

Speaking of Stamps, Etc.

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From STAMPS Magazine, February 6, 1988

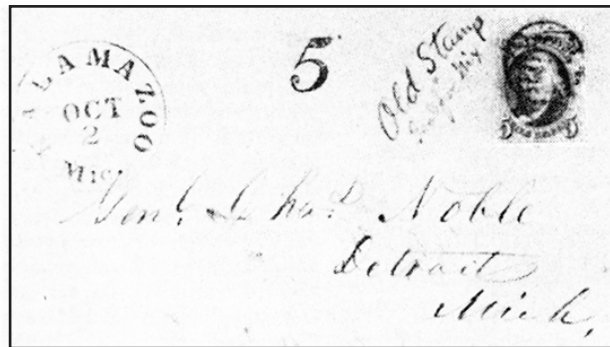
A number of our philatelic students share the viewing of their prize early covers by illustrating them on their Christmas greetings. Two practitioners of this delightful custom are Millard Mack of Cincinnati, Ohio, and Creighton Hart of Shawnee Mission, Kansas.

Rare and lovely United States gems have appeared on the cards sent out by these two gentlemen. Many of them were familiar to anyone who spends more than six minutes studying the exhibits at our top philatelic shows. But not often does a cover which the card's recipient saved from destruction appear on one of these occasions.

This generation of stamp dealers just cannot realize the unusual items found in "original finds" a half century ago. At the time such finds were not recognized as being of great value, for they were not. In 1933, when I hung out my shingle, an ordinary 5c 1847 cover sold for about five dollars. (Of course, exceptional examples brought double that.)

In one of these bundles that found its way to my 116 Nassau Street office was a half dozen or so 1847 covers from Kalamazoo, Michigan. All but one were routine. The unusual cover was a nice single bearing a 5c 1847 stamp, but marked for 5c postage due. I thought it a novel cover, but the significance of it escaped me. After all, 55 years ago, I had a lot to learn about U.S. stamps; in fact, I am still learning.

From the contents of the folded letter, we now know that it was cancelled October



2, 1851. The Postmaster had instructions to accept any 1847 stamps and redeem them for cash until October 1, 1851, the day before the letter was posted. Had the sender tried to obtain cash for the stamp, and when it was denied, did he try to get postal use from it? We do not know, but we know that the Kalamazoo postmaster knew the law. The letter went to its destination in Detroit as an unpaid letter.

But the remarkable thing about the cover, something I could not help but notice, was the inscription in ink alongside the stamp, "Old Stamp Good For Nix."

I put the cover in one of my auctions with an estimate of \$25 on it, a figure that seemed fair since it was a nice clean cover, and the stamp had three fine margins and was only close at the bottom.

The late Harry Konwiser came in to look at my lots and studied this cover. "How do you know that the pen writing is original?", he asked. I told him that I did not, but since it was most unlikely that a philatelist had ever seen the cover and its mates, I was

reasonably certain that the marking had been applied in 1851. Konwiser demurred. "The word 'nix' was not in the English language in 1851," he told me. I disagreed with him, suggesting that "nix" came from the German word "nichts," pronounced exactly like "nix," and indicating quite conclusively that what the postmaster was saying was that the stamp was "good for nothing."

With the Konwiser opinion broadcast to the world (he was never reluctant to express opinions on other stamp dealers' merchandise), the cover suffered in the sale. As I recall, it sold for \$15, a bargain at the time, as apparently it would be today.

I asked C.H. if he recalled whence the cover had come, and what it had cost him. He thought that he had owned it about 30 years. Where it had been between 1933 and 1958 he did not know, but perhaps some former owner may recall on seeing the illustration.

It's always nice to greet old friends again, but it would be much nicer to learn where this cover has been hiding in the intervening years.

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Despite the wonders of the internet, I was unable to find a better image of this cover, much less its location; however, at www.siegelauctions.com, and shown here on page 2, I was able to find other interesting #1 covers, one on which the 5¢ was not accepted as postage payment, and four others on which it was—with some very informative lot descriptions. JFD.

Here we have another demonetized usage, a 5¢ tied by a light strike of blue circular datestamp and by file fold, second strike of blue "Harrisburg Pa. Oct. 21" (1852) circular datestamp on folded cover to Washington D.C., manuscript "Due" and blue "5" handstamp, 1852 docketing on back, attempted use of demonetized 1847 stamp, the stamp was not accepted as payment and the recipient was charged 5¢ due.



Here we have a cover on which the 1847 5¢ was used after June 30, 1851, and was accepted as payment for reasons that are explained in the Siegel lot description that follows.



This cover sold for \$354,000 in Siegel's auction of the William H. Gross U.S. Postal History Collection. Here's a portion of the lot description:

The famous Canada and United States First Issues mixed-franking cover with a 1851 3p "Beaver" and single 5¢ 1847 Issue, both cancelled in Montreal, Canada—one of the most desirable covers in all of classic worldwide philately

5¢ Red Brown (1), late impression, used with Canada, 1851, 3p Red on Laid (1), both stamps tied by bold strikes of Canadian 7-ring target cancel, red "Montreal L.C. JU 8, 1851" circular datestamp, red "CANADA" in framed arc cross-border handstamp on blue folded letter from Montreal, Canada, to New York City, datelined "Montreal, June 7th 1851", sender's notation "p. paid" at top right, red "PAID" arc handstamp applied in New York ties both stamps and confirms that the 5¢ stamp affixed in Canada was accepted as full prepayment.

"...in the United States, Congress had established lower postage rates and authorized new stamps to pay them, set for release on July 1, 1851. On that day the old 1847 Issue would no longer be valid for postage, and a three-month redemption period would commence. For years before, the 1847 stamps had been supplied to Canadian post offices and used there to prepay the U.S. postage on letters addressed to the states. After the 1851 U.S.-Canada postal treaty took effect, Canadian postmasters accepted the U.S. stamps in payment of the Canada 6-pence rate (roughly equivalent to 10¢ U.S.), even after the 1847s were demonetized in their own country of origin.

"The time between the release date of Canada's first issue [April 23, 1851] and the last day the 1847 Issue was valid for postage in the U.S. [June 30, 1851] is 69 days. During this brief period, the first issues of both countries, printed by the same firm—Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson—could be used on the same letter, but only under very unusual circumstances, which technically skirted the rules of the new treaty, but were nonetheless practiced and accepted by post offices on both sides.

For good reason, this is one of two recorded covers with a combination of the 1847 and 1851 Issues—the 1851 issues went into use on July 1, 1851, one day after the 1847 issues were demonetized. The usage is even more remarkable, for reasons explained in the Siegel lot description, as follows:



"5¢ Red Brown (1), used with two 1¢ Blue, Ty. IV (9) and 3¢ Dull Red, Ty. II (11A), tied by red "Exeter N.Y. Jan. 1" on small black-bordered mourning envelope to Augustin W. Hale in docketing at top left.

"This black-bordered mourning envelope is an extraordinary use of the demonetized 1847 Issue. The 5¢ stamp is combined with 1¢ and 3¢ 1851 Issue stamps to make up the 10¢ rate to the West Coast. Since that rate went into effect on April 1, 1855, this was probably mailed in January 1856 from Exeter, New York, to San Francisco.

"Upon close examination, the 5¢ stamp shows evidence of re-use. Traces of a red circular datestamp are visible at the bottom, indicating that the lightly cancelled stamp was removed from another cover and affixed by the sender. Re-use of stamps was illegal, and surviving examples are rare. The re-use of a stamp that was demonetized at least five years earlier was especially audacious. Perhaps the mourning envelope evoked the Exeter postmaster's sympathy, or perhaps he was half-blind."

[I favor the sympathy rationale, and suspect that the lot describer also felt that way and was being humorous, as the postmaster would at least be able to see the stamp regardless of whether or not it was being re-used. JFD.]

Here we have a legal use for a valid reason:

"5¢ Red Brown tied by blue grid cancel, matching "Philadelphia Pa. Jun. 30" (1851) circular datestamp and "5" rate handstamp on folded cover to a member of the DuPont family in Wilmington Del., 1851 docketing on back."



On this cover the 5¢ stamp was a legal usage, but insufficient, explained as follows:

"5¢ Red Brown beautiful warm shade (approaching



Orange Brown of late printings), tied by two bold blue grids, matching "Troy N.Y. Apr. 23" cds on 1851 folded letter to Perth, Canada West, with manuscript "Due 5", manuscript "Via Cape Vincent or Ogdensburgh N.Y." routing instructions, sent via Ogdensburgh as evidenced by red "U. States" in arc with shield, manuscript "3" pence Canadian due.

"The treaty rate of 10¢ U.S. or 6p Canadian began on April 6, 1851. This cover is very unusual, because it shows the 5¢ 1847 prepaying U.S. postage with Canadian postage collected in cash." [Thus, the 5¢ U.S. was accepted, but it was 5¢ underpaid when the rate to Canada was 10¢.]