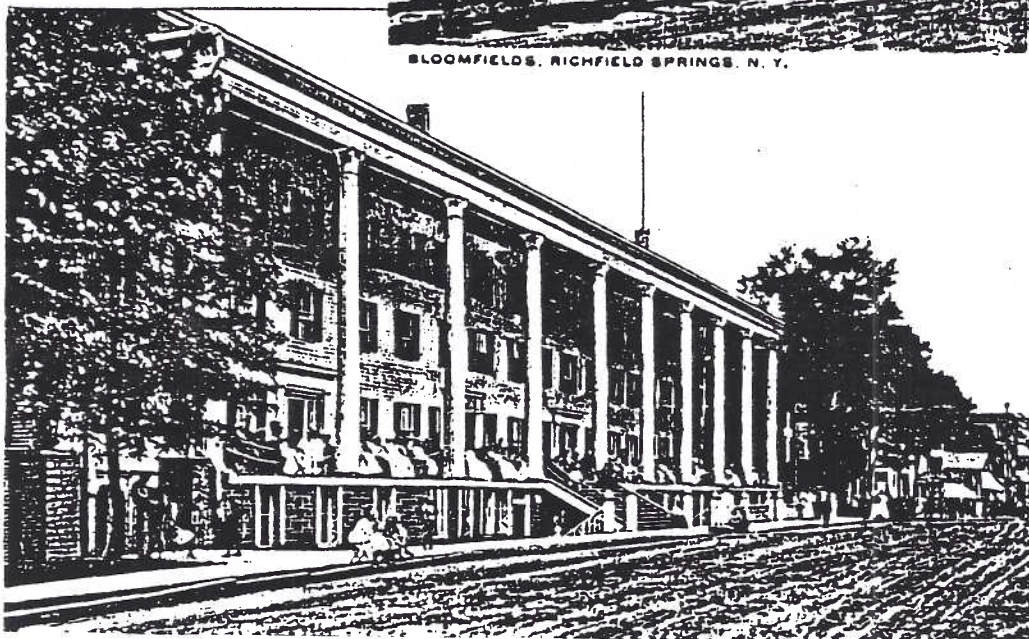
Copyright 1906 by the H. W. H. Co.

4273 The Teller, Richfield Springs, N. Y.

LAND COLORED

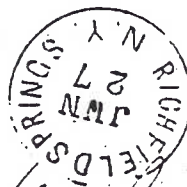


BLOOMFIELD, RICHFIELD SPRINGS, N. Y.





26 Mr. Lafayette S. Blue
Care of Mr. Schuch
Merchants Hotel
Cortlandt St New York



210 Mr. La Fayette Blue
Merchants Hotel
Cortlandt St
New York

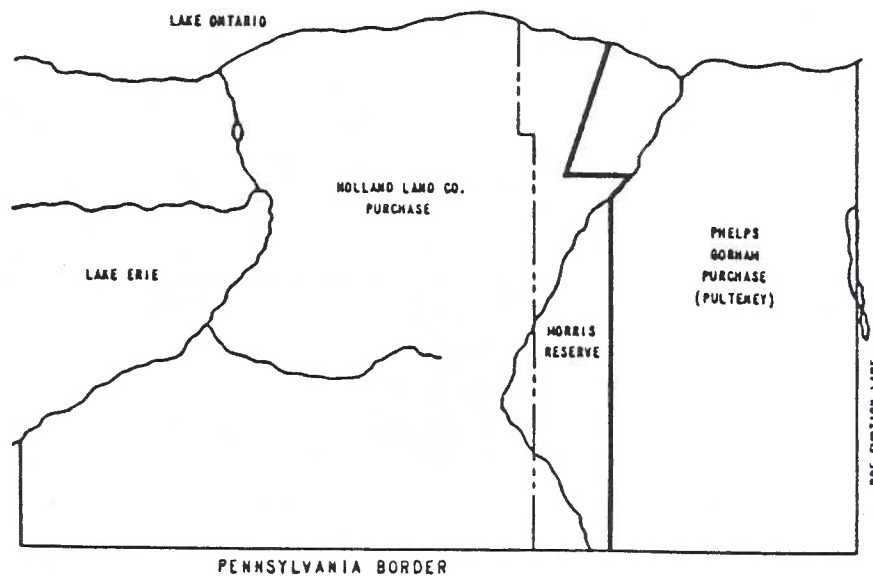
EARLY BUFFALO AND WESTERN NEW YORK POSTAL HISTORY *by Nathan Calkins*

Political Organization of Western New York

The postal history of this region is the history of its settlement. New post routes and post offices were opened almost simultaneously with the formation of new communities. Since ownership of the land to be settled and the political organization of counties and towns were often a determining factor in the establishment of new post offices, a very brief outline of their history is given here.

The treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1784 affirmed the Indian ownership of all land in New York State west of Seneca Lake. The right to buy land from the Indians - pre-emption rights - was assigned to the State of Massachusetts in the convention of Hartford on December 16, 1786. New York State retained sovereignty over this region. Two years later, Massachusetts sold its pre-emption rights to a group of Boston financiers and land speculators, the Phelps and Gorham Company. Title to part of the area - roughly that between Seneca Lake and the Genesee River and amounting to 2,600,00 acres - had been obtained from the Indians in the Treaty of Buffalo Creek on July 7, 1788.

In 1790, Phelps and Gorham, unable to fulfill their obligations to the State of Massachusetts sold all their unsold properties to Robert Morris who in turn disposed of most of them to a group of English land speculators, the Pulteney interests. Excluded in the later sale was a strip 12 miles wide on the western border. This strip became known as the Morris Reserve and was sold in large tracts. best known are the Connecticut, Triangle, Craig, 40,000 acres, Ogden, Cottringer, Church, Sterrett, and Morris tracts.

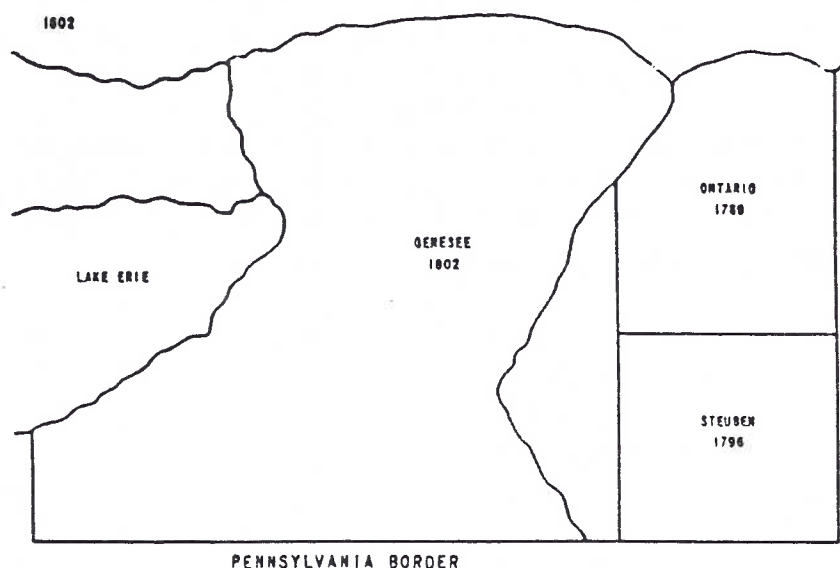


The territory west of the Genesee River to the Pennsylvania border - about 3,750,000 acres for which Phelps and Gorham had not yet obtained a title, reverted to the State of Massachusetts. Robert Morris purchased the pre-emption rights in 1791 and two years later sold the biggest part (about 3,500,000 acres) to a Dutch syndicate, generally known as the Holland Land Company. The title to these lands was obtained from the Indians in the Treaty of Big Tree in 1797. The Holland Land

Company was unable to sell large tracts and was forced to liquidate its enormous holdings piecemeal to the settlers. It was not until 1836 that the company was able to sell the balance of its unsold properties.

When the State of New York obtained sovereignty over Western New York in the Hartford convention, it added these lands to the existing County of Montgomery (formerly Tryon). From it was set off the County of Ontario on January 27, 1789 which embraced all territory west of the pre-emption line. Canandaigua became the county seat. For a number of years it was the outpost of civilization on the western frontier.

As soon as settlement of the Holland Land Company territory began, it became evident that so large a county was difficult to administer. On March 30, 1802, a new county was formed covering the area west of the Genesee River and of a line south of the "Great Forks" (Genesee river and Canaseraga Creek). The name of the new county was Genesee with Batavia as its capital. In 1796 the Pulteney interests were instrumental in having Steuben County set aside from Ontario.



Early Postal Routes of Western New York

At the end of the 18th century the area of New York State west of the Genesee River was an almost unbroken wilderness of forests and swamps. The only inhabitants were Indians and it was not until the very last years of that century that a survey was made and settlement started.

Canandaigua was for many years the outpost of civilization in Western New York. It was the seat of the newly established county of Ontario (1789) which covered the entire area west of Seneca Lake. A post office had been established in 1795 connecting the village with Utica, Albany and New York. 130 miles to the west was Fort Niagara at the mouth of the Niagara River and Lake Ontario which had stayed under English occupation until in 1796, under the terms of the Jay Treaty, it was finally turned over to the United States. In the fall of the following year, a post route from Canandaigua to Fort Niagara began to operate - once every fourteen days. Efforts had been made as early as 1792 by the Pulteney interests to procure postal service for the Genesee region and by citizens of Canada for a mail route to the border. But it is understandable that the government had no interest in any such plan until Fort Niagara had been returned to the United States. From a standpoint of financial returns, it is very doubtful if the route would have paid its way had it not been for the revenue from mail for Upper

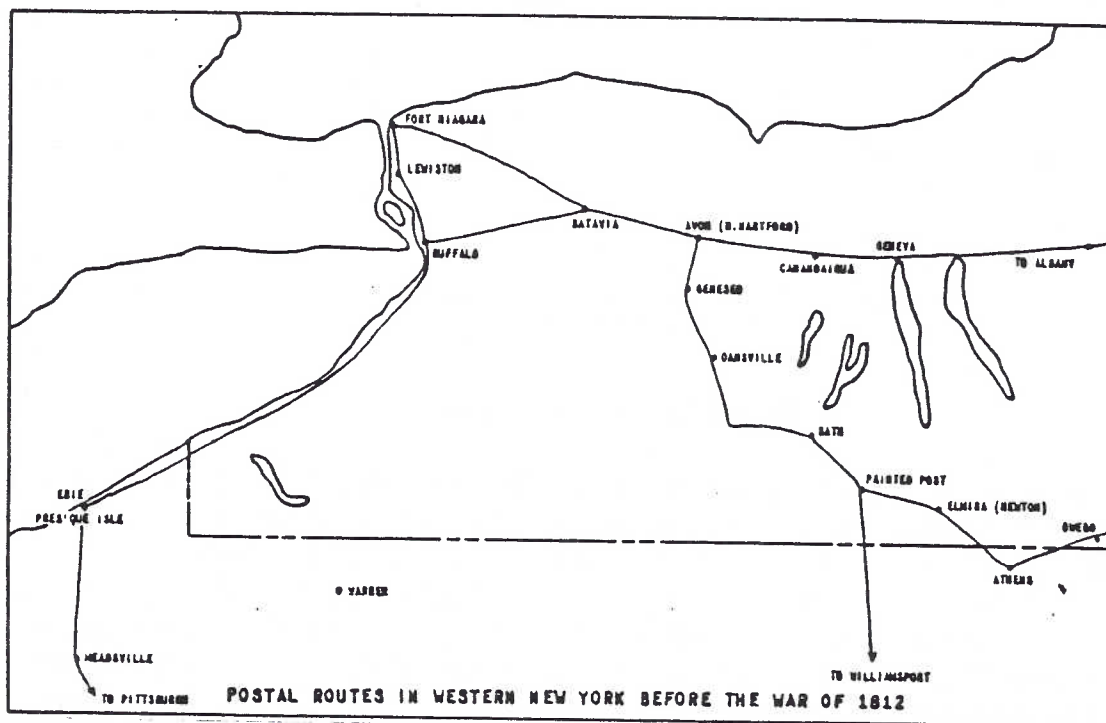
Canada. In spite of the earlier and denser settlement in the Niagara region of Canada, mail service was practically non-existent.

The new route went via New Hartford (now Avon) and Batavia to Fort Niagara.

Southwest of the territory under discussion, the nearest post office was Erie, also called Presqu'Isle, which since 1798 was connected by a route via Pittsburgh with Philadelphia. In the southeast Bath had had a post office since 1800. One post route connected it with Athens, Pennsylvania (via Elmira and Painted Post) and with Canandaigua. Since 1804, another route from Williamsport, Pennsylvania brought the mail to Painted Post and from there to Bath. In 1806 an extension of the route to Avon was authorized (via Dansville and Geneseo).

On March 26, 1804, Congress passed a law that the post road from Canandaigua to Niagara "shall pass by Buffalo Creek" and as a result, a post office "Buffalo Creek" began to operate in the new settlement originally called New Amsterdam but later known as Buffalo. The name of the office was changed to Buffalo in 1809. A post rider made the round trip from Canandaigua to Fort Niagara and Buffalo every 14 days. Since there were no roads between Buffalo and Fort Niagara, he used to travel on the Canadian side and crossed the river by ferry (near present West Ferry Street). By 1810 a road had been built so that travel via Fort Schlosser and Lewiston to Fort Niagara was possible.

With the authorization of a post route between Presqu'Isle and Buffalo Creek in 1805, connection with Erie and Pittsburgh and with Cleveland and Detroit was established. Mail from New York and Albany could now travel the direct route via Canandaigua and Buffalo to Cleveland and Detroit.



The map above shows the routes which were in existence at the outbreak of the War of 1812. They became so important for military purposes that the Postmaster General established on them a special "Express Mail" which was carried by a relay of post riders. One route from Buffalo via Avon, Bath and Williamsport to Washington made the trip in the "incredible" time of 4½ days. (Regular mail from Buffalo to Albany took 5 days.) A second "express" ran from Buffalo to Detroit and a third to the Sacketts Harbor and Plattsburg region via Utica. The "Army of the Center" headquarters in the Niagara district also had express service with Buffalo. Civilian mail was also carried with the expresses without

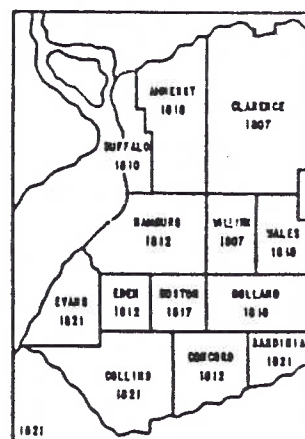
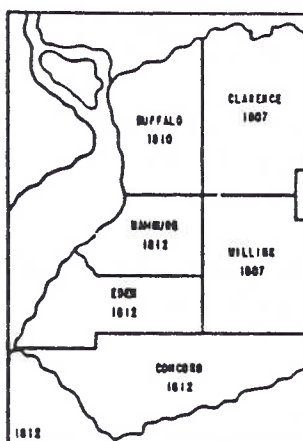
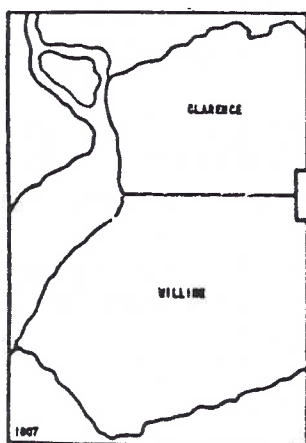
any additional changes, but newspapers were excluded due to their weight. Immediately after the termination of hostilities, the express services were discontinued (February 1, 1815).

The next decade saw the arrival of an unprecedented number of settlers. Most of the towns were organized in this period and many post offices established. The frequency of trips on existing routes was increased in some instances, and a number of new post routes were authorized by Congress, mostly crossing the country from east to west.

Erie County

Erie County was created April 2, 1821 from the southern part of Niagara County. From the original towns in this territory - Clarence and Willink - had been set off a number of new towns so that by 1821 there existed these towns:

Clarence created	1807	Hamburg	1812 from Willink
Buffalo	1810 from Clarence	Eden	1812 from Willink
Amherst	1818 from Buffalo	Concord	1812 from Willink
Willink	1807	Wales	1818 from Willink
		Holland	1818 from Willink
		Boston	1817 from Eden
		Evans	1821 from Eden
		Sardinia	1821 from Concord
		Collins	1821 from Concord



The towns of Buffalo and Amherst were further divided. The northern part of the town of Buffalo became Tonawanda (April 16, 1838). Grand Island, formerly part of Tonawanda was made an independant town October 19, 1852. From the southern part of Amherst were created the towns of Cheektowaga (March 22, 1839) and Seneca (now West Seneca) on October 16, 1851.

Buffalo, laid out by Joseph Elliott in 1804, became an incorporated village in 1813 and on April 20, 1832, the incorporated City of Buffalo. The enlarged territory was completely surrounded by the town of Buffalo. The name of the town was changed in 1839 to the town of BLACK ROCK. In April

1853, when the City of Buffalo enlarged its boundaries to its present size, it took possession of the entire town of Black Rock.

Congress authorized on March 26, 1804, an extension of the Canandaigua - Fort Niagara mail route to Buffalo. This was the first mail route to be organized in this county. One from Erie to Buffalo followed in 1805. With the appointment on September 3, 1804 of Erastus Granger as postmaster at BUFFALO CREEK present ERIE COUNTY received its first post office. Due to its advantageous location it became an important distribution center not only for Erie County but also for the adjoining counties. The name "New Amsterdam" which was used for a while by the Holland Land Company seems never to have been used by the government. From 1809 the name Buffalo (also Buffaloe) seems to have replaced the original Buffalo Creek.

When in 1853 the City of Buffalo absorbed the town of Black Rock, there existed in this territory, the following post offices:

BLACK ROCK - founded January 29, 1817 in the neighborhood of Niagara Street and West Ferry. The office was discontinued September 1, 1869.

BLACK ROCK DAM Post Office was located a short distance to the north. It opened July 12, 1854. The name of the office was changed to NORTH BUFFALO on February 10, 1857. North Buffalo operated until March 18, 1870.

In lower Black Rock, perhaps a continuation of North Buffalo, the Post Office MIDWAY was established June 4, 1870. It was discontinued July 15, 1873.

In the present University section was the Post Office ELEYSVILLE, which began under postmaster Samuel Eley on July 29, 1840. (Englewood Avenue was formerly Eley Road.) The name of the office was changed July 23, 1849 to BUFFALO PLAINS which continued until October 6, 1890.

At the intersection of Abbott Road (now South Park Avenue) and Hopkins Street was the Post Office RED JACKET. Asa Whittemore was postmaster from February 4, 1851 to May 22, 1858 when the office was discontinued. It was reopened January 31, 1870 and continued until August 14, 1888.

From January 19, 1874 until August 14, 1888, the Post Office SOUTH BUFFALO operated on Seneca Street between Buffum and Zittel Street. Louis Zittel was postmaster during its 14 years existence.

The town of Tonawanda was established on April 16, 1836 from Buffalo.

The "Buffalo Patriot" of June 1, 1824 announced the appointment of Henry H. Sizer as postmaster at "Mouth of Tonnewanta Creek." This seems to coincide with an entry in the Postmaster Appointment Book: "MILLPORT Post Office, Henry H. Sizer, May 17, 1824, Amos Shepherd, March 16, 1825, changed to Tonawanda."

Buffalo, New York
"Buffalo Creek"

An early map shows ten small parcels of land retained by the Seneca Indians around their villages and a large tract extending east from the mouth of Buffalo Creek. The rest of Western New York was bought by a group of Dutch investors, the Holland Land Company. Joseph Ellicot, a Pennsylvanian, was engaged as Head Land Agent to develop these immense holdings. He laid out roads, townships, and between 1801 and 1804 the village of "Buffalo Creek." Ellicot tried to change the name to New Amsterdam but the natives would have no part of this and he left in a huff for Batavia.

When Ellicot first reached Buffaloe Creek in 1797, he found a small group of settlers already there. A tract two miles square in the Indian Land at the mouth of Buffalo Creek had been given to Captain William Johnson by his wife's Seneca relatives. He, his wife, and their small son had been living since about 1789 in a log house north of what is now Exchange Street and east of Washington Street, the first permanent settlers of Buffaloe Creek.

Erastus Granger, who came to Buffaloe Creek in 1803, was sent, it is recorded "to exert his political influence in favor of the party (Republican) which had elected Mr. Jefferson to power." He had formerly been a surveyor in Virginia, and had but recently buried his wife, to whom he had been married only a little while. He was a boarder at Crow's tavern for some time after arrival in Buffaloe Creek, "it being the only place where he could obtain even the scanty accommodations afforded him." He was appointed Superintendent of Indian Affairs, became the first postmaster, and was given other appointments by the General Government, which indicated that he had served the Jefferson party well. When Buffaloe Creek was made a port of entry in 1805, Erastus Granger was appointed Collector of Customs for that district.

There seems to be a difference of opinion as to when Erastus Granger was appointed Postmaster. The Buffalo Historical Society states that he was appointed in 1805. Mr. Pitt Petri states that he was appointed on September 30, 1804. He continued in his office until May 5, 1818. The first post office was located in a corner of Crow's Tavern.

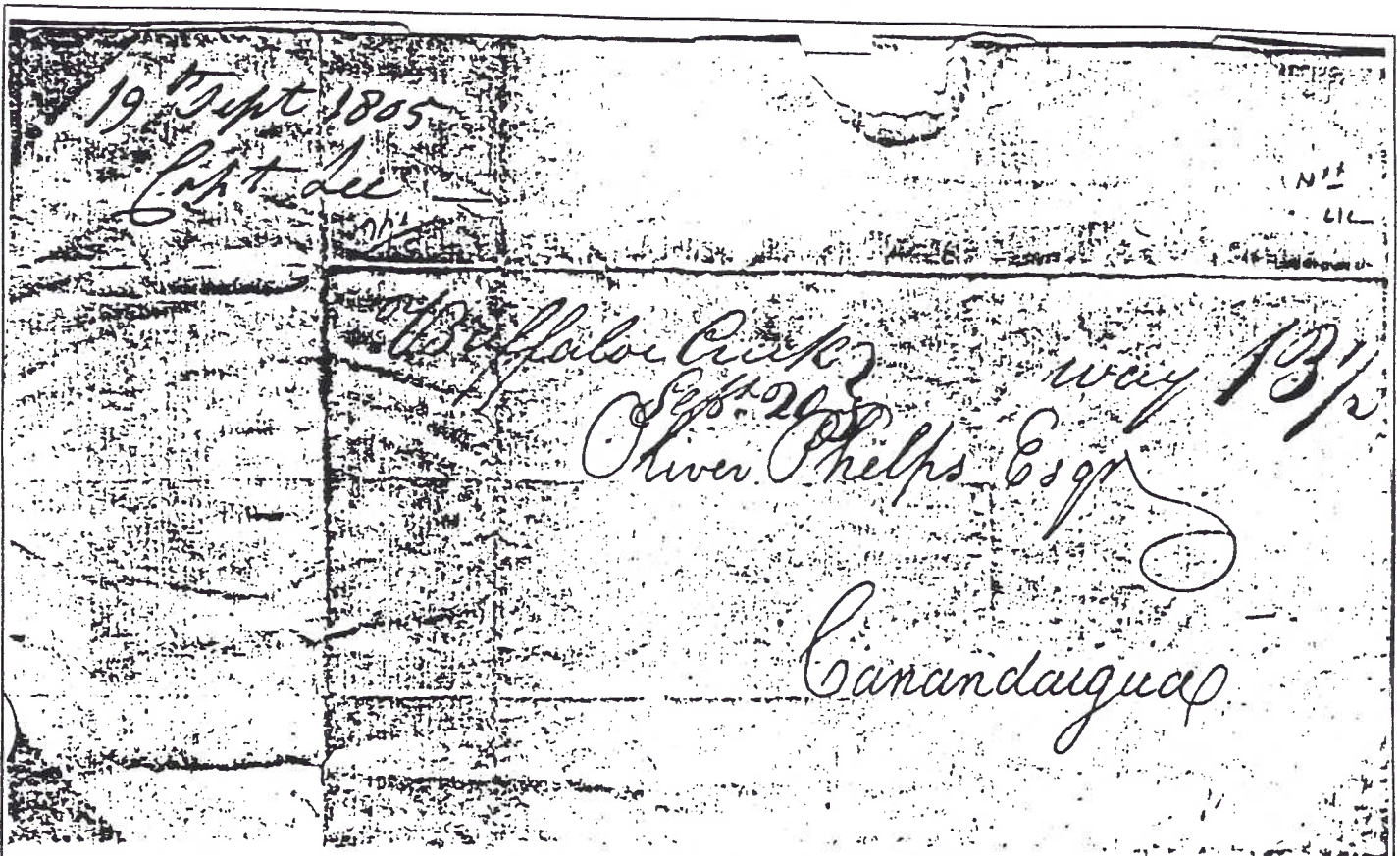
The first ship built by Americans in waters of Erie County was the little schooner *Contractor*. It was built at Black Rock in 1803, by a company having the contracts for supplying the western military posts, under the superintendence of Captain William Lee, who sailed the schooner for six years. The company seems to have been one with which Augustus Porter was connected. Augustus Porter had the contract for the carrying of the mails from Utica to Fort Niagara in 1802, and then entered the transportation business, establishing a stage line along the Buffalo Road.

The contract for supplying the frontier posts had been entered into with the United States Government by Augustus Porter and Messrs. Norton and Phelps during the last years of Porter's residence in Canandaigua. Therefore, it seems quite possible that the builders of the sloop *Contractor* were Norton and Phelps.

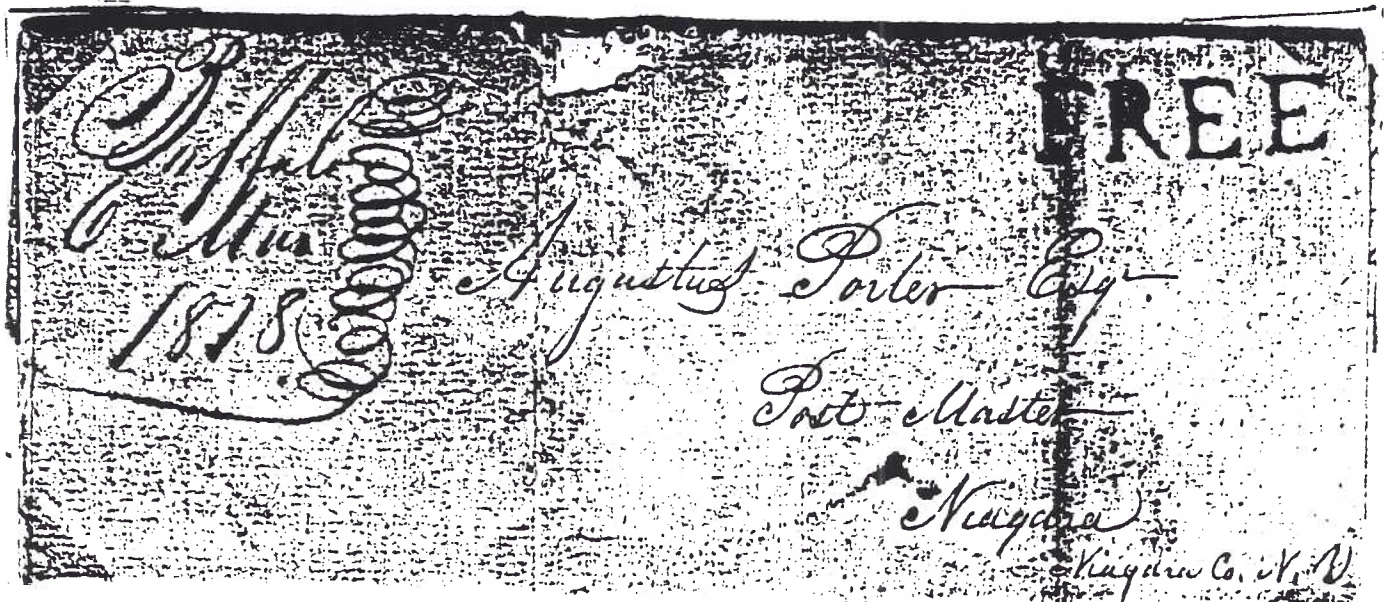
The following cover was sent from "Buffaloe Creek" to Oliver Phelps Esq. in Canandaigua. It was marked "Way 13 and one half cents" in manuscript. The "Way" denoting that it had been picked up by a post rider.

Without a doubt this cover had been manuscripted by Erastus Granger, first postmaster of Buffalo.

You will note that the back of the cover has been docketed "Sept. 19th, 1805," Capt. Lee.

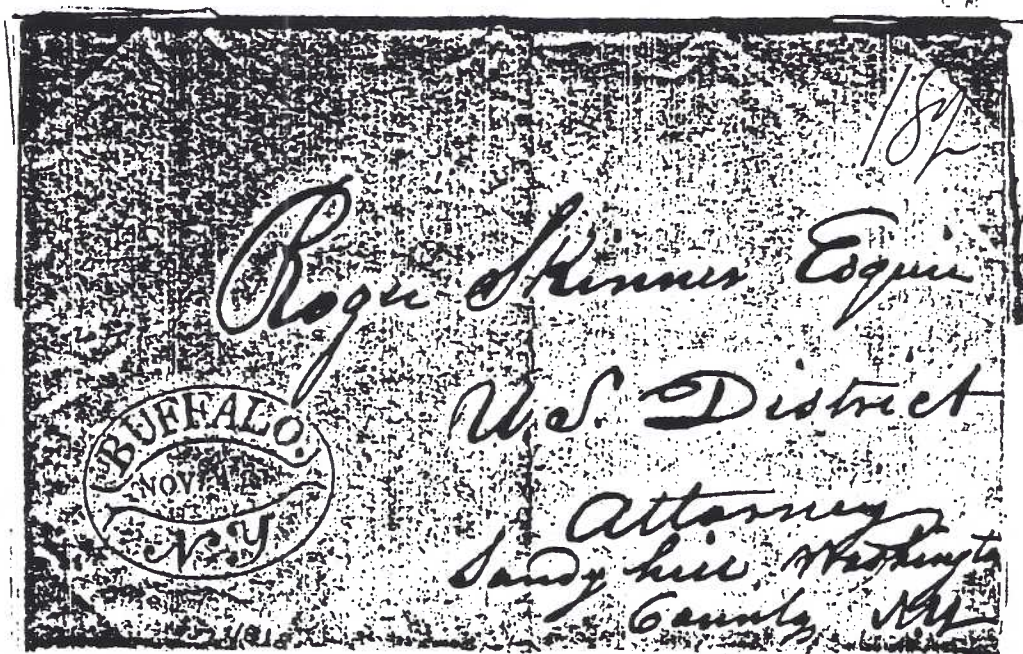
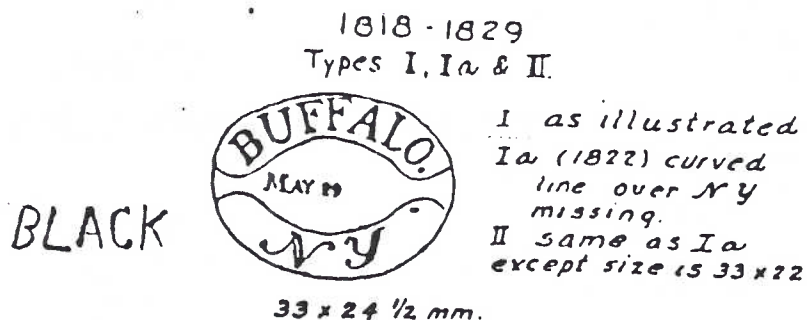


The cover below, Manuscript, Buffalo, 6 Mar. 1818, was mailed to Augustus Porter Esq. Post Master, Niagara (Niagara Falls) Niagara Co. N.Y. It was mailed by J. Harrison and concerned some legal matters. Note the unusually large FREE frank.



The following Buffalo covers bearing Hand Stamp Cancellers and Rate Marking Hand Stamps have been listed herein with the year dates used. The different types have also been listed with the year dates used.

It must be remembered that some of the hand stamps which were in good shape when the new designs were brought out were retained and used along with the new ones for possibly a year or so. The cover below bears the first Hand Stamp used in the Buffalo Office in 1818.



The following cover was sent from Buffalo to the Honorable Augustus Porter who was postmaster of Niagara Falls at this time. It was directed to him in Albany, New York where he was taking care of some political matters.

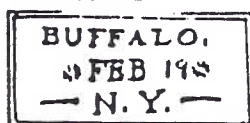
The double lined boxed Buffalo cancel in red had been used in part of 1828 and 1829. It was also stamped free.

A new bank was being opened in New York City and the writer asks Mr. Porter to exert his political influence on this matter.

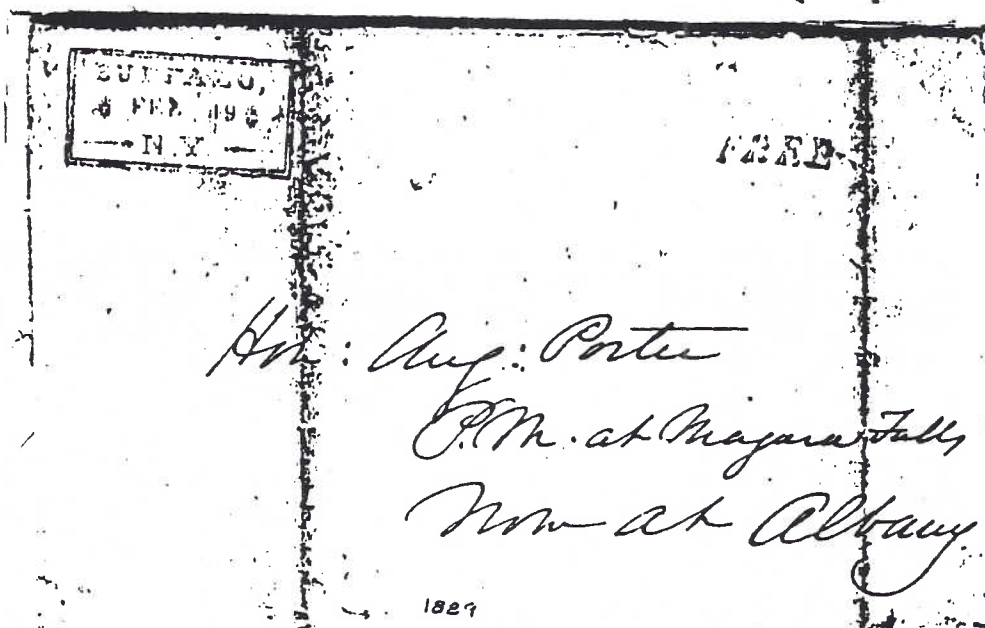
1828-1829

Type III

REB



30x22



In the period of 1830 to 1845 there appeared for the first time, the terms "steamboat" and "railroad." Steamboats were used for transportation of mail during navigation season from Buffalo to Ohio and Michigan and on Lake Chautauqua. No evidence of mail contracts with canal boats on the Erie Canal has been found.

Various railroad companies formed a continuous line of communication between Albany and Buffalo since 1843. They were: Mohawk and Hudson Railroad (later Albany and Schenectady Railroad), Utica and Schenectady Railroad, Syracuse and Utica Railroad, Auburn and Utica Railroad, Auburn and Rochester Railroad, Tonawanda Railroad (Rochester to Attica) and Attica and Buffalo Railroad. All were consolidated in 1853 into the New York Central Railroad system. The oldest railroad in Western New York was the Buffalo-Black Rock Railroad Company, later the Buffalo-Niagara Falls Railroad Company. It began in 1834. The Lockport-Niagara Falls Railroad Company started in 1837.

The Erie Railroad became an important factor in the development of the southern counties. The "Erie" reached the Great Lakes at Dunkirk in 1851. In the next year, the Buffalo State Line Railroad (Buffalo to Erie, Pennsylvania) established a connection with Dunkirk.

The government made contracts with the railroad companies for the transportation of mails, thereby eliminating the stage coach operators as contractors. The costs were higher but transportation was faster and more reliable. In the following century, many more railroads were built and they were the most common means of transportation of mail. The "Highway Post Office" system, created by an

act of Congress in 1940, has expanded rapidly. As has already been mentioned, the "Rural Free Delivery" system at the turn of the century made many of the smaller post offices obsolete. Here too, the automobile has become an important factor in giving faster and more reliable service.

Transportation of mail by air has made rapid strides in the last decade and no doubt will be used in the future more and more.

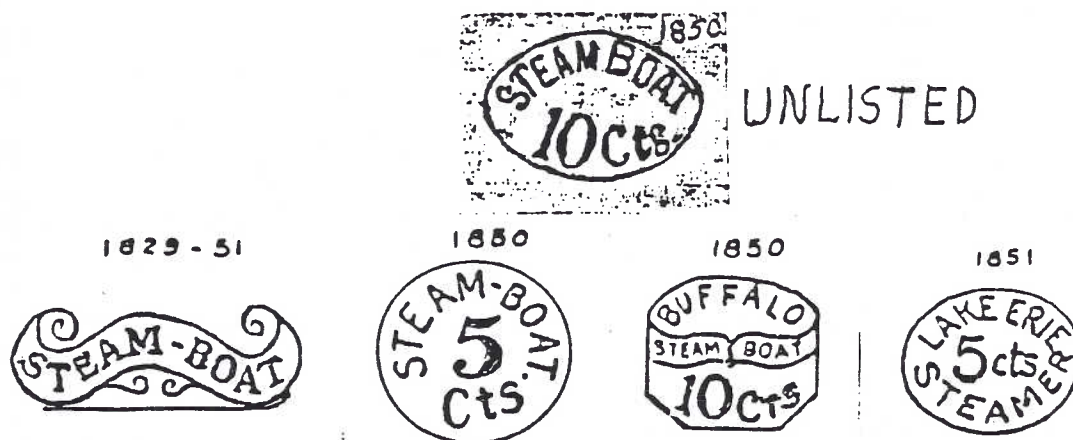
Inland Waterways Mail Markings
"Steamboat" and "Steam" - Official Port of Arrival Markings

The mark STEAMBOAT or its abbreviation STEAM was applied by the receiving post office to letters delivered by the captain or clerk of a steamboat having no mail-carrying contract with the Post Office Department. These letters were picked up somewhere along an inland river, lake, bay, or sound route as a favor to the writer.

STEAMBOAT letters were recognized for the first time in the Postal Laws & Regulations in 1825, with a fee of 2¢ to be paid the steamboat captain delivering the letter. At Lake Erie ports a fee of only 1¢ was paid.

The rate applied to such steamboat letters by the receiving post office was the amount of regular postage required between the point where the letter was picked up by the boat and its final destination.

The four facsimiles shown below were used by the Buffalo Post Office on incoming Lake Erie mail.



Steamboat Mail History on Lake Erie

On August 23, 1818, the Steamer *Walk in the Water* came up the Niagara River into Lake Erie. It was built at Black Rock and launched into the Niagara River. When a full head of steam was built up they cast off. Lo and behold the boat did not have power enough to navigate the swift current and they had to hook several yoke of oxen on to it and pull it up into the lake.

This was the first steamboat built in the east end of Lake Erie.

Private (domestic) steamboat letters and printed matter, received from a steamboat not under postal contract, taxed same rate as if they had been carried in the United States mail by Postmasters at receiving post offices. This only applied to non-postal steamboats. (For matter carried outside the mails.)

This cover was sent to Buffalo on the steamboat *Walk in the Water*.

The cover below was handed to the captain of a steamboat in Detroit, Michigan, bound for Buffalo, New York. Michigan became a territory July 1, 1805 and became a state January 26, 1837. On arrival in Buffalo the captain delivered the cover to the post office where it received the oval Buffalo hand stamp dated July 26. It also received the manuscript "Ship 20½ (cents)." Inside correspondence dated July 23, 1819. It then was sent to Albany by regular mail service.



Hotel Mail Markings

Hotels provided mail service and used handstamps on letters as early as 1842. Little is known about the purpose of these handstamps but apparently they were applied to the letters of guests which were taken to the post office or picked up there by a hotel employee. Whether or not there was a small charge for this service is hard to determine as there is no proof that such was the case.

In addition to this local service, a great many letters were carried outside of the mails by guests who were leaving the hotels for another city and who evidently were asked to carry some of this mail and drop it in the post office on their arrival at their destination - in fact there is definite evidence that some merchants in New York City used this means of having their monthly statement delivered to customers in different cities.

Hotel handstamps are generally found on stampless covers in the 1840-50 period applied to either the front or back of the letter, however, there are examples found in later years.

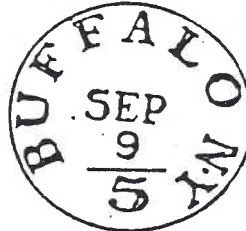
(Due acknowledgement is given to the American Stampless Cover Catalog for the historical data given above.)

The cover below was forwarded from the Western Hotel in Buffalo to the Buffalo post office in 1848. Addressed to Don Piatt, Esq. Cincinnati.

1848

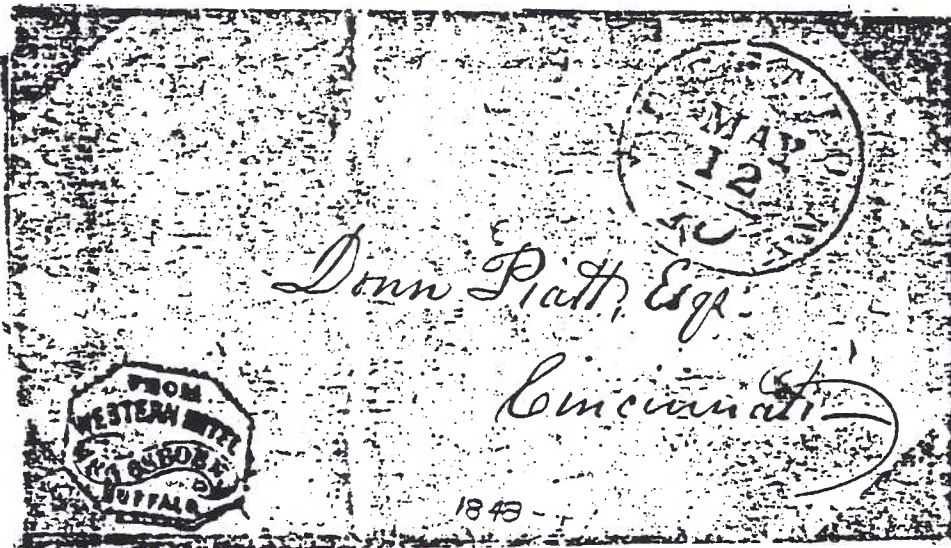
1848-51
Type XI

511



Numerals 5 or 10
under date with or
without line over
the numeral
(1851) also with
numeral 3

32 mm.



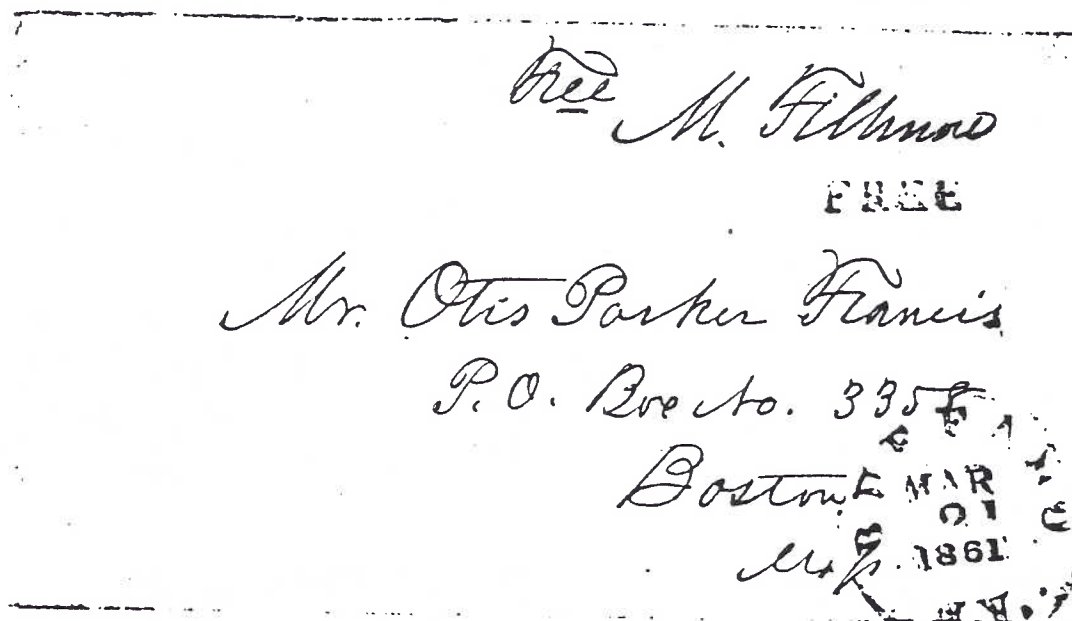
BUFFALO



RED

FROM/WESTERN HOTEL/IRA OSBORN.[in scroll]/BUFFALO.
(1847-49; octagon 24x20; front; Red)

The following cover was written and free franked by ex-president Millard Fillmore. After his term of office had expired he resided in Buffalo. The cover was dropped in the Buffalo office on March 21, 1861.



1861

1851-55-64
FREE



Note: This article is reprinted from the book written by Nathan Calkins and based on his collection. It had been scheduled to be included in the 25th Anniversary issue, but due to space limitation could not be included. We are please to be able to publish the information in this issue of the Empire State Postal History Society Journal.

NEW YORK STATE TELEGRAPHS: EARLY DEVELOPMENT

by Bob Harris

While the United States Congress was responsible for the appropriation to construct the first telegraph line in the United States between Washington D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland, on May 24, 1844, its attention to these affairs lapsed, Morse claimed, because it was more interested in annexing Texas.¹

As the story goes, it is at this point that Amos Kendall began his connection with the telegraph.

*"While Mr. Kendall was employed in the prosecution of claims, he fell in with Professor Morse, who was endeavoring, with little prospect of success, to get an appropriation from Congress to extend a line of his telegraph from Baltimore to New York; it being already in operation between Washington and Baltimore. Finding the Professor much discouraged, he inquired whether he had no project to render his telegraph profitable as a private enterprise, if he should fail in obtaining further aid from the government. On being answered in the negative, he rejoined that if the appropriation failed he would be glad to talk further on the subject. It failed, and Professor Morse asked Mr. Kendall for a proposition to take charge of his telegraph business."*²

It was March 10, 1845. On May 15, 1845, Kendall engineered articles of agreement and association constituting the Magnetic Telegraph Company to extend the government line to New York City.³

*"Mr. Butterfield has been with us today, and with some of his friends proposes to build a line of telegraphs from Buffalo to Springfield, Massachusetts, there to connect with the line from New York to Boston, which also he is disposed to undertake if we do not make other arrangements."*⁴

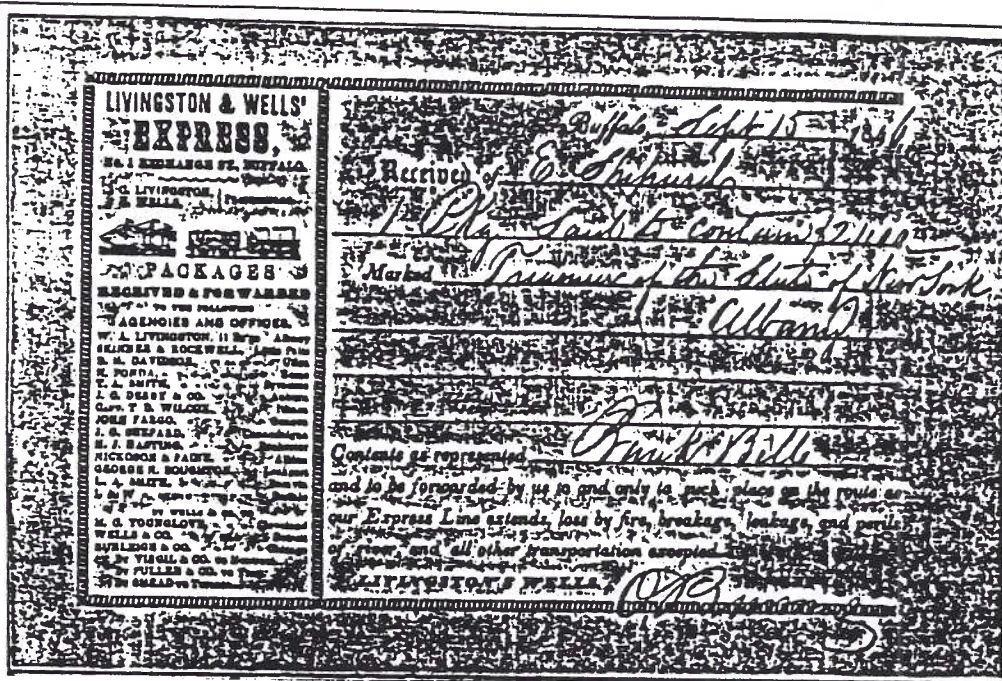
Mr. Butterfield and his friends, all interested in stages, canal packets, and steam railroads of New York state, had among them Henry Wells and Crawford Livingston, expressmen.

¹Samuel F.B. Morse: His Letters and Journals edited and supplemented by his son Edward Lind Morse (New York, 1914) Vol. II p. 244.

²Autobiography of Amos Kendall ed. by his son-in-law, William Stickney (New York, Peter Smith, 1949) p. 527.

³"Articles of Agreement and Association Constituting the Magnetic Telegraph Company" Robert Luther Thompson, Wiring the Continent (Princeton, 1947) Appendix I, pp. 447-448.

⁴ Autobiography op cit., Letter d.l. (New York May 30, 1845) from Amos Kendall to "My Dear Wife."



Expressmen in New York state especially took advantage of the completion of a line of railroads from Albany to Buffalo in 1842 to threaten both postal revenue and postal authority by carrying letters as well as "packages" out of the mails at substantially lower rates than offered by the government.

As expressmen, Wells and Livingston had challenged the government authority for postal communication. Now they joined with the telegraphers to challenge the more abstract notion of an exclusive government authority over the transmission of intelligence. In this regard, Postmaster General Cave Johnson asked President Polk:

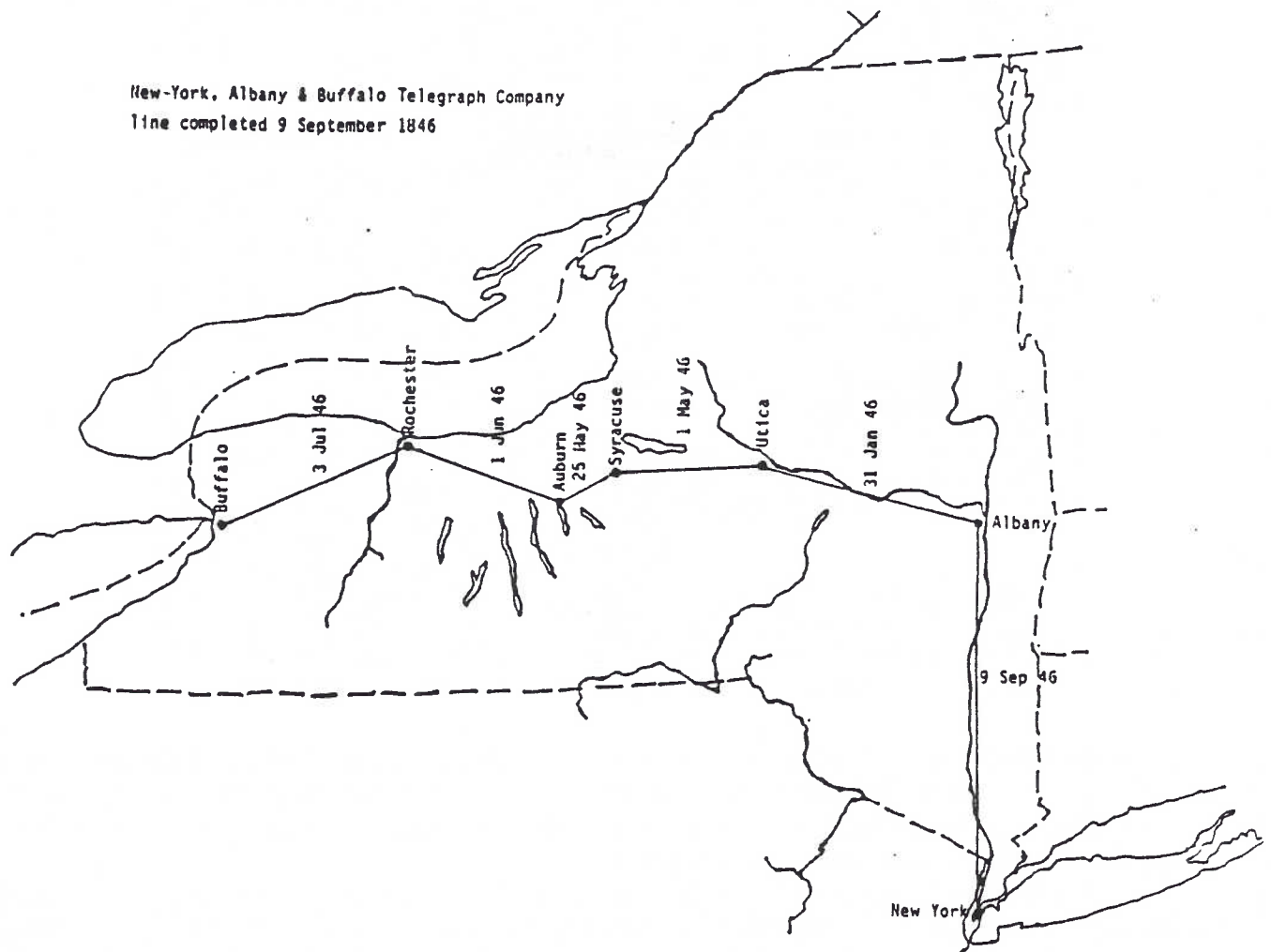
"How far the government will allow individuals to divide with it the business of transmitting intelligence - an important duty, confided to it by the constitution, necessarily and properly exclusive? . . . In the hands of individuals or associations, the telegraph may become the most potent instrument the world ever knew to effect sudden and large speculations - to rob the many of their just advantages, and concentrate them upon the few."¹

So it was that ex-PMG Kendall became associated with the current and final nemeses of the postal system. This is how it began in New York state.

The first plan to build from Buffalo through Albany to Springfield, Massachusetts, there to connect with a line between New York and Boston, ran afoul of the independent and competing hinterland interests of New York and Boston. The terminus was changed to New York and construction began with the planting of the first pole at Wall Street and Broadway on August 17, 1845, to connect New York City with Albany, thence by Utica, Syracuse, and Rochester to Buffalo. The Albany to Utica section was the first to be finished on January 31, 1846, but with no intermediate offices. From Utica to Syracuse was completed May 1, from Syracuse by way of Auburn (May 25) to Rochester was open June 1, through to Buffalo July 3. The New York to Albany section was finished September 9, 1846 for a continuous line between New York and Buffalo.²

¹ Report of the PMG to the President December 1, 1845.

² James D. Reid *The Telegraph in America* (New York 1886) pp. 304-305.



Not much evidence remains in the literature about what path was taken by the original telegraph line - whether, for example, a particular turnpike, railroad, or canal right-of-way had been used between its first offices. Indeed, the telegraph was supremely indifferent to the geographical conditions that would have been fundamental to the projection of any means of transportation. Moreover, inasmuch as way and through business had to compete for the same wire, and telegraphing rates were according to distance, a proliferation of offices had to be balanced against the interruption by any way business of the more lucrative through service.

Probably in anticipation of these features, the geographical development of the telegraph was fundamentally regulated to favor a branching system of trunk and side lines. Indeed, the projection of branch or side lines was an early and important issue in the development of telegraphy in New York state. In fact, my earliest N.Y.A.&B. telegram shows evidence of a side line to Oswego.

ALL COMMUNICATIONS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

TARIFF OF PRICES

From Albany to	NUMBER OF WORDS.																	
	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100
Buffalo,	.50	.70	.90	1.10	1.30	1.50	1.70	1.90	2.10	2.30	2.50	2.70	2.90	3.10	3.30	3.50	3.70	3.90
New-York,	.35	.50	.65	.80	.95	1.10	1.25	1.40	1.55	1.70	1.85	2.00	2.15	2.30	2.45	2.60	2.75	2.90
Rochester,	.25	.35	.45	.55	.65	.75	.85	.95	1.05	1.15	1.25	1.35	1.45	1.55	1.65	1.75	1.85	1.95
Auburn,																		
Utica,																		
Syracuse,																		
Poughkeepsie,																		

Via Telegraph from *Oswego*

Office No. 7, Delavan-House, corner Steuben & Montgomery-streets,
Albany, N.Y. 28th 1846.

To Mr. Capt. H. Boat Alice.

"Via Telegraph from Oswego" received November 28, 1846 at Albany. The office at Poughkeepsie was opened October 19 on the line between New York and Albany.

In their articles of agreement and association for establishing the Magnetic Telegraph Company between New York and Washington D.C., it was stipulated that side lines were to retain all their revenues while connecting trunk lines were to apportion revenues according to the relative distance traversed of each line contributing to the dispatch.¹

Thus, branches originally were to be encouraged as vital adjuncts to the associated trunk² together constituting a domain relatively impervious to intrusion. Yet such intentions were already compromised when the N.Y.A.&B. was granted a 50% take on the gross revenue of each sideline connection. And, indeed, in spite of the 50% provision, the N.Y.A.&B. chose to construe local side lines as if they also were trunk lines, i.e. apportioning revenues according to relative distance.³

Accordingly, the Oswego office which should have retained 50% of the charges that it had collected for the dispatch to Albany of my earliest telegram may have retained rather less than 25% in an apportionment of receipts according to distance. It had taken less than a year to establish a principle in telegraphy by which, according to the vision of PMG Cave Johnson, "to rob the many of their just advantages, and concentrate them upon the few."

¹ Thompson, op cit.

² Amos Kendall would have been most familiar with a similar feature in the extension of the postal system according to the prerogative of the Postmaster General to establish what were called private or special post offices. Off the line of established routes, the "private" post office was to be supplied by the contractor for the revenue of the office (not to exceed a stipulated amount). For example, see Laws and Regulations for the government of the Post Office Department (Washington 1843) (Sec. 3) Thompson, op cit. pp 68-69.

³ Thompson, op cit. pp 68-69.

The issue was resolved, in a limited fashion, October 29, 1846 when the N.Y.A.&B. for a fixed sum received the Morse patent right for all side lines subsequently to be contracted for and built.⁴

Early side lines have left few tracks in the historical record. According to the organizational charts of Western Union to which the N.Y.A.&B. was finally leased December 23, 1863, none of the N.Y.A.&B. branches at that time had origins earlier than 1850. Indeed, no incorporation date is there assigned to the N.Y.A.&B. itself.²

Chart D

New York, Albany & Buffalo Electro Magnetic Telegraph Company Incorporated New York. Leased December 23, 1863 to Western Union.

1. Canandaigua & Niagara Falls Line. Sold July 9, 1860 to N.Y.A.&B.
2. Canandaigua & Suspension Bridge Tel Line. Sold July 9, 1860 to N.Y.A.&B.
3. Eastern & Western Tel Co Inc. NY May 30, 1855. Leased 1857 to N.Y.A.&B.
4. Gloversville, Johnstown & Fonda Tel Co Inc. NY August 26, 1861. Owned by N.Y.A.&B.
5. New York & Western Union Tel Co Inc. NY December 22, 1852. Leased to N.Y.A.&B.
6. New York State Tel Co Inc. NY May 15, 1850. Sold November 15, 1852 to N.Y.A.&B.
7. N.Y. State Printing Tel Co Inc. NY July 15, 1850. Leased February 15, 1856 to N.Y.A.&B.
8. The Syracuse, Binghamton Tel Co Inc. NY December 18, 1860. Merged January 1865 in N.Y.A.&B.
9. The Syracuse, Oswego & Ogdensburg Union Tel Co Inc. NY September 22, 1855. Owned by N.Y.A.&B.

Telegraph Companies³

A * indicates companies not in operation.

NAME.	Date of Organization.	Capital.	NAME.	Date of Organization.	Capital.
Albany, Springfield & Boston Direct Telegraph Co.....	May 10, 1854	\$ 35,000	New York & Montreal Telegraph Co.*	Oct. 23, 1852	\$ 40,000
American Telegraph Co.*.....	Dec. 12, 1855	200,000	New York & New England Tel. Co.*	April 26, 1849	42,300
Atlantic & Pacific Telegraph Co.*	June 15, 1857	300,000	New York & New England Tel. Co.....	July 3, 1852	30,000
Baldwinsville Electro Magnetic Telegraph Co.*.....	Dec. 4, 1852	400	New York & Philadelphia Branch Telegraph Co.....	April 24, 1848	15,000
Buffalo, Corning & New York Telegraph Co.....	Jan. 25, 1856	15,000	New York & Sandy Hook Telegraph Co.....	Aug. 13, 1852	25,000
Central & Southern Telegraph Co.*	Nov. 13, 1854	11,250	New York & Washington Printing Telegraph Co.....	May 20, 1852	200,000
Eastern & Western Telegraph Co.*	May 30, 1855	20,000	New York & Western Union Telegraph Co.....	Dec. 22, 1852	10,000
Erie & Central Junction Tel. Co.*	April 24, 1852	11,250	New York, St. Louis & New Orleans Junction Telegraph Co.....	Aug. 26, 1850	200,000
Erie & Central Junction Tel. Co.....	July 10, 1853	11,250	New York State Printing Telegraph Co.*.....	July 15, 1850	200,000
Genesee Valley Turnpike Co.....	April 10, 1857	80,000	New York State Telegraph Co.*.....	May 15, 1850	25,000
Long Island, Marine & Inland Telegraph Co.....	March 24, 1858	40,000	Otsego Telegraph Co.....	Sept. 30, 1851	4,000
Merchants' Telegraph Co.*.....	Sept. 23, 1852	40,000	Syracuse, Oswego & Ogdensburg Telegraph Co.....	Sept. 22, 1853	20,000
New York, Albany & Buffalo Electro Magnetic Telegraph Co.....	May 31, 1848		Transatlantic Telegraph Co.*.....	May. 19, 1857	100,000
New York, Albany & Buffalo Telegraph Co., Incorp. by special act*	Jan. 25, 1856	250,000	Transatlantic & Submarine Telegraph Co.....	Jan. 18, 1858	100,000
New York & Canada House's Printing Telegraph Co.....	Nov. 19, 1855	40,000	Troy, Albany & Boston Telegraph Co..	July 25, 1857	50,000
New York & Mississippi Tel. Co.*	April 8, 1851	860,000	Utica & Oxford Magnetic Telegraph Co.....	Aug. 2, 1852	6,400
New York & Mississippi Valley Printing Telegraph Co.*.....	Feb. 21, 1854	170,000	West Troy, Lansingburgh, Waterford & Cohoes Telegraph Co.....	July 14, 1855	8,000
New York & Montreal Printing Telegraph Co.*.....	Sept. 15, 1853	60,000			

¹ Thompson, op cit. pp 68-69.

² Diane DeBlois "Telegraph Companies Forming Western Union" PS 43, p. 82.

³ J.H. French Gazetteer of the State of New York (R.P. Smith, Syracuse 1860) p. 81.

That line had been built under a general easement whereby, May 13, 1845, the New York legislature had authorized:

" . . . the proprietors of the patent right of Morse's electro-magnetic telegraph . . . to construct lines of said telegraph from point to point and across any of the waters within the limits of this state . . ."

With the adoption of the Constitution of 1846, New York corporations were to be founded under general laws, rather than as the objects of special legislation. Subsequently was passed "An Act to provide for the incorporation and regulation of Telegraph Companies" April 12, 1848, later to be amended June 24, 1853. But, these companies were to make no report and no official record was maintained of those in existence. Indeed, such a listing as does exist records only one date of incorporation of a telegraph company within New York State before 1850 - that of the N.Y.A.&B.: May 31, 1848.¹

In 1827, Harrison Gray Dyar developed an electric telegraph on Long Island that he surveyed to erect between New York and Philadelphia. The details of this venture were brought back to public notice during the telegraph patent suits of the early 1850s.²

United States Jury Room, January 8, 1851

Harrison Gray Dyar, sworn, - I am forty-four years of age; I reside in New York; I have passed the last twenty years in Europe; I am not engaged in any particular profession; I have paid a good deal of attention to natural science and divers discoveries and inventions; I have made several discoveries in chemical science, and its application to mechanical arts.

Question: Did you ever, prior to the year 1832, invent any electric telegraph?

Answer: Yes, I did.

Question: Please state when it was?

Answer: In the autumn of 1827.

...

Question: Where was it put up?

Answer: Around the Long Island Race Course. It was known that the experiments were considered by Mr. Brown and myself perfectly satisfactory. It was not then my intention to make known any of the details of the experiments. I cannot say how much may or may not have been known.

Question: What steps, if any, were taken to carry this project into effect?

Answer: That portion of our labors devolved upon Mr. Brown.

Question: Was it contemplated to erect a line between any cities in this country?

Answer: It was contemplated to erect a line between New York and Philadelphia.

...

Question: What led to the abandonment of the design?

¹ French op cit. pp 80-81.

² "Benjamin B. French, et al. versus Henry J. Rogers, et al. Respondents' Evidence" (Philadelphia 1851) pp 13-16.

Answer: Public prejudice against the transmission of secret intelligence, and a belief on the part of others that the project was impracticable; some of my friends and others contending that it was not a lawful enterprise.

Question: Were any legal measures taken which led to its abandonment?

Answer: I was informed that some steps were taken, charging me with transmitting secret intelligence on a wire. Charles Walker, a lawyer of New York, was consulted on the subject, and he advised me, in consequence of the great difficulties attending the defense of such a suit, and the great public prejudice against the undertaking, to abandon it. On that advice I left New York, and a friend of mine, in conjunction with the said Charles Walker, arranged the suit in some manner, by my paying back all moneys received, and all the expenses parties had been put to.

Question: Was Mr. Walker in any way connected with Samuel F.B. Morse?

Answer: He was a brother-in-law of Morse. That is to say, the brother of Morse's wife.

"There is not the slightest evidence that Professor Morse had any knowledge of Dyar's plans."¹ Nor was there clear evidence that the line would have been successful: "this instrument appears to have been little more than a philosophical toy."² But there was evidence that the "public" was not ready for the idea of electric telegraphs in 1828. Dyar fled the country.

Perhaps the next publicity for an electric telegraph in New York was for a line built, now with the future interests of the N.Y.A.&B. in mind (its first pole having been planted August 17, 1845), from Utica in September 1845 to the state fairgrounds, then open: "This gave a splendid opportunity to a large number of people from all parts of the state to witness the machinery in action." Similarly, a demonstration line was built from Buffalo to Lockport, and opened November 9, 1845 as the first regular commercial telegraph line in America.³ Since Lockport was not among the offices named on the main line, we presume that if the segment remained operable, it would have been as a side line.

Troy had a strategic position in the New York and Boston hinterland competition, blocking the construction of a railroad bridge across the Hudson River at Albany until 1856, that as early as 1842 would have permitted a continuous line of tracks via Albany from Boston to Buffalo. It should be pointed out that Albany in turn blocked Troy's own railroad, the first to be built in the United States by a municipality, and one of the best, from effectively connecting at Schenectady with the central New York line of railroads.⁴ This block covered the belated deployment of railroads from New York City to Albany in the face of a competition with the steamboats and stages. What might have been the impression of this putative contention upon the details of the opening of a telegraph office in Troy?

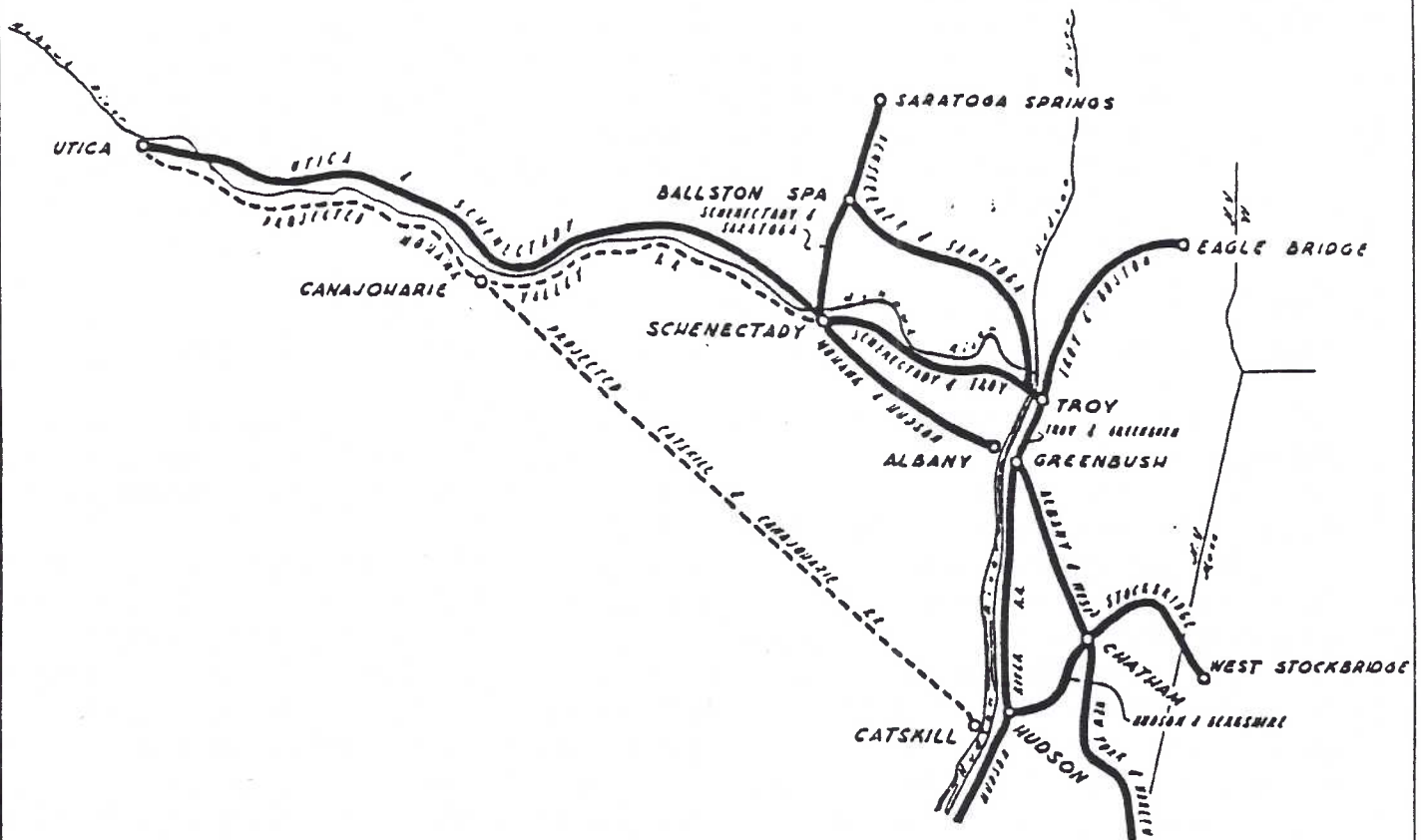
¹ Reid op cit. p. 70.

² Laurence Turnbull Lectures on the Electromagnetic Telegraph (Philadelphia 1852) pp. 6-7.

³ Reid op cit. p. 302.

⁴ Harry H. Pierce Railroads of New York A Study of Government Aid 1826-1875 (Harvard 1953) p. 60 ff.

Albany and Troy Railroads 1852¹



A line between Troy and Saratoga Springs was evidently completed July 24, 1846² before being connected on August 7 with the completed Albany to Buffalo segment of the N.Y.A.&B.³ The line to Saratoga may have followed the right-of-way of the Rensselaer and Saratoga Railroad but the connection to the N.Y.A.&B. was probably directly from Troy to Albany, rather than at Schenectady which is otherwise not said to have had a telegraph office until December 15, 1848. Whether the telegraph line advancing up the east bank of the Hudson from New York City, ahead of the railroads, made its September 9 connection at Albany or Troy is problematic, but probably not important. When the river froze that year December 15, 1846 to April 6, 1847, closing itself to navigation, the wire could have been carried across to Albany over the ice. Then in March 1847 "a sleet storm nearly obliterated the

¹ Ibid, appendix.

² A.J. Weise History of the City of Troy (Troy 1876) p. 199; Arthur James Weise Troy's One Hundred Years 1789-1889 (Troy 1891) p. 159. The second of these notices substantially contradicts some of the first, as well as adding detail that seems faulty, but both seem consistent with the date of the opening of the Saratoga Springs line, and the connection with the N.Y.A.&B.

³ Ibid; Reid, op cit. p. 305 corroborates.

line from Albany to Amsterdam and from Troy to Hudson. Its operations were almost entirely suspended for six weeks."⁴

2

Also from Troy was projected a Canada Junction telegraph, by an agreement made in May 1847 between Ezra Cornell and all the Morse patentees, to build from Troy to the Canadian border either in New York or Vermont, there (at the border) to meet a line from either Montreal or Quebec. Considering the difficulties between the patentees and the N.Y.A.&B. over the nature of side line connection, it is important to note for the Troy & Canada Junction a stipulation very much in the original fashion of the Magnetic, i.e. side lines retain all receipts. In this way, the T & C was probably envisioned as an independent trunk connection to the N.Y.A.&B., as well as a limit on the domain ceded with the Morse rights to that company October 29, 1846.³

The Troy and Canada Junction was met by the Vermont and Boston at Burlington in March 1850. By the summer of 1851, Boston's principal hinterland line was carried across the top of New York state to Ogdensburg where it met the Syracuse and Oswego sideline extended through Watertown.⁴ In conjunction with the completion of lines in Canada, the Boston hinterland telegraphs became associated with the affairs of Lake Erie and the St. Lawrence River. By 1858, in fact, the Montreal Telegraph Company operated the Canada junction lines making side connection with the N.Y.A.&B. at Buffalo and Whitehall, as well as the entire length of what had been the Vermont and Boston extension across the Ogdensburg.⁵

Thus the north-bearing sidelines of the N.Y.A.&B. became important elements in the networking of the hinterland telegraphs of Boston and New York. Just so, the south-bearing sidelines of the N.Y.A.&B. laced the southern tier in association with a New York and Erie line in a western development which subsequently became the basis for Western Union.

<i>From</i> TROY TO	<i>For</i> <i>first</i> 15	<i>Each</i> <i>added</i> <i>Word.</i>
Bennington Manchester Rutland Castleton Whitehall	25	2
Orwell Middlebury Vergennes Burlington St. Albans	30	2
St. Johns Montreal	50	3

¹ Reid, op cit. pp. 307-308.

² W. Williams Appleton's Northern and Eastern Traveller's Guide New York, 1850, p. 310.

³ Articles of Association, for the Formation of the Troy and Canada Junction Telegraph Company (New York 1847) p. 7.

⁴ Robert Dalton Harris "The Vermont and Boston Telegraph" P.S. #5 pp 18-22. Station lists compiled from telegraph delivery forms are used to identify the pattern of development.

⁵ Reid, op cit. p. 330.

VERMONT & BOSTON TELEGRAPH LINE		
LIST OF STATIONS AND TARIFF		
From Ogdensburg to	From Ogdensburg to	From Ogdensburg to
Boston.....50	Bellows Falls, Vt.....50	Essex, Vt.....25
Lowell.....50	Brattleboro.....50	St. Albans.....25
Nashua.....50	Greenfield, Mass.....50	Swanton.....25
Manchester.....50	Northampton.....50	Rouses Point.....25
Concord.....50	Springfield.....50	Chateaugay.....25
Franklin.....50	Woodstock, Vt.....50	Malone.....25
Enfield.....50	W. Randolph.....50	Potdam.....25
W. R. Junction.....50	Northfield.....50	Potdam Station.....25
Windsor.....50	Montpelier.....50	Canton.....25
Claremont.....50	Waterbury.....5025
Springfield, Vt.....50	Burlington.....5025
CONNECTING WITH OTHER LINES		
St. John.....50	Newburyport.....70	Whitehall.....70
Providence, R. I.....70	Portsmouth.....70	Castleton.....70
Hartford.....70	Portland.....70	Troy.....70
New Haven.....70	Bangor.....70	Hallowell.....70
Bridgeport.....70	Verona.....7070
New York.....707070

All messages strictly confidential. No abbreviations or figures used in the body of message. Office hours from 8 A. M. to 8 P. M.

W. B. LASSELL, OPERATOR

Ogdensburg, May 10, 1852.

Ogdensburg May 10, 1852, station list and telegraph message form, from the western and of the Vermont and Boston telegraph Line shortly after its completion.



July 7, ca 1862, Montreal Telegraph Company makes its closest connection with Central Square from the Watertown office.

Appleton's Northern and Eastern Traveller's Guide gives an April 1848 snapshot of such sidelines bearing south from Auburn and Rochester:¹

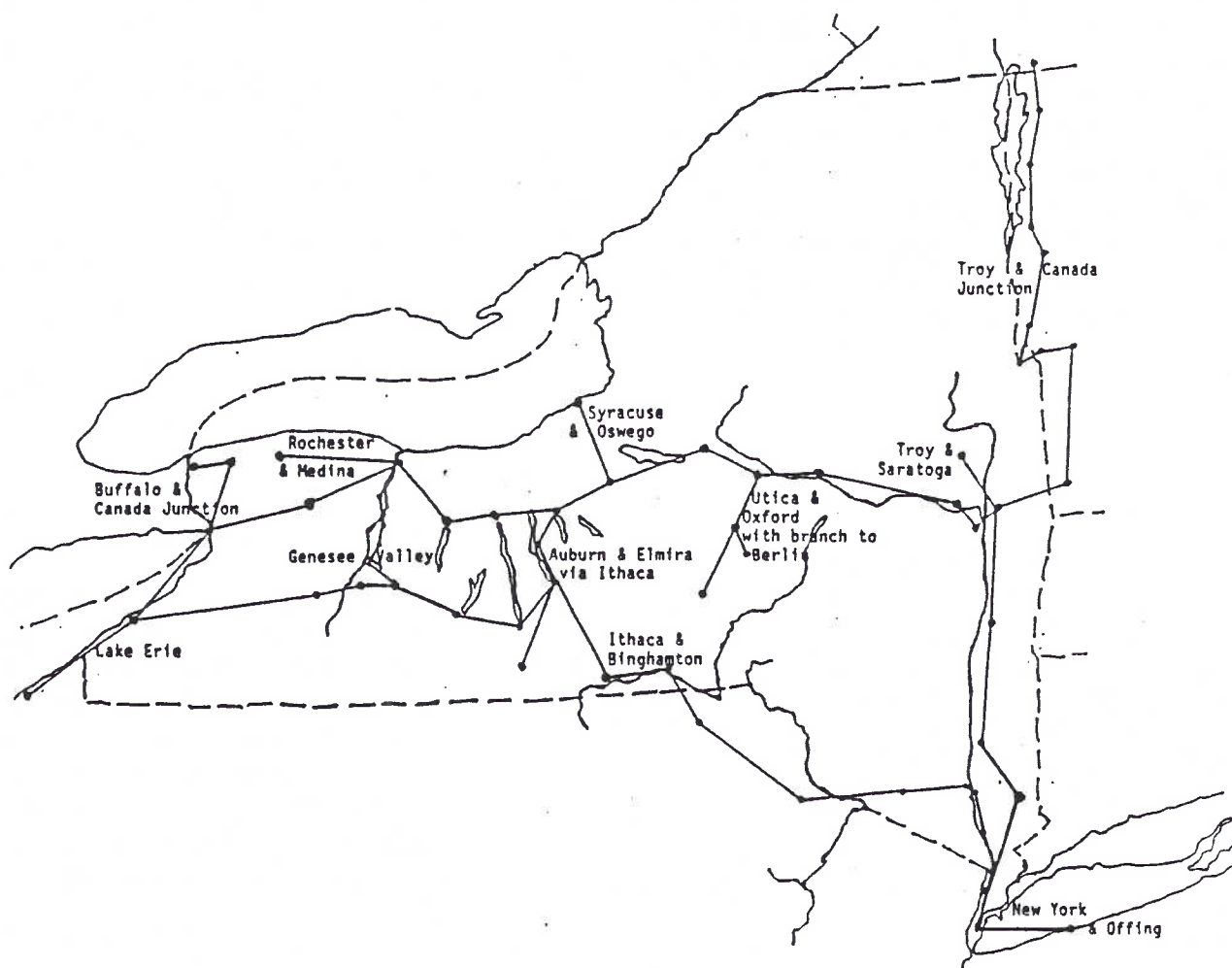
From Auburn to Elmira, via Springfield and Ithaca.

From Rochester to Dansville, via Scottsville, Geneseo, Avon, and Mount Morris.

¹ W. Williams, op cit.

By a February 1848 agreement, the New York and Erie Telegraph Company built a line crossing the Hudson River at West Point through both Ithaca and Dansville and completed in the fall of 1849 to the Lake Erie line at Dunkirk.¹

New York State Telegraphs 1849
Trunk Lines (N.Y.A.&B. and New York and Erie) and Sidelines²



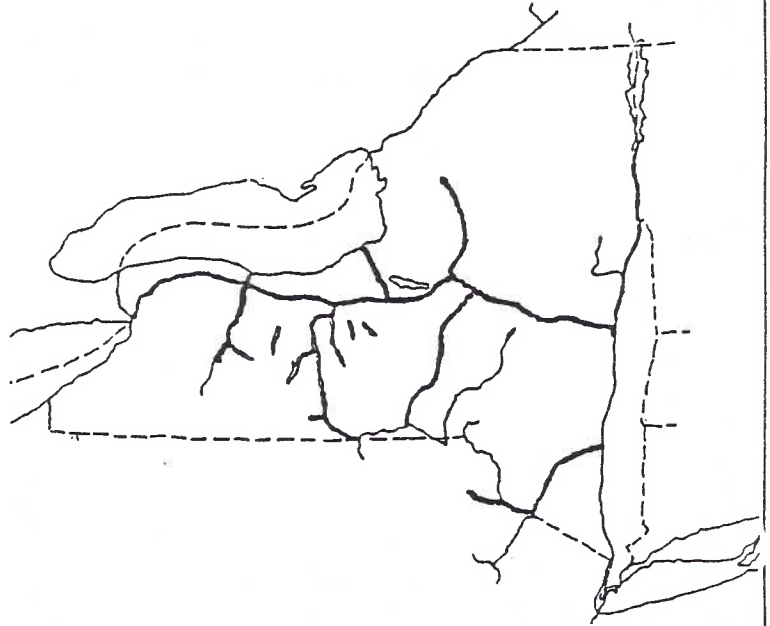
¹ Thompson, op cit. pp 176-180.

² Telegraph routes throughout New York state 1849, compiled from notices in Reid, Thompson, and Williams (already cited) rationalized in light of telegraph delivery form station lists.

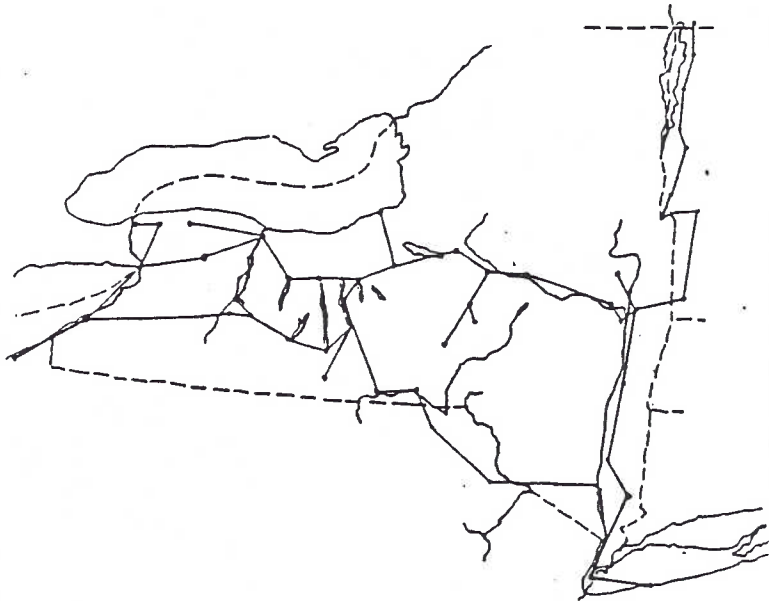
Comparison of the development of the telegraphs throughout NYS by the end of 1849 with the railroads and canals then in place.

Canals¹

While all three systems cross central New York similarly, across the southern tier each path is idiosyncratic. The most striking facility of the telegraph is in its North-South continuity contrasting with the disjunction of the railroads at the Hudson River. When canal and railroad routes are distinct as they become west of Syracuse on the cross-state trunks, or in the case of sidelines, the telegraph seems to select all conjunctions with equal frequency. Between Syracuse and Oswego all three have lines.



Telegraphs

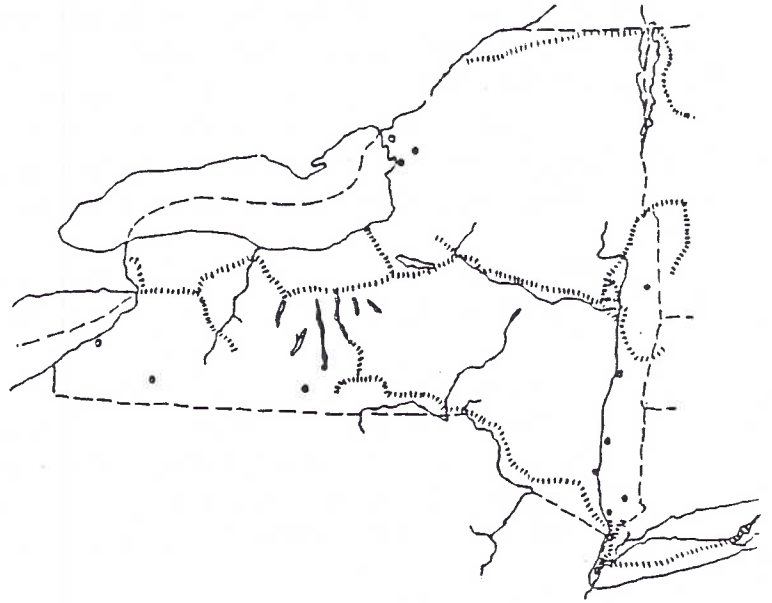


The Genesee Valley Telegraph roughly shares a route with the canal that will not have its railroad for another decade. Cayuga Lake at Ithaca sprouts southerly railroads and telegraphs but no canal. And a telegraph line crosses direct to Bennington from Troy, no feat for a canal, nor for a railroad until the Hoosac Mountain barrier was tunnelled some 25 years later.

¹ Adapted from a map in Ronald E. Shaw Canals for a Nation (University of Kentucky 1990).

Railroads¹

Accordingly the telegraph introduces a new means of communication inasmuch as the contingencies of its development are not to the same degree constrained by the considerations of grade that operate so powerfully upon the economic feasibility of railroads and canals. And though Kendall vested the telegraph with a branching architecture which was well designed to suit its geographical elaboration to riverine settlement patterns, the sidelines quickly spun a network instead.



But we have yet to account for any of the specific sidelines mentioned earlier in tabulations from the Western Union Telegraph organizational chart or French's Gazetteer. We might, then, be prepared for a certain invisibility in the status of such developments in the history of the telegraph. Indeed, this case is perhaps best illustrated in the matter of the last of the New York state telegraphs to be mentioned in Appleton's:

"New York and Offing, over Long Island to Fire Island."

Samuel Colt, just as he was being disappointed in his first attempts to manufacture and sell pistols to the United States Army 1840-1842, was also failing to interest the Navy in a "submarine battery," an electrically-detonated mine. Having become acquainted with Morse, who also was unsuccessfully petitioning Congress for interest in an electrical technology, Colt turned from 'smart bombs' to the 'communication of intelligence.' By 1845 he had organized the New York and Offing Telegraph Association,² which shows itself briefly in the records of the Magnetic Telegraph Company when on March 7, 1846 that board of directors met solely to resolve "that permission be granted to Messrs. Colt and Robinson to put one isolated wire on poles between Wall Street and Yorkville, to be removed at the discretion of the Company."³

¹ Adapted from a map in George Rogers Taylor; Irene D. Neu The American Railroad Network 1861-1891 in light of material from French's Gazetteer, Pierce, Williams, op cit.

² Thompson, op cit. p. 90.

³ Proceedings of the Magnetic Telegraph Company Vol 1, p. 31.

The war with Mexico that was to be precipitated by the annexation of Texas distracted Congress from Morse's program, but was a boon to Colt's. As Colt was turning his attention back to the manufacture of pistols, he had evidently allied himself with William Robinson, a book dealer, to help conduct the telegraph. And the Wall Street-Yorkville line, requested according to the niceties of the Morse patent that was being used, was probably designed to make contact with shipping via Long Island Sound at Hellgate, in addition to its services for marine traffic upon the Atlantic. Colt's electrical telegraph joined several systems for visual signalling that had been developed following the War of 1812 for the transmission of shipping intelligence and items of news between the harbor and the port of New York.¹

Robert Luther Thompson, whose Wiring the Continent still stands as the authority on "the history of the telegraph industry in the United States 1832-66," in writing of this line, generalizes on the:

*" . . . story of Colt, with minor modifications, characterized the activities of the petty promoters who webbed the country with their wires. While often making a satisfactory construction profit for their promoters, few of these side lines ever made a cent for their stockholders. After a few years of fruitless struggle, most of them were either abandoned, or sold for debt and incorporated as tributaries of the trunk lines."*²

Indeed, Thompson does concentrate upon what he regards as the trunk lines - or the 'main story' - but thereby he misses an essential feature in the development of the telegraph. It is precisely the sidelines, the tributaries, that go beyond the linear coverage of Thompson's account to the quadratic features of a communications network.

In more general terms, sidelines are just the feature of telegraph architecture which makes for the self-consistency of intensive and extensive developments which has driven the telegraph and subsequent 'revolutions' upon the form of electronic communications. But even in Thompson's narrower view, it was sideline development that drove the industry itself to monopoly. This must be seen as the essential genius of Western Union, by which, according to the logic of a network rather than of a line, it was realized that a whole would be greater than the sum of its parts.

Williams' 'snapshot' of the telegraphs of New York state as of April 1848 appears in the 1850 edition of Appleton's Traveler's Guide. Williams himself qualifies the timeliness of the details:

*"The foregoing account will be found as accurate as it is possible to make it, especially when it is taken into consideration, that every day creates a change in the aspect of the telegraph."*³

So, the list must have been hopelessly outdated by the time it was published: ephemeral matter not likely to be included in subsequent editions. And this is why we have to probe so far beyond, and in addition to, the historical record - such as in Reid or Thompson - to begin to fill out a sense of how and why the system of electromagnetic telegraphs found a particular elaboration.

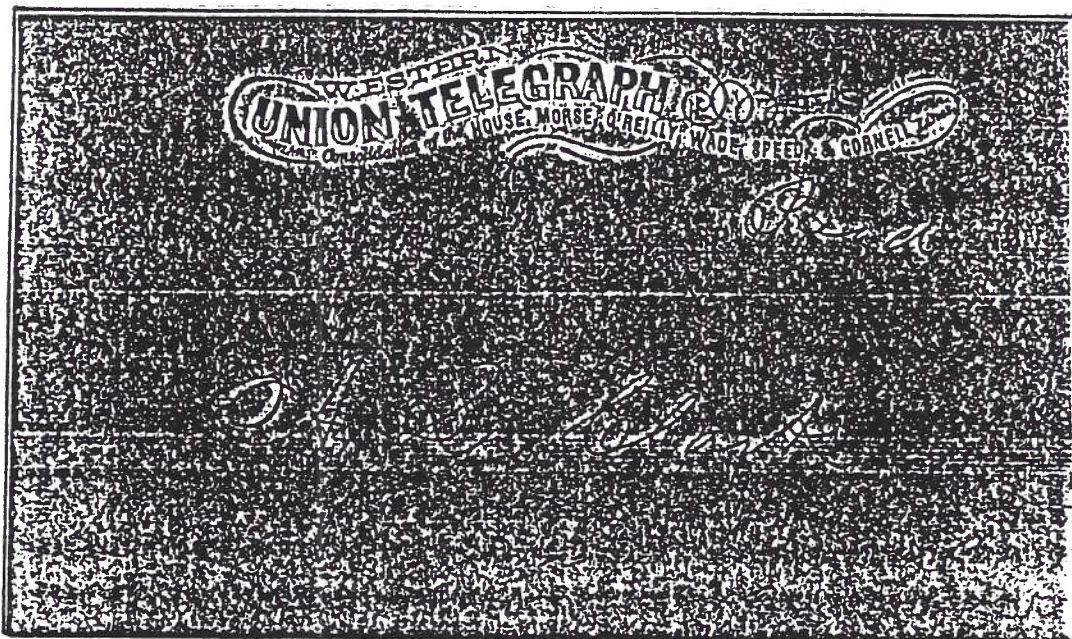
The proliferation of the telegraphs simply led beyond all former developments, to affect connections that relaxed the geographical contingencies. The power of the telegraph to manage

¹ Geoffrey Wilson The Old Telegraphs (Phillimore 1976) pp. 213-215.

² Thompson, op cit. p. 92.

³ W. Williams, op cit. p. 309.

essentially upon its abstraction of the spatial metaphor.⁴ The whole of Western Union's hardware could have been reproduced for one tenth of its capitalization. But its software, ultimately its history of risk and acquisition, was the more essential measure of its strength.



Western Union, incorporated in 1856, promulgated a vigorous program of consolidation that, by the end of the Civil War, gave it a virtual monopoly over the telegraphy of the United States, and status as the world's most powerful corporation.

Note: This article first appearing in P.S., is used here with their kind permission.

¹ Robert Dalton Harris "The Telegram is the Message" P.S. #45 pp. 9-18.

