

The United States Reference Manual

The First Postage Stamps Used in the United States



Sc. 40L1

6LB1

6LB7

9X1

1

L01

As the title suggests, this Reference Manual section does not refer only to the 1847 General Issue. Instead, it is an attempt to put that issue in perspective, along with other issues of that era that were created to evidence payment of postage.

These excerpts from a summary at Wikipedia will be a good place to start:

The introduction of postage stamps in the UK in May 1840 was received with great interest in the United States...however, it would be private enterprise that brought stamps to the U.S.

On February 1, 1842 a new carrier service called “City Despatch Post” began operations in New York City, introducing the first adhesive postage stamp ever produced in the western hemisphere, which it required its clients to use for all mail. This stamp was a 3¢ issue bearing a rather amateurish drawing of George Washington, printed from line engraved plates in sheets of 42 images.

Alexander M. Greig was advertised as the post’s “agent,” and as a result, historians and philatelists have tended to refer to the firm simply as “Greig’s City Despatch Post,” making no mention of [the company founder, Henry Thomas Windsor.] In another innovation, the company placed mail-collection boxes around the city for the convenience of its customers.

A few months after its founding, the City Despatch Post was sold to the U.S. Government, which renamed it the “United States City Despatch Post.” The government began operation of this local post on August 16, 1842, under an Act of Congress of some years earlier that authorized local delivery. Greig, retained by the Post Office to run the service, kept the firm’s original Washington stamp in use, but soon had its lettering altered to reflect the name change. In its revised form, this issue accordingly became the first postage stamp produced under the auspices of a government in the western hemisphere.

An Act of Congress of March 3, 1845 (effective July 1, 1845), established uniform (and mostly reduced) postal rates throughout the nation, with a uniform rate of five cents for distances under 300 miles and ten cents for distances between 300 and 3000 miles.

However, Congress did not authorize the production of stamps for nationwide use until 1847; still, postmasters realized that standard rates now made it feasible to produce and sell ‘provisional’ issues for prepayment of uniform postal fees, and printed these in bulk. Such provisionals included both prepaid envelopes and stamps....

Eleven cities printed provisional stamps in 1845 and 1846:

- Alexandria, Virginia
- Annapolis, Maryland
- Baltimore, Maryland



What some collectors regard as the first U.S. postage stamp, Sc. 6LB1, on its August 16, 1842 First Day of Use.

- Boscawen, New Hampshire
- Brattleboro, Vermont
- Lockport, New York
- Millbury, Massachusetts
- New Haven, Connecticut
- New York, New York
- Providence, Rhode Island
- St. Louis, Missouri

The 1845 Congressional act did, in fact, raise the rate on one significant class of mail: the so-called “drop letter”, i. e., a letter delivered from the same post office that collected it. Previously one cent, the drop letter rate became two cents.

The first stamp issues authorized by an act of Congress were approved on March 3, 1847 [for use beginning July 1, 1847]. The earliest known use of the Franklin 5¢ is July 7, 1847, while the earliest known use of the Washington 10¢ is July 2, 1847. Remaining in postal circulation for only a few years, these issues were declared invalid for postage on July 1, 1851....

The use of stamps was optional: letters could still be sent requiring payment of postage on delivery. Indeed, the post office did not issue any 2-cent value for prepaying drop letters in 1847, and these continued to be handled as they had been....

The post office had become so efficient by 1851 that Congress was able to reduce the common rate to three cents...necessitating a new issue of stamps. Moreover, the common rate now applied to letters carried up to 3,000 miles. This rate, however, only applied to prepaid mail: a letter sent without a stamp still cost the recipient five cents—clear evidence that Congress envisioned making stamp use mandatory in the future (it did so in 1855).

The 1-cent drop-letter rate was also restored, and Post Office plans did not at first include a stamp for it; later, however, an essay for a 6-cent Franklin double-weight stamp was converted into a drop-letter value. Along with this 1¢ stamp, the post office initially issued only two additional denominations in the series of 1851: 3¢ and 12¢, the three stamps going on sale that July and August. Since the 1847 stamps no longer conformed to any postal rate, they were declared invalid after short period during which the public could exchange old stamps for new ones.

[We should also point out that the Wikipedia summary does not mention that when the 1851 stamps were issued in three denominations—1¢, 3¢ and 12¢—the Post Office also created a special “Carrier Stamp”, the non-denominated (1¢) Franklin Carrier, with Franklin facing left to distinguish it from the postage stamp on which he faces right. We will return to this subject when we get to the Official Carrier.]

Early Postage.Intro.001
Published 042321

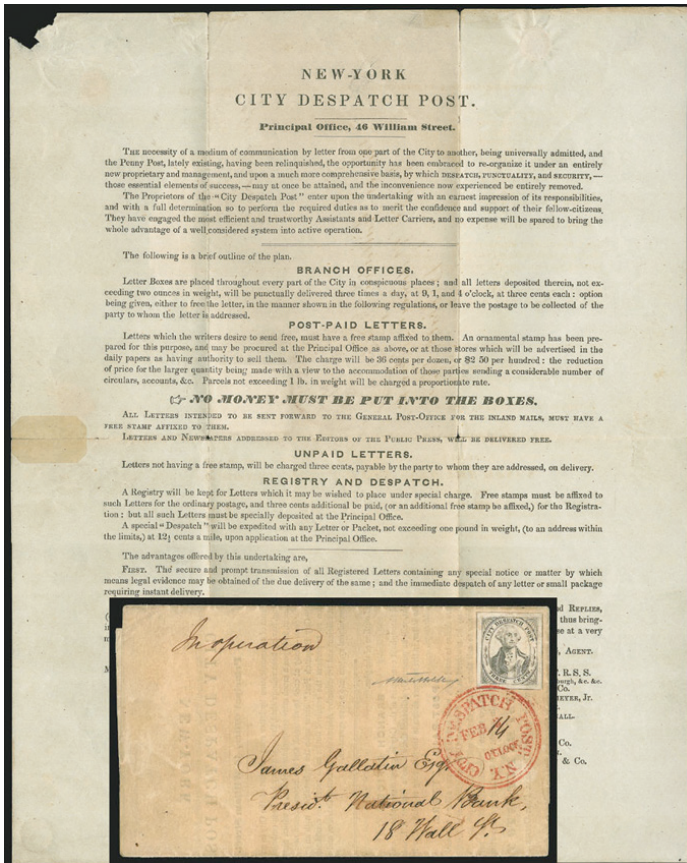
The United States Reference Manual

The 1842 Greig's City Despatch Post Issue



To New York belongs the high honor of placing the first postage stamp in the United States, and the second in the world, into actual use. This first postage stamp was known as the City Despatch Post, which was established in New York City on February 1, 1842, by Alexander M. Greig (photo, left).

In August of that year, Mr. Greig's postal service was taken over by the Government and renamed the United States City Despatch, and Mr. Greig was given the position of letter carrier.



(Greig) City Despatch Post, New York N.Y., 3c Black on Grayish (40L1) tied by deep red "City Despatch Post N.Y. Feb. 3 - O'Clock" (1842) Type I double-line circular datestamp with manuscript "14" date change, the stamp affixed to the printed advertisement for the City Despatch Post, describing services and listing names of patrons and stations operated by the post. One of four known stamped circulars, this one is addressed to James Gallatin, President of National Bank, 18 Wall Street, with sender's notation "In operation".

The history of this private enterprise begun one hundred years ago by Greig is an interesting one. Henry Thomas Windsor, a London merchant, was at that time on a visit to America. On his travels about the country, he was impressed with the inefficiency of our postal service, and, being very familiar with the English postal system, saw the possibilities of establishing a private postal service in New York.

Windsor had already formed the acquaintance of Greig, and, feeling that the venture would have better success under a well-known name, placed Greig at the head of it. Throughout the city, letter boxes were placed at various points where mail was delivered three times a day: at 9 a.m., 1 p.m. and 4 p.m.



One of only five known complete sheets of 42 of the (Greig's) City Despatch Post 3c black on grayish paper (Sc. 40L1).

City letters not exceeding 2 oz. each could be mailed for 3 cents. An option was given to "free" the letter, that is to postpay it, or senders could leave the postage to be collected on delivery. The service extended from the Battery to 23rd Street, the Principal Office being located on Williams Street, in lower Manhattan. One of its features, which is interesting to note, is that provision was made for registration and what amounted to special delivery.



Sc. 40L1 with framed "Free" handstamp



The City Despatch Post 3c black on grayish paper (Sc. 40L1), tied by deep red "Free" in frame, with matching "City Despatch Post N.Y. 6 Apr. 1 O'Clock" double-line circular datestamp on folded cover to the Episcopal Seminary on West 21st Street.

The City Despatch proved very successful in its modest way, and in time attracted the attention of the City Post Office Department—the revenue of which was doubtless reduced by its competitor. Mr. Windsor stated that the Government obliged him to discontinue it, and, on August 1, 1842, the Postmaster General took the City Despatch Post over, with all its equipment, and changed the name to the United States City Despatch Post. Mr. Greig was employed as the letter carrier and another person as clerk.

40L1.1

Published 042321

The United States Reference Manual

The First U.S. Postage Stamps, Sc.6LB1

by Elliott Perry (*From Mekeel's Weekly, March 30, 1918, with images added*)

The First "United States City Despatch Post" Issue By Elliott Perry, from Mekeel's Weekly, March 30, 1918

(*Events Leading Up to the First Postage Stamps Issued in the U.S.*)

Collectors of United States postage stamps have often wondered that so long a time should have elapsed between May, 1840, when the first adhesive labels for the prepayment of postage were issued in England, and August, 1847, when the 5¢ and 10¢ postage stamps of the United States first went into use. This delay of over seven years in adopting a system so remarkably efficient that it soon spread to nearly every corner of the world inhabited by civilized man and for many years has been universal, has usually been charged to lack of enterprise or excessive conservatism on the part of the postal authorities of the United States—a thing surely to be wondered at in a country where the spirit of enterprise is credited with having accomplished so much in other directions.

Among the early reports of the Postmaster General there are to be found several documents which the writer of this article believes tend strongly to show that the attitude of the Post Office Department toward greater postal efficiency and even toward the introduction of postage stamps during that period was not at all that which has been widely accepted, and that the delay in beginning the general use of postage stamps in this country was due in great measure to entirely different causes.

The report of Postmaster General John M. Niles for the year 1840 contains a lengthy and most comprehensive report dated November, 1840, from Geo. Plitt, a special agent of the Post Office Department, who had been abroad investigating the workings of the European postal systems, and in particular, those of England and France. Among other recommendations, Plitt's report suggested the postage rates in the United States be reduced to 5¢ per 1/2 oz. under 500 miles, if prepaid; 10¢ per 1/2 oz. over 500 miles, if prepaid, and that letters not prepaid should be charged double these rates. He also suggested that,

"For the convenience of the public, small cards, prepared for the purpose, of an adhesive nature, to be affixed upon the face of the letter mailed, of the denomination of 5¢ and 10¢ each, might be issued by the department, and sold at all post offices, which would be evidence of the prepayment of postage."

From a careful study of these reports it is quite evident the postal authorities of the United States were keenly alive to what was going on abroad and were closely watching the developments which followed the reduction of postage rates in Great Britain. They were well aware of the marked difference between the conditions there, where the population was comparatively dense, and in America, where there were fewer people and these were far more widely scattered, and undoubtedly anticipated that if cheap postage did not succeed in England under the much more favorable conditions there, they could not hope to make it succeed here.

As proof that the United States postal authorities were not so lacking in enterprise as has been supposed, we find them within eighteen months making a trial under conditions most likely to be satisfactory. On May 31, 1842, an order was given which resulted in the issue of the first United States postage stamp in the city of New York a few weeks later.

In Luff's Postage Stamps of the United States, he states, "We cannot fail to observe that the Postmaster General exceeded his authority when he ordered the preparation of stamps, since that is the exclusive prerogative of Congress. It is possible that the 'stamps' to which he referred were the hand stamps used to cancel letters and indicate postage paid; in which case it was the Postmaster of New York who overstepped the limits of authority." Mr. Luff also states, "The stamps of the United States City Despatch Post were issued by the authority of the Postmaster General."

Granting Luff to be technically correct that the Postmaster General exceeded his authority, the facts remain that the stamps were issued with that official's knowledge and consent and unquestionably had the authority of the United States government behind them. The Act of Congress of March 3, 1847, expressly authorized the Postmaster General to prepare postage stamps and as the legality of Wickliffe's action appears to have passed unquestioned at the time we may infer the Act of 1847 was meant to legalize whatever stamps had been previously sanctioned by the Post Office Department as well as those to be issued after its passage. Had there been any necessity for inserting one, no doubt a retroactive clause to cover such stamps would have been included in the Act.

The history of the establishment of the United States City Despatch Post is given in the report of the Postmaster General for 1842. Such a wealth of detail is included, there remains little further to be said. The reader cannot fail to note that the "stamps" referred to were certainly the adhesive labels numbered 845 to 849 in the current standard catalog [U.S. City Despatch Post Carrier stamps, now Sc. 6LB1-6LB7. JFD.].

I quote as follows from the report of Postmaster-General C. A. Wickliffe, under date of December 3, 1842 :—

"In the month of August last, I caused to be established, and put into operation, a city despatch post for the city of New York, confined to the delivery, through the post office of that city, of the correspondence within its limits. I am gratified to know that its operations have proved highly satisfactory to the community, giving to the citizens a prompt and cheap medium of communication, the income of which will not only maintain the expenses of the establishment, but, in the course of time, promises a considerable addition to the revenue of the department. The report of the postmaster of New York upon this subject is submitted, in order that its details may be more generally known, and, when understood, I have little doubt that the other large cities of the Union will call for a similar establishment. Its usefulness has been fully tested in New York, by the saving of a heavy daily expense of money and time to the business community, in their city correspondence."

Report of Postmaster Graham.

"Post Office, N. Y., Nov. 24, 1842.

"Sir: In pursuance of your letter of the 16th instant, directing a detailed report of the operation of the United States City Despatch Post, established in the city of New York, in pursuance of your order of 31st of May last, I have the honor to report:

"That measures were immediately after its receipt, taken to possess myself of every information connected with the subject; and that, on the first day of August, I made an arrangement with Mr. Alexander M. Greig, then proprietor of the City Despatch Post established by himself, for particulars of which arrangement I beg leave to refer to a copy of my letter to you of July 21st last, hereto annexed (marked No. 1).

"On the 16th day of August, after devoting much time in organizing the system, a commencement was made with the United States City Despatch Post. Mr. Alexander M. Greig was appointed a letter carrier, and Mr. William Seymour, a clerk in the post office, at a salary of \$1,000 per annum, agreeably to your order dated the 31st of May, 1842. Mr. Greig having given the usual bond, the city was then divided into eight districts, and a carrier appointed to each, and the whole system adopted and carried out agreeably to a printed circular (marked No. 2) accompanying this report.

"Up to the time of the annexation of the city despatch post to the Department, the average number of city letters delivered was 437 per day. During the first month from that period they increased to an average

6LB1-7.1

Published 060121

The United States Reference Manual



A cover posted on the first day of the United States City Despatch Post. The magnified Aug 16 cancel date shows a number 9 being turned upside down to serve as a 6.

of 610 letters per day, and it has continued gradually to augment to an amount of 762 letters per day—thus showing an increase, in three months, of 17-1/2%, or 70% per annum, after deducting 250 letters per day, which had previously been delivered by the letter carriers of the post office.

“The limits of this city mail extend from the Battery to Twenty-second street, a distance of upwards of three miles, and from the East river to the Hudson, which, at some points, are distant from each other two miles and a quarter—comprehending an area, intersected by streets, amounting to 113 miles in extent. Within this extended range are 112 stations, at which boxes are placed in the most populous and eligible situations for the deposit of letters, among which all the principal hotels in the city are included, and where collectors of letters call at stated periods three times each day, receiving and transmitting to the post office all letters the said boxes contain, accompanied by a printed receipt for them, signed each time by the proprietors of the hotel or of the stores constituting the stations. The letters, being brought to the post office are examined with the receipt, stamped with the hour and day, and conveyed throughout the same space to the parties to whom they are addressed, in the same number of deliveries, thereby affording the public the greatest possible facilities in this rapid and frequent transmission of letters at three cents.

“For the accommodation of those who wish to transmit these letters postpaid, free stamps [overprinted stamp and cover, page 11] are prepared; and when purchased in numbers, are charged at \$2.50 per hundred. On letters bearing these stamps being received at the post office, the stamps are defaced in such a manner as to preclude the possibility of their being a second time used.

“A comparative statement is herewith sent (No. 3), showing that this great accommodation to the public has been established and carried on up to the present time, without additional expense to the Department, except the original boxes and fixtures incident thereto; and from the increase which has taken place in the number of letters, there is reasonable ground to believe that it will much extend itself, and become a source of revenue to the Department.

“In conclusion I would respectfully represent that this department of the public service is kept entirely separate from all others in the post office; and considering that it is yet in its infancy, and is the only one of the same kind on this side of the Atlantic Ocean, it has gone into operation without that experience, which under other circumstances, would have been easily obtained. Yet it has answered every purpose, in a manner satisfactory to myself, and to the great advantage of the community. It has awakened great public feeling and interest for its success, while it has received general encouragement and approbation, more particularly from the commercial portion of our citizens.

“Respectfully, your obedient servant,
John Lorimer Graham, Postmaster.
Hon. Charles A. Wickliffe.”

(Exhibit No. 1)

“Post Office, New York, July 21, 1842.

“Sir : Pursuant to the order given me by you, dated 31st May last, to establish a city despatch post, I have had same under advisement, with a view to possess myself of every information, that, when undertaken, it might produce the most satisfactory results to the Department and the public.

“On reference to the report of Mr. Plitt, I find that, in London, the twopenny post, as it is there called, is entirely separate from the general carriers delivery, while in Paris they are combined. It therefore became an object of great importance to examine closely into the exact nature of the manner in which the new system would operate in this city, and whether the London or Paris mode would be the best. At one time I was inclined to the latter, and so wrote you in a private letter. Since then, I have caused very minute investigation to be made, in consultation with some of our oldest carriers, and the opinion given me by those to whom I have intrusted it, together with their reasoning, has satisfied me that it will be much the most proper to adopt the London plan, and keep the general and despatch delivery entirely separate.

“With this view, I have examined into the present state of the city despatch post, now in operation as established by Alexander M. Greig, a gentleman of undoubted respectability and talent, and I have finally made an arrangement with him to appoint him a letter carrier, to buy of him, for the sum of \$1,300, all his fixtures and paraphernalia of every kind, and place the new business of a despatch post under his care, conjointly with Mr. William Seymour, who is also a gentleman of high respectability, whom I have employed as a clerk, at a salary of \$1,000 per annum, as directed by you, to superintend the whole concern.

“I have ascertained to my entire satisfaction, that, by uniting the business already built up by Mr. Greig with the penny letters received at the post office, now delivered by the regular mail carriers, a sufficient sum will be received to pay a considerable profit to the Department immediately. After deducting all expenses, we shall start with an income of about \$3,400 per annum, one-half of which will arise from the business already secured by Mr. Greig, as he has about an average of 450 letters per day.

“It will be necessary that I should have orders from the Department to pay, out of the general receipts of my office, the \$1,300 for the fixtures purchased of Mr. Greig, which is considerably under cost. In order to make them answer, it will be necessary somewhat to vary the name from that designated by you, and to call the new establishment the ‘United States City Despatch Post.’ By doing this, all the boxes, the stamps, etc., already in possession of Mr. Greig, can be used, by simply adding the words ‘United States’ to the stamps and to the labels on the boxes.

“This arrangement has been fully explained to General Eaton and Mr. Bridge, and is approved of by them. It will go into operation on the 1st of August, and I shall be happy, at your earliest convenience, to have your approval, which I cannot doubt will be at once accorded, as it will commence at once in its great accommodation to the public. The special messengers employed to carry out this plan will be approved of by me, and will give a reasonable sum as security for the faithful performance of their duty.

“Very respectfully yours,

“Postmaster General. John Lorimer Graham.

“Hon. Charles A. Wickliffe.”

Collectors who are familiar with the history of Greig’s City Despatch Post will recognize in Exhibit No. 2 an almost word for word copy of the original circular issued by Greig to announce the City Despatch Post [reproduced on page 11]:

The United States Reference Manual

(Exhibit No. 2.)

“UNITED STATES CITY DESPATCH POST Office, New York

“The Postmaster being desirous that all city letters, commonly being known by the name of penny letters, should have the advantage of the most rapid delivery, has ordered that a United States City Despatch Post should be established with three deliveries each day; with a view therefore, to put the same into immediate operation, the postmaster of this city has made an arrangement with Mr. Alexander M. Greig, the proprietor of the City Despatch Post, by which he discontinues the same, and surrenders the property, boxes, and arrangements, now in use by him to the Post Office Department. The postmaster has secured the service of Mr. Greig, in connexion with Mr. William Seymour, who will superintend this department. An additional number of sworn carriers have been employed to carry the city letters wholly independent of letters received by the mail. Notice is, therefore, hereby given that all letters placed in the boxes at the various stations, together with all city letters deposited either in the post office, or in the branch post office, will be under the charge of the department and will be received for rapid delivery at the hours mentioned below.

“Letters addressed to parties renting boxes at the upper and lower post offices, will be deposited in them as heretofore, unless a request is made that they be sent by the City Despatch Post.

“Stations—Letter boxes are placed at the stations mentioned on the other side, and all letters deposited therein, will be punctually delivered three times a day, (Sundays excepted) at three cents each; option being given, either to free the letter in the manner shown in the following regulations, or leave postage to be collected of the party to whom the letter is addressed.

“Post Paid Letters—Letters which the writers desire to send free, must have a free stamp affixed to them. An ornamental stamp has been prepared for that purpose, and may be procured at either of the post offices and all the stations. The charge will be 36 cents per dozen, or \$2.50 per hundred; the reduction of price for the larger quantity being made with a view to the accommodation of those parties sending a considerable number of circulars, accounts, etc.

“All letters intended to be sent forward to the General Post Office for the inland mails, must have a free stamp affixed to them.

“Unpaid Letters—Letters not having a free stamp will be charged three cents, payable by the party to whom they are addressed, on delivery.

“Letters and newspapers addressed to the editors of the public press, will be delivered free.

“Registry—No money must be put into the boxes, unless registered at the upper post office, where a registry will be kept for letters, which parties may wish to place under special charge. Free stamps must be affixed to such letters for the ordinary postage, and an additional free stamp must be affixed for the registration, but all such letters must be specially deposited at the principal office.

“The advantages offered by the plan are:—

“First. The secure and prompt transmission of all registered letters containing any special notice or matter by which means legal evidence may be obtained of the due delivery of the same, and the immediate despatch of any letter or small package requiring instant delivery.

“Secondly. The certain and expeditious delivery of mercantile letters and circulars, of invitations and replies (either under free stamp or unpaid), and every description of commercial, professional and social correspondence; thus bringing the most distant parts of the city in effect near to each other, and providing the means of constant intercourse at a very moderate charge.”

The list of stations given (and which concludes the letter) totals 101, so it is evident there were eleven added between the time the circular appeared and November 24, 1842, when Postmaster Graham states there were 112 stations in operation. It is of interest that the

station at No. 3 Wall Street was in the office of Harnden & Co., mail agents, who were pioneers in the mail and express business, and that the station at No. 266 Greenwich Street was in the drug store of James Tarrant, who probably established the business which, under the name of Tarrant & Co., was a large user of United States proprietary revenue stamps thirty years later.

(Exhibit No. 3)

“UNITED STATES CITY DESPATCH POST NEW YORK, Nov. 19, 1842.

“Agreeably to an order received from John Lorimer Graham, Esq., Postmaster, the undersigned lay before him a detailed statement of the business of this Department since the same come under the supervision of the Post Office, being one quarter of a year ending the 17th instant.

“The undersigned would, however, previously call the attention of the Postmaster to some facts connected with the system previous to its adoption by the Government, with a view of showing the very beneficial change that has taken place in the prospect of its permanent success.

“On the 1st February, of this year, the late ‘City Despatch Post’ went into operation under the superintendence of Alexander M. Greig, and continued to be conducted by him till 15th August, following. During that period, notwithstanding every means that could be devised, were taken (aided and encouraged by the public press), for the purpose of giving publicity to a system that had received the stamp of approbation from the most intelligent of the commercial community, the average number of letters for the last month previous to its passing into the hands of the government, was only 437 per diem.

“On the 16th August it became the property of this Department, and a month from that time the letters averaged 610 each day, which amount kept gradually increasing to the number of 763 letters per day, thus showing an increase of nearly ninety per cent. in three months.

“The system embraced in the public circular issued by this department, has been carried out in all its minute details to the fullest possible extent. The limits of this post extend from the Battery to Twenty-second Street, a distance of upward of three miles, reaching from the East River to the Hudson, for two miles and a quarter. Within this extended range are one hundred and twelve stations, placed in the most populous and eligible situations for the deposit of letters, at which collectors call three times at stated periods, each day, and receive and receipt for the number of letters taken from each station, which are brought to this office, whence they are again conveyed to their respective districts in three different deliveries, thereby affording the public the greatest possible facilities in the transmission of letters, at the cost of three cents each, while the introduction of the ‘free stamps’ as a means of prepaying letters, has been too highly extolled by the public press, as well as appreciated by the community generally, to render further comment necessary.

“The undersigned, in presenting the annexed statement, beg to intimate that it shows the results of the business of this Department from its commencement to the 19th instant, inclusive.

“Paid the U. S. Government, in full for 1 cent on each letter, amounting to 59,774 letters..... \$597.74
Less Mr. Wm. Seymour’s salary..... 250.00
Leaving a surplus of..... \$347.74
to go towards liquidating the cost of purchase, etc.

The undersigned take leave to tender to the Postmaster, their grateful acknowledgements for the kind aid he has at all times so promptly afforded them in furtherance of the business of this Department.

Alex M. Greig.
William Seymour.
John Lorimer Graham, Esq.
Postmaster, City of New York.

The United States Reference Manual

The First U.S. Postage Stamp

by Elliott Perry (From *Mekeel's Weekly*, September 14, 1918, with images added)

There is only one type of the United States City Despatch Post stamp. It is beautifully engraved on steel and closely copies the stamp of the City Despatch Post but the inscription in the oval band surrounding the portrait of Washington reads "United States City Despatch Post" and the ornament at either end of "Three Cents" is smaller and differently shaped.

Apparently it was printed on colored paper in order to distinguish it from Greig's stamp, and whatever paper happened to be at hand was used, for the paper varies widely both in texture and in color. The wove paper preceded that on which the printed surface is glazed and both varieties occur in shades and hues of green and blue.

[Scott 6LB1 through 6LB4 were printed on Unsurfaced Woved Paper that was colored throughout.]

Almost nothing is known about the pink, (rosy-buff), paper [Per Scott, "Some authorities consider No. 6LB2 an essay." JFD.] No used copy on this paper has been found and all known specimens are believed to have come from a small block of ten or perhaps twenty which came into the possession of J. W. Scott in the early '70s and was divided into single copies by him.

There is a possibility this paper was intended to designate official use. It is of the same quality as the blue and green wove. Both Luff and Needham give August 1, 1842 as the date when the United States City Despatch Post commenced operation and these authorities, with others, state that Greig's stamp was used as a United States carrier's stamp for a short time prior to the issue of the government stamp.

The local post stamp when cancelled with the government cancellations is listed as No. 844 [now Sc. 6LB1] in the standard catalog at the head of the New York carrier stamps, but its standing as a United States carrier stamp must depend largely upon the date when the United States Despatch Post commenced operation. The reports quoted above show conclusively that the plan was to commence operation August 1st and that owing to some cause there was a delay of fifteen days.

What was the cause of this delay? The present writer believes Rawdon, Wright & Hatch did not have the stamps ready by August 1st and that this was the principle cause of the delay. Neither Postmaster Graham nor anyone else in the Post Office at that time would be likely to have known much about the time required to engrave and print adhesive stamps and it would appear that the order to prepare the stamps was not given until about July 21, or after that date.

Graham's letter of July 21 reads as though he had not then ordered the stamps and was awaiting authority to do so. The order authorizing him to go ahead is dated August 1st and even if he anticipated the receipt of this order, the stamps could hardly have been ready much before August 16th.

All other arrangements necessary to change the City Despatch Post into a government carrier service were matters that could be



Left, Sc. 40L1, Greig's City Despatch Post first stamp, issued Feb. 1, 1842; right, Sc. 6LB2, "the First U.S. Postage Stamp", same design as Greig's, but with "United States" added, different ornaments, and on a shade of rose paper, issued Sept. 1, 1842. Per Scott, "Some authorities consider No. 6LB2 an essay."



The U.S. City Despatch Post, New York N.Y., 3¢ black on light blue unsurfaced paper, Sc. 6LB3. Because 6LB2 is not known used considered by some to have been an essay, this cover is regarded as the earliest documented usage of this 1842-45 issue. It was cancelled by an orange-red "U.S." in frame cancel and tied by a matching "U.S. City Despatch Post Sep. 1, 1 O'Clock" double-line circular datestamp.

adjusted quickly and without much trouble and it is quite evident Postmaster Graham expected the stamps could be prepared about as quickly as any ordinary printing job. He says, "—all the boxes, the stamps,



etc., already in possession of Mr. Greig, can be used, by simply adding the words 'United States' to the stamps and to the labels on the boxes." Doubtless he was surprised when he learned that to add the words "United States" to the stamps would necessitate making a new plate.

...Regarding the United States City Despatch Post stamps stated by Luff and others to have been used before August 16th, 1842, perhaps the saying, "one swallow doesn't make a summer", is applicable. Luff mentions one copy bearing the date August 5th, 1842. Few collectors would accept the evidence of a single copy against the official statements of Graham, Greig and Seymour, who were the persons in control of and most closely in touch with the post and the stamps, particularly when their statements are dated within such a short time after the post was established. The date and first sentence of [the reports quoted above] should satisfy anyone that the date of issue of the first United States postage stamp was August 16, 1842.

As with Scott 6LB2, there is a difference of opinion regarding the status of Scott 6LB4, photos, next page. Per Scott, "Some authorities consider...No. 6LB4 to be a color changeling."

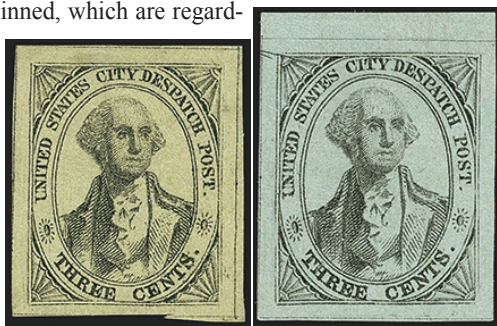
Nevertheless, Scott does list this issue, the primary listing being Black on Green paper, with the one listed variety being Black on Yellow Green paper.

In our previous viewing of the Hall Carriers and Locals Collection, which included the Green on Black, the Siegel Galleries Auctioneers explained, "The unsurfaced colored-through papers used for the first U.S. City Despatch Post stamps were Rosy Buff (4LB2), Light Blue (4LB3) and Green (4LB4). Approximately ten Rosy Buff stamps are known, all

6LB1-7.4

Published 050121

unused and most thinned, which are regarded as trial impressions on paper that was not regularly issued. The Light Blue paper was regularly issued and is the most common of the three (it is known used). The elusive Green paper—the true 6LB4—is evidently genuine... Only two examples are recorded, both unused without gum.... These are probably trial-color impressions, similar in status to the Rosy Buff.



Sc. 6LB4a: left, Apple Green; right, Green, 6LB4

The Three Cents Black on Blue Green Surface Glazed paper (Sc. 6LB5) not only is the most common of the United States City Dispatch Post Office issues, it also comes in a variety of shades. From our viewing of the Siegel Auction Galleries New Amsterdam City Despatch Post Collection, above is a sampling of shades, including moss green, green (2), blue green and greenish blue, and to the right is a rare shade, an



Apple Green variety of the Scott-listed Black on Green, Sc. 6LB5d, listed but not assigned its own minor letter.

Scott 6LB6, the Three Cents Black on Glazed Pink paper, is unique. It is seen here, described as Black on Pink Unglazed Surface Colored on a cover front dated April 7, (1843).... The datestamp is the double circle which was not in use after 1843.



As the source was a past edition of the Penny Post journal of the Carriers and Locals Society, and not an auction lot, the description did not mention the vertical file fold that runs through the stamp. Not for that reason, but in order to get a better look at the stamp, we show here a computer enhanced image.

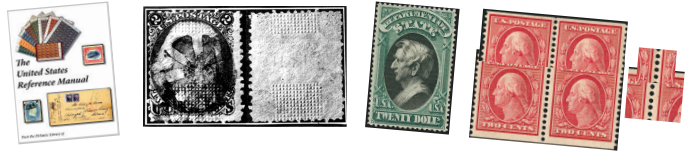


Sc. 6LB6

Continued, next page

6LB1-7.5
Published 050121

The U.S. Reference Manual!



The Washington-Franklin Heads "HOW TO TELL THEM APART" Study of The Washington-Franklin Heads:

- 58 FULL COLOR pages, covering Scott 331 // 547, with each denomination treated separately and in depth.....\$42.50
- Also available in black & white.....\$19.50
- Individual Issue Studies, including helpful identifiers, background information, earliest known and other covers, and more**
- The Washington-Franklins, Part 1, Sc. 331-366, 374-396
- 58 pages, in full color.....\$34.50
- Also available in black & white..... \$19.50
- The Washington-Franklins, Part 2, Sc. 405-461
- 58 pages, in full color.....\$34.50
- Also available in black & white.....\$19.50
- The Washington-Franklins, Part 3, Sc. 462-497, 519
- 45 pages, in full color.....\$31.50
- Also available in black & white.....\$17.50
- The Washington-Franklins, Part 4, Sc. 498 // 546
- 49 pages, in full color.....\$34.50
- Also available in black & white.....\$19.50

ALSO AVAILABLE:

THE FARLEYS, in Two Sets

Set 1: The Farleys and their Forerunners.

50 FULL COLOR pages, covering the stamps as originally issued, Scott 727-733, 734-751 & Sc. CE1 and the History & Background of the Farley issues, Sc. 752-771\$39.50

Set 2: Collecting the Farleys

41 pages with illustrations of the major collecting formats—gutters or line pairs, arrow and centerline/gutter blocks, plate blocks, pans, etc.—for each stamp (Sc. 752-771).

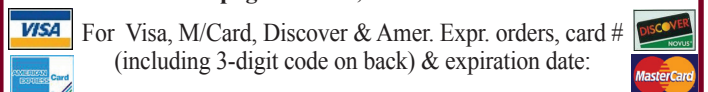
DELUXE SET 2 Full Color on card stock, printed on one side only that can be used to mount the Farley issues.....\$39.50
Standard set 2 in color on offset paper, printed on both sides...\$21.50

- The United States Grills, Sc. 79 // 144A. 20 information-packed black & white pages, with high definition photos—including fakes—based on the expertise of Wm. L. Stevenson & Lester G. Brookman..... \$12.00
- 1919-1932 Comems, black & white covering Sc. 537 // 715...\$11.50
- The Bank Notes Part 1 (Scott 134-191), 62 pages, with identifiers, secret mark illustrations, postal history and more..... \$16.50
- The Bank Notes Part 2 (Sc. 205-29, 246-53) 54 pages, with identifiers, secret mark illustrations, postal history and more...\$16.50
- The Columbians & Trans-Mississippi
79 pages, an in-depth study of both popular issues.....\$19.50
- U.S. Provisionals, Airs, Back-of-Book
64 pages, including Provisionals in depth, some early airs, Locals, Postage Dues, and Offices in China.....\$15.50
- The Officials

27 full color descriptive pages covering all the Officials including the Special Printings.....\$21.50

The 27 descriptive pages above, PLUS 15 pages picturing in full color each Department Set on card stock on which you can mount your stamps.....\$26.50

• **FOR YOUR PAGES: A personalized 2" Reference Manual ring binder with your name on the front cover! (Please print your name) With an order for pages...\$9.50; Alone...\$14.00**



For Visa, M/Card, Discover & Amer. Expr. orders, card # (including 3-digit code on back) & expiration date:

Send Check, Money Order, or Charge Card Data to:
Stamp News, 42 Sentry Way, Merrimack, NH 03054
phone 603-424-7556, fax 800-977-7550, subs@stampnewsnow.com

PayPal to jd@stampnewsnow.com

The United States Reference Manual

U.S. First Overprinted Stamp

by George Sloane (From *STAMPS Magazine*, April 20, 1957, with images added)

The first adhesive postage stamp in world philatelic history to be overprinted with a new valuation was an issue in use in the United States in 1846. This was a stamp of the United States City Despatch Post, operating in New York City, and the item is listed by Scott under the "Carriers" group as No. 6LB7. The 3¢ black on green was surcharged with a large red "2," which very nearly covers the entire Washington portrait, and at the same time the word "Three," was obliterated by a bar also in red.



About three copies of this variety are known, all on covers, used in 1846:

The first known copy to come to the knowledge of collectors was discovered sometime before 1900. It was used on a letter dated February 14, 1846. This cover was originally in the famed F. W. Bowers collection and more recently in the Caspary collection.

Caspary had a second copy, also on cover, used March 2, 1846.

A third copy and on the cover, with a "January 9" postmark was once in the collection of Count Ferrary and later in the collection of Arthur Hind.

The large numeral "2" used in marking the surcharge appears to have been a cut-out from one of the handstamps regularly in use at the New York post office, the so-called "drop-letters" postmark, reading "New-York 2 cts.," so frequently seen on stampless New York covers of the period. Little history or information is available on the stamp and why these 3¢ stamps were so overprinted to reduce them to 2¢ in value. The U.S. City Despatch Post, in early 1846, was still in operation by the government.

Update

In addition to the three on-cover examples, there also is one off cover stamp, reproduced above.

As to the reason for the reduction to 2¢ from 3¢, we have an excellent explanation from the Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, in a lot description for the cover shown in the next column.

We quote here from that lot description:

U.S. City Despatch Post, New York N.Y., 2¢ on 3¢ Black on Blue Green Glazed, Red Surcharge (6LB7)...filing crease thru letter and stamp, effectively tying it, red "U.S. City Despatch Post Feb. 14, -- O'Clock" Type II circular datestamp, red "New-York 2 cts. Feb. 14" drop-letter rated circular datestamp on folded letter to the Rev. R. S. Cook, Tract House, in New York City, sender's notation "Mr. J. S. Lathrop" at lower left, manuscript docketing on back "Feb. 14, 1846"...

The world's first government-issued, overprinted stamp is the 2¢ on 3¢ U.S. City Despatch Post carrier issue, Scott 6LB7. It was overprinted in late 1845 or early 1846 to meet the need for a 2¢ stamp to prepay the carrier fee after the drop-letter rate was modified on July 1, 1845. Only four stamps are recorded, including three genuinely used on covers. The cover offered here is regarded as the finest of the three.

To understand why it was necessary to revalue U.S. City



Despatch Post stamps from 3¢ to 2¢, it is helpful to look at the effects of the July 1, 1845, postal reform (as per the Act of March 3, 1845). As is well-known to most U.S. stamp collectors, the July 1st reforms created the simplified 5¢ and 10¢ postage rates and laid the foundation for adhesive stamps to be used in this country. The postmasters' provisionals appeared first, followed in 1847 by the first General Issue (Scott 1 and 2). However, at the same time inter-city rates were lowered, Congress raised the drop-letter rate from 1¢ to 2¢. A drop letter is one brought to a post office that is not transmitted to another post office. Congress raised the drop-letter rate out of fear that the new postage structure would cause a severe decline in postal revenues. By raising the intra-city rate, Congress hoped to offset some of the anticipated losses.

The consequences of this legislation for the U.S. City Despatch Post were immediate and dire. Prior to July 1, 1845, a drop letter could be taken by the carrier to or from the post office for 3¢, which included 2¢ for the carrier department and 1¢ for the post office (drop postage). Beginning July 1, an extra cent was required for the drop postage, making the total amount equal to 4¢.

Although other classes of mail were unaffected by the drop-rate increase (including carrier letters that by-passed the main post office), the U.S. City Despatch found itself at a severe disadvantage competing with local posts, who generally charged 2¢ for a city letter. In the post-July 1 period, not only did Boyd flourish, but many smaller local posts entered the scene, hoping to capture a share of the market for intra-city letter delivery. By November 1846, the U.S. City Despatch Post was closed. Government carrier service would not appear again in New York City until 1849....

The three recorded 6LB7 covers were mailed during the first eight months of the 2¢ drop-rate period.... In addition to the three stamps on covers, there is a stamp off cover, previously affixed to a cover dated Oct. 29 (1845 or 1846), but which did not originate.

The rarity of the 2¢ on 3¢ stamp suggests that it was used on a very limited basis, during a period of decline for the U.S. City Despatch Post. By overlaying the "2" overprint [from the stamp] on the "2" in the drop-rate date-stamp [on the cover above], we have determined that they are identical in size and shape. The overprint was probably made from a modified integral-rate marker and struck by hand on each stamp....

6LB1-7.5
Published 050121