

The

# Journal

of



## New York State Postal History

Volume 36

Fall 2002

*Alan Parsons*  
President

*Martin Margulis*  
Editor

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# The *Journal* of New York State Postal History

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# POSTAL ROUTES IN 1837-1841

## AND HOW THEY INFLUENCED THE DELIVERY OF MAIL ORIGINATING IN SARATOGA COUNTY, NEW YORK

by John A. Lange  
Ballston Spa, New York

This postal history study consists of stampless folded letters (SFLs) originating from towns in Saratoga County, New York in the 1837-1841 period, together with descriptions of the postal routes used to carry these SFLs to the addressee.

Descriptions of each route are given, together with extracts from a postal route map with each SFL because that information is necessary in deriving the travel time. The maps and route descriptions are also necessary in determining the exchange post offices when multiple routes are used.

The time period of 1837-1841 was chosen because it coincides with the time span of the 1839 *Postal Route Gazetteer* for New York State. The mail description under each route includes the name of each town on the route, where the route starts and ends, the departure and arrival times at the route end-points, the frequency of service (e.g. daily, once a week, etc.) And the mode of transportation (e.g. four-horse postal carriage, rail cars, etc.).

The foregoing information, together with a perpetual calendar, are used to determine when a letter was most likely to leave the originating post office. When multiple routes are used, the challenge is in connecting them together at a mutually common post office.

Why is this study significant? Conventional state postal history exhibits usually emphasize the postal markings, the stamps (if used), as well as the origin/destination. But the analysis of the travel time and the routes taken are rarely covered in a state postal history exhibit because the data to determine them has been obscure. The *New York Gazetteer* for 1839 is the only *Gazetteer* known to the author to have been published to date; therefore, routes to adjoining states are obscure, except when the destination town is on a route that originated in New York State.

The process used in determining the likely postal routes was as follows:

- a. Determine the county of New York in which the destination is located.
- b. Use the 1931 postal route map to determine the most likely path for the SFL to travel.
- c. Refer to the 1839 Postal Route Map, first to confirm that those towns actually existed in the 1837-1841 period and secondly, that actual postal routes existed between those towns.
- d. Search the *Postal Route Gazetteer* to find the route numbers of the originating town and the destination town. Sometimes, but not always, there are several choices. Choose the route(s) that contain the names of other towns to the next point on the map.
- e. When there are multiple routes involved, it is necessary to repeat the process at each transfer post office. The route determination process works best when the probable routes are initially listed starting from the origin and separately from the destination toward the origin.
- f. Compare the arrival time/day of one route with the departure time/day of the mating route. Check to ensure there are no alternative routes.
- g. Using a perpetual calendar and the information previously obtained, determine the travel time. If a route is not daily, but once a week, or three times a week, review any alternative routes to see if a better fit exists.

The SFL having a small town destination in a distant county may require several routes for travel. Correspondingly, the challenge of matching exchange post offices between routes increases. The Greenfield Centre SFL sent to Castile is a splendid example requiring seven routes and a week's travel time between post offices.



Author's Acknowledgment: This study would not have occurred if it had not been for the initiative of Robert Dalton Harris in gathering the postal route information together and seeing to it that it was published as a *Gazetteer*. This *Gazetteer* not only contains a large postal route map of New York State applicable to the 1837-1841 period, but also a perpetual calendar.

The author is indebted to Robert for this effort and for his encouragement and support when he learned how I was applying the information contained in *Gazetteer*.

References:

*Postal Route Gazetteer, Part I: New York State 1839*, compiled by Robert Dalton Harris, 1992. Published by the Printer's Stone, Ltd., Box 30, Fishkill, N.Y. 12524. Contains a folded postal route map; available from the Subway Stamp Shop.

*Map of New York exhibiting the Post Offices, Post Roads, Canals, Rail Roads, etc.* by David H. Burr, late topographer to the Post Office, geographer to the House of Representatives of the United States, 1839 (1992 reprint). Included as a foldout in the *Gazetteer*.

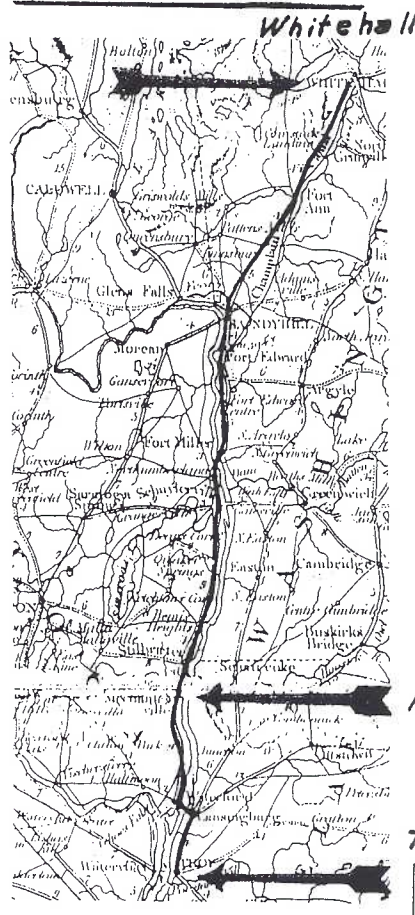
*Post Route Map of the State of New York Showing Post Offices with the Intermediate Distances on Mail Routes in Operation on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 1931*. The scale is 1½ inches to 10 miles. The map comes in two sections, each 27x50 inches. Obtainable from the Empire State Postal History Society, 373 Route Rd., Ballston Spa, New York 12020-3227.

*New York Postal History: The Post Offices and First Postmasters from 1775 to 1980* by John L. Kay and Chester M. Smith, Jr. Published in 1982 by the APS and available from the Empire States Postal History Society.



# Saratoga County, New York Mechanicville

## ROUTE NO. 544



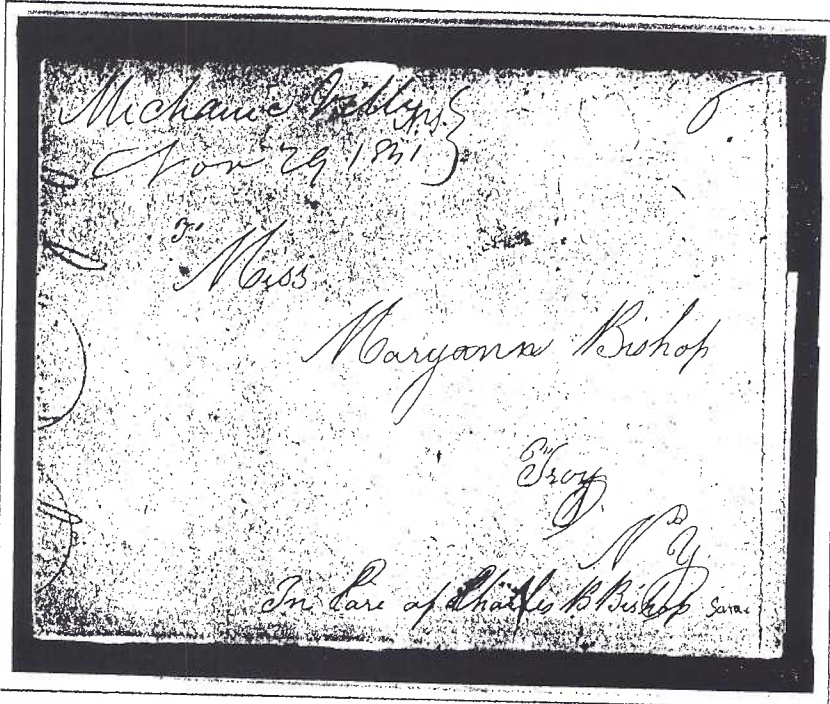
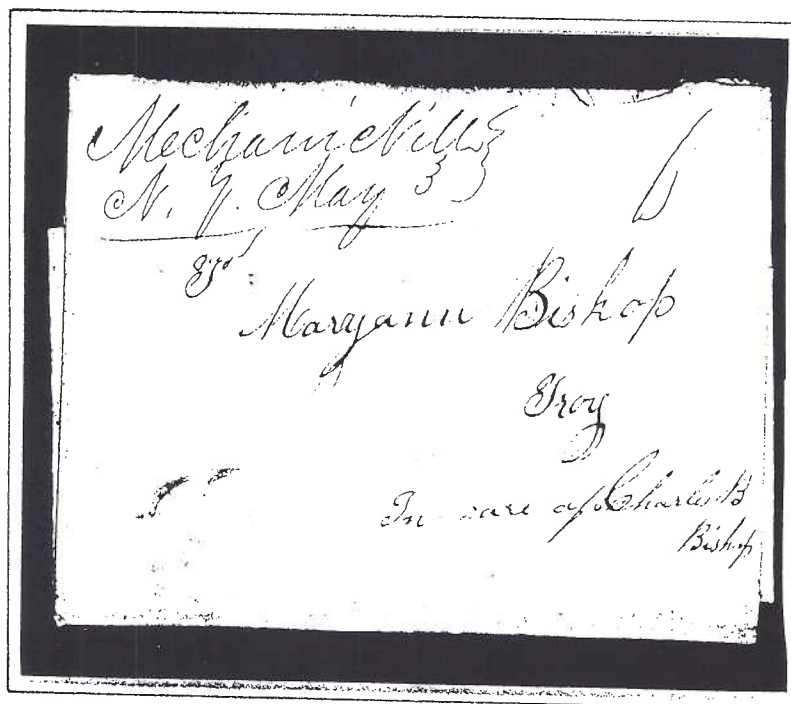
Mechanicville

1841 6¢ Rate, single letter, not over 30 mi.

Troy

Leave from Whitehall at 8am, arrive at Troy same day by 8pm. 72 miles and back, daily in four-horse post-coaches. One of the stops was Mechanicville (Mechanicsville).

Map & Route information from "Postal Route Gazetteer Part I: New York State 1839"



# Saratoga Springs

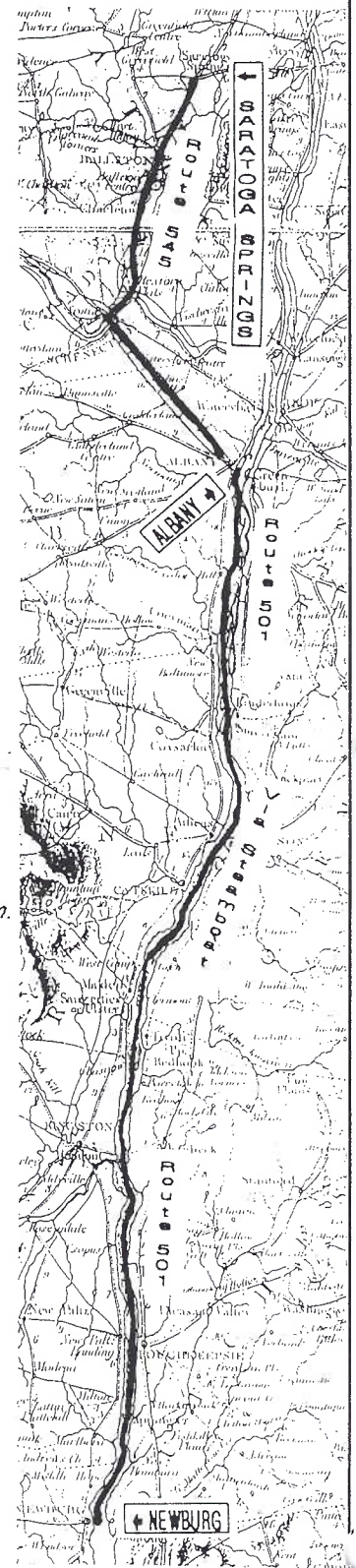


- **Route 545:** From Albany, by Schenectady and Ballston to Saratoga Springs; 33 miles and back, daily, in railroad cars. Leave Saratoga Springs everyday at 10 a.m.; arrive in Albany same day by 2 p.m.
- **Route 501:** From New York, by West Point, Newburgh, Hamptonburg, Poughkeepsie, Hyde Park, Tivoli, Catskill, Hudson, Coxsackie, Stuyvesant and Albany, to Troy; 152 miles and back, daily, in steamboats, during the season of navigation. Leave Troy every day at 4 p.m.; arrive at New York next day by 6 a.m. This portion, 81 1/2 mi.

## Travel time:

**Saturday, Aug. 25, 1838:** Letter written, brought to the P.O. and postmarked. If this occurred before 10 a.m., it was picked up by the Route 545 carrier. Arrived in Albany by 2 p.m. It then left Albany on the Route 501 Steamboat, probably before 5 p.m.

**Sunday, Aug. 26:** Letter arrived in Newburgh, several hours before 6 a.m.

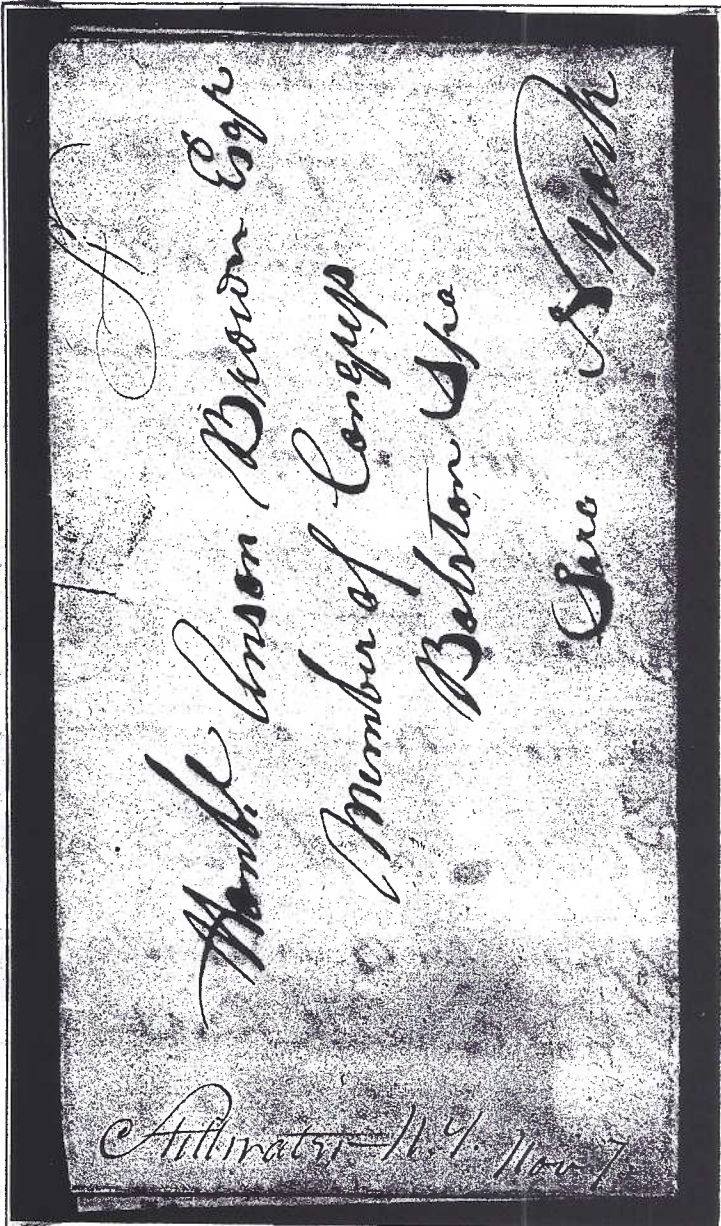


1839  
POSTAL ROUTE MAP



# Stillwater

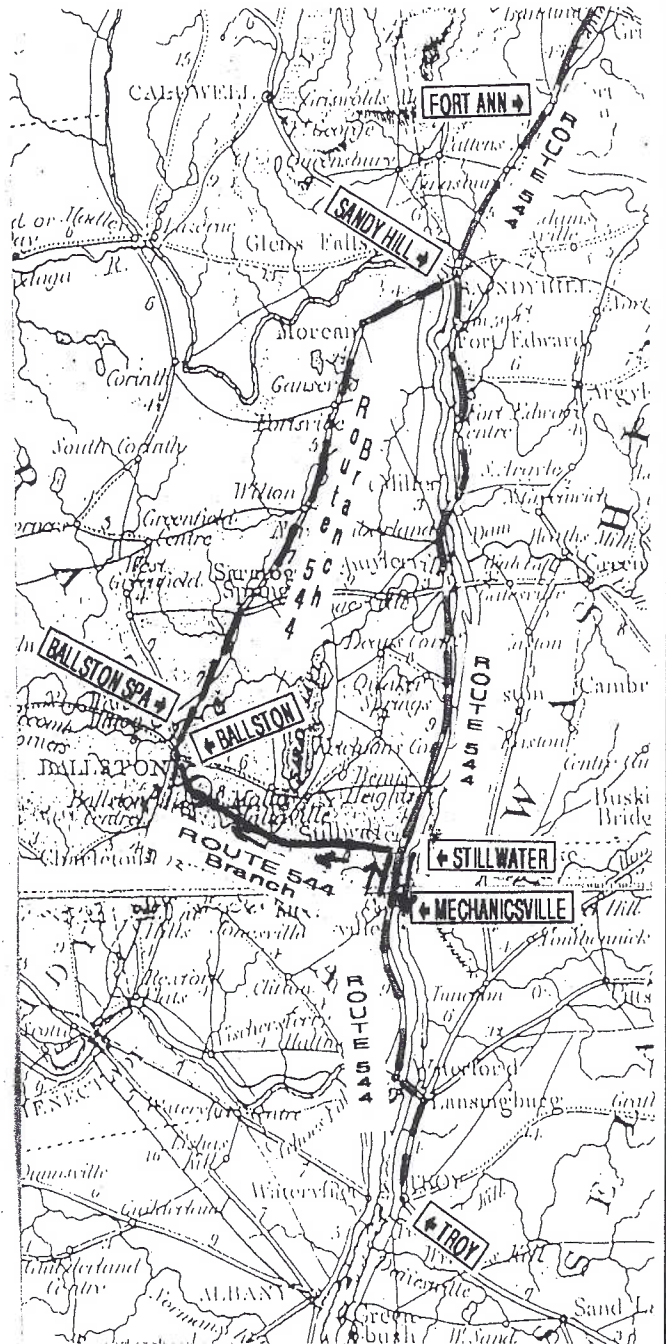
STILLWATER to BALLSTON SPA  
via  
BALLSTON



Nov. 7, 1839

Normally a 6¢ rate, not over 30 mi

Free (letter to a congressman)



- Route 544: Stillwater to Mechanicsville
- Route 544 branch: Mechanicsville to Ballston



## Stillwater

### ~~ROUTE DESCRIPTION FOR THE 1839 STILLWATER COVER - ADJACENT PAGE~~

**ROUTE 649 (not shown):** From Ballston by Maltaville, Stillwater, Quaker Springs, Dean's Corners, Ketcham's Corners, Maltaville and Malta to Ballston, equal to 22 miles and back, once a week. Leave Ballston every Wednesday at 5 a.m. and return to Ballston same day by 8 p.m. (Ballston to Stillwater, 16 miles)

**ROUTE 544 (Comstock/Reed):** From Whitehall by Comstock Landing, Fort Ann, Kingsbury, Sandy Hill, Fort Edward, Fort Edward Centre, Fort Miller, Northumberland, Schuylerville, Bemus Heights, Stillwater, Mechanicsville, Waterford, Lansingburg to Troy, 72 miles and back, daily. Leave Whitehall daily at 8 a.m., arrive in Troy same day by 8 p.m. in four-horse post-coaches.

**ROUTE 544 Branch:** .... and three times a week from Mechanicsville, by Maltaville, Malta, Ballston, Saratoga Springs, Wilton, Fortsville and Moreau to Sandy Hill. Leave Mechanicsville every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 1 p.m.; arrive at Sandy Hill next days by 5 p.m.

### ANALYSIS :

1. **Choice of routes :** The postal route map shows a direct route from Stillwater to Ballston, but the Route 649 carrier only made this trip on Wednesdays. Although the letter was written on a Wednesday, it missed the carrier as evidenced by the Nov. 7 (Thursday) postal marking. The only alternative was Route 544 as an originating route.

### 2. Timetable:

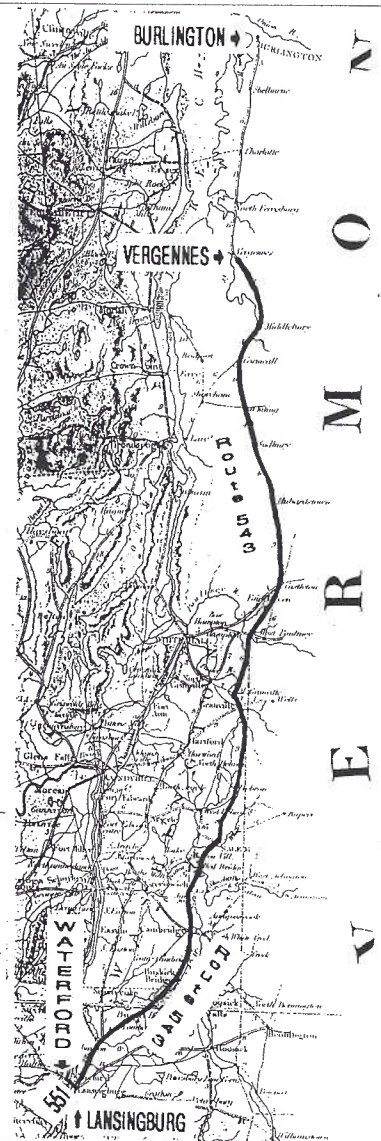
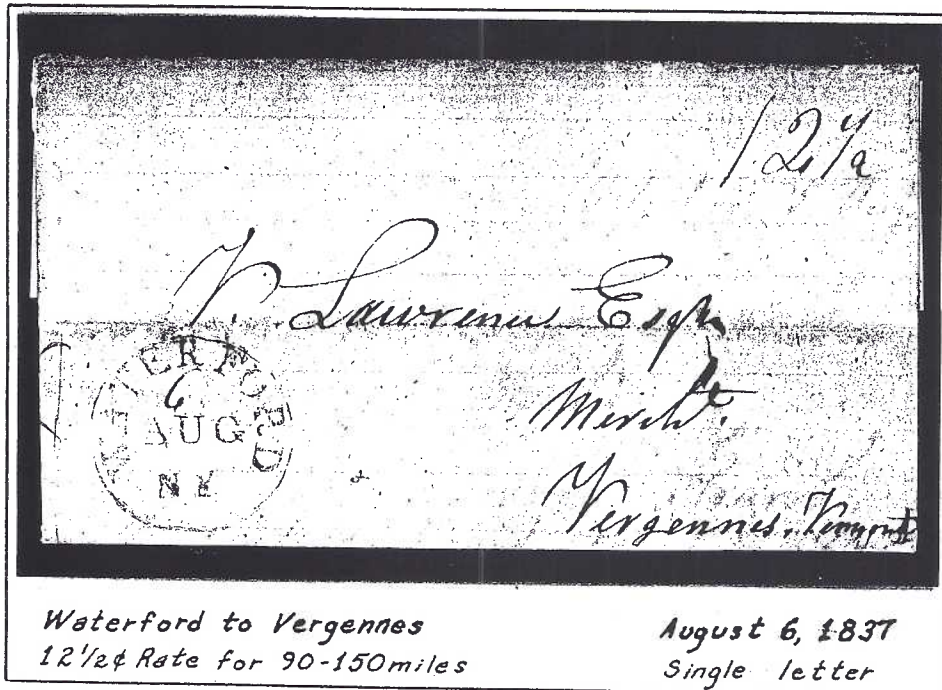
a) Wednesday, Nov. 6, 1839: Letter written in Stillwater.

b) Thursday, Nov. 7: Letter postmarked in Stillwater. Picked up by the Route 544 carrier and brought the four mile distance to Mechanicsville. However, because of the 15 mile distance from Mechanicsville to Troy and the arrival time of 8 p.m. in Troy, it missed the 1 p.m. departure time of the Route 544 branch carrier. It had to stay overnight in the Mechanicsville post office.

c) Left Mechanicsville via the Route 544 Branch carrier on Friday, Nov. 8 at 1 p.m. and arrived in Ballston in the late afternoon or early evening.

3. **Milage:** Stillwater to Mechanicsville, 4 miles }  
Mechanicsville to Ballston, 20 miles } 24 miles total in postal system

# Waterford



- **Route 551:** From Waterford by Lansingburg to Troy, four miles and back, daily. Leave Waterford every day at 2 p.m., arrive at Troy by 3 p.m. Four-horse post-carriages. Two miles for this portion.
- **Route 543:** From Albany by Troy, Lansingburg, ... Cambridge, ... Middle Granville, ... Hubbarton, ... Middlebury, Vergennes, ... to Burlington; 137 miles and back, daily, in four-horse post-carriages. Leave Albany every day at 10 a.m.; arrive in Burlington next day by 12 m. One hundred nine miles for this portion.

## Travel time:

- a) Saturday, Aug. 5, 1837 - Letter date-lined in Waterford; brought to the Waterford P.O. on Aug. 5 or
- b) Sunday, Aug. 6 - Route 551 carrier leaves Waterford at 2 p.m., arrives in Lansingburg before 3
- c) Monday, Aug. 7 - Route 543 carrier pickup in Lansingburg about noon.
- d) Tuesday, Aug. 8 - Arrival in Vergennes, Vt. in the evening.
- e) Wednesday, Aug. 9 - Most probable earliest pickup by the addressee.

Route description: Obtained from the "Postal Route Gazetteer, Part I: New York State 1839



## Schuylerville

*Schuylerville N.Y.,  
Feb 8, 1838*

*Messrs Law & Todd  
New York*

*N.Y.*

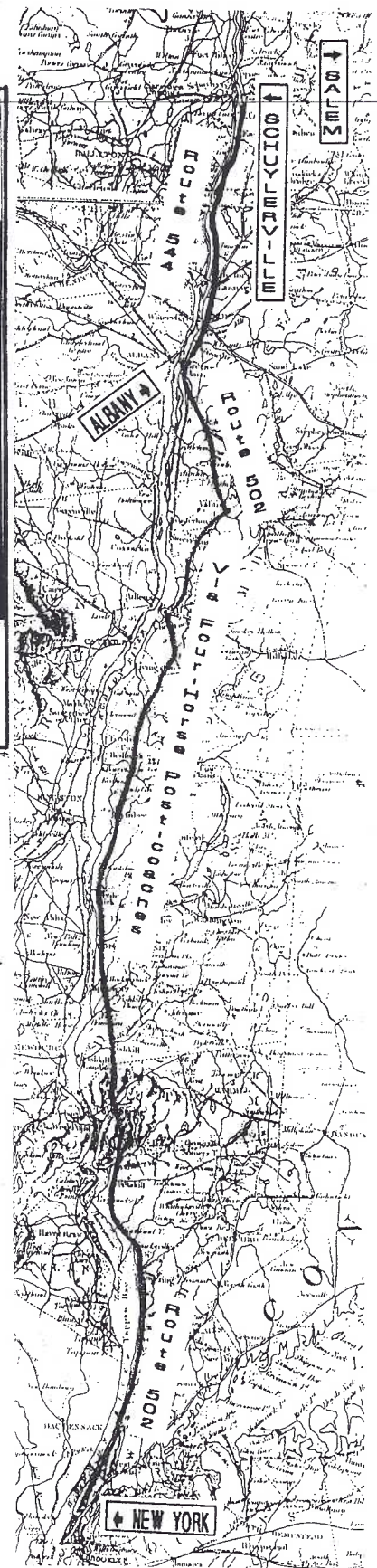
**SCHUYLERVILLE to NEW YORK**  
February 8, 1838 18<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>¢ Rate for 150-400mi. Single L.

- **Route 544:** From Whitehall, ... Schuylerville, ... to Albany, daily, 72 miles. Leave Whitehall (in winter) at 12m.; arrive Albany next day by 6p.m. (36 hours, total).
- **Route 502:** From Albany, ... Hudson, ... Sing Sing, ... to New York, daily, 152 miles. Leave Albany (in winter) at 6a.m.; arrive New York next day by 2p.m. (32 hours).

### Travel time:

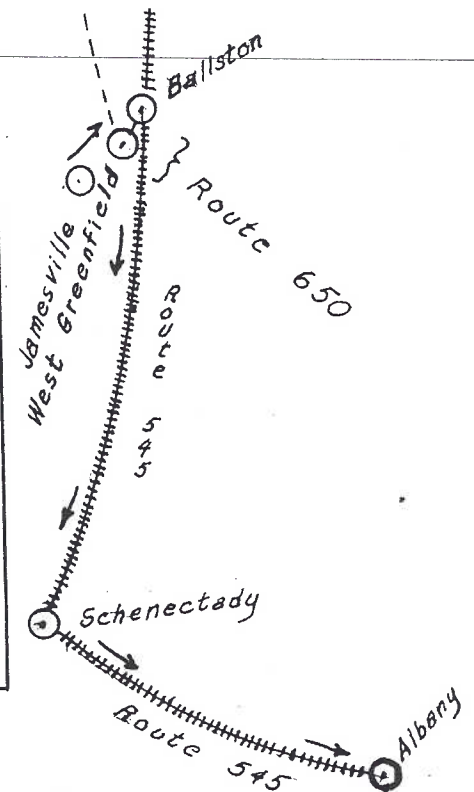
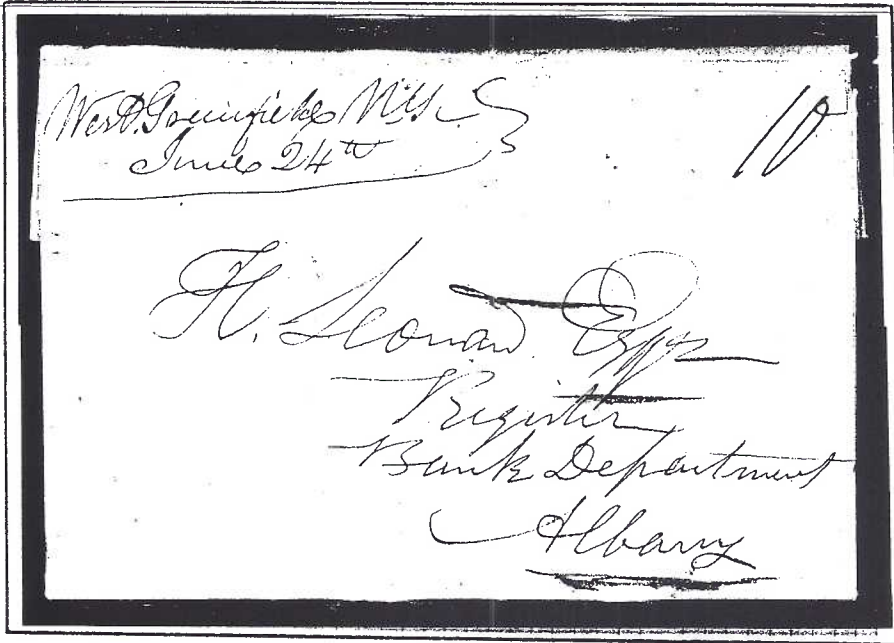
- a) Sunday, Feb. 4, 1838 - Letter written in Salem.
- b) Thursday, Feb. 8 - Post marked in Schuylerville.  
Route 544 probable pickup, late evening.
- c) Saturday, Feb. 10 - Arrived in Albany by 6 p.m.
- d) Sunday, Feb. 11 - Pickup by the Route 502 carrier at 6a.m.
- e) Monday, Feb. 12 - Arrived in New York by 2 p.m.

Note: Route information obtained from "Postal Route Gazetteer-Part I: New York State 1839"





## West Greenfield



June 24, 1841, 10¢ Rate - Single letter, 30-80 miles

Route 650: From Ballston, by West Greenfield, Greenfield Centre, Porter's Corners, South Corinth, Corinth, and Luzerne, to Caldwell, 38 miles and back, once a week. Leave Caldwell every Monday at 6 a.m.; arrive at Ballston same day by 6 p.m.

Route 545: From Albany, by Schenectady and Ballston, to Saratoga Springs, 33 miles and back, daily in railroad cars. Leave Saratoga Springs everyday by 10 a.m.; arrive at Albany same day by 2 p.m.

### Travel Time for letter:

- Written in Jamesville (one mile from the nearest PO of West Greenfield) on June 23, 1841, a Wednesday.
- Received the West Greenfield townmark and date (ms), June 24, a Thursday
- Stayed in the West Greenfield PO until the following Monday, June 28, when it was picked up about 4-5 p.m. by the Route 650 carrier. It arrived in Ballston by 6 p.m.
- Picked up in Ballston Tuesday morning, June 29 between 10-11 a.m. and delivered to the Albany PO by 2 p.m. that day

This sequence produced a travel time of five days between post offices only 40 miles apart, unusually long even in those days.

# Rexford Flats

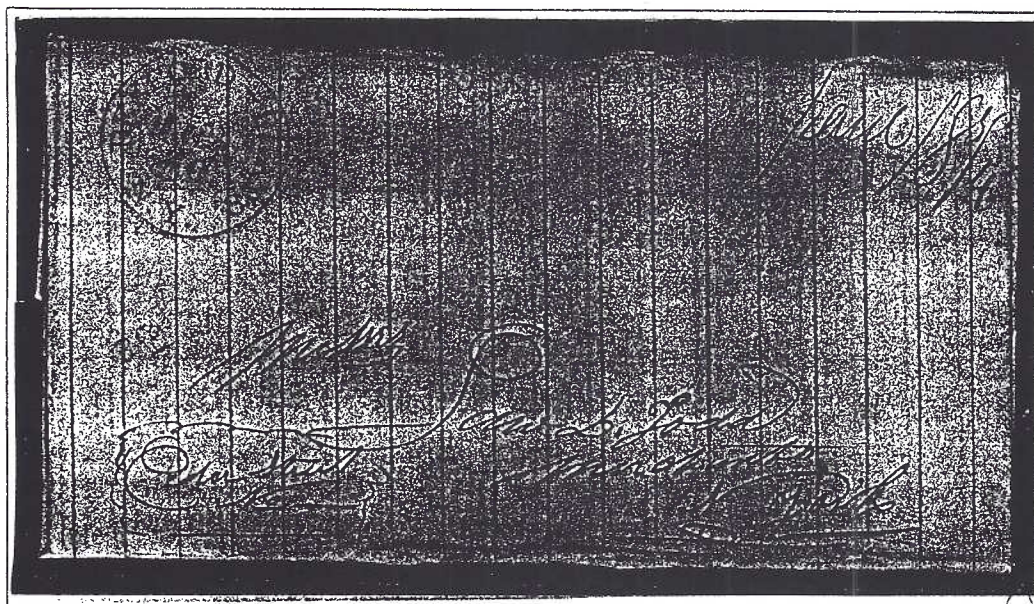
to New York

18<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> d

150 - 400 mile.

Zone Rate

Single Letter



June 10, 1838

- Route 608: Ballston, 7 a.m. ... Rexford Flats  
... Schenectady, 12 m. Wed. only. 1-horse C.
- Route 545: Saratoga Springs, 10 a.m. ...  
Schenectady ... Albany 2 p.m. Rail
- Route 501: Troy, 4 p.m. ... Albany ...  
New York, 6 a.m. next day. Steamboat

June 10, Sunday: Letter left in the  
Rexford Flats P.O. and paid for.

June 13, Wednesday. Route 608: Picked up  
in early p.m., delivered to Schen. by 2 p.m.

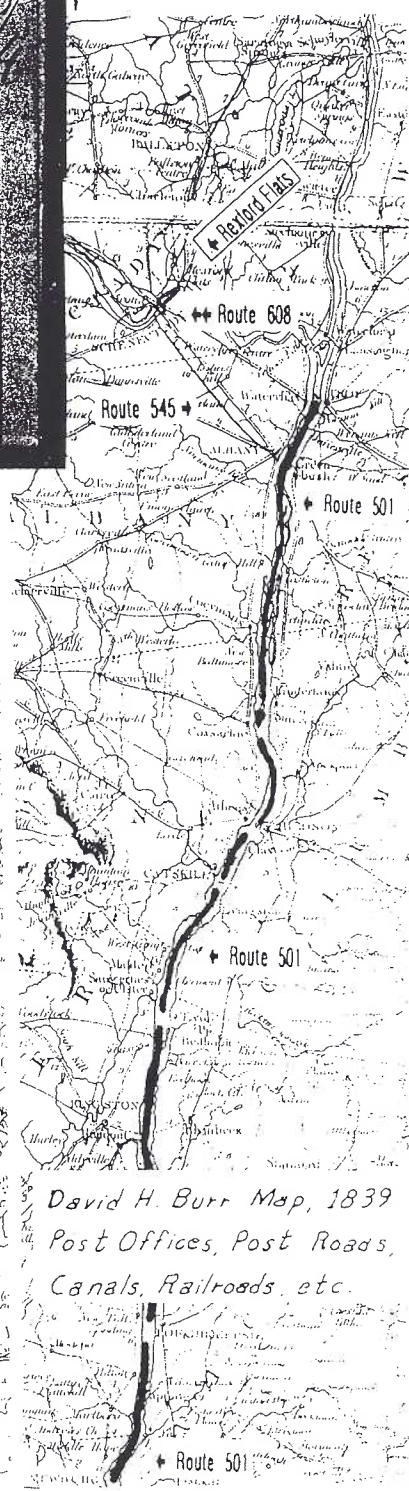
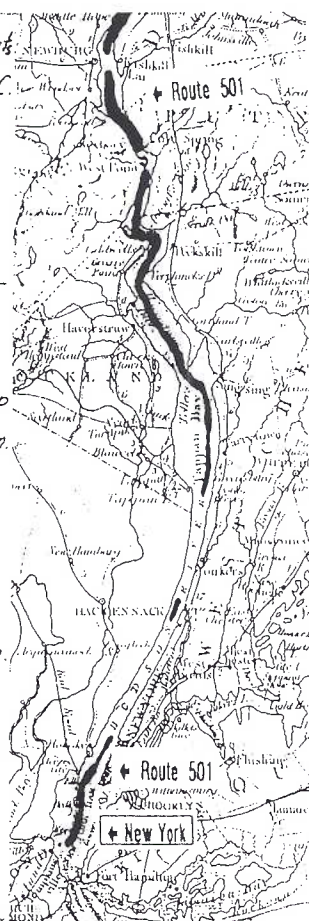
June 13, Wednesday. Route 545: Missed  
the train to Albany since it left  
prior to 2 p.m.

June 14, Thursday. Route 545: Left  
Schenectady and arrived in Albany 2 p.m.

June 14, Thursday. Route 501: Left  
Albany after leaving Troy at 4 p.m.

June 15, Friday. Route 501: Arrive in  
New York by 6 a.m.

Source: Postal Route Gazetteer, N.Y. 1839



David H. Burr Map, 1839  
Post Offices, Post Roads,  
Canals, Railroads, etc.

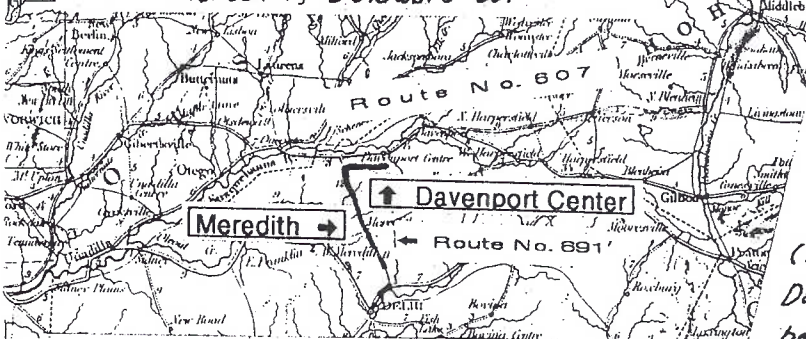


SARATOGA COUNTY, N.Y.  
SARATOGA SPRINGS



Nov. 8, 1840  
Red 32 mm. Circular Date Stamp  
12 1/2¢ Rate, Single letter, 80-150 mi.

Saratoga Springs, Saratoga Co. to  
Meredith, Delaware Co.



This letter left Saratoga  
Springs at 10am, Sunday, Nov. 8,  
1840 by railway (Route No. 545)  
arriving in Schenectady about noon.

It left Schenectady at Midnight  
that same day by stage coach  
(Route No. 607) and arrived at  
Davenport Centre Monday, Nov. 9  
before 6pm.

Mail from Davenport via Meredith to Delhi was once per week, so the letter  
stayed in Davenport Center until Wednesday when it left at 1pm by post rider or  
coach (Route No. 691). The letter arrived in Meredith the afternoon of Nov. 11, 1840 (Wed)

Source: Postal Route Gazetteer, Part I: New York State 1839

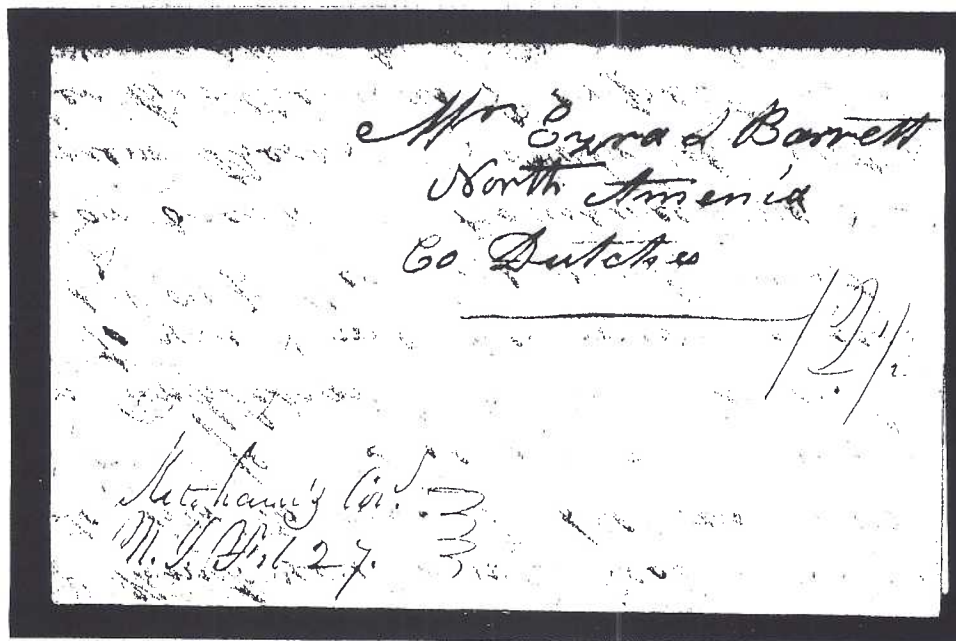
Route No. 545: Saratoga Springs via Ballston, Schenectady to Albany, daily

Route No. 607: Schenectady via ... Schoharie ... Davenport Centre to Oneonta  
Monday, Wednesday and Friday

Route No. 691: Davenport Centre via Meredith to Delhi - Every Wednesday.

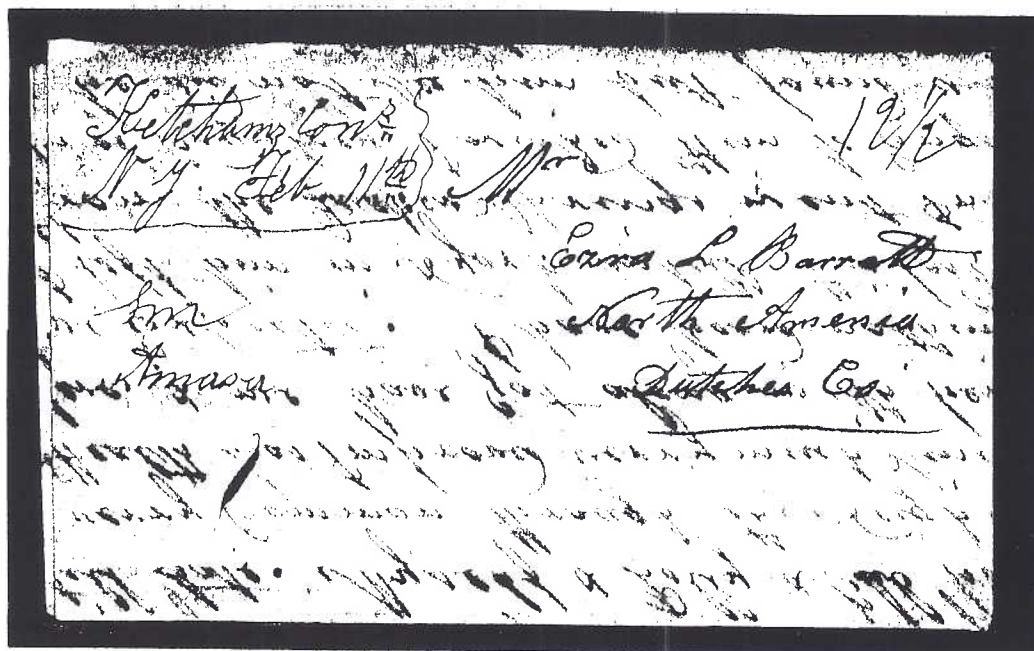


Saratoga County, New York  
Ketcham's Corners



Feb. 27, 1838

12 1/2¢ Rate - Act of April 9, 1816, 80-150 mi.  
Both letters traveled the same routes - described next page



Feb. 11, 1840

## Saratoga County, New York Ketcham's Corners

### KETCHAM'S CORNERS to NORTH AMENIA

#### **ROUTE 649 - KETCHAM'S CORNERS to BALLSTON**

*From Ballston by Maltaville, Stillwater, Quaker Springs, Dean's Corners, Ketchums Corners, Maltaville and Malta to Ballston, equal to 22 miles and back, once a week, leaving Ballston every Wednesday at 5am and returning to Ballston the same day by 8pm.*

#### **ROUTE 545 - BALLSTON to ALBANY**

*From Albany, by Schenectady and Ballston, to Saratoga Springs and back (Albany) in railroad cars. Leave Saratoga Springs every day at 10am, arrive at Albany same day by 2pm. Travel: 36 miles and back.*

#### **ROUTE 502 - ALBANY to RHINEBECK**

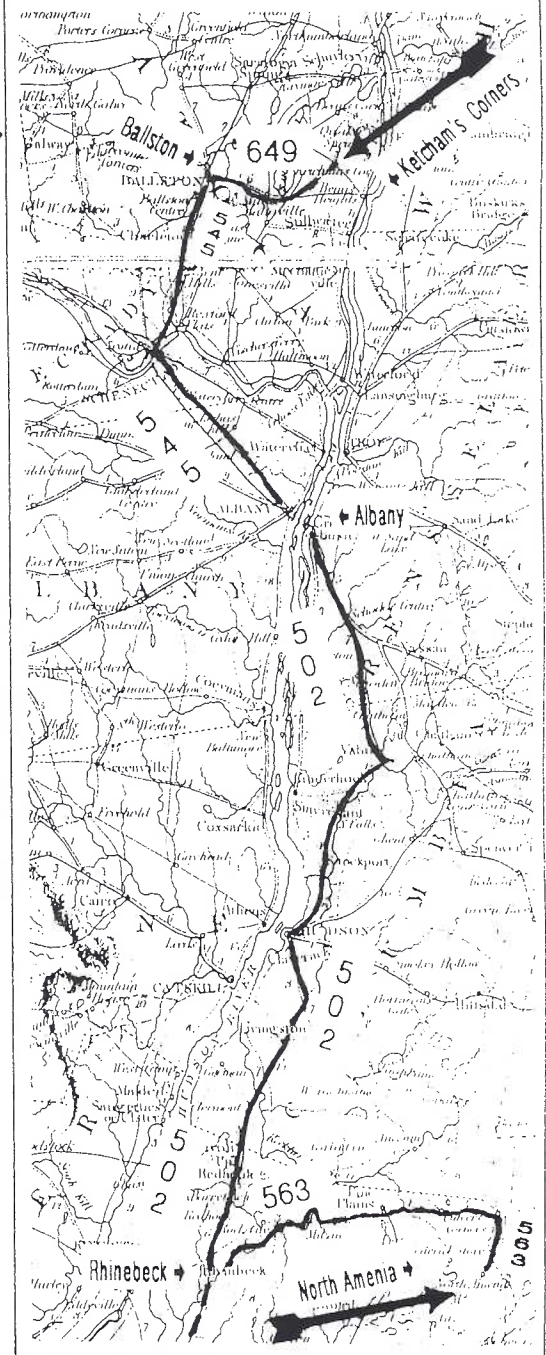
*From New York and various other towns to Albany and back to New York, 152 miles and back, leaving Albany, Greenbush, Schodack Centre, South Schodack, Valatie, Kinderhook, Columbiaville, Hudson, Livingston, Clermont, Red Hook, Rhinebeck, Staatsburg, Hyde Park, Poughkeepsie, Wappinger's Creek, Peekskill, Cortlandtown, Sing Sing, Tarrytown, Dobb's Ferry, Yonkers and New York. Leave Albany every day at 6am; arrive next day at New York by 2pm (two hours allowed for winter).*

#### **ROUTE 563 - RHINEBECK to NORTH AMENIA**

*From Rhinebeck, by Milan, Pine Plains, Pulver's Corner, NorthEast, and North Amenia to Sharon, Ct., 32 miles and back every Friday at 6am, arrive at Sharon the same day by 6pm.*

*Probable travel time: The letter dated Feb. 27 (a Tuesday) actually left Ketchum's Corners on Wed. and arrived in Rhinebeck that Friday, but missed the 6am departure, so stayed in the Rhinebeck P.O. until the following Friday, March 9 when it was delivered to North Amenia*

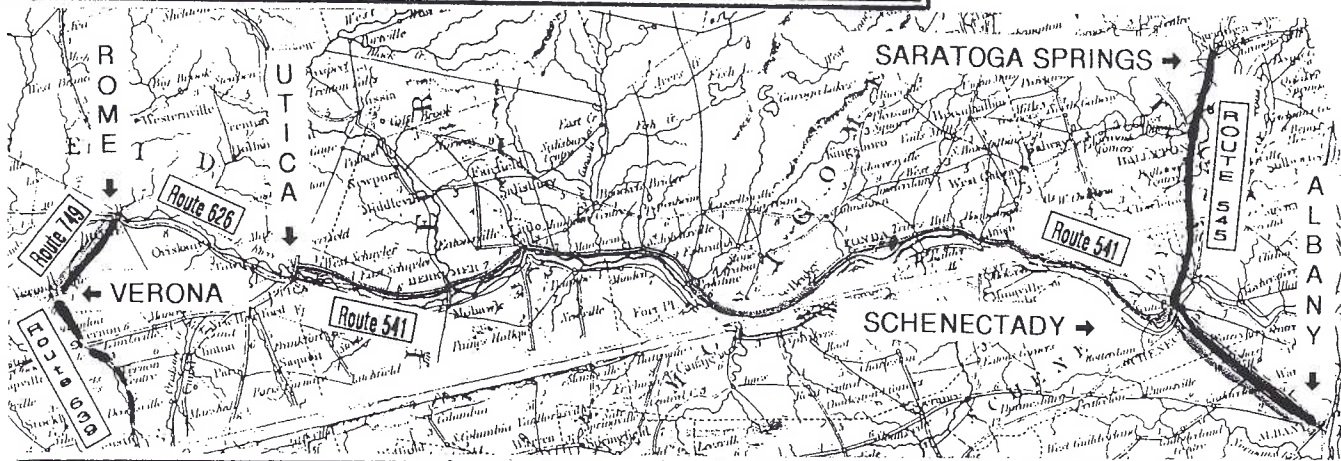
MAP OF NEW YORK  
exhibiting the Post Offices, Post  
Roads, Canals, Railroads, etc.  
by David H. Burr  
1839



# SARATOGA SPRINGS to Verona

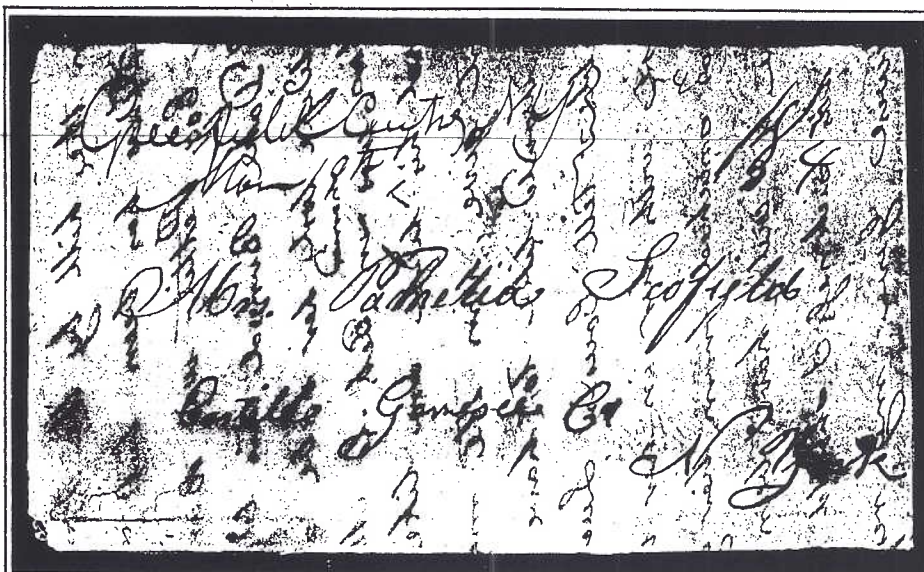
Nov. 7, 1838

The 12½¢ rate confirms that the postage charge (80-150mi) was computed using Schenectady as a transfer point. The junction of routes 545 & 541 could have been made either in Albany or Schenectady (137 miles)



Route	DEPARTURE FROM	ARRIVAL AT	SERVICE	Miles
● 545	Saratoga Springs, 10 a.m. 11/7, Wed.	Saratoga Springs, 11/6, Tues. Albany, 2 p.m. 11/7, Wed.	Daily Railroad Cars	33
● 541	Albany, 10 a.m. 11/8, Thurs.	Utica, 2 a.m. 11/9, Friday	Daily 4-Horse Post-C	96
○ 626	Utica, 3 a.m., 11/9, Friday	* Rome, less than two hours later, 11/9, Friday	Daily 4-Horse Post-C	16
● 749	Rome, 5 a.m., 11/9, Friday	Verona, about 6-7 a.m. 11/9, Friday	Tues. & Friday method undefined	8 153
○ 626		* Rome, more than two hours later, 11/9 Friday, therefore missing the connecting Rt. 749	Daily 4-Horse Post-C	16
● 639	Rome, 4 p.m. 11/9, Friday	Verona, about 5-6 p.m. 11/9, Friday	Mon. - Wed. - Fri Stages	8 153





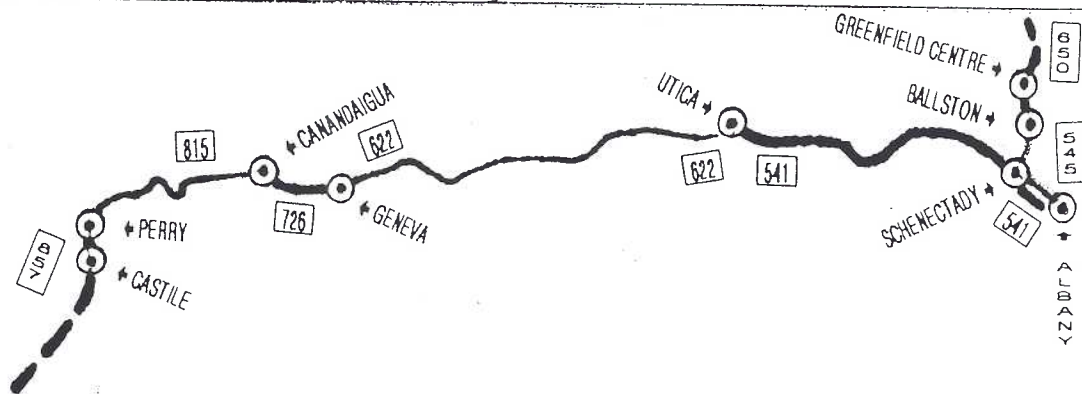
## GREENFIELD CENTRE

This letter travelled from Greenfield Centre (Saratoga Co.) to Castile (Genesee Co.) a postal route travel distance of 293 miles. This took eleven days and required seven postal routes. (A possible 545 transfer at Schenectady to connect with 541 would not have changed the time).

Thursday, March 19, 1840 18-3/4¢, 150-400mi. Single letter

Route	Departure from	Arrival at	Service	Miles
● 650	Greenfield Centre, 3/23 Monday, late afternoon	Greenfield Centre, 3/19, Thurs. Ballston, 3/23, Monday by 6 p.m.	Monday only	7
⊙ 545	Ballston, 3/24, Tuesday a.m.	Albany, 3/24, Tuesday by 2 p.m.	Daily, Railroad	27
● 541	Albany, 3/25, Wednesday at 10 a.m. (winter and summer weather)	Utica, 3/26 Thursday by 7 p.m. (winter weather)	Daily, 4 horse post carriage	96
○ 622	Utica, 3/26, Thursday at 8 p.m.*	Geneva, Friday, 3/27 by 7 p.m.	Daily, 4H-PC	96
● 726	Geneva, 3/27, Friday at 8 p.m.	Canandaigua, 3/27, Friday eve.	Daily, 4H-PC	19
⊙ 815	Canandaigua, 3/28, Saturday @ 8 a.m.	Perry, 3/28, Saturday, by 6 p.m.	Daily, 4H-PC	13
● 857	Perry, 3/30, Monday at 6 p.m.	Castile, 3/30, Monday, about 7 p.m.	Monday, Wed. - Fri.	5 293

\* The transfer of mail at Utica from Route 541 to Route 622 was critical, ".....soon after arrival of the Albany mail....".

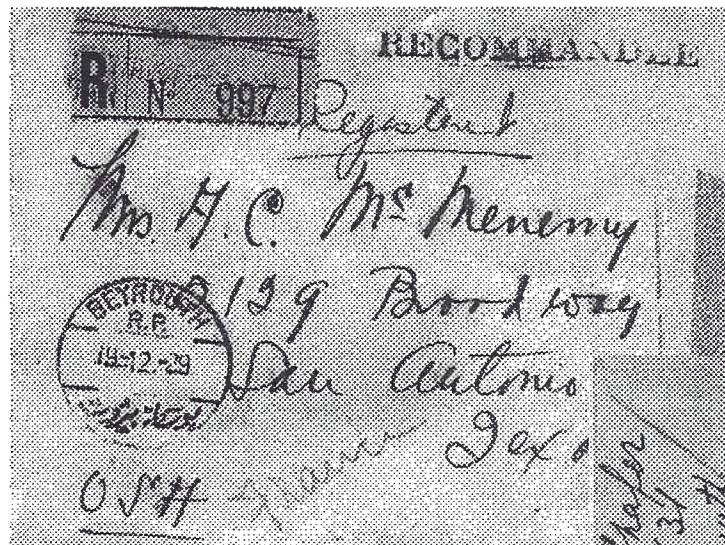




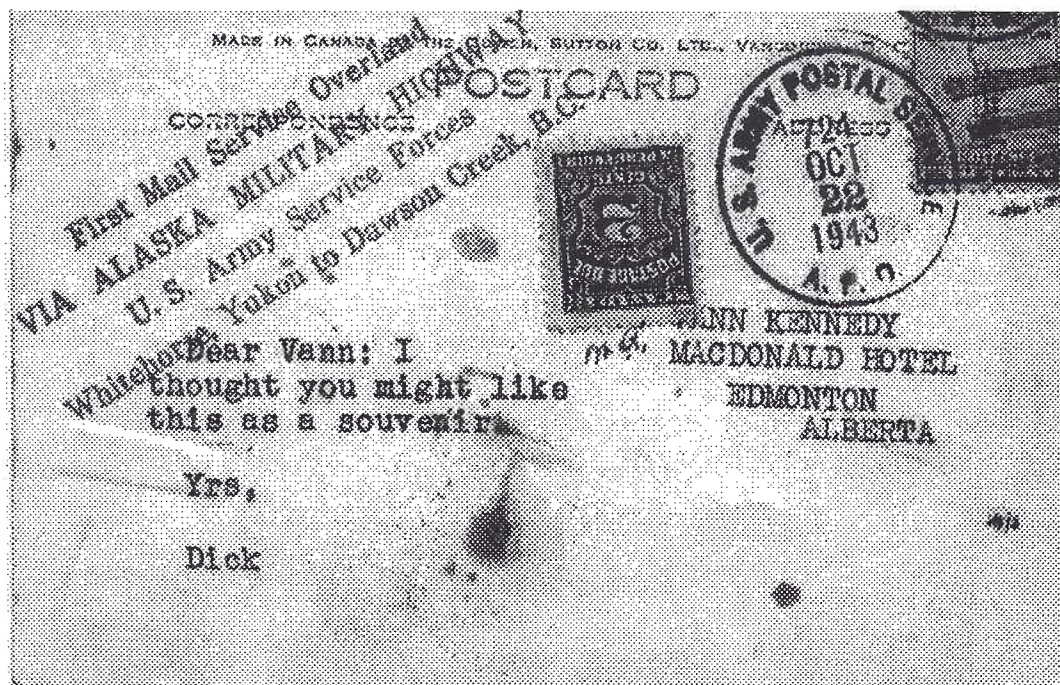
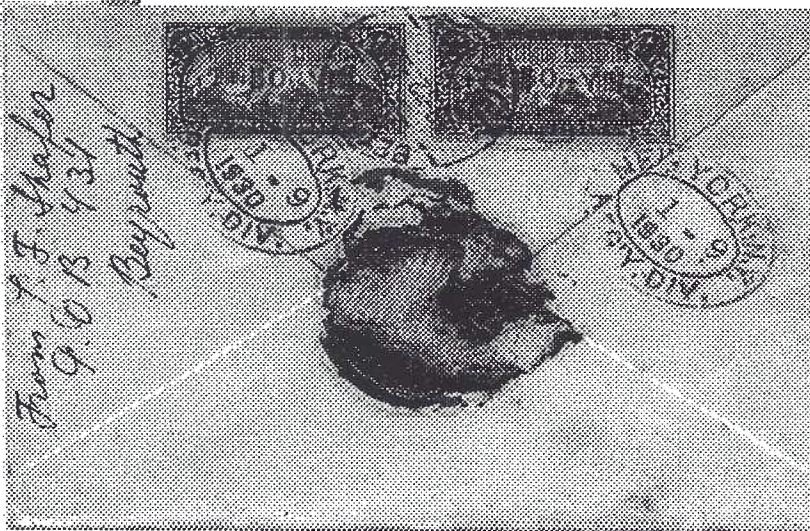
# FOUR MISCELLANEOUS COVERS TO THE UNITED STATES

by Martin Margulis  
Austin, Texas

These are four miscellaneous covers to the United States. Three have nothing in common. I found them interesting.



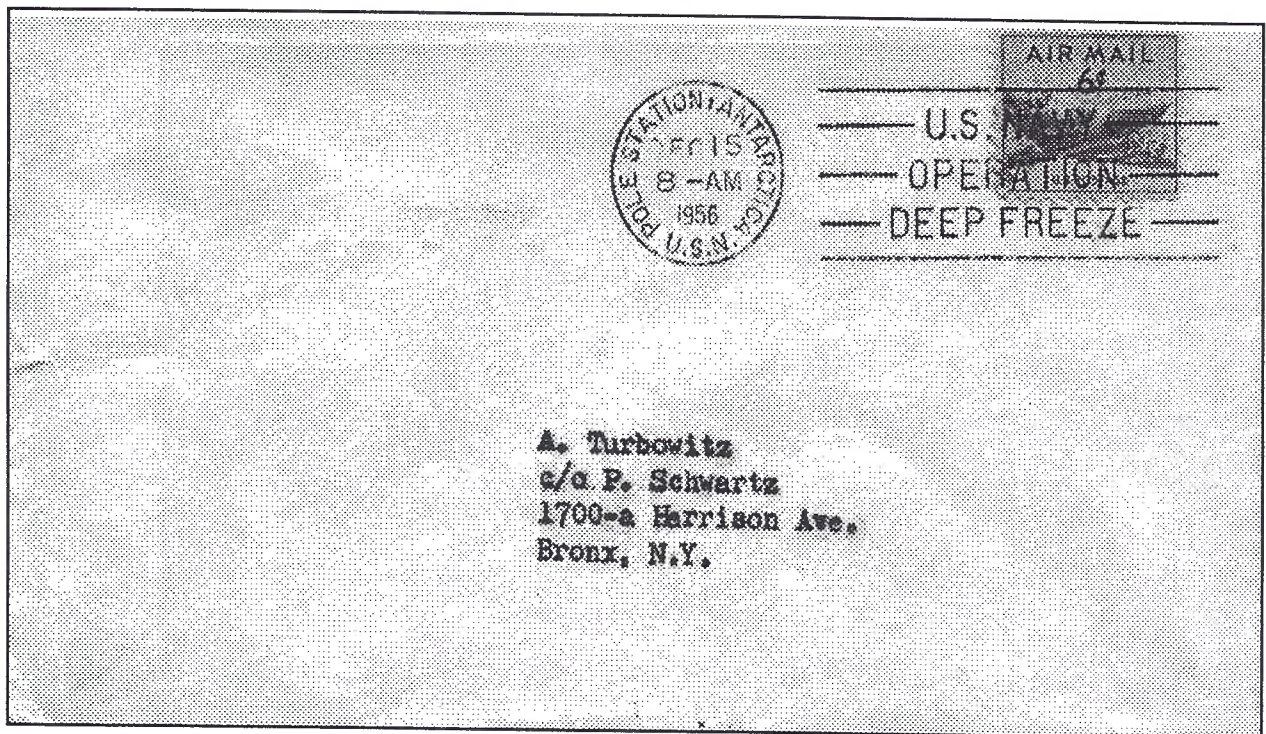
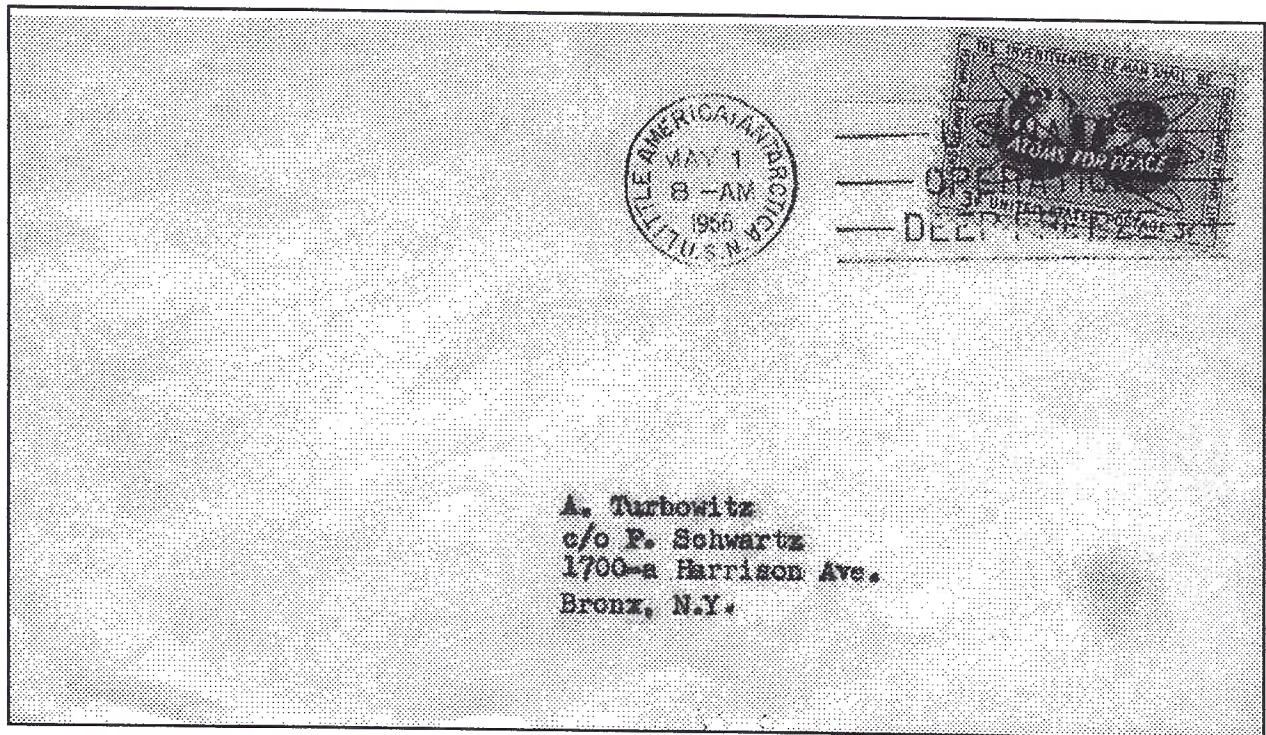
The first cover is from Beyrouth Harbour to Texas via New York City. It is registered RN997. It took almost three weeks to reach New York. I have no idea when it reached San Antonio.



A first day of operations cover from Alaska to Edmonton Alberta. The cover is stamped Whitehorse Yukon (Terr.) To Dawson Creek B.C. It has a United States Army Postal Service postmark and a two-cent Canadian Postage Due stamp on it. I assume it was underpaid by that amount.



Two different United States Navy Operation Deep Freeze covers.  
 Once canceled May 1, 1956 and the other December 15, 1956.





# NEW YORK POST ROADS: THE TOPOLOGY OF A POSTAL HISTORY

by Robert Dalton Harris

The earliest printed map to show a road in North America, drawn and engraved by Herman Moll and published in London in 1715, included a paragraph identifying the road as a post road, providing thirteen offices with weekly mails in a line from Philadelphia via New York and Boston to Piscataway (near Portsmouth, New Hampshire).<sup>1</sup>

Hugh Gaine tabulated roads in his *American and British Kalendar for the Year 1775* and included post roads. The line of post offices had been extended south to Charles Town (South Carolina). A second weekly mail ran between New York and Boston, taking in Hartford and Springfield, rather than the coastal route. The mails to Canada evidently took the east bank of the Hudson River, from New York City to Montreal, but the west bank also was equipped for travel by "post stages" between New York City and Albany well before postal services on that side of the river are recorded.

The United States Constitution conferred upon Congress the authority in 1789 to establish post offices and post roads. The first quarterly report (October 5, 1789 to January 5, 1790) of the Postmaster General (PMG) indicated that the extremities of the main line had failed to pay the expense of mail transportation, as did six of ten "cross roads" branching from the main line. The PMG observed that the money collected was not all that was produced on those relatively unproductive routes inasmuch as unpaid letters originating from those sections could count as revenue elsewhere. Remote offices could receive and collect postage upon unpaid letters originating on the main line but, evidently, the remote offices originated more mail for, than they received from, the prosperous centers.

The postal laws and regulations of 1794 tabulated the post roads, the main line extending 1,733 miles from Maine to Georgia, but with about 100 "Cross-Post-Roads" totaling more than 10,000 miles in length to serve the hinterlands. The route north from New York City along the east bank of the Hudson to Albany was given a distance of 166 miles. A cross post extended west from Albany 114 miles by "Connojoharrie" to "Kanandaigua," branching at Connojoharrie 30 miles south to Cooperstown. From New York City a branch ran out onto Long Island 107 miles to Sagg Harbour.

These post roads and the associated postal services were promulgated on behalf of the national character and, indeed, they seem to have inspired private enterprise to the task of road building - triggering a mania for turnpikes, i.e. toll roads. State legislatures provided for turnpike corporations - such roads to be constructed by private capital, to be privately owned, maintained and operated for the tolls. The Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike Company, incorporated April 9, 1792, was oversubscribed by an enthusiastic public. The road was soon completed and is acknowledged to be the first extensive turnpike in the United States, serving the first stage for both travelers and the mail heading west from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh.<sup>2</sup>

The U.S. Secretary of the Treasury in 1808 reported that more capital had been invested on turnpikes in New York than in any other state, 900 miles of road having already been built by 67 companies. A chain of turnpikes extended from Albany to Buffalo.

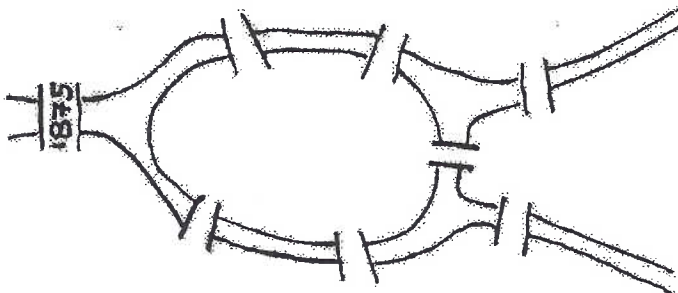
In building turnpikes the penchant was for the straightest line between two points, a principle favored by geometry and economy. Notorious in this regard was the Lancaster and Bolton Turnpike in Massachusetts. It was known as "Seven Bridge Road" - the 'straight line principle' disregarded watercourses as well as hills.<sup>3</sup>

The "Seven Bridges" motif was also present at the origins of topology. Koenigsberg (now Kaliningrad) was located at the junction of two branches of the Pregel (now Pregolya) River near where it emptied into the Baltic Sea. Just below the confluence of the branches lay an island which constituted one of the three settlements which had been joined in 1724 to form the city. Otherwise, seven bridges united the several parts of the city with itself and environs. Perambulating Koenigsbergers wondered whether a single course might be plotted to cross all seven bridges but once - this vexation of Koenigsberg captured the imagination of the



mathematician Leonhard Euler (working in St. Petersburg) because, though geographic in nature, it was not susceptible to resolution by the usual geometric methods based on measures of lengths and angles. It turned out to be an example of a class of problems - any number of bridges linking any number of regions - which could be resolved by the logic, rather than the measure, of number.

Figure 1: 1875 bridge added to an illustration of the seven other bridges of Koenigsberg from L. Euler's *Solutio Problematis ad Geometriam Situs Pertinentis*, 1736.



Euler published his elegant resolution in 1736: a course would have to cross two bridges - one upon entry and another upon exit - for each transit of any region, unless the region was either the origin or the end of the journey. Accordingly, at most two regions could be served by an odd number of bridges for there still to be a single course to cross each bridge but once. Koenigsberg's seven bridges were so arranged that all four regions were served by an odd number of bridges. Therefore no single course crossing each bridge but once could be found, at least not until an eighth bridge was installed in 1875 below the island, leaving only the island and the peninsula with an odd number of bridges, and commending them both as start and finish of an "Eulerian" path.

Euler also studied a complementary problem of finding, for any number of regions and bridges, or places and connecting roads, whether there was a course to be found that visited each region or place but once. The difference between the problems may be likened to the difference between the explorer and the traveler - the explorer who wishes to examine all possible routes, the traveler who wishes to visit all the places. But though the conditions for the "Eulerian" path could be stipulated for the explorer, there was no such straight forward text for the traveler's problem.<sup>4</sup>

Euler's work revealed an aspect of communications networks that could not be characterized by simple measures. The U.S. PMG's caveat in 1790, on the difficulty of calculating precisely the distribution of revenues and expenses, acknowledged the same problem. After 1799 the PMG was required: "...to report annually to Congress every post-road which shall not, after the second year from its establishment have produced one third of the expense of carrying the mail on the same."<sup>5</sup> While unproductive post routes were acknowledged to contribute to the vitality of the system, a threshold had to be established to balance the excess revenues from the prosperous centers in the Northeast against the expansion of the system into the South and West.

The first publication of such unproductive post roads, in 1804, revealed what accommodations were necessary in order to accomplish in practice what must be impossible in principle. First of all, the office at the head of the route was excluded from the calculation of revenues on a cross road. Moreover, to make allowance for the letters which were sent unpaid from one office on an unproductive route to provide revenues at offices on likely more productive routes, the net revenues were augmented.: "upon several calculations it has been found that on the average, the value of postages sent from a post office, where no newspaper is printed, is about 5/6 of the nett proceeds, which added to the nett proceeds, makes the whole value of the route."<sup>6</sup>

A clear indication of another kind, that the business of managing a communications network went beyond post roads and post offices, was the addition of a second and a third mail, then daily mails to accommodate

the increasing volumes of postal matter. Such improvements became sufficiently important that PMG McLean during the 1820s introduced the concept of mail transportation miles, combining the length of the post roads with the frequency of their performance, in arriving at an aggregate measure of postal progress. Once postal service had been extended to every village and the total length of post roads stabilized, further progress would be measured almost exclusively by increased frequency of service.<sup>7</sup>

After McLean, PMG's Barry and Kendall emphasized the model of 'efficient traveler,' not only to be able 'to get there from here' but also to be able to do so expeditiously and inexpensively.<sup>8</sup> Timing had always been a matter of concern in the management of the U.S. postal system. Section 6 of the organic act of 1794 directed the PMG "to contract for the conveyance of the mail...describing the place from and to which such mail is to be conveyed; the time at which it is to be made up; the day and hour at which it is to be delivered. Provided. No contract shall be entered into for a longer term than four years." But it was not until the 1825 edition of the Postal Laws & Regulations that postmasters were instructed "to report every failure of the mail...if a failure of the mail takes place, all the packets should be forwarded by the next trip." Prior to PMG McLean there had only been: "Whenever a contractor is negligent or guilty of misconduct, the post-master is to communicate the facts to this office. And in like manner whenever a contractor shall employ a driver or rider of a doubtful or bad character."

Evidently, with the growth of postal services, both in extent and intensity, failure of the mails joined bad behavior as a feature of the mail transportation to be monitored by the postmasters. PMG Barry was even more emphatic than McLean about the necessity of punctuality (he was doubling postal service almost exclusively by increasing the frequency of the mails): "Postmasters at the ends of routes, and at all places named in the schedule of contract, will report immediately every failure of the mail to arrive within ten minutes of the time specified...they can use no discretion in this matter. The report must be made in every case."

Selah R. Hobbie had become an Assistant under PMG Barry, responsible for the post offices and their masters and for "the examination of mail routes, in order to determine the location of new offices." Chief Clerk Obadiah H. Brown superintended the "office of mail contracts" whose business included "regulating and adjusting mail routes; the times of arrival and departure of mails, the frequency of their trips...arranging, preparing, and advertising mail routes...keeping a route book of all the mail routes and post offices thereon." Brown had long held these responsibilities but, when a Congressional examination into the affairs of the Post Office Department uncovered an excessive coziness with the mail contractors, Brown, and then Barry, were forced to resign in 1835. Amos Kendall was appointed to succeed Barry; Selah Hobbie assumed Obadiah Brown's responsibilities.

In his first annual report as PMG (1 Dec 1835) Amos Kendall had expatiated upon the principles of organization behind the technical details of the individual contracts for the carriage of the mails:

The multiplication of railroads will form a new era in the mail establishment. They must soon become the means by which the mails will be transported on most of the great lines of intercommunication; and the undersigned has devoted some attention to the devising of a system which shall render the change most useful to the country.

The cities and large towns on the great mail lines constitute centres from which the mails diverge to pervade and supply the surrounding country. At these points, generally, are the distributing post offices. The great whole will evidently be most speedily and effectually served by causing the mails to pass with all possible expedition, by night and by day, along the main lines through these numerous centres, stopping for no local object, and pausing at the distributing offices only long enough to exchange mails. The distribution through the country around must be made after the great mail has passed on by means of coaches, stages, or other vehicles, and horses, as the interest of the Department and the country may mutually require.

The first four year contract lettings (subsequent to the reorganization of the post office in 1836) - to run from July 1, 1837, to June 30, 1841 - were for New York and New England. New York's contracts numbered 501 to 880 - 380 routes covering 1,450 offices - plus another 93 special routes to supply offices

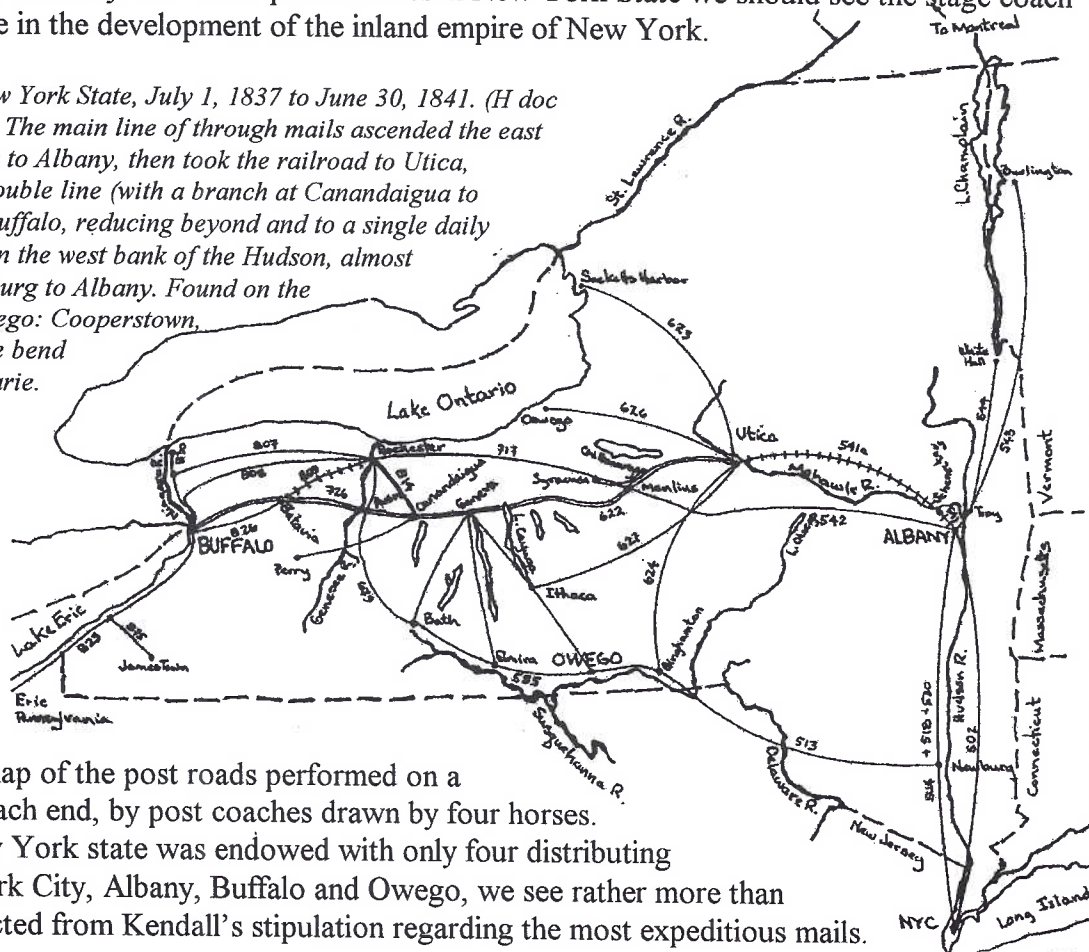


beyond the reach of the regular contracts, the payment for the transportation not to exceed the nett proceeds of the office served. 235 postal routes - 50% of the total - ran on a weekly basis. 65 ran twice weekly, and 100 thrice weekly. The 50 daily routes included those of the Great Mail Line referred to by PMG Kendall. Many of the small remainder, some 20 running daily except Sunday, were relics of what Richard John called "The Invasion of the Sacred." Sabbatarians objected to the Sunday workings of a public institution and in the late 1820s sustained for a short time an opposition "Pioneer Line" against the "Old Line Mail" through central New York. The "Pioneer Line" attempted to make up with speed what its schedule lacked in regularity: the "Old Line Mail" answered with its "Telegraph" coach line, running day and night.<sup>10</sup>

The weekly routes averaged 25 miles in length, the daily more than 50 miles, with those of intermediate frequency falling in proportion, length to frequency. This curious correlation of frequency with the length of the post route can be traced to the correlation of frequency with the increased bulk of the mails, with an increase in the proportion of transit to way mails along certain routes, with the longer hauls appropriate to such through mails, with the larger vehicles needed to haul these mails. The weekly routes were overwhelmingly performed on horseback, at a walking pace: one man, one horse, back and forth. The daily routes were performed by four horse post coaches in relays - getting a fresh team of horses every ten miles, a fresh driver every eight hours - and could be run continuously while the single horseman would succumb to exhaustion in a day.

As PMG Kendall indicated, the railroads would be enlisted to carry the mails, as had the steamboats. But whereas the steamboats were curtailed in New York State by winter ice and had to be supplemented on parallel routes by the post coaches, the railroads could run year around and so, for their increased speed and carrying capacity, would entirely supersede post coaches on the major routes. Stage coaching, which had had a glorious three decade ascendancy upon the turnpikes, was doomed to a quick decline; but if we focus on the winter schedule of the daily four horse post coaches in New York State we should see the stage coach at the zenith of its role in the development of the inland empire of New York.

Fig. 2: Daily mails of New York State, July 1, 1837 to June 30, 1841. (H doc 139 [25-2] 31 Jan 1838). The main line of through mails ascended the east bank of the Hudson River to Albany, then took the railroad to Utica, westward from which a double line (with a branch at Canandaigua to Rochester) stretched to Buffalo, reducing beyond and to a single daily mail to Erie. Catskill is on the west bank of the Hudson, almost 2/3 of the way from Newburg to Albany. Found on the southern end of Lake Otsego: Cooperstown, northeast of which, on the bend of the Mohawk, Canajoharie. Between them, Cherry Valley. Rome is on the Mohawk where it takes its easterly bearing. Salina is nearby Syracuse on track to Oswego.



Here we have a map of the post roads performed on a daily schedule from each end, by post coaches drawn by four horses. Considering that New York state was endowed with only four distributing post offices: New York City, Albany, Buffalo and Oswego, we see rather more than we should have expected from Kendall's stipulation regarding the most expeditious mails.

But once we begin examining the schedules for these routes we find that only a limited number of the contracts were to be performed so as to constitute a continuous line of communications day and night. These formed the main line.

Two daily routes ascended the Hudson River, on its east and west banks, but only the east bank's route ran through day and night from New York City to Albany, 152 miles in 34 hours. On the west bank, travelers and the mail spent the night in Newburg and Catskill and took twice the time, 68 hours, in reaching Albany. West from Albany, three railroads were already serving the central corridor - from Albany by Schenectady to Utica (contract routes #541 and 541a) and from Rochester to Batavia (809). The Old Line Mail ran (542) by the First and Third Great Western Turnpikes, from Albany to Cherry Valley and from Cherry Valley to Manlius on to Syracuse and Salina, where the salt wells were. At Manlius the "Cherry Valley Turnpike," as the Third Great Western Turnpike was called, intersected the Great Genessee Road, a state road that had been improved by the Lottery in 1797 to branch from the Mohawk River at old Fort Schuyler (Utica) to cross the top of the Finger Lakes and reach Canawagus (Avon) upon the Genessee River. This route was turnpiked (to provide for its maintenance) to Canadaigua - "The Seneca Turnpike" - in 1800 and, in 1805, was extended by the Ontario and Genessee Turnpike from Canadaigua to Black Rock on Lake Erie just north of Buffalo Creek (for which the city was later to be named).

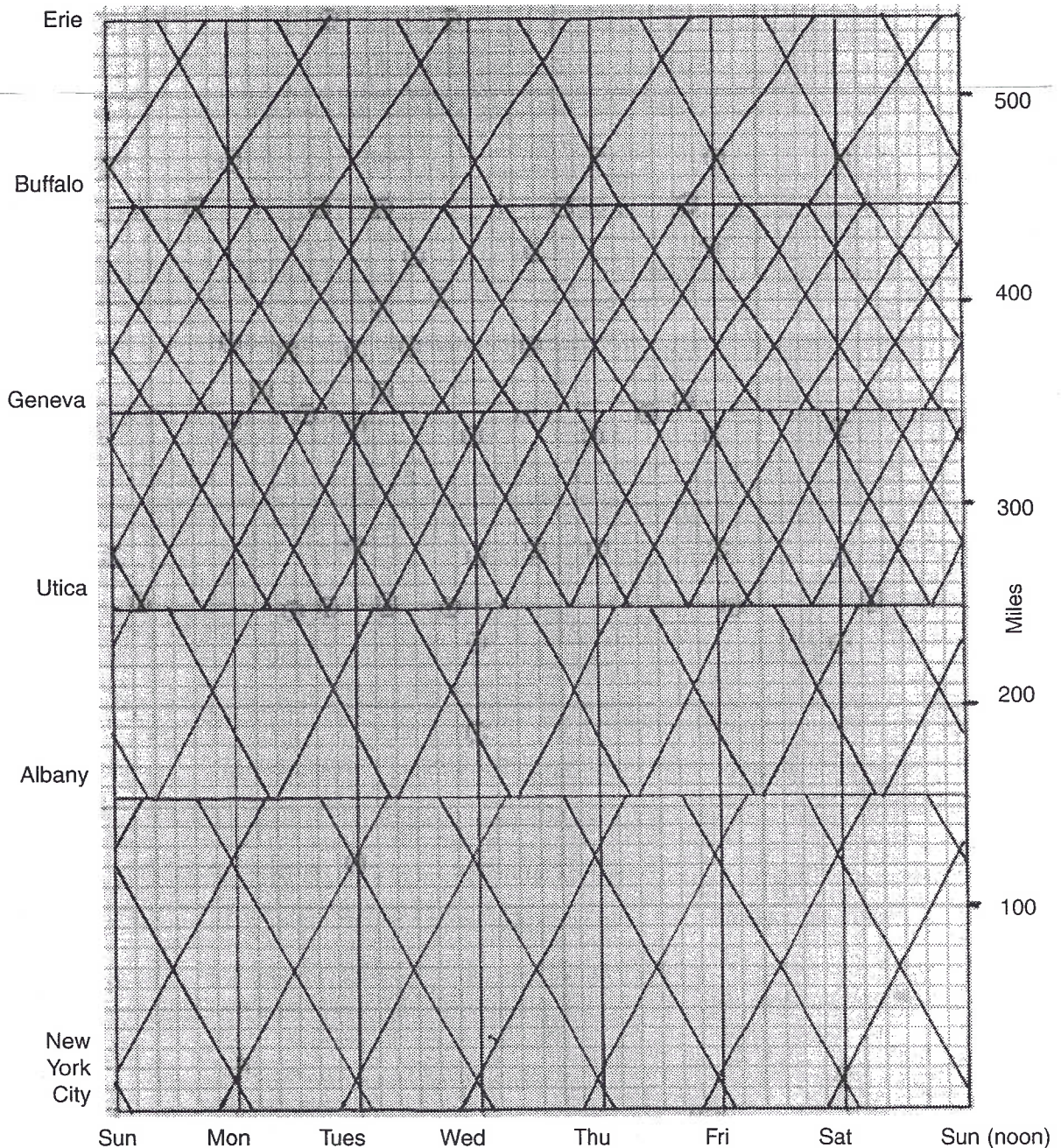
The Erie Canal paralleled the Mohawk River beyond Utica to Rome, where it had to change watersheds from the Mohawk to the Great Lakes. Both canal and river were paralleled by the railroad (541a) from Schenectady to Utica, and then by part of 626. Further west, 717 touched the canal at Syracuse and, from the Montezuma marshes above Lake Cayuga, paralleled the canal on the Montezuma Turnpike. Beyond Rochester to Lockport the canal towns were served by 808.

The main mail line, then, of day and night travel on through schedules, ascended the east bank of the Hudson to Albany (502) and followed the canal and railroad to Utica (541). By the track of turnpikes from Utica by Canadaigua (622) to Buffalo (726), a twice daily mail of through routes (morning and afternoon) was despatched from both termini. These twice daily schedules not only carried the bulk of the mail but also facilitated connections particularly for the daily mails branching at Geneva past the Finger Lakes (which drain into Lake Ontario) into the headwaters of the Susquehanna - the 'Southern Tier' of New York State. Here, too, turnpikes and stagecoach proprietors led the way. During these winter schedules, the mail by way of Newburg (513) and Owego (535) and Bath (679) to intersect the main mail line at Avon took 120 hours, 5 days - more than the main line mail took between New York City and Buffalo altogether. In the summer, however, with steamboats in operation, travelers and mail by the Southern Tier routes could intersect the main line just half a day behind the mails via Albany.

These arrangements for the daily transport of the mail in New York State disclose a sophisticated operational strategy for scheduling transportation facilities to serve national, regional and (by the remaining 400 contracts of less than daily frequency) local interests in communication. The speed of transportation was not yet of particular concern as long as the horse remained the source of power - route, timing, frequency and 24 hour days, for the main line mails, being the 'secret' to systematic achievement. Yet after its reorganization in 1836, the Post Office Department took, as its new logo, the galloping horse.<sup>11</sup> Horses did not gallop for the postal service. This icon may refer metaphorically to the speed either of an express rider or of the railroad which would soon serve, instead of the four horse post coaches, on the main line. Even so, systematic features which had already been established in the era of horse power would continue to be fundamental to network design, whatever the claims to speed of the vehicle.



# Winter Main Line: New York City to Albany, Buffalo, Erie



Whether moving from top to bottom or bottom to top, take diagonal path to the right.  
Upon reaching the right margin (noon Sunday) return to the left margin.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> "The Geography of a Postal History" Robert Dalton Harris, *PHJ* 102: Oct 95, p. 6 ff
- <sup>2</sup> Frederic J. Wood *The Turnpikes of New England*, Boston 1919. p. 11 ff
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169
- <sup>4</sup> N.L. Biggs, E.K. Lloyd, R.J. Wilson *Graph Theory 1736-1936*, Oxford 1976, p. 1-20
- <sup>5</sup> Section 30 of an Act to [re] establish the Post-Office of the United States
- <sup>6</sup> Hdoc (8-2) 4 Feb 1805
- <sup>7</sup> "Kentucky: The Mail Runs Through It" Robert Dalton Harris, *PHJ* 111: Oct 98, pp. 10-11
- <sup>8</sup> "Postal Network Design," Robert Dalton Harris with John Lange, *PHJ* 120: Oct 01, p. 8
- <sup>9</sup> Richard John *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse*, p. 169 ff
- <sup>10</sup> Richard F. Palmer *The 'Old Line Mail.' Stagecoach Days in Upstate New York*, 1977, p. 112 ff
- <sup>11</sup> "Post Office Department Seals" *P.S. A Quarterly Journal of Postal History*, 54, 54, 56 p. 8 ff



# POSTAL NETWORK DESIGN, 1830s

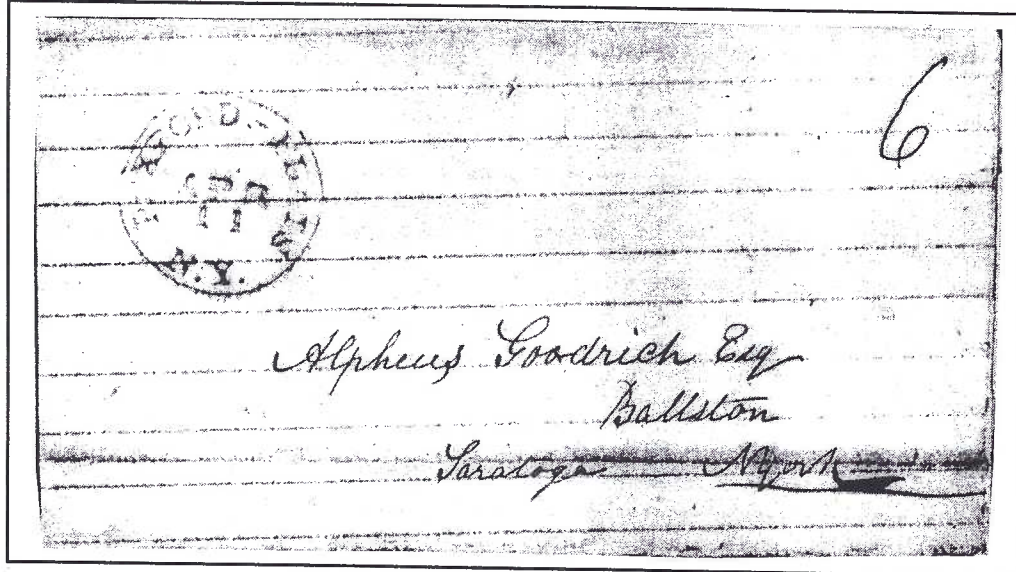
by Robert Dalton Harris, with John Lange

Four years ago, the Empire State Postal History Society gave John Lange its deLisle award for an exhibit tracing the schedule of postal routes serving the mail from Saratoga County to other parts of New York State. John has continued to explore this coordination of geographical and chronological relations, discerning (inside out) some of their larger patterns.

Two covers from John's collection, both posted in 1838 at Rexford Flats, illustrate the scope of these possibilities. Rexford Flats was a canal town established in 1825, located on the north side of the Mohawk River where the Erie Canal crossed by aqueduct. Today, there is a State Historical Site on the Schenectady side where a bridge now crosses the Mohawk.

The first cover was to travel north to Ballston, under 30 miles, for 6 cents collect. The date of the postmark, April 11, was a Wednesday and corresponds with the probable carriage of this letter on Route 608.

Route 608 was a 15-mile post road between Schenectady and Ballston to be traversed each way once a week: northbound to leave Schenectady at midnight on Wednesday arriving at Ballston by 6:00 a.m.; southbound to leave Ballston every Tuesday at 5 a.m. to arrive in Schenectady by 11 a.m.



Wednesday, April 11, 1838

28 mm. Dia.--Orange strike--6¢ Rate--for not over 30 mi.

## Postal Route No. 608

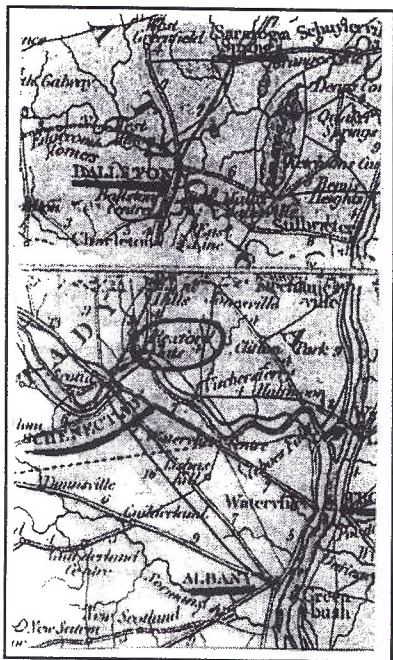
From Schenectady via one-horse carriage by Rexford Flats, Burnt Hills and South Ballston to Ballston, 15 miles and back, once a month.

Leave Schenectady every Wednesday at 12 midnight, arrive at Ballston same day by 6 a.m.

Contract with Thomas Stetts dated 18<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1837 to commence 9<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1837, to expire 30<sup>th</sup> June 1841

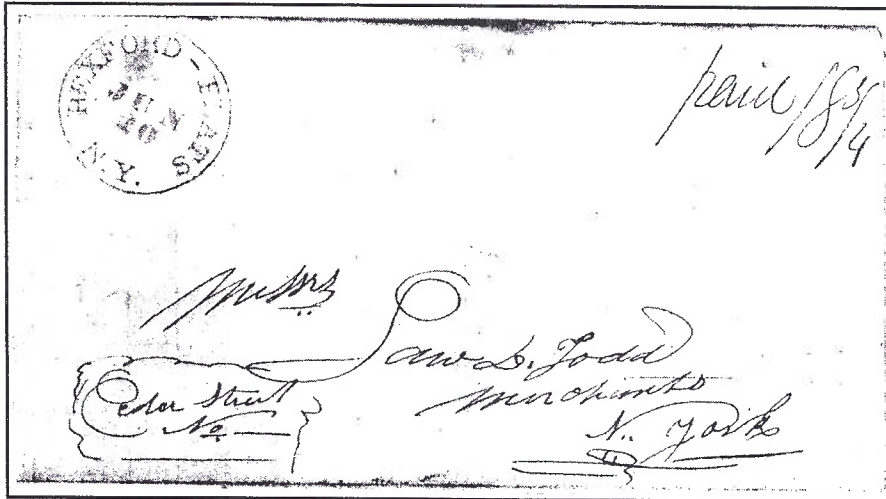
Source: *Postal Route Gazetteer, Part I, NYS, 1839*

(From exhibit page prepared by John Lange  
for an 1838 letter from Rexford Flats to Ballston.)





The next cover was also posted on a Wednesday - June 20 - but, though addressed to New York City (over 150 miles, 18 3/4 cents paid), was sent on the northbound leg of 608 to Ballston, there to connect with the southbound daily service by railroad cars between Saratoga Springs and Schenectady by way of Ballston, route 545. The train left Saratoga Springs every day at 10 a.m. and, making connection at Schenectady with route 541 via the Mohawk and Hudson Rail Road, arrived at Albany at 2:00 p.m. There it would be in time to catch the twice-daily service by steamboat between Troy and New York City, route 501. The night steamboat left Troy every day at 4:00 p.m., stopping by Albany, to arrive in New York the next day at 6:00 a.m. For this letter that would be the next day, June 21, when it was probably delivered by carrier on the orders of merchants Law & Todd on Cedar Street.



Letter from Rexford Flats  
to New York City.

*John Lange Collection*

John Lange's work is made possible largely by the publication, following the re-organization of the post office in 1836, of especially detailed reports on mail contracts giving full details of the times - as well as mode and frequency - for the departure and arrival of the mails at the termini of the post roads.

Total annual mail transportation had recently been doubled - mostly in terms of increased frequency on existing post roads. Too, steam power was providing new modes for the mail: steam boats and railroads to accommodate the increased product of the steam press-printed newspapers which comprised the bulk of the mail. And both of these developments must have challenged especially the celerity of the mails, making close connections over the several routes involved in transmitting letters from their origins to their destinations. Postmaster General W.T. Barry who had largely been responsible for the rapid growth of the annual transportation of the mail had explained in his annual report of 1834 his principle design and motive for handling the articulation of post roads:

The celerity of the mail should always be equal to the most rapid transition of the traveler; and that which shortens the time of communication, and facilitates the intercourse between distant places, is like bringing them nearer together. While it affords convenience to men of business, it tends to counteract local prejudices, by enlarging the sphere of acquaintance. It perpetuates existing friendships, and creates new ones, by which the bands of union are strengthened and the happiness of society promoted. These considerations have always had their full weight upon my mind in making improvements in mail operations.

After postal reorganization, PMG Amos Kendall reiterated this principle in his annual report of 1839:

Experience has proved that travel is increased in proportion to the reduction of its cost...By running in connection with each other, and enabling travelers to proceed on their way by night as well as by day, they

save tavern bills to the traveler, and greatly reduce his expenses. A great increase of travel is the certain consequence. In this close connection, therefore, consists their highest interest. All railroads in connection with each other will ultimately find their profit in considering themselves parts of one system, in submitting to the inconveniences of their respective positions, and in so arranging their hours of running as to make connected traveling lines, and not impose on travelers the necessity of stopping at intermediate points in their journey. And it is this close connection, most favorable to railroads in reference to travel, which the Department requires for the transmission of the mails.

Kendall had engaged S.R. Hobbie as first Assistant Postmaster General, to oversee the details of transporting the mails, as described in his annual report of 1836:

...the duties of arranging the connexions of the mails on all mail routes, adjusting the speed of the mails, fixing on the frequency of their trips and the mode of conveyance...fixing on the location of distributing post offices, directing the course of distribution...performing all acts appertaining to post roads which are necessary to put the mails in motion, and regulate their conveyance, speed, and connexion. (PMG Report 1836).

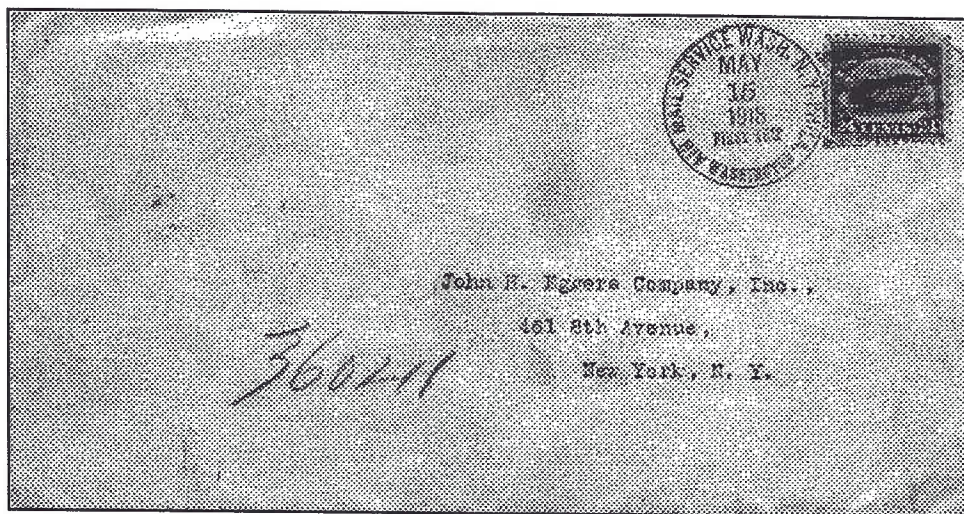
So we are to understand that the patterning of the post roads must be credited to design as well as circumstances. Indeed, the first new block of 4-year contracts (New York and the New England States) for mail service under the re-organized department and with Hobbie as 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant were reported and printed with a cross indexing of post roads representing the whole of the numbered series of the contracts for New York State (the hinterland of the City) as a nested hierarchy of branching structures with intervals for the radial service of local centers. Today this would be a text book example for the design of a transportation network. But the textbook history of transportation network design finds theory beginning twenty years after Hobbie's seminal work, application, fifty years after. In other words, the U.S. postal system has been ignored as the historical proving ground for the design of modern transportation networks.



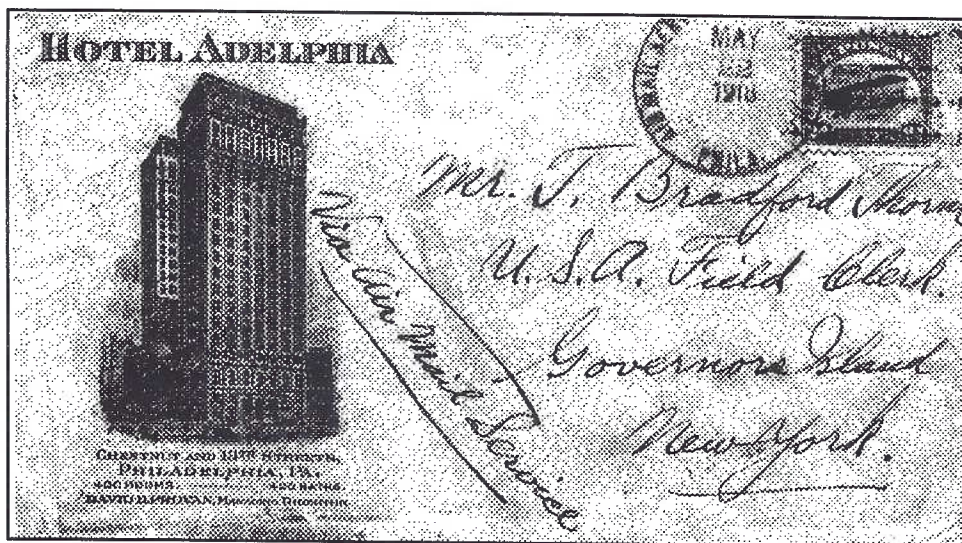
# AIR MAIL COVERS FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD OF THE UNITED STATES AIR MAIL SERVICE

by Martin Margulis  
Austin, Texas

What follows are eleven covers from 1918 through 1920 of air mail covers from the earliest period of the United States air mail service. They are all from the period of when the government ran the air mail.



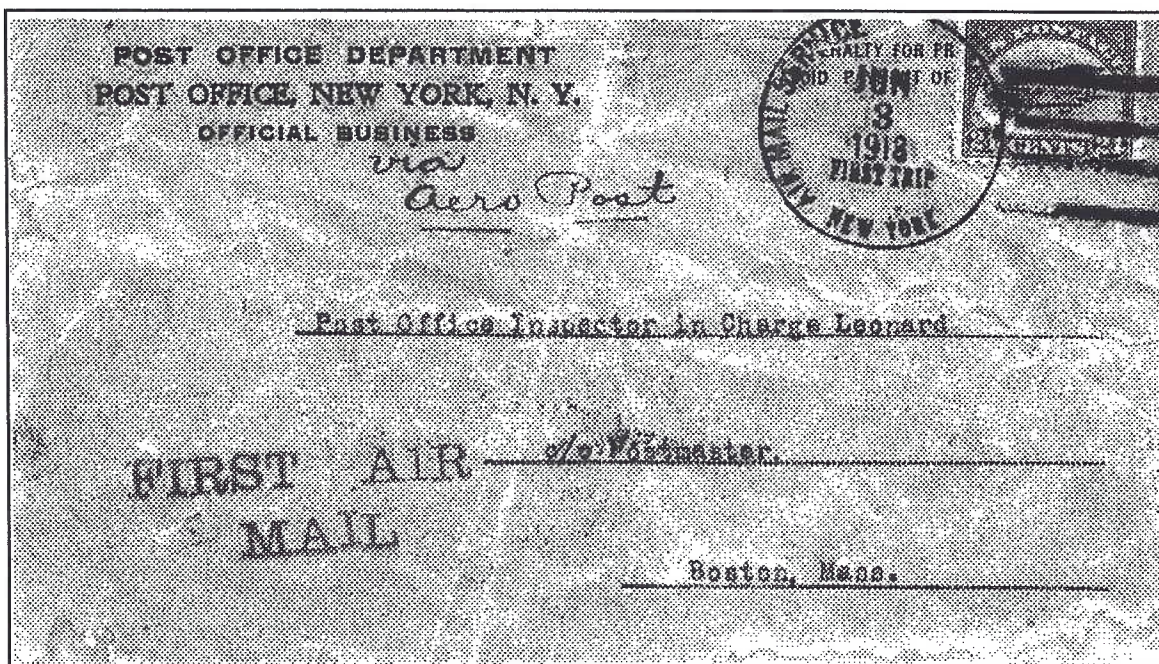
This was the first regular scheduled airmail route. The cost was 24 cents (Scott #C3), which included special delivery service (AAMA #101A). The service was one day faster than mail by train. This service was run by the United States government.



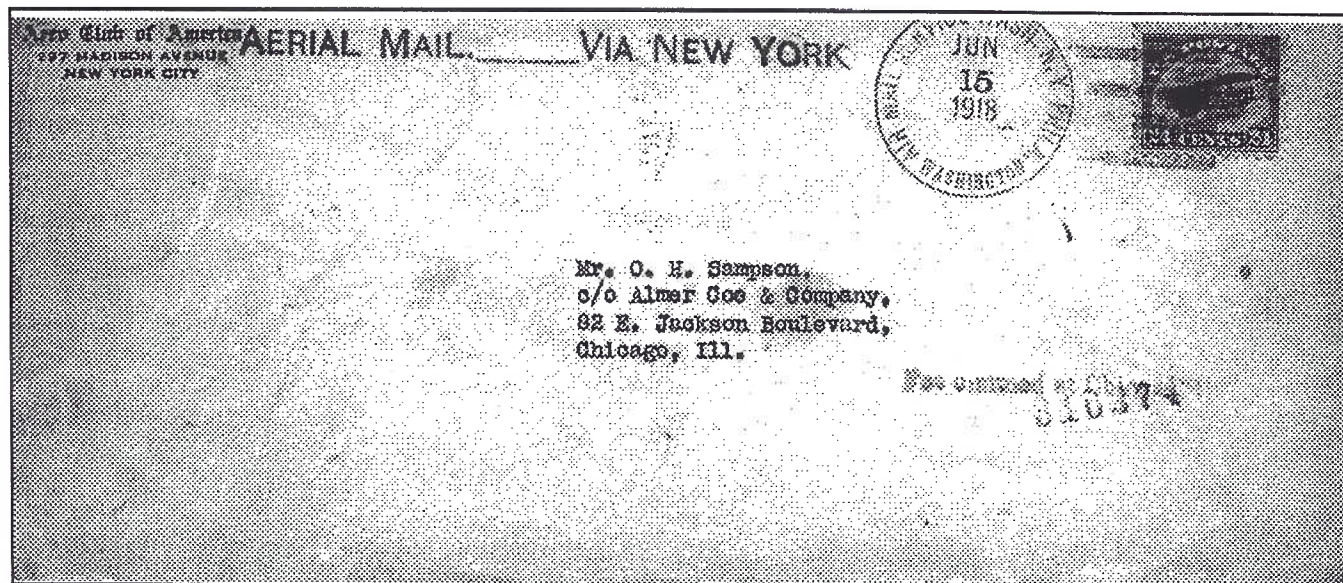
This cover is from the second day of service on the Washington, Philadelphia, New York airmail route. It is going to a clerk on Governor's Island in New York. There is a N.Y. receiving mark of 10 PM on the rear of the envelope. Illegible stamping front and rear of envelope.



On June 3 this experimental service between New York City and Boston was flown (AAMA-104). In actual fact, the first successful attempt was made on June 6<sup>th</sup> by Lt. Torey H. Webb. Backstamped Boston June 6 - 4:30 P.M. 1918 - Mass.

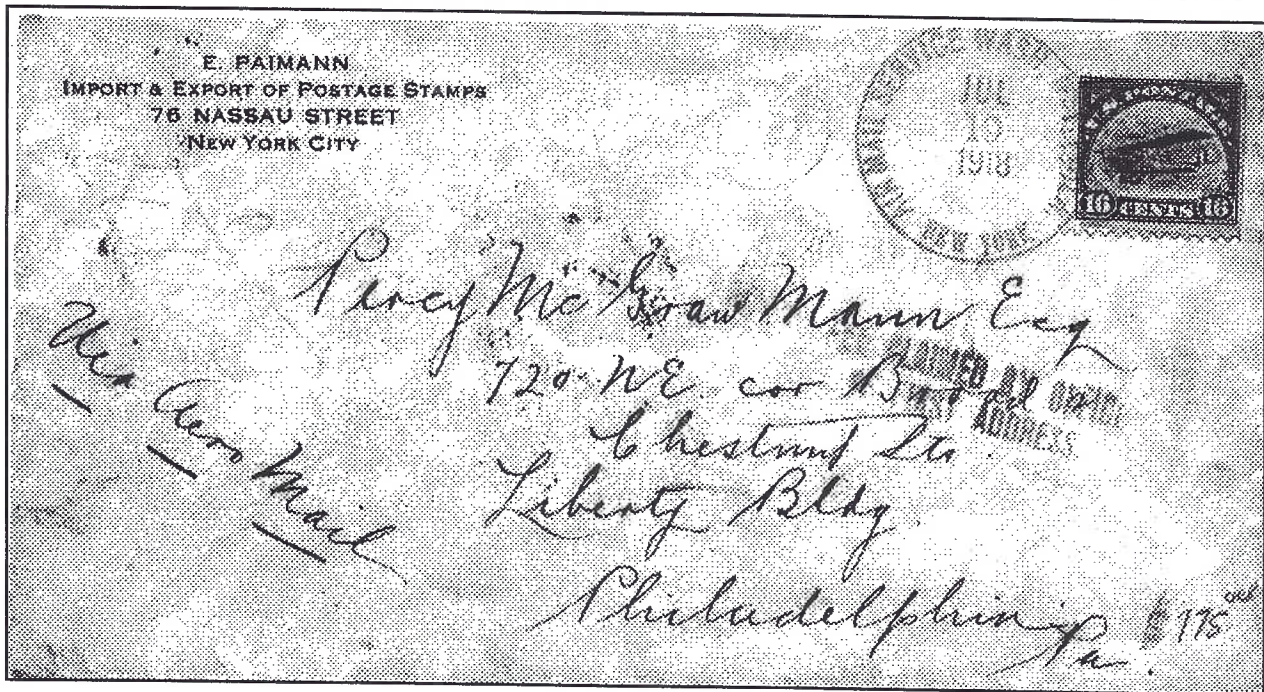


This cover is back stamped Philadelphia Transit so it may have originated in Washington. It would then have been put on a train to Chicago as the New York to Chicago flights did not start until September 1918.

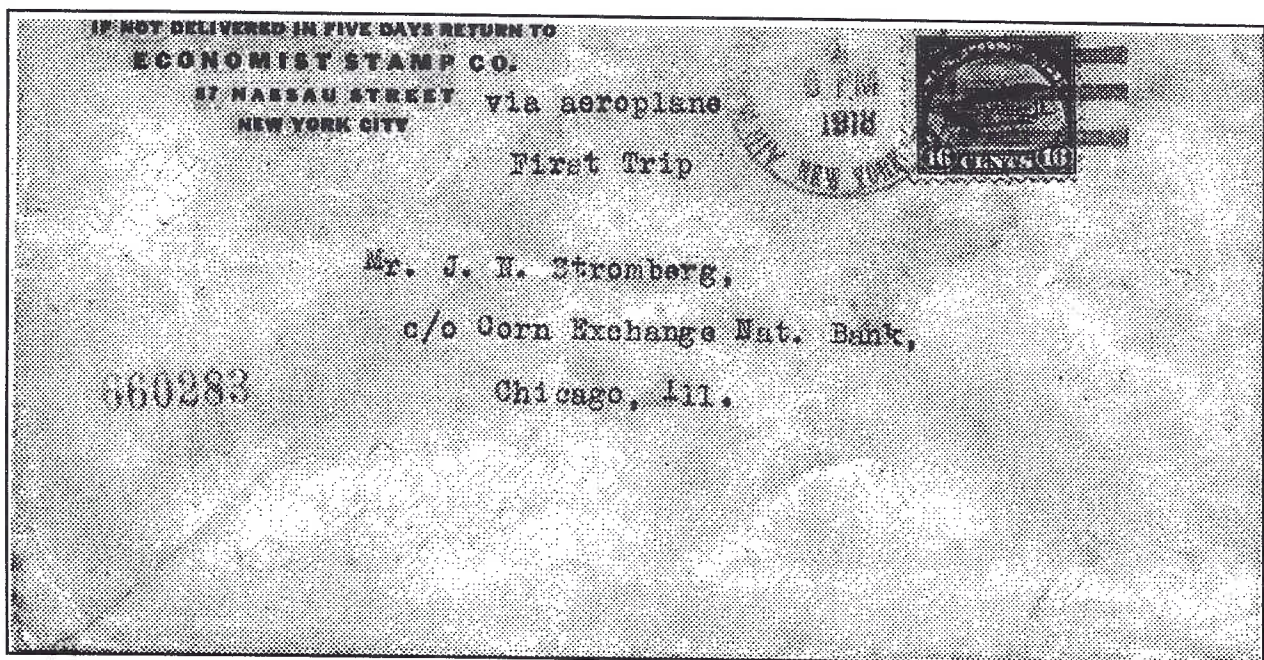




By July it was apparent that the twenty-four cent rate was too high. The sixteen cent rate covering airmail and special delivery took its place. The first flight as per the Scott Specialized Catalogue was July 15<sup>th</sup>, so this is an early cover.

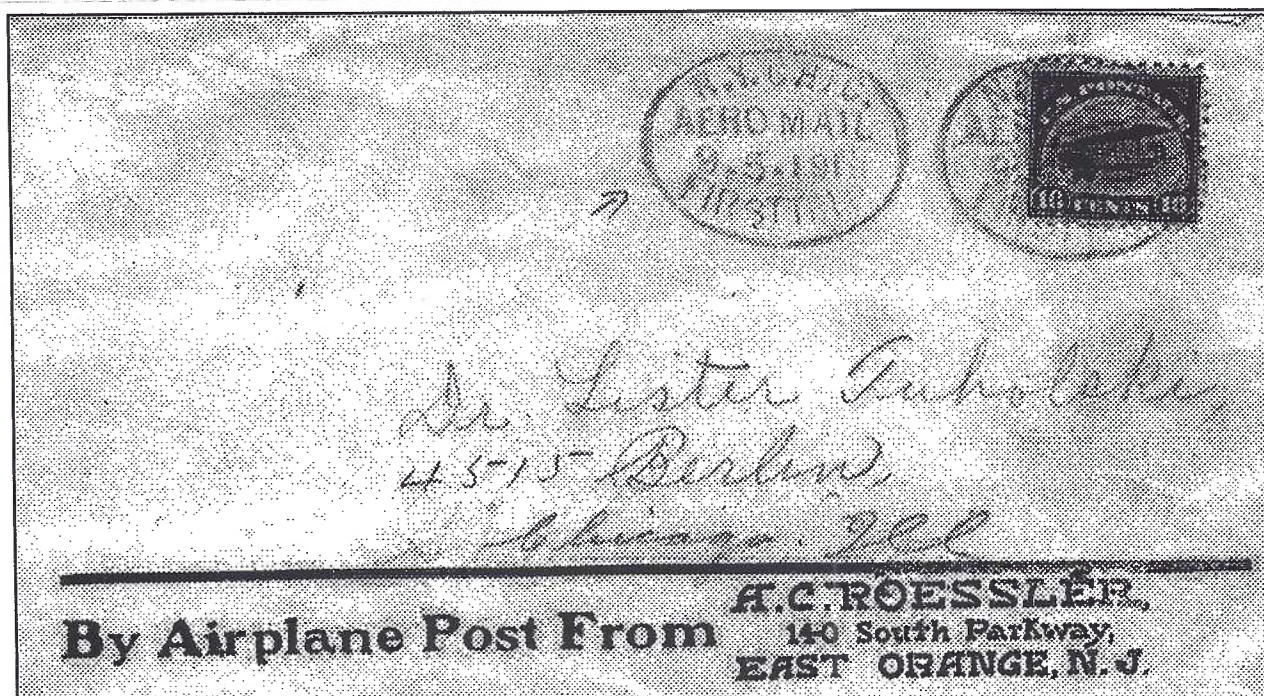


An Interrupted Flight cover. The plane was forced down and could not be repaired immediately so the cover was put on a train to Chicago and was backstamped received Sep. 6 8 PM. There is also a Mail Delayed 6 Train Late backstamp. This was one of two flights to Chicago. There should have been a four line oval stamp but there isn't. It is a first flight cover.





New York to Chicago was a pathfinding trip. The charge was sixteen cents, and stopped at Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, Bryan, Ohio and Cleveland, Ohio en route to Chicago (AAMA #108).

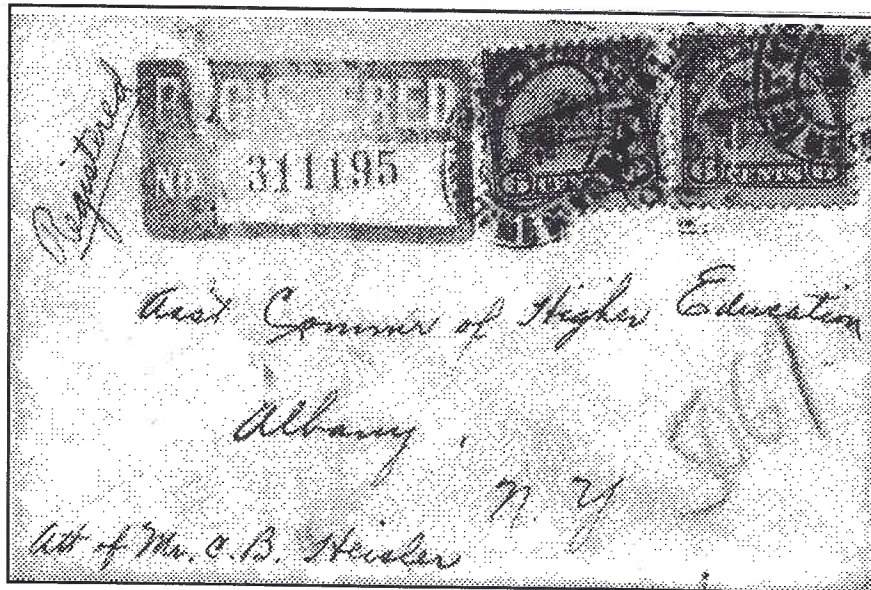


This is a second day cover at the six cent rate. The first day was the sixteenth. This cover was misdirected.

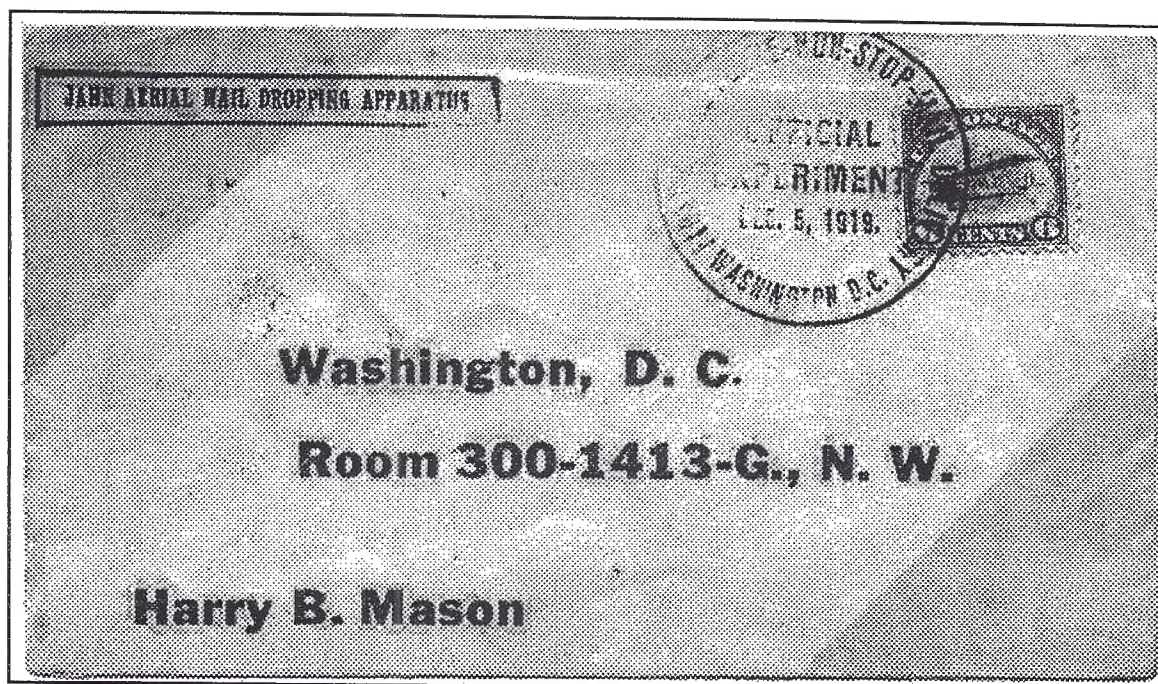




This cover, a registered letter, is paid for by two six-cent airmail stamps, ten cents for the registration fee and the rest for general postage New York to Albany. Regular airmail service between the two cities was a year away.

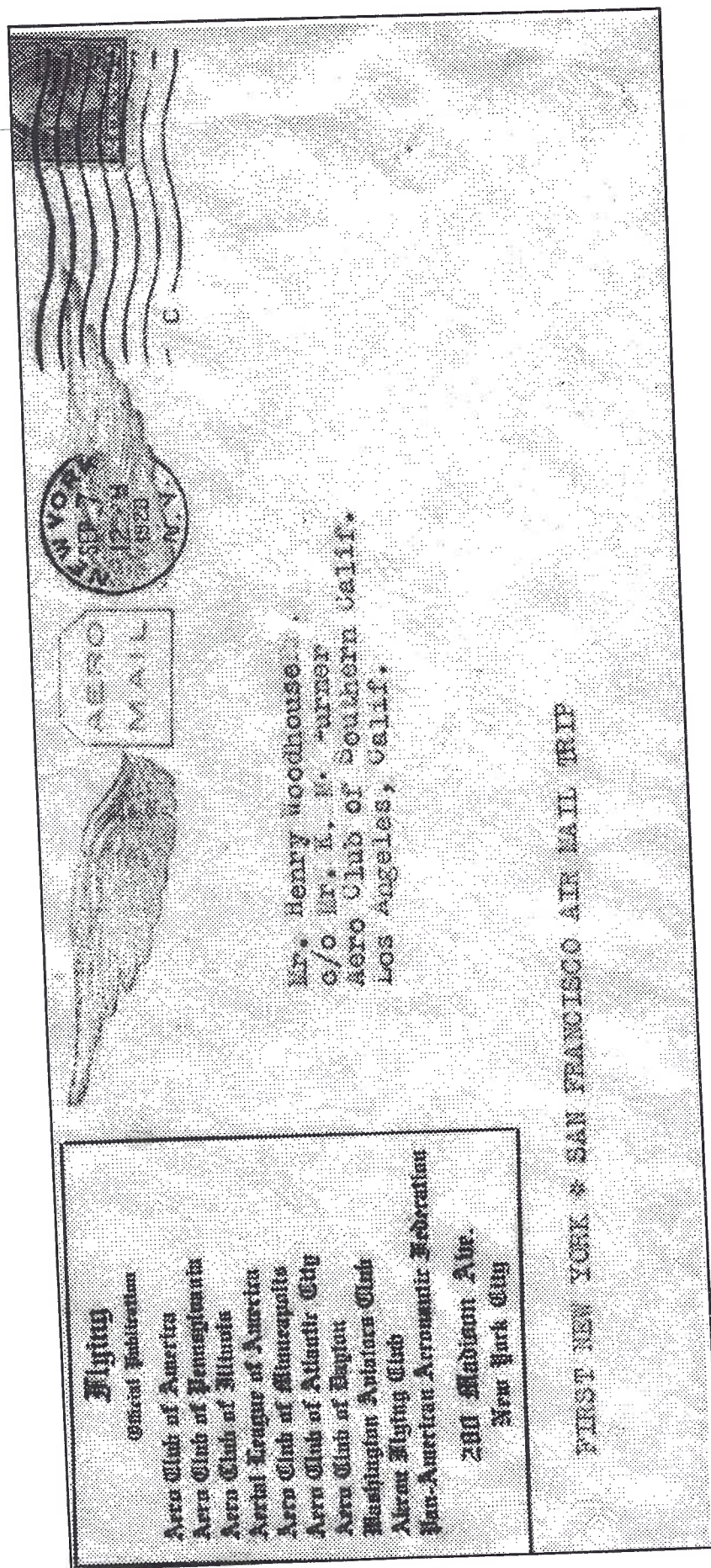


This cover "commemorates" an experiment in dropping, parachuting, airmail packages from an airmail plane to the ground without the plane landing. Nothing came of it. The experiment took place on the Capitol grounds. Backstamp.





This cover is a FFC from New York to San Francisco and then on to Los Angeles with many stops in between. However, the cover has no receiving postmarks on it.





### **MANUSCRIPT DATA STILL NEEDED!**

Just because the Master Supplement has been published doesn't mean that there is no more work to be done. Please look over your copy (what do you mean, you haven't ordered one yet?) and send new towns, dates, or corrections to the editor. If you have suggestions about forms, they will be considered for the next edition. **WE URGENTLY NEED DATA ABOUT MULTI-COUNTY OFFICES!** Your contribution is appreciated.

*Send Data To:*

Douglas Penwell  
P.O. Box 3525  
Glendale, AZ 85311-3525  
(623) 931-5741

## WANTED: SARATOGA COUNTY, NY

*Better grade stampless covers wanted for exhibition purposes from these towns:*

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*Send on approval or a photocopy with price to:*

**John A. Lange Jr.**

373 Root Road  
Ballston Spa, NY 12020  
(513) 882-6373

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## WANTED — EXHIBIT LEVEL COVERS

- A. Covers to or from Post Offices in Staten Island
- B. New York City, pre-1900
- C. NYC/NYS airmail covers, pre-1946 (no FF covers please)
- D. Pacqueboat covers from or to New York City
- E. Ship Covers from or to Central or South America to, from or through NYC
- F. Covers to or from Austin, Texas

*Please send photostats of covers with price wanted*  
DO NOT SEND ACTUAL COVERS

**Martin Margulis**

4159 Steck #113  
Austin, TX 78759-8511

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