

Adams' Express and Independent Mail

by Calvet M. Hahn

On May 2, 1840, 35-year old Alvin Adams joined with P.C. Burke to advertise in the *Boston Notion* the opening of a new People's Express that would run via the Stonington steamboats to New York, beginning May 4th. The timing of this new service, which was to be a direct competitor to the Harnden Express, was propitious. The *Great Western* was sailing to England May 9th and Boston merchants might want to get goods and drafts on board.

The initial advertisement gives to concept that was to dominate Adams' Express during its initial years. It reads:

PEOPLES EXPRESS

BURKE & CO'S NEW YORK AND BOSTON

PACKAGE EXPRESS Office No 9 Court Street

Boston and William st.,¹ corner of Wall st, New York.

The subscribers will go through in person

DAILY, via Ston-

ington and take charge of any Business that may be entrusted to their care.

Bank Notes, Specie and all kinds of Small Packages will be forwarded by the Steamboat Train and delivered at any part of the City free of extra charge.

They will also attend to Purchasing Goods, Paying and Collecting Notes Drafts and Bills and will transact with promptness all business entrusted to their care.

CHARGES TO CORRESPOND WITH THE TIMES.

All packages should be directed to the care of Burke & Co.

and sent to No. 9 Court st., Boston by 3½ o'clock P.M. or to

William st. corner of Wall st. New York by 4 o'clock P.M.

Packages will be received and forwarded to Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, Albany, Utica, Rochester, and Buffalo. Receipts given if requested.

REFERENCE, In Boston (Kimball, Jewett & Co.

Dutton & Richardson

J.C. Dodge)

P.C. BURKE

ALVIN ADAMS

To Commence on MONDAY, May 4, 1840 May 2 3m*

As can be seen, Mr. Burke was the senior partner, although this did not last long. He quit the firm sometime between July 18th and November 27th and is next found advertising as the agent for the Western Passage Freight and General Forwarding company in New York in June 1841.² It is believed he never returned to the express business.

1. No. 46 was the exact address.

2. T.W. Tucker, *Waifs from the Way-Bills*, 1872, p. 57. Burke is reported to have left after six months, or around November 1840.

There are several reasons for the breakup. One was morality. Alvin Adams was known for personal purity and strongly objected to profanity and ribaldry. He would not have a man working for him who swore or told dirty stories. A.L. Stimson, who worked for Adams for many years wrote on page 327 of his *History of the Express Business*, 1881 edition, that Adams discovered that one of his partners (long since deceased) was flagrantly immoral and wrote him he would not be associated with such a person. This led to a rupture and dissolution of the firm. The incident best fits the breakup of the People's Express when one examines Adams' business history.

A second reason was the relatively slow growth of the firm. Burke may well have reasoned that the business would grow very slowly and therefore could not support two principals. Having a better opportunity, he took it. In the second edition (1858), Stimson wrote,

After a few months of "up-hill work," Burke retired, and Mr. Adams executed all the business of the "opposition" himself. He was its messenger, cashier, receipt-clerk, label-boy, and porter. He employed no wagon, nor did Harnden, until a year or two elapsed, for they had only small and valuable parcels to deliver in those days. . . . For the first week or two, Adams could have stowed it all in his hat; nor did he carry anything more than a valise for several months from the commencement. For a long time he found it the hardest kind of up-hill work to obtain a share of the public patronage sufficient to pay his expenses. . . . Indeed, very many people regarded Adams as an interloper upon a field of enterprise fairly won by Harnden. . . . It is more than probable that not a few of Adams' personal friends looked upon his new business disapprovingly, or damaged it by faint praise. We know that some of them had no sympathy with it.

Covering the initial period, William Harnden, the company's major competitor, wrote his employee Luke Damon, the future independent mail operator along the Hudson on May 5, 1840 commenting upon the first day of operation of the People's Express that,

. . . Burke & Co.'s Express commenced running yesterday. They did not have quite a hatful of packages. . . .

Despite the slow beginning, Alvin Adams was able to turn the company into a major express worth \$27 million at the time of his death of thoracic dropsy on September 1, 1877. At that time some 15,000 people were employed by Adams. He focused from the beginning on the package express and its concomitant banking business rather than the carrying of letters. This explains why Adams' independent mail covers are scarce to rare. However, it also means that when the express statutes ended the independent mail era effective July 1, 1845, Adams was well placed to continue and expand his business. According to T.W. Tucker in *Waifs*, Adams' real growth began in 1843 when Harnden diverted his attention and interests to promotion of the immigrant business. This gave Adams an opportunity to gain an edge on the express business in New England and he took it.

A Biographical Sketch

Who was Alvin Adams? In an autobiographic letter written in Boston May 4, 1870 he tells us much of his background. He was born June 16, 1804 at Andover, Vermont the son of Jonas Adams and Phoebe Hoar; he was the ninth of eleven children, of which six were boys. Several died quite early. At the age of eight, in February, 1813, he was orphaned when both parents

died of spotted fever. Alvin remained on the farm with his eldest brother Jerry and attended common schools in Andover and Grafton until he was 15.

At 16, in November 1820, Adams went to Robert Booker, a stage and hotel proprietor in Woodstock, Vt. and asked for a job.

"I have no place for you at this time" was the reply but when Adams explained that he was an orphan and Booker had time to check his background, the reply was:

Young man, go home, get your clothes, come back and stay through the winter and perhaps longer.



Alvin Adams

Adams tells us he took the offer and stayed four years. Then he went to Boston and became an assistant at the Marlboro House for a year. This was a major hotel and staging point at the time. Others tell about his way with horses and how he fancied he would like to be a stage driver, perhaps even to own a stage line. The association with horses lasted throughout his life and a trademark of Adams express wagon was its well-chosen team of horses. A friendly, outgoing man with sparkling grey eyes, a singularly pleasant face and frank, manly air, Adams spent his leisure time talking with the stage drivers and trying to decide his future. He was advised to seek a career in a mercantile profession.

Several trades were tried including a grocery and provisions company where he worked to gain experience. On November 11, 1831, at age 27, he married Ann Rebecca Bridge of Boston, ten days after her 22nd birthday. The couple had nine children several of which died very early. Three ended up with ties to the business. His daughter married the son of his partner in 1867, while Alvin Adams, Jr. and Waldo Adams were active in the firm in the Boston area. Tucker reports Alvin, Jr. was working in the Boston office in 1872, while Stimson reports Waldo was superintendent of the Boston office as late as 1881. The younger Alvin Adams apparently predeceased his father.

As noted earlier, Adams got into the produce business, but in the Panic of 1837 he failed, losing his capital and going, as he tells it in his autobiographic letter, \$10,000 into debt. This took place in 1838 and he tried again in New York City but without sufficient capital he was forced to close up and in March 1840 returned to Boston. This would have been the depression of 1839.

Adams did not mention any of his early partners. Rather he tells us that,

I heard that the Boston & Norwich was about to be opened and I applied for the privilege to run an express over it as a man by the name of Harnden had been doing this business on the Stonington for about a year. . . Harnden and his friends brought such influence he got the contract . . . determined not to be eliminated I went to the agent of the Stonington route and purchased two season tickets, between New York and Boston. I gave one to my partner, and with trunks or valises we went back and forth daily. . . My first express left the office, No. 9 Court Street, Boston, May 4, just thirty years ago this very day. My first way-bill amounted to \$3.75. I continued in this way (my own messenger) until September when I was informed by my friend, the late Addison Gilmore (formerly of Weston, Vt.) that Harnden had been notified to quit the Norwich route and for me to make application at once for a contract. Gilmore, at this time, was a director.

I made application, got the contract, and have run over that route to this day. In four years I was ahead of Harnden and about that time he died insolvent and Adams & Co. purchased his interest in the business and for twenty-five years, Adams & Co. have owned

all the express lines between New York and Boston, although Harnden and Kinsley were run in their original names for a certain purpose.

In 1842 we extended service to run between New York and Philadelphia. . . In 1849 we extended our business to California. . . and in 1852 established a banking house in Melbourne and a branch at Sydney. . . In 1855 we closed up our business both in California and Australia. . . For six years we had 35 offices in California and one in Oregon. . . The company since 1854 has been operated as a joint stock company. William B. Dinsmore came in 1842. He has been President and Treasurer since 1856 and there has never been an ill word spoken or written between us.

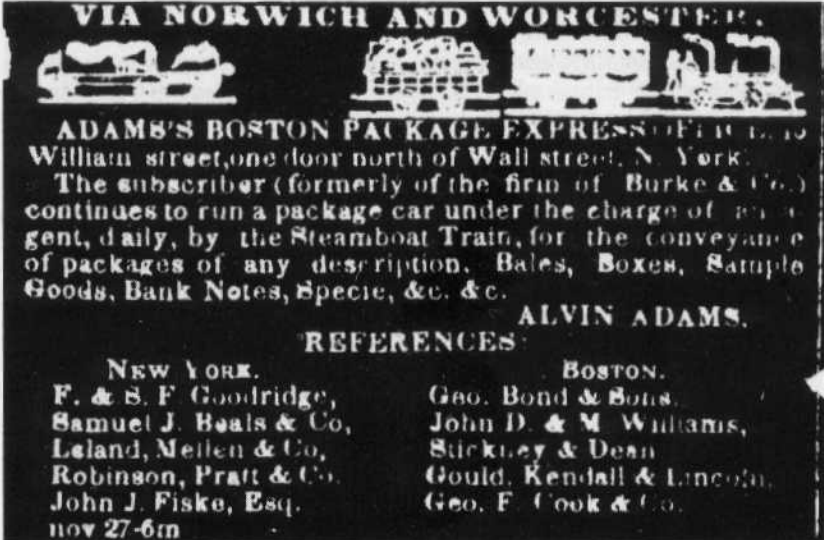
As the Norwich & Worcester Railroad opened March 9, 1840, connecting with the Boston and Worcester, we can put a date to Mr. Adams' first approach. The two season tickets would have been used by Adams and Burke. Adams would not have reached the age of 36 when he began his life's work.

The Boston Package Express

Initially, Adams operated as part of the People's Express with its operations defined in the advertisement cited earlier. However, that phase lasted only a few months until Burke left the firm. We know this occurred on or before November 27, 1840, for on that date advertisements began to run under the Adams' name as Adam's Boston Package Express. Tucker's report that Burke left after six months fits this date. Adams' statement that he continued as his own messenger until September seems to be in conflict, but this may mean he hired a messenger even during the Burke period.

Elliott Perry and Arthur Hall located the ad in Fig. 1 in the *New York Commercial Advertiser* of December 1, 1840.

This advertisement ran until late May 1841, which was the six months specified in the insertion date. Throughout this time Adams apparently worked alone doing everything from messenger to porter as cited by Stimson earlier. Until 1842 he didn't even have a job wagon for delivery but relied upon his friend, Mr. E.H. Brainard, a relative of the Charles H. Brainard who ran the Brainard's Express independent mail service and who eventually joined Adams, to do his carting. Brainard found Adams



VIA NORWICH AND WORCESTER.

ADAMS' BOSTON PACKAGE EXPRESS. OFFICE, 110 William street, one door north of Wall street, N. York.

The subscriber (formerly of the firm of Burke & Co.) continues to run a package car under the charge of an agent, daily, by the Steamboat Train, for the conveyance of packages of any description. Bales, Boxes, Sample Goods, Bank Notes, Specie, &c. &c.

ALVIN ADAMS.

REFERENCES:

NEW YORK.	BOSTON.
F. & S. F. Goodridge,	Geo. Bond & Sons.
Samuel J. Beals & Co.,	John D. & M. Williams,
Leland, Meilen & Co.,	Stickney & Dean
Robinson, Pratt & Co.,	Gould, Kendall & Lincoln,
John J. Fiske, Esq.,	Geo. F. Cook & Co.
nov 27-6m	

Fig. 1.

so likeable that he did this for free much to the disgust of Mr. Leonard, the owner of the Worcester express who had to pay for the service. Running the business alone was impractical and Adams soon sought another partner.

The Founding of Adams & Co.

Perry and Hall report the Boston Package Express ads ran until the end of May 1841. I believe this is based upon the six months insertion notices. I find them as late as May 8th, however, the new Adams & Co. name is cited as early as May 28th. An advertisement in the *Boston Daily Mail* of June 17, 1841, insertion date of May 28th, gives the new service.

FOR NEW YORK VIA WORCESTER
AND NORWICH

The New and splendid steamer WOR-
CESTER, Capt. Coit will leave Norwich
on the arrival of the cars on TUESDAYS
THURSDAYS and SATURDAYS.

The Steamer NEW YORK, Captain Routh,
will leave on the opposite days.

No ferry or change of cars on this route.

Tickets berths and state rooms can be secured of the
subscribers at No. 9 Court street.

Cabin passage to New
York \$3.

Packages, Parcels &c. marked 'Adams & Co's Express'
and left at the office before half past 3 P.M. will be forward-
ed and delivered in New York on the arrival of the boat
early the next morning. Office in New York 46 William
street corner of Wall street. ADAMS & CO.

Ma 28 5M

I believe that it was at this point that Adams brought in Ephraim Farnsworth as his New York partner to create Adams & Co. Biographical encyclopaedias such as Appleton and Compton's state Adams & Co. was formed in 1840 with Farnsworth as partner and that Adams formed Adams & Co. by "purchasing two season tickets" as he tells the story autobiographically. However, that explanation does not fit with the advertisements.

The advertisement of the new firm coincides with Adams' acquisition of the Harnden contract on the Norwich and Worcester route. This contract and route were to be mainstays of the Adams New England operation for many years to come and were still favored by Adams when he wrote in 1870. Why was Harnden forced to give up the Norwich contract?

We know that Harnden was a sworn postal route agent from July 1, 1839 until June 30, 1841 and that there was then a hiatus until February 21, 1842. It seems to me the end of his route agent service may have been anticipated by Gilmore and that it is related to the shift whereby Harnden gave up the contract on the Norwich and Worcester.

Farnsworth seems to have lasted only about five months. With his departure Adams continued to look for someone to run the New York operation, preferably with extensive business experience and New York connections. On October 26, 1841, advertisements appeared listing R. Moore as the New York agent at 46 William street with J.B. Taylor listed as agent at Worces-

ter. The latter office was probably at 155 Main st. Moore appears to have lasted only about one month.

During the summer of 1841, a 31-year old Bostonian and future relative, William B. Dinsmore was employed as clerk and messenger in the New York office. He had previously traded in the south and had been most recently employed as a salesman or bookkeeper by the New York stationer, David Felt. Although he did not meet Adams' specifications, Dinsmore was so useful and so persuasive that he was put in charge despite the fact he could contribute no capital. Almost immediately he became a partner in Adams & Co.

In the 1858 edition of his *History*, Stimson tells us that when Dinsmore obtained his partnership, he moved the New York office from 46 William Street (later home of the Boyd's local post) to No. 7 Wall (renumbered to 17 Wall in 1845). Using this information we can date the change between November 23rd when the New Haven and Hartford Express owned by Jared Hurlbut and Amos Smith advertised its establishment and noted, in the *New York Commercial Advertiser* of that date:

At this end of the line business will be managed by the faithful and enterprising proprietors of Adams & Co.'s Boston Express Line, at their office 47 William street between Pine and Wall. . .

and December 4th, insertion date of a *Boston Daily Mail* ad that I located in the January 22, 1842 edition giving the new 7 Wall street address as well as the information that the company was extending its service to Philadelphia where an office was established at 3rd and Dock.

The earliest example of Adams' independent mail operation I record is a letter from Salem, Mass. dated December 27, 1841 from the Seth Low correspondence (Fig. 2). This letter was originally inscribed to go via Harn-den's express, but was reinscribed to go via "Adams & Co. 7 Wall Street" suggesting the address was new. Combined with Stimson's information concerning Dinsmore becoming a partner and changing the office location, this letter confirms the December date of change. Its rating gives us significant information on the price structure used by Adams as will be noted later.

The section on expresses contained in the 1841 *Report of the Postmaster General* is dated November 30, 1841. The bulk of the testimony in it about Adams comes from Nathaniel Green, Boston postmaster until March 15,



Fig. 2.

1841. His replacement, George Gordon, noted Adams ran daily both ways between Boston and New York on the Worcester & Norwich line (this is the operation purchased by Adams from Harnden), while Jonathan Day, postmaster at Webster, Mass. (on the Norwich line) tells us that it was a young man who carried the Adams & Co. express material and letters and that he took letters daily. As both Green and Gordon specifically refer to Adams & Co. as the name, it is possible that the new name preceeds March 15, 1841 but I doubt it.

Alvin Adams engaged in a number of businesses to generate funds during 1841. In the *Boston Notion* of May 8, 1841, we find an advertisement signed by him as Alvin Adams offering to sell cabs manufactured by H.C. Vanderwerken of Newark, N.J. As discussed earlier, by May 28th he was signing his ads with Adams & Co. The ad quoted shows him offering, "Tickets, berths and state rooms" on the Norwich steamboats. Similar ads continue until at least 1847. This ad ties down the takeover of the Harnden Norwich & Worcester route to about June 1, 1841.

Early Adams & Co. Personnel

The exact composition of the staff of Adams & Co. in 1841 and 1842 will probably remain a mystery. We do know that Adams employed his brother-in-law, Mr. Hall as a clerk in Boston until the spring of 1843 when he was replaced by Charles Haskell. A freight receipt signed by Haskell on June 10, 1844 can be seen at Fig. 3. Haskell's brother, D. Hale Haskell, was the man selected by Adams to go to California in 1849 where he began the major Adams effort there. The Boston way-bill clerk was James R. Cholwell, whose family was involved in the New York express and forwarding business in 1842 and 1849. Two examples, one in red, the other in black, are recorded of the "Forwarded By/CHOLWELL'S/LETTER EXPRESS No. 20 Wall."

By the fall of 1843, Samuel L. Woodward was the Boston wagon driver and a major generator of new business for Adams. An important factor in the growth beginning in 1843, Woodward finally retired in 1867. Charles H. Brainard worked for Adams in 1842. He is a member of the family that owned and operated the Brainard independent mail operation and was the Boston office for that company in 1844-5.³

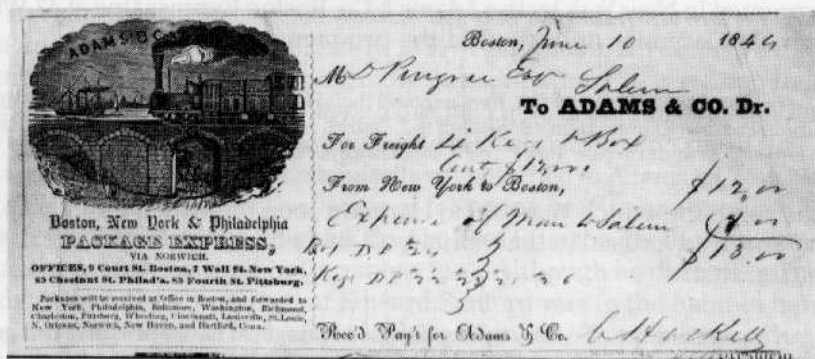


Fig. 3.

3. C.M. Hahn, "The Brainard Independent Mail Companies" *Collectors Club Philatelist*, vol. 63, no. 3, May-June 1984, pp. 181-96.

The New York office was headed by William B. Dinsmore, who was 31 or 32 when he joined Adams being born in July 1810. He married Augusta Snow of Boston and had several children. He got along famously with Alvin Adams and became president and treasurer of the Adams Express Company upon Adams' "retirement" to Boston and continued to hold these posts until his death on April 13, 1888. His son, William B. Dinsmore, Jr. was born in 1845 and in 1867 married Adams' daughter. His other son, Clarence G. Dinsmore was also involved with the company.

Stimson reports that Swett and Fisher were messengers on the trains in 1842. This would be George B. Fisher, the company's bookkeeper in Boston as well as conductor, as he testified as a witness for Adams in the 1843 government trial to put the company out of business. Another conductor was Mr. Stevens, the man arrested by the government, although he was not usually a conductor. I assume Swett and George Fisher replaced Dinsmore and Alvin Adams as traveling expresses in 1842. Another early messenger was Thomas O. Gould, who won a gold watch from Adams for his assistance to passengers during the sinking of the steamer *Atlantic* in 1846.

John Hoey, who became an important official in the express company, seems to have joined in 1842, although he stated 1843 in print. He was hired by the Beecher Express, which operated out of the Adams office in New York and moved over when he was offered \$4 a week. Hoey is best known to collectors for the Civil War handstamp, "FREE/For the (7th) Regiment/ADAMS EXPRESS COMPANY/Per Hoey."⁴ Through his work for Adams, Hoey became a Long Island millionaire well-known as the husband of the famous actress Mrs. Russell. John Hoey's interview for Adams' obituary, in the *New York Times* of September 5, 1877 served as the source for a number of facts about the company, including the fact that Adams & Co. initially charged 25 cents a letter. He also tells us that Adams traveled as an express himself for only a few months.

In 1843, Daggett was the New York clerk handling the custom house business and John Hoey was Dinsmore's runner and factotum. As Stimson tells the story, when Hoey was first employed, the entire New York office was handled by one man and a boy with the aid of a Jersey wagon owned by Amos Smith. Smith lived in Brooklyn.

Mr. Smith advertised with J. Hurlbut (Jared Hurlbut of Hartford) on November 23, 1841 as an express to New Haven and Hartford, which would be agented in New York by the Adams & Co. Boston Express line at 47 William. By December 10th we find the two men advertising that:

Very Important—Hurlbut & Co., have removed their Hartford and New Haven and Springfield Package Express from 46 William to 7 Wall st. . . . Mr. Hurlbut will remain at Hartford and A. Smith at New York . . . New York Office at Adams' Express Office, 7 Wall st. . . .

This company, which was sold to Harnden soon thereafter, quickly split and Smith advertised in the February 12, 1842 *New York Commercial Advertiser* that:

An express line between this city, Hartford and Springfield has been established on a plan similar to Harnden's, Amos Smith of Wall Street is the proprietor.

4. See C.M. Hahn, "Adams Express—Free for the Regiment," *American Philatelist* vol. 87 no. 1, January 1973, for a discussion of this marking and the Adams operation in early 1861.

A March 1842 ad shows the Hartford office to be at the City Hotel, Main Street and the transport to be the New Haven and Hartford steamboat. The timing of these ads suggests that Hoey began early in 1842 with Smith's Jersey wagon helping out around February of that year. Hoey's recollection of 1843 doesn't fit these ads.

Stimson reports that sometime during 1842 Dinsmore got Hoey a pony that was used to trot to the Long Island railroad station in Brooklyn where the company's messenger on the train from Boston threw him the papers. Hoey then sped these to the New York editors ahead of the Harnden competition; in New York he was building a reputation for speedy service that rivaled Harnden's Boston runner, "Mercury Jim" Garland.

I believe Stimson was wrong on the date. The first mail through on the Long Island to Greenport where the steamboat carried it to Stonington or Norwich was August 9, 1844. Prior to that time there was no connection that would fit. Thus, this incident seems to me to have to date to 1844.

Stimson also reports that during 1842 a regular express wagon was obtained for service in New York and Warren Studley, subsequent founder of the Railway Baggage Delivery Express, hired to drive it. This event probably took place sometime after March 1842 when Smith became too busy with his New York, Hartford and Springfield Express. Studley was replaced in 1843 by James D. Wallace who was replaced in the spring of 1844 by John M. Freeman. Freeman is known to western collectors for his subsequent express operations in California and Panama.

Extending the Service

Until 1842, Adams & Co. confined its operations to New York, London, Norwich, Worcester and Boston although conjunctive service was offered to Buffalo and Washington from the very beginning, possibly through Burke's connections. Conjunctive service was apparently dropped quite early and did not resume until 1842. Conjunctive service to Hartford, Conn. and Springfield, Mass. was advertised on November 23, 1841 using Hurlbut & Co. and by July 1842 when Hurlbut sold out to Harnden, Adams was linking up with a new express to New Haven, Benjamin Beecher's Express, which began service August 4, 1842 between the Adams office in New York and 40 Orange Street in New Haven.

As reported earlier, service was extended to Philadelphia and an office set up at 3rd and Dock either late in 1841 or early 1842. An exclusive transportation agreement with the Union Transportation Co. was announced for that service on March 14, 1842. Thus far, I have not found contemporary evidence stating who first handled this extension. Stimson stated that he thought E.S. Sanford of Massachusetts was attached to Adams & Co. in New York in 1844 and that in the "same or following year" was appointed the Philadelphia agent for Adams & Co. I believe Stimson got the date wrong and the events occurred in December 1841. Although he does not give us a date, John Hoey reports that Edward Sanford was in the habit of hanging around the New York office looking for work. The job he finally got was as agent in Philadelphia.

The Philadelphia office was at 3rd and Dock but had moved to 85 Chestnut Street by December 20th. (By August 16, 1846 or earlier, the office was

at 80 Chestnut.) On December 21st, Adams announced a package express between New York and Newark with offices at 315 Broad street in Newark. As I gave the story of this office in my 1970 *Essays on Postal History*, it will not be repeated here. Edward Sanford, who may be a relative of the Captain M. Sanford of New Haven (who was a Vanderbilt partner and owner of the Independent Line to Philadelphia), became associated with Samuel Shoemaker and together they started Shoemaker & Sanford's Express between Philadelphia, Wilmington, Baltimore and soon thereafter Washington. Sanford in later years became a director and vice president of the Adams Express Company.

While Adams used Sanford & Shoemaker as agents for their Philadelphia office, it is interesting to note an advertisement in the November 30, 1848 *North American and Daily Advertiser* supplied me by Richard Schwartz:

ADAMS & CO'S EXPRESS OFFICE No. 80 CHESTNUT ST.—CHANGE OF HOUR. On and after Monday, December 4th, our Express Cars will leave for BALTIMORE, SOUTH & WEST, at 4 o'clock P.M. with the Mail and Passenger Trains. Goods received at the Office, No. 80 Chestnut St., until 3 o'clock, P.M. Small packages will also be forwarded by the 8 o'clock A.M. train.

Our speed and facilities will be increased, and our charges on small parcels, and packages materially reduced, especially on those addressed to WASHINGTON, NORFOLK, and RICHMOND.

SANFORD & SHOEMAKER,
Proprietor

Thursday, November 30, 1848

To me this advertisement indicates that Adams used the joint stock company during the Adams & Co. period with various proprietors of various portions of the express. This would be true in the independent mail period as well as later.

An announcement taken by Perry and Hall from an 1842 *City Directory*, probably compiled around May of that year, shows how the company employed conjunctive service. It states that Adams & Co. used Pomeroy to forward to Albany and Troy, N.Y. and all principal cities on the western route as far as Chicago. Griswold & Co. handled shipments to Baltimore and Washington as well as Richmond, Petersburg, Norfolk and Charleston while Greenawault & Cunningham handled shipments within Pennsylvania to Lancaster, Carlisle, Harrisburg and Hollidaysburg.

An advertisement of February 13, 1843 tells us the Adams & Co. direct service included, in addition to New York, Worcester and Boston: Norwich, New London, Hartford and New Haven in Connecticut. It added that direct service extended to Newark, N.J., Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington and Pittsburgh with Sanford as agent in Philadelphia and R.G. Berford [sic] at 85 Fourth Street in Pittsburgh. This is probably Richard Berford of Berford & Co. western express fame. Another ad of March 23, 1843 announced "through" service from New York to Pittsburgh in four days. An advertisement of July 28, 1843 showed conjunctive use of Roger & Co's Southern Express and noted conjunctive service to Cincinnati, Louisville and St. Louis. On December 5, 1843 service was announced to New Orleans.

By December 15, 1843 Adams had its own Baltimore office (7 Light street) and used Shoemaker & Sanford to connect to Petersburg, Va. and Greene

& Co. to service Cincinnati. By February 2, 1844, the company had its own offices at Bridgeport, West Stockbridge, Springfield and Worcester in New England. By September 1844 service was reported throughout much of the south and as far west as New Orleans and St. Louis.

Matching Harnden's red foot-square cards, Adams developed an illustrated broadside poster in 1844 (Fig. 4). This used F.H. Lane as the illustrator of the Adams express wagon. The poster reports eight offices of the "Adams & Co's American Package Express." The use of "American" suggests this poster was printed in the second half of 1844.

ADAMS & CO'S
AMERICAN PACKAGE EXPRESS.

The following route commences on Monday the 1st inst. and proceeds to the West. From the office of a New England Express Office at No. 9 Court Street, Boston, via WORCESTER, SPRINGFIELD, and ST. LOUIS, to the office of the company at New Orleans, Louisiana, and thence to the office of the company at New York, New York, and thence to the office of the company at New England Express Office at No. 9 Court Street, Boston.

Business transacted in all of the above places on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and on other days at the office of the company at New England Express Office at No. 9 Court Street, Boston.

ADAMS & CO. EXPRESS OFFICE, 9 COURT STREET, BOSTON, NEW YORK, PHILADELPHIA, BALTIMORE, PITTSBURGH, AND ST. LOUIS, NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, AND NEW ENGLAND EXPRESS OFFICE, 11 MAIN STREET, WORCESTER, MASS.

CUSTOM HOUSE.
Business transacted in all of the above places on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and on other days at the office of the company at New England Express Office at No. 9 Court Street, Boston.

AGENTS IN NEW YORK, BOSTON, PHILADELPHIA, BALTIMORE, PITTSBURGH, AND ST. LOUIS, NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, AND NEW ENGLAND EXPRESS OFFICE, 11 MAIN STREET, WORCESTER, MASS.

OFFICES
No. 9 Court Street, Boston. No. 7 Wall St., New-York. No. 7 Light St., Baltimore.
No. 55 Chesnut St., Philad'a. Penn. Avenue, Washington.
No. 12 Shutehock St., Norwich. No. 25 Fourth St., Pittsburg.
No. 11 Main St., Worcester.

NOTICE TO TRAVELLERS.
Business transacted in all of the above places on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and on other days at the office of the company at New England Express Office at No. 9 Court Street, Boston.

ADAMS & CO's Express Office, No. 9 Court Street, BOSTON.
1844. ESTD 1810

Fig. 4.

June 20, 1844 saw the announcement by Adams of an extension service to Europe, when Adams appointed Willmer & Smith as its agent in Liverpool. The Willmer & Smith firm had previously represented Harnden, who withdrew December 16, 1843 and set up other arrangements. The initial ad in the *Boston Courier* offered to:

take charge of all and any business intrusted to their care, such as forwarding LETTERS, PARCELS, PACKAGES, SPECIE, and VALUABLE PAPERS, to all parts of the Continent, and all orders intrusted to them will receive the personal attention of Messrs. W.&S. of Liverpool, and prompt returns assured...

On August 15, 1844, the ads stated that, "Merchants will bear in mind that letters can be prepaid to every part of Europe."

Two letters have surfaced showing Adams service to Europe during the independent mail period; neither show Willmer & Smith markings. The first letter, from the George Sloane holding, is dated New York June 14, 1845 and went via the *Cambria* leaving Boston the 16th and arriving Liverpool the 27th. It has a Liverpool handstamp of the 28th, as well as a French transit for its destination, Paris. There is a red oval PD showing full payment.

A carmine 33mm circle PAID THROUGH/ill/ADAMS & CO./9 COURT ST./BOSTON shows the Adams handling. There is an addition of 5 and 10 which Perry and Hall felt might represent postal charges to France plus Willmer & Smith charges for their services. The second cover originated in Baltimore and went on the *Hibernia* leaving Boston May 16 and arriving Liverpool May 31, 1845. It bears an open black circle LIVERPOOL/JU2/1848/PAID and a departure tombstone M/PAID/23JU23/PAID the Adams carmine circle and the PD in oval as well as French transits to Marseille c/o Fitch, Brothers & Co. who were to get this to the *USS Plymouth*, which was then in the Mediterranean. There are two 5's summed into a 10 at top left. I should like to suggest that the rates are not compatible with transport in Europe but rather may represent a special Adams reduction for domestic rates competitive to the other independent mails.

Adams & Co. had introduced a horse express between Philadelphia and New York on February 6th 1845 to bypass the delay in the postal service at Philadelphia that was causing agitation at the time. On May 29th, an advertisement in the *North American and Daily Advertiser* tells us how letters were handled:

FOREIGN LETTERS & PACKAGES
ADAMS & CO.

LETTER BAGS for the Royal Mail Steamer *Britannia*, which sails from Boston on Sunday, June 1st, will close at their office 85 Chestnut Street on Saturday the 31st inst. at 6 o'clock, A.M.

The public will please bear in mind that under no circumstances have the letters deposited with ADAMS & CO. failed of being forwarded by the proper steamer, although frequently not received until 16 hours after the closing of the regular mails.

Government postage will be paid at the Philadelphia Post Office by A. & Co. and the letters go on in charge of their special messenger. This arrangement gives the greatest security attainable of the transmission and delivery of foreign letters before the departure of the Steamer.

ADAMS & CO.
No. 85 Chestnut St.

My 29

This prepayment of letters at the postoffice and private carriage, along with Harnden's similar approach, presages the handling of the western expresses with their franked government envelopes in the 1850's.

Fig. 5 is an example of a transatlantic letter carried by Adams & Co. which did receive a marking from their European agent. This letter of about 1852 bears the handstamp of Edwards, Sanford & Co. which was the Adams agent at the time. Only the outer wrapper for a package of circulars sent to Havre, France survives. Thus, there is no evidence as to the rate charged. Edwards, Sanford replaced Willmer & Smith company as the Adams agent after the independent mail period. Adams did advertise it would carry letters, but all ads that have been found were timed to coincide with the sailing of the Cunarders from Boston and at least half the advertising copy dealt with the basic Adams business of parcels, packages, orders and specie not letters.

Adams Rates

The rates charged by the expresses and independent mails have long been obscure to the typical collector of the material. The initial People's

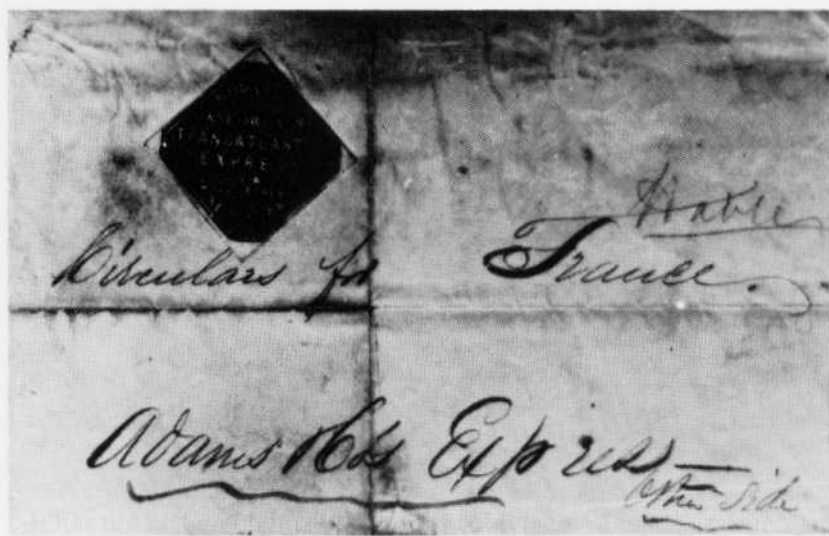


Fig. 5.

Express ads noted "charges to correspond with the times" giving the company considerable option on rates. Other ads by Adams & Co. noted the company would carry packages of any description. This implied that packages of letters could be made up and the postoffice report on the expresses of 1841 suggests that they were. Too, the actual case of *United States vs Adams & Co.* (Nov. 15–16, 1843) had as one major charge that one Jed Frye, "had received letters enclosed in packages to Adams & Co.'s express." Judge Betts held that:

I shall regard it as proved that mailable matters have been transported through the defendants' express, and by their agents, in the manner claimed by the Government; but that, when enclosed and carried in packages they were placed there without the assent or knowledge of the defendants.

In addition to the packages of letters, we also have a series of ads such as the one of January 16, 1845 in the *Newark Daily Advertiser* stating, "Orders for articles to be returned by the Express will be delivered free of charge."

The testimony of the several postmasters in the *1841 Report of the Postmaster General* indicated that Adams charged 25 cents a bundle for letters and in another example carried four letters in a bundle for 18¾ cents, although the rate table included in the *Report* indicated 12½ cents per single letter. The cover in Fig. 2, already discussed, gives a rate breakdown of 13 and 25 cents from Salem to New York in 1841. This supports the 25 cents Boston to New York rate reported by the postmasters in the *1841 Postmaster General's Report* and a conjunctive charge of 13 cents from Salem to Boston. John Hoey's 1877 interview confirms the basic early Adams & Co. rate for letters was 25 cents.

Fig. 6 is a January 10, 1842 letter rated by Adams at 25 cents and carried from New York to Millbury, Mass. It contained a power of attorney. The single letter rate did change; the question is when. After winning the 1843 case brought against it by the government, Adams advertised in the *Worcester Palladium* of August 28, 1844:

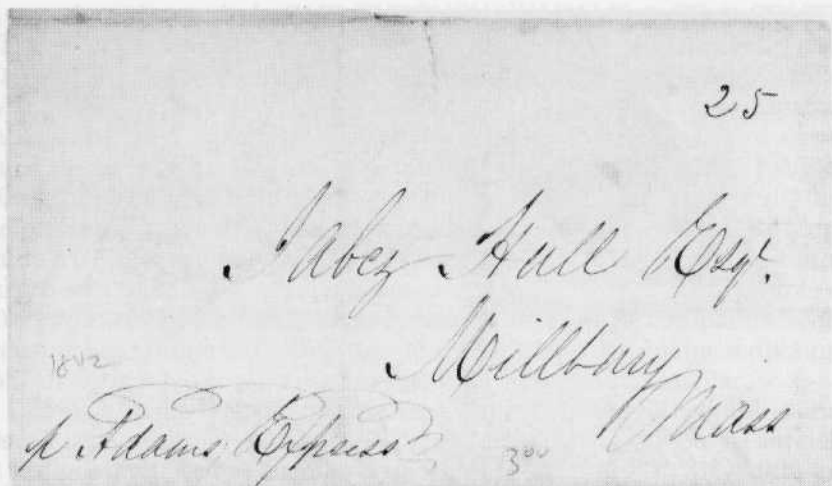


Fig. 6.

... Prices Reduced

The public is respectfully informed that Parcels will be carried to and from New York for 12½¢ instead of 25¢ as previously. Boxes, Packages, Valuable Papers transmitted to all the Southern & Western cities with great rapidity and at moderate charges. . .

J.H. KNIGHTS, Agt., No. 155 Main St., Worcester

This notice indicated that Adams handled letters as though they were parcels, which partially explains the scarcity of covers, and that this was done at a 25 cent rate before late 1844.⁵ This analytic conclusion is supported by the testimony of George B. Fisher, bookkeeper and regular conductor for Adams & Co. at the time of the offenses alleged in the government's suit of 1843. Fisher testified: 1) conductors were instructed by Adams & Co. not to take letters, 2) Adams & Co. refused to accept letters at their offices, 3) no entry was made in the books for monies allegedly received by Stevens, the substitute conductor who was charged, 4) had Stevens received money it would have been entered.

Countering the above date for the rate change is an example from the Seth Low correspondence posted in Salem November 10, 1843—a week before the Adams trial—which is clearly rated “Ex 13”, an apparent rounding of the 12½ cents single rate, Fig. 7. It is possible that this rating is only for the conjunctive use from Salem to Boston. The letter is clearly a single. Although I have not located a notice that Adams was operating directly in Salem by this time, there is no conjunctive use charge on this letter as there is on Fig. 2. The pencil manuscript notation at the left “Hutchi/t?” is typical of agent markings found on many items of the period and erased by dealers or collectors who don't recognize the postal significance of pencil notations or who are so concerned with exhibitability appearance that they are willing to show damaged goods that look pretty.

5. Harnden advertised a rate reduction from 25c to 12½c on June 30, 1844.

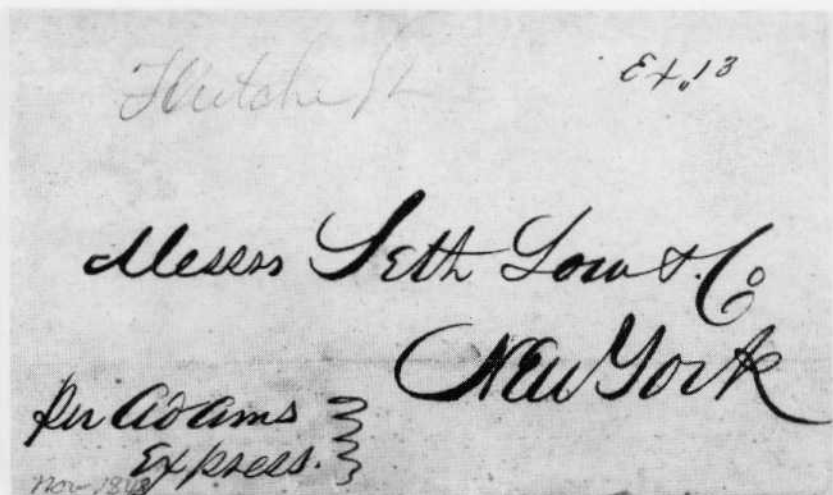


Fig. 7.

It has not been recognized generally that labels are just as much an indication of prepayment as handstamped or manuscript markings on independent mail letters and express items that do not otherwise qualify for free transit, e.g. return goods orders. An example from the Charnley & Whelen find is seen as Fig. 8. It was posted in Boston March 17, 1845 and enclosed eight railroad bonds to the company in Philadelphia. It is rated in red crayon 3/- or 37½ cents for a triple rate under the rate reduction previously noted in the *Palladium* advertisement. The letter was not particularly fat as indicated by the position of the wax seal.

Another label example, where the rate is not noted, is one from New York to Newark of November 13, 1844 which enclosed a receipt for leather as well as \$100. Ex-Reussille, this is one of two letters showing the Adams Newark office service, Fig. 9. The second example, Fig. 10, was posted in Newark and addressed to Col. Savage in Philadelphia. It is marked "Very important to be delivered today" and rated 2/- or 25 cents on the envelope.

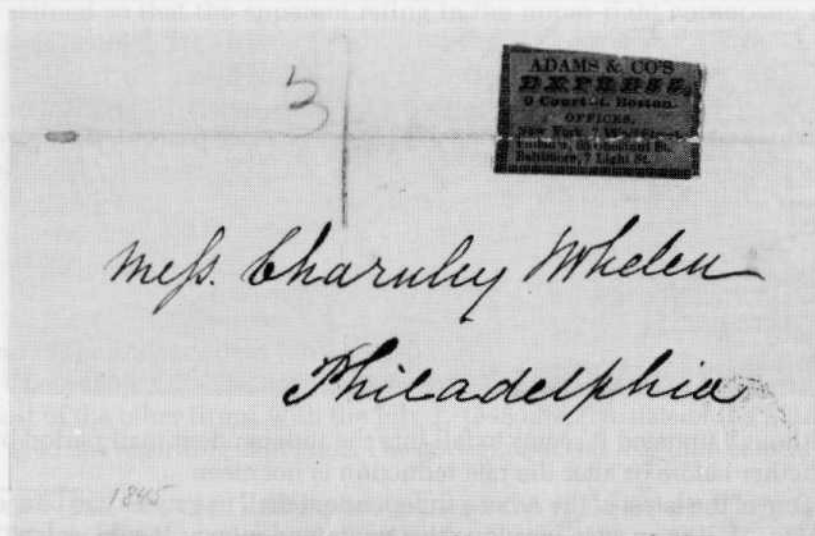


Fig. 8.

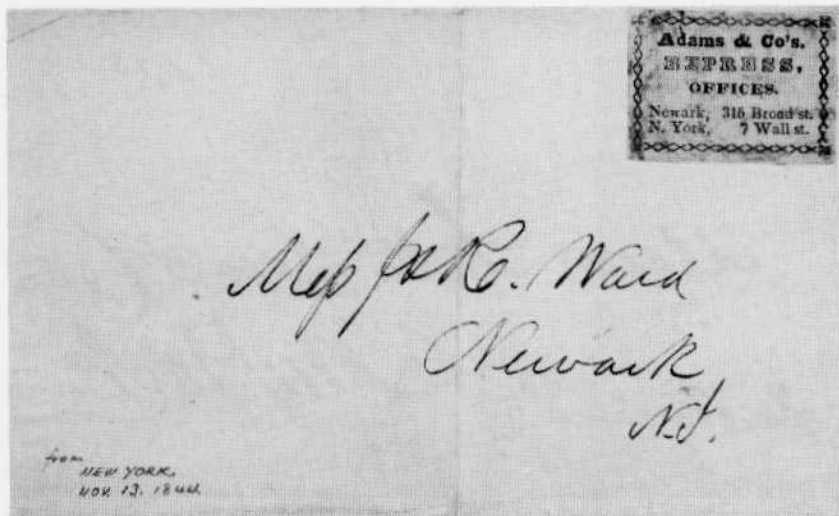


Fig. 9.

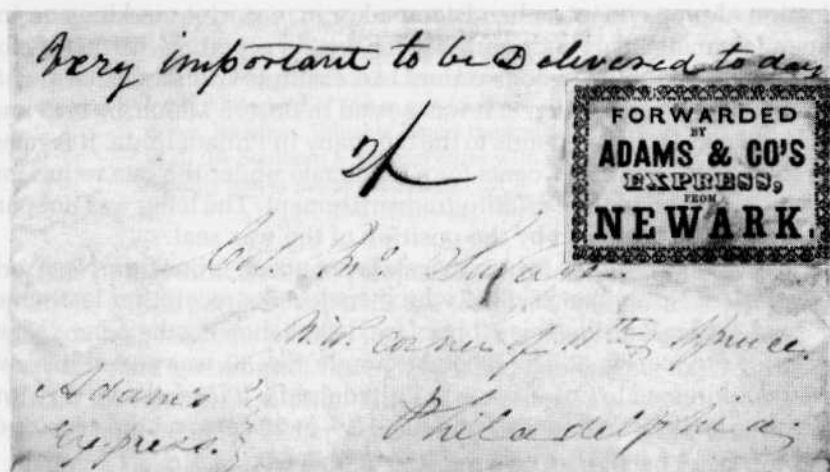


Fig. 10.

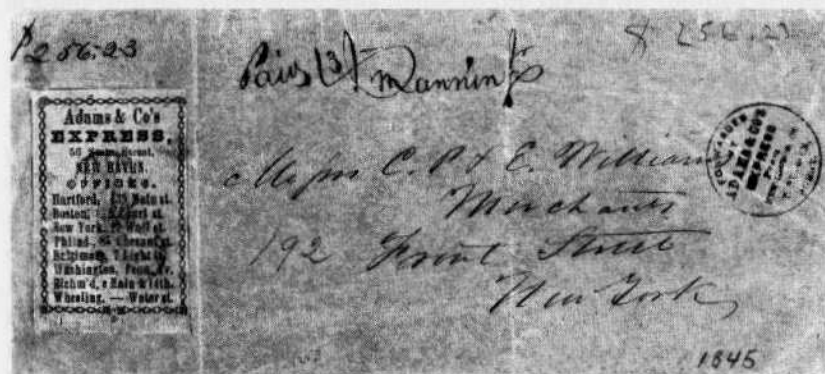


Fig. 11.

Although undated it seems to fall into the independent mail period but whether before or after the rate reduction is not clear.

One of the latest of the Adams independent mail use styles can be seen as Fig. 11. It is an 1845 envelope that contained money. It sold as lot 778

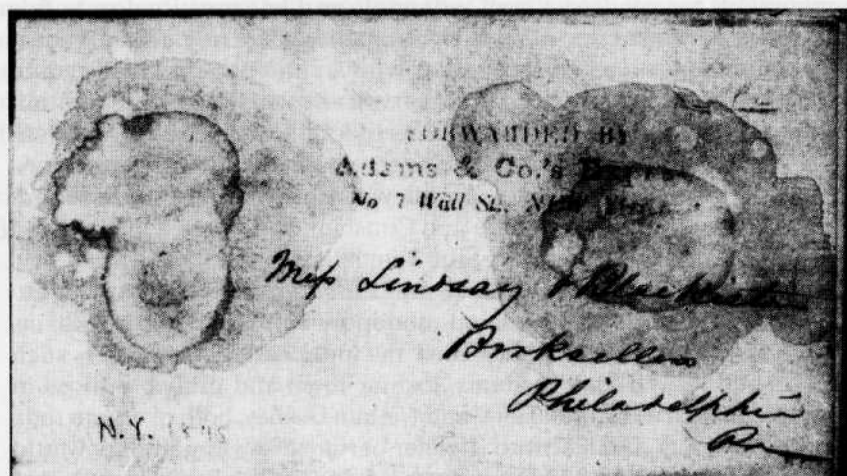


Fig. 12.

in the Knapp sale of May 5-10, 1941 to H.H. Spring but it was not in the sale of his material that took place October 28, 1941. There is a black handstamp 27mm circle FORWARDED/BY/ADAMS & CO'S/EXPRESS/From/NEW LONDON, CT./C.E. ROATH?/AGENT. as well as a pink label added at the 56 State street New Haven transit office of either Beecher or Webb & Co. This "label" is cancelled twice by a handstamp. The letter contained \$256.23 and was rated "Paid 3/- (37½ cents) Manning, Jr." presumably at New London, by the clerk in that office. The amount was verified in pencil. If Roath is a correct reading, he eventually became assistant superintendent of the New England Division..

The Perry/Hall research cites two examples of the red handstamped FORWARDED BY/Adams & Co's Express/No. 9 Court St., BOSTON. It should be noted that with the substitution of the name Child, this is identical with the Donald Malcolm example from Child & Co.⁶ It is now possible to supplement the Adams handstamp with an apparently unique copy going from New York to Philadelphia and datelined February 15, 1845. The cover is stained so that the apparent rating in the upper right corner can no longer be read, Fig. 12.

Earlier it was noted that no Adams & Co. letters were yet recorded to Europe that showed the overseas rate charged during the independent mail period. However, they would probably have taken the same rates advertised by Harnden in 1842, e.g. 31 cents to Liverpool and 33 cents to the rest of England with 51 cents to France, 75 cents to Switzerland and 94 cents to most of northern Europe and Italy except for Belgium (85 cents) and Holland (90 cents).

End of the Independent Mail Period

The Adams & Co. independent mail operations ended, as did those of most of the other firms, with the July 1, 1845 effective date of the March 3, 1845 law regarding expresses. The government was less than candid in

6. C.M. Hahn, "The Child & Co. Express," *Collectors Club Philatelist*, vol. 52, no. 3, May 1973, pp. 145-55.

its arguments for needing a mail monopoly and has remained so to this date. The government appealed to the Constitution disregarding the fact that our forefathers were quite familiar with an independent mail system having actively used one in the 1770s as well as during the Confederation and early Constitutional period. Patriots like William Goddard and Benjamin Franklin were quite familiar with the independent mail operations of the Bordentown stage and the Allentown stage as well as the independent mail riding of Bennoni Dare and Constant Cooper. In a later period the Morristown stage and Swift-Sure line letters are well known.⁷

New Yorkers relied upon the Peck and Flushing lines for mails out to Long Island and the state-chartered monopoly Van Wyck line to Albany. New Englanders like John Adams knew the independent mail riders such as Silent Wilde, William Williams, Joshua Town and probably those in Connecticut such as Nathan Percy and Nathan Dudley, both of whom rode between New York and Hartford. In later periods New Englanders would use the Plymouth stage, the Davis stage (Maine) or the Barnes line out of Worcester (25 cents a letter).

Specialists in the independent mails know that the operations didn't begin with William Harnden in 1839 but go back to the Salem & Boston line's independent mail and package operations organized in 1823 by Daniel Manning. Then there was the A.S. Taylor Lowell independent mail operation of 1835-6, which was sold to William Grey (1836-45) whose handstamps are well known. Too, there was the Dean & Davenport line of 1836-7 which later became the independent mail and express operation of Davenport & Mason. A slew of express and independent mail companies date into 1840 when Adams was beginning: Cheney, Earle & Co., Hatch, Leonards, P.C. Hale and Forbes and James N. Winslow's express are among these. The Hale & Co. and C. Mills independent mails date into the 1838 and 1833 periods respectively, although Hale didn't become a major factor until 1843-4.

It wasn't the existence of independent mails that bothered the government, it was their success. By 1844 the network of independent mail operations was so extensive and the rates so low that the government operation was affected. Henry Wells, together with some others, approached First Assistant Postmaster General S.R. Hobbie with a proposed takeover of the entire United States mail system, including delivery, at a rate of 5 cents a letter. The politically astute Col. Hobbie immediately rejected the proposal with "Zounds, sir! It would throw 16,000 Postmasters out of office." No politician would risk such a source of patronage except under extreme pressure and John Tyler was trying for renomination in his own name in 1844.

Earlier, in 1842, Lewis Eaton, special agent of the Department, had approached Pomeroy & Co. to obtain their express business, but Pomeroy declined to send his parcels through the postoffice because Pomeroy was the "people's line."

The government has also never admitted the extent to which the independent mail and express operations served the country. The govern-

7. Cf. C.M. Hahn, "The Swift-Sure Stage," *SPA Journal*, vol. 42, no. 10, June 1980; vol. 43, no. 7, March 1981. Also, "The Swift-Sure Letters, Stages and Stage Routes Across New Jersey," *SPA Journal*, vol. 42, no. 2, October 1979.

ment argument always focuses upon the “profitable” Boston to Washington corridor without recognizing that the independent mails were already serving back country Maine, rural upstate New York and operating in areas of the West the government feared to go into. The expresses and independent mails blanketed much of the South and Midwest.

Actually part of the government’s reaction was the result of misanalysis. Looking at the letter mail revenues for the years ending June 30th we find:

<u>Year Ending 6/30</u>	<u>Letter revenues</u>
1840	\$4,003,776
1841	3,812,739
1842	3,953,315
1843	3,738,307
1844	3,676,862
1845	3,660,231
1846	2,881,698

This table makes it clear that the government was looking at a 5 percent drop in letter mail revenue when it began its campaign against the expresses in the fall of 1841, even though the expresses were still a minor factor. The law suits of 1843–4 were launched when another drop of about 5 percent was seen after a minor rise. However, the fact is that the period of greatest inroads into postal revenue was fiscal year 1845 and the difference between that year and the preceding one was insignificant.

The real problem with postal revenues was that the country was in the midst of a depression. The south was affected by a drop in cotton prices from about 14.5 cents a pound in 1839 to about 5 cents a pound in 1845. Generally wholesale prices on an index basis dropped from 110 in 1839 to a low of 75 in late 1843 before rebounding to about 83 in 1845.

The Panic of 1837 which forced New York banks to suspend payments in May of that year had run its course by 1839. However, bad management of the United States Bank of Pennsylvania forced its failure in October 1839 (it tried to manipulate the cotton market) and banks began to fail by the hundreds with unemployment spreading throughout the industrial cities. States couldn’t meet payments on their excessive bond issues and repudiated them. By early 1841 the United States Bank again suspended and then was liquidated. It was not until 1845 that conditions finally improved.

The new regulations based upon the law of March 3, 1845 were sent to the postmasters April 21, 1845:

576. The establishment of private expresses for the conveyance of any letters, packets, or packages of letters, or other matter transmittable in the United States mail, (newspapers, pamphlets, magazines, and periodicals excepted,) from one city, town, or other place, to any other city, town or place in the United States between and from and to which the United States mail is regularly transported under authority of the Post Office Department, is prohibited.

577. So is the causing to be conveyed, or the providing for the conveyance or transportation, by regular trips, or at stated periods or intervals, as aforesaid any letters or other matter transmittable by mail. . .

580. This is not to prohibit the conveyance of letters, packets, or packages of other matter, by private hands, no compensation being tendered or received therefore in any way, or by special messenger employed only for the single particular occasion.

581. Stage coaches, railroad cars, steamboats, packet boats, and all other vehicles or vessels performing regular trips at stated periods, on a post road between two or more cities. . . are prohibited from transporting or conveying, otherwise than in the mail, any letters, packets or packages of letters, or other mailable matter whatsoever, except such as may have relation to some part of the cargo. . . or to some article at the same time conveyed. . .

526. What is subject to letter postage is defined to be letters in manuscript, or paper of any kind conveyed in the mail, by or upon which information shall be asked for or communicated in writing, or by marks or signs.

562. No packet shall weigh more than three pounds: Bound books, of any size, are not included in the term "mailable matter. . .

These new regulations plugged the loophole of new forms of transportation that had been left by the omission of railroads in the earlier acts. However, the loopholes of cargo and letters accompanying cargo as well as of letters for which no compensation was tendered or received still remained.

While the independent mail operations immediately went out of business in 1845, expresses such as Adams & Co. did not. The *1846 Report of the Postmaster General* of December 7, 1846 again blamed the deficiency of revenues upon the expresses, which purportedly ignored the law or took advantage of loopholes.

Expresses still continue to be run between the principal cities with as much regularity as the mails, and, it is believed, collect and transport letters for pay, out of the mails, in great numbers. The penalty provided by law for the commission of such offences can rarely be enforced for the want of sufficient proof. The writer, the receiver, and the carrier, refuse to testify against each other, because, by so doing, they may subject themselves to a similar penalty. The agents of the department have no authority to arrest the offenders, and seize upon their bags or trunks, and have them examined before a proper tribunal, though morally certain that they contain letters. . . Advantage is taken of the provision of the law which limits the weight of a single letter to half an ounce, to cover the correspondence of third persons; and even packages of letters addressed to different individuals are collected together and placed under a single cover, and directed to some third person for distribution, by which means one hundred letters, thus enveloped, weighing eight ounces, are charged, under 300 miles, 80¢, and over 300, \$1.60; when the department is entitled to receive, under the law, five or ten dollars, according to the distance. These practices can seldom be detected, and when detected, the only penalty is the payment of the true postage. . . Advantage is taken of that provision of the law which authorizes letters in relation to the cargo to be taken over mail routes free of postage, to cover correspondence in relation to other matters. They are generally marked on the outside of the letter, "in relation to cargo," free. Agents are unable to detect the imposition. . . If that privilege had been restricted to the bills of lading, or open letters relating to the cargo, much abuse would have been avoided on the principal railroad and steamboat routes. . .

Once again, the Post Office Department appeared to be overreacting. The drop in revenue caused by the new rates made the officials nervous and the express scapegoat was hauled out. The biggest loophole was the "no compensation" one. The expresses carried letters for free after July 1, 1845 insofar as they carried them at all. The letters obviously were good for business and usually resulted in future goods orders for which charges could be made. There was only a moot relationship between the letter and future compensation for goods. Postal historians do find a number of such free letters, but almost none of the classes about which the Postmaster General was exercised.

Acquisition of Beecher's Express

In addition to the Hurlbut and Smith operations out of New York, a third example was reported by Perry and Hall. This is the earliest express to New Haven and is reported in the *New York Commercial Advertiser* of August 4, 1842:

BEECHER'S PACKAGE EXPRESS FROM NEW HAVEN TO NEW YORK.

The subscriber continues the above business, as usual, and devotes his whole time, and gives his personal attention to all and every kind of business entrusted to his care, without the aid of special messengers or agents. Having first commenced business in this city, he hopes to be sustained by a generous public.

Office 40 Orange street New Haven, and

7 Wall street, New York.

N.B. All packages to be marked "Beecher's Express"
aug 4

The owner of this express is Benjamin Beecher, Jr. son of the New Haven alderman of the same name. By 1843, the New Haven City Directory lists him and the express at 56 State Street with his residence at 169 George. The same directory noted that Washington Webb, residing at 41 Union, was the agent for Beecher's Express.

On pages 104–5 of the 1858 edition of his *History*, Stimson tells us that:

W. Webb, the New Haven agent, was Harnden's agent there in the summer of 1842, and he has continued to conduct the New Haven business through every change of ownership. He was agent in 1844 of Beecher & Co.'s and Phillips & Co.'s Expresses—the former running, per steamboat, between New Haven and New York daily; and the latter running from New Haven to Hartford via the railroad (which was in operation, at that time, no further than the latter city,) and from Hartford to New York by the New Haven steamboats. He is characterized by a quiet, unassuming, yet pleasing and gentlemanly address, a kind accommodating disposition, and the most untiring and faithful discharge of his duty. These good qualities rendered him a favorite with the New Haven merchants at the outset, and he has not ceased to make new customers and retain old ones. Agents of this kind, and like Peregrine Turner and the late Mr. Parks, (for so many years the faithful and popular agents in New London and Norwich, Conn.,) are invaluable to an Express Company. . . It was through Webb that Adams & Co. obtained about that time the services of Henry B. Plant, now, and for two or three years past, the superintendent of their express operations in the Southern States. Plant was Webb's partner in the West India goods business in New Haven in 1844, and he shared with him the Express agency also. Indeed, the details of the latter business devolved almost entirely upon him at that time, and it so remained until Adams and Dinsmore brought out Beecher & Co.'s Express, and united it with Phillips & Co.'s under the name of Adams & Co's Hartford and New Haven Express. Soon afterwards, Webb & Plant sold out their store business; the former devoting his attention exclusively to the agency for Adams & Co. and the latter becoming a messenger for them on the steamboat between New York and Hartford. The manager of this branch of Adams & Co.'s business, at 16 Wall Street, was E.A. Johnson, long since deceased. He wanted Plant to assist him in his office, and he became a clerk there—Gabriel Brush, one of the drivers, taking his place as messenger. W.L. Crane, the present manager of the New York Department of that Express, was then a clerk at the New Haven office.

As can be seen, the move into New Haven was significant for the personnel brought into the company—Webb, Johnson and Plant. Plant was the man who executed the company's contract with the US Treasury to take charge of the gold and silver transfers between the New York Custom

House and the Philadelphia Mint. In later years he was entrusted with the company's Southern Division and became head of the Southern Express Company at the time of the Civil War. Plant was the man who replaced Johnson as head of the New York and Hartford branch.

Webb had been Harnden's agent in New Haven until May 13, 1843 when an advertisement began appearing in the *New Haven Palladium*. It ran from June 14th through October 4th, 1843:

Harnden & Co's Package Express

AND FOREIGN LETTER OFFICE

Mr. W. WEBB Having given up the agency at Harnden's Express it has been transferred to JAMES S. BAILEY, No. 1 Exchange Place and leaves New Haven *daily* for New York Philadelphia Baltimore and South; Hartford, Springfield, Worcester, Boston and intermediate places East.

The Express leaves for all quarters about 10.

P.P. Any Parcels going either way should be marked

Care of Harnden & Co. and left at our office by or

before 8 o'clock in the evening. JAMES S. BAILEY, Agent.

My 13

No. 1 Exchange Place

The 1844 New Haven city directory reported that Washington Webb and H.B. Plant were agents of Beecher's Express, with Plant "bedding" at 14 Court street. The 1845 directory no longer listed Benjamin Beecher and we find the firm of Webb & Plant reported at 56 State, the old Beecher office. Both Webb and Plant are listed at their respective residences.

In the New York city directories, Benjamin Beecher, Jr. is listed at 7 Wall street, the Adams address in the directory published July 1, 1843 with the occupation of "New Haven & Hartford Express." The same listing appears in 1844 and 1845, the last being published August 7, 1845. However, this is from a prior listing as Adams and other 7 Wall occupants are listed at 17 Wall.

Although I have located no cover carried by Beecher's Express, philatelic evidence is found in a Hartford letter datelined April 21, 1845 in which Daniel Phillips, owner of the Phillips & Co. express of that city writes a customer in New York regarding damage on a painting sent down from Hartford. In this letter, Fig. 13, Phillips refers the addressee to B. Beecher, who handled the shipment from New Haven to New York and stating he and Mr. Beecher would call upon the addressee in New York. The letter is free franked by Phillips and bears a manuscript, "Will Mr. Johnson please forward this at once." This is the Johnson who headed the Hartford and New Haven branch of Adams & Co. and who got Plant assigned to his office following the latter's stint as a messenger.

The use of the old address in the New York city directory and the omission from the New Haven one suggests Beecher had just left the New Haven operation around June 1845. This is confirmed by a letter datelined June 15, 1845, Fig. 14. This is a letter from the office of the *Palladium*, free franked by Henry Plant and inscribed "Webb & Cos Express." Addressed to Hartford, it suggests to me that Webb bought out Beecher, not Adams, in April or May of 1845, and that Webb operated the company's express business

*Will Mr Johnson please forward
 this at once.*

W T Rowland Esq -
38 Beekman Street
per Phillips & Co 1845 New York.

Fig. 13.

From Palladium Office 3 *Free*
Plant

Chas Deer, Esq
Webb & Co Express & Hartford
Conn

Fig. 14.

and independent mail operations under his own name not that of Webb and Plant, which was reserved for the West India goods operation.

The 1846 New Haven Directory still lists the company as Webb & Plant, with Webb now residing at 234 Chapel. By 1847, Henry Plant is no longer listed. He is apparently working for Adams & Co. directly as a messenger. The following advertisement appears in the directory:

WEBB'S DAILY EXPRESS

Express for Hartford and the East closes at 10-½ A.M.

For New York & South at 9 o'clock P.M.

N.B. Orders for all parcels to be called for in the city must be left at the office at least one hour before the time of leaving.

WEBB & CO., 2 Dwight's Building, Chapel Street.

The Dwight building address is 143 Chapel. Identical listings appear in both 1847 and 1848. However, in 1848, Webb becomes an Adams & Co. agent as noted in the *New Haven Journal & Courier* of September 25, 1848 with an insertion date of January 28th:

NEW EXPRESS

ADAMS & CO. respectfully give notice that by an arrangement made with the Directors of the New Haven and Northampton Company they have commenced running a DAILY EXPRESS to and from New Haven and Plainville in connection with their New York and New Haven line. They will also connect with Col. Welton's line of Stages to Waterbury and with waterman's line of Stages to Bristol, Collingsville Terryville, Plymouth and Litchfield. . . . A special messenger will accompany the passenger trains leaving New Haven at 1 P.M. Returning, leaving Plainville at 4:40 P.M. . . . orders for Goods to be returned by Express will be delivered free of charge.

OFFICES AND AGENTS

ADAMS & CO.

No. 16 Wall Street New York 9 Court street Boston
80 Chestnut street Philadelphia
7 Light Street, Baltimore
Penn Avenue Washington
cor. of Main and 14th st. Richmond
Water street Wheeling
D.B. WATERMAN, Plainville, Ct.
PRATT & POTTER, Southington, Ct.
G.B. CONKLIN, Meriden, Ct.
Phillips Chalel's (Dwight's Building) New Haven W. WEBB, Agent
jan 28

The 1849 New Haven city directory shows a change in listing inasmuch as there is an advertisement for both Adams and Harnden. It might be noted in this regard that the New York & New Haven Railroad was completed shortly after Christmas Day, 1848 so the new listings are a logical development:

ADAMS & CO'S EXPRESS

The Express for New York and South and for Hartford and the East closes at 9 P.M. For Farmington &c. at 1 P.M. N.B. Orders for parcels to be called for in the city must be left at the office at least one hour before the time of leaving.

W. WEBB, Agent, Dwight's Building, 143 Chapel Street.

Immediately below is the one for Harnden:

HARNDEN'S EXPRESS

For Hartford, Springfield and New York
For the transmission of all descriptions of merchandise and the collection of notes, drafts and bills. Leaves New Haven, daily at 11 P.M.

E. MYERS, Agent, 6 Exchange Building, Chapel Street.

I do not find an E. Myers in the directory although he is listed in New Haven ads as Harnden's agent as late as August 1849. I do find a John A. Myers as a freight agent, boarding at 124 Orange.

The only Adams cover I find from this era is a letter datelined New Haven May 15, 1849 to Colinsville, Conn. with a magenta label giving the New

Haven address as well as those of New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore. It is seen in Fig. 15 and is from the DeWindt collection.

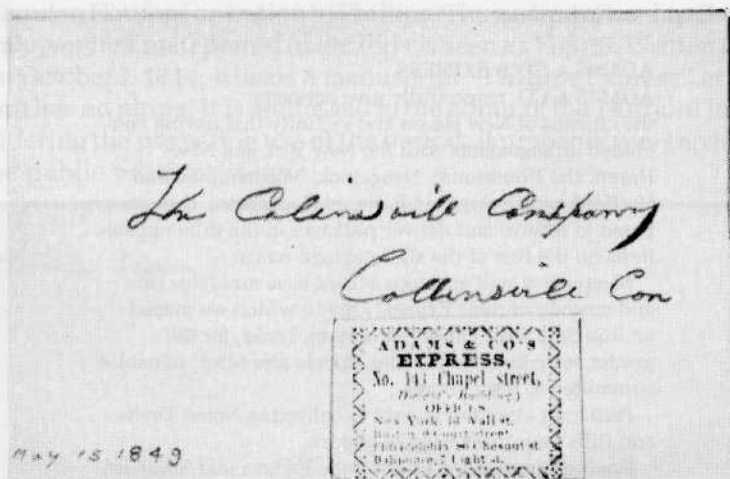


Fig. 15.

With the new rail connection a new service is announced in the *New Haven Daily Register* of August 5, 1849 with insertion date back to January 27th:

SPECIAL EXPRESS NOTICE

New York and New Haven Rail Road

ADAMS & CO. respectfully give notice

that in addition to their established Express line between Hartford, New Haven and New-York via the Sound and Railroad they now run SPECIAL MESSENGERS over the New York and New Haven Railroad DAILY for the transportation of Valuable packages, parcels, bank notes, &c. between the following places, viz:—New Rochelle, Mamaroneck, Rye Station, Port Chester, Greenwich, Stamford, Darien, Norwalk, Westport, Southport, Fairfield, Bridgeport, Stratford, Milford, New Haven.

Express leaves New York at 3 o'clock P.M. and New Haven at 1 P.M.

Office in New Haven, No. 143 Chapel street, W.

WEBB, Agent. Office in New York, No. 16 Wall st.

Jan 27 ADAMS & CO.

Adams & Co's Express

For New York and South and for Hartford and the East. Leaves daily (Sundays excepted) at 9 o'clock P.M.

M.W. WEBB, Ag't Dwights Building

Based upon the information from the city directories, I conclude Stimson had a slight confusion as to the timing of events. Adams & Co. apparently acquired Webb & Co. in 1848 in anticipation of the completion of the N.Y. & N.H. R.R. and it was Webb that acquired Beecher in the late spring of 1845. Mr. Plant joined Adams & Co. in 1847 at a time that he and Webb were not agents for Adams & Co. but conjunctive expresses.

An advertisement from the *New Haven Daily Register* of November 19, 1851, but inserted in February of that year shows us the operations of Webb as agent for Adams during the final years before Adams & Co. became the Adams Express Company:

ADAMS & CO'S EXPRESS

ADAMS & CO. respectfully give notice to the citizens of New Haven and vicinity that having concluded arrangements with the New York and New-Haven, the Housatonic, Naugatuck, Northampton and Hartford and Springfield Railroad Companies, they are prepared to receive and deliver packages at the different stations on the line of the above named roads.

Messengers will accompany and have exclusive care and custody of their Express Cars in which we placed an Iron Safe with Jone's Patent Bank Locks, for the greater security of bank notes, specie and other valuables committed to their charge.

Particular attention is paid to collecting Notes, Drafts, and Bills and purchasing of goods.

Having superior facilities on the Eastern and Southern Roads as they are enabled to convey merchandise at mail speed in advance of any other medium to nearly all the cities and towns in the Union.

Agents: New York, 16 Wall st.; Boston, 9 Court st.; Hartford, Phillips & Co.; Bridgeport, Sterling Hotel; Philadelphia 80 Chestnut st.; Baltimore, 162 Baltimore st.; Washington, Pennsylvania Avenue; Norfolk, Va. Main st.; Richmond, 7 Fourteen st.; Pittsburgh, Baker & Forsyth; Cincinnati, 15 East Third st.; New Orleans H.G. Stetson; San Francisco, Adams & Co.

Express for New York and Way Stations, for Pittsfield and Way Stations on Housatonic and Naugatuck Railroad at 9:15 A.M. and to New York at 4 P.M.

For Tariffville and Way Stations on the Canal Railroad at 9 P.M.

For Hartford, Springfield and the East at 8 A.M.

W. WEBB, Agent, No. 143 Chapel st., Dwight's Building New Haven Feb. 6

Knowing the dates and addresses of the various Adams & Co. offices is important in dating covers and labels without dates and in ascertaining if labels have been added to covers.

Acquisition of Phillips & Co.

In 1842, the *Bolles City Directory* of Hartford, Conn. listed Daniel Phillips, Jr. as residing at 43 Church street, whereas the *Geer City Directory* reported him at 43 Trumbull. Neither reported him as an express. The only express listing was for Jared Hurlbut, who resided at 26 Pearl street. This was Hurlbut & Co's New York, Hartford and Springfield express with offices located at the Harnden office at 7 Central Row, just four doors from the Hartford post office at 3 Central Row. The Springfield office was reported at the Springfield post office. As noted earlier, Hurlbut had sold his express to Harnden early in 1842. By 1843, Jared Hurlbut was listed as a "general agent" at the same address and Phillips was not listed at all.

The creation of Phillips & Co. is recorded in the 1844 directories. The company shows up at 7 Central Row, with Daniel Phillips, Jr. at 26 Pearl street indicating a takeover of the Hurlbut offices and possibly the sale of the Harnden Hartford operation to Phillips. The earliest cover I record from the independent mail period of Phillips is seen as Fig. 16. Written at New Haven October 7, 1844, it bears a manuscript "Phillips Express" at upper left and has no rating. It is addressed to the editor of the *Hartford Journal*. Considering the prevailing use of the period, it probably was carried free for the public relations value.

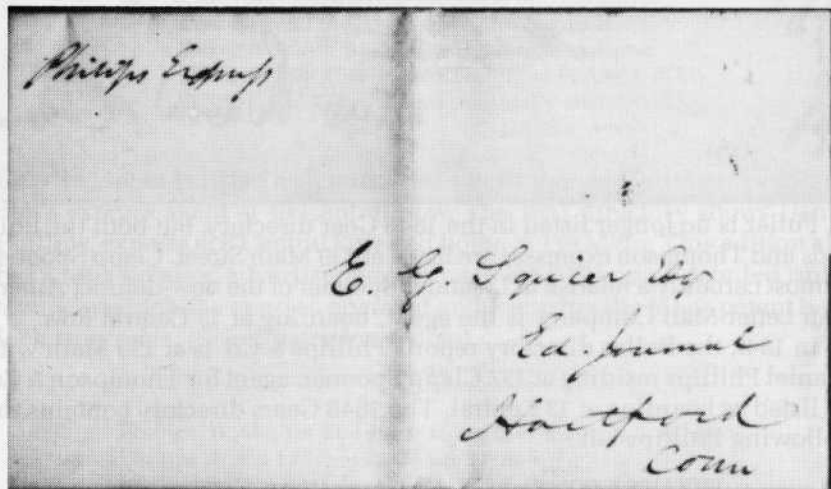


Fig. 16.

The Geer directory of 1844 also reports that Thompson & Co's Springfield, Boston and Albany Express is located at 7 Central Row with Frank A. Fuller as agent, boarding at the U.S. Hotel. Neither Fuller nor Thompson was listed in the previous directory. This new listing represents the sale of the Harnden Boston to Albany route to Thompson who was based out of Springfield, Mass.

By 1845, the Bolles directory lists both the Phillips and Thompson's express at 139 Main street with Daniel Phillips living at 26 Pearl. There is an advertisement in this directory reading:

PHILLIPS & CO'S PACKAGE EXPRESS
 Spring Arrangement, Office 139 Main street
 Leaves Hartford for New York at 7½ A.M.
 Middletown Package Express
 By Fuller & Co. leaves daily for the above places.
 Francis A. Fuller, Phillips & Co., r: Church St. Cottage

The Geer directory reports Francis A. Fuller, Phillips & Co., agent, Thompson & Co., h. Bulls Cottage, Church Street. Daniel Phillips, Jr. still is residing at 26 Pearl.

A cover, Fig. 17, datelined Hartford April 18, 1845 and addressed to a musician at New Haven shows the late Phillips rating. Unlike Webb and Adams, Phillips apparently used a 6 cent rate for letters by 1845. This is competitive with a number of the independent mail operations and but half of the Harnden and Adams package express letter rates.

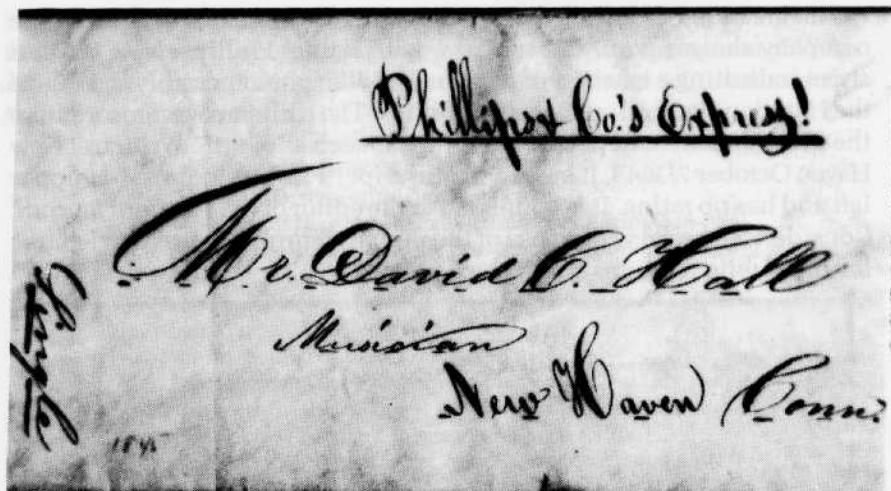


Fig. 17.

Fuller is no longer listed in the 1846 Geer directory, but both the Phillips and Thompson expresses are listed at 139 Main Street. Clapp Spooner, almost certainly a relative of Lysander Spooner of the now-defunct American Letter Mail Company, is the agent, boarding at 13 Central Row.

In 1847, the Bolles directory reports Phillips & Co. is at 139 Main with Daniel Phillips residing at 137. Clapp Spooner, agent for Thompson & Co. is listed as boarding at 13 Central. The 1848 Geers directory contains the following Phillips ad:

PHILLIPS & CO'S Hartford, New-Haven, New-York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington daily Package Express, Specie and Bank Notes forwarded and notes, drafts and bills collected with promptness and dispatch; also small cases, bundles & c. forwarded and receipts given in all cases. In regard for fuller particulars apply to Phillips & Co. 139 Main street, Hartford.'

Thompson & Co. Express 139 Main St. daily (Sunday excepted) to Greenfield, Boston and Albany and all intermediate towns, connecting with Eastern and Western Expresses.

The directory also lists Clapp Spooner at 1 Grove.

As in the case of Webb & Co. in New Haven, Phillips was incorporated into the Adams & Co. system in 1848. The Hartford Wells City Directory of 1848 gives us an advertisement of this service:

Phillips & Co. New York and New Haven Package Express. Forwarding and Commission Houses and Agents for Talcott's general Emigration and Foreign Exchange Office for Conveying Passengers to and from Great Britain and Ireland and Remitting money to all parts of England, Ireland Scotland and Wales.

Offices and Agents: PHILLIPS & Co., 139 Main St., Hartford, G.B. CONCKLIN, Meriden; W. WEBB, 143 Chapel street N. Haven; ADAMS & CO., 16 MALL (sic) street, New York.'

"Thompson & Co's Express. Leaves from 139 Main street for Springfield, Boston and Albany at 1 P.M. Office 139 Main Street, Clapp Spooner, Agent.

Spooner was reported to be boarding at 1 Grove. The Greer directory for 1849 shows Clapp Spooner listed for Phillips & Co., boarding at 1 Grove. It also gives Thompson & Co. at 139 Main and repeats the Phillips and Thompson ads. The 1850 directory ad lists Brattleboro as one of the Thompson towns while the Wells directory has the Phillips ad signed by Daniel Phillips and C. Spooner. A Harnden advertisement also appeared in this issue,

HARDEN'S EXPRESS OFFICE 10 Central Row
HARDEN'S PACKAGE EXPRESS for New Haven
New York and the South and North Leaves N.
York at 4 o'clock P.M. Daily, Hartford at a quarter
before 3 P.M. Office in HARTFORD, at PEASE & BOW-
ERS 10 Central Row, Orders punctually attended to.
C. GREEN, Agent

Charles Green is listed as boarding at the Exchange House and as Harnden's express agent at 10 Central Row. The 1851 directory shows Daniel Phillips, express at 6 Central Row and home at 139 Main. This edition also has a long detailed advertisement on page 125-6 giving a detailed run of towns in which the express operated and featuring the Jones patent bank lock iron safes. (See illustration below).

125

Phillips W. J., tin and stove store, 256 main, h 3 village
Phillips J. F., (Bacon & P.) h 21 morgan
Phillips Albert, pistol maker, h 111 front

PHILLIPS & CO.'S EXPRESS: *New Arrangement.*

PHILLIPS & Co., having effected contracts (in connection with Adams & Co.) with the New York and New Haven; the Housatonic; Naugatuck; New Haven and Northampton Company; New Haven, Hartford and Springfield; and the Hartford, Providence and Fishkill Railroads, will run a Daily Express by Passenger trains over these Lines, delivering and receiving Packages, Parcels, &c., at the several Stations, as follows: *Via New York and New Haven Railroad*, for Milford, Stratford, Bridgeport, Fairfield, Southport, Westport, Norwalk, Darien, Stamford, Greenwich, Port Chester, Rye, Mamaroneck and New Rochelle. *Via Housatonic Railroad*, for Stepney, Betaford, Newtown, Hawleyville, Brookfield, New Milford, Gaylord Bridge, Kent, Cornwall, Canaan, Falls Village, Mass. State Line, Sheffield, Barrington, Van Deusenville, W. Stockbridge, Stockbridge, Lee, Lenox and Pittsfield. *Via Naugatuck Railroad*, for Derby, Ansonia, Humphreysville, Naugatuck, Waterbury, Waterville, Plymouth, Camp's Mill, Litchfield, Wolcottville, Burrville and Winsted. *Via Canal Railroad*, for Tariffville, Unionville, Farmington, Plainville, Southington, Cheshire and Hamden. *Via New Haven and Hartford Railroad*, for New Britain, Berlin, Middletown, Meriden, Wallingford, North Haven and New Haven. *Via Hartford, Providence and Fishkill Railroad*, for Manchester, Vernon, Rockville, Bolton, Andover and Willimantic, connecting

with Downer & Co.'s Express for Norwich, New London and intermediate places.

Messengers will accompany and have exclusive care and custody of their Express Cars, in which are placed "IRON SAFES, with Jones' Patent Bank Locks," for the greater security of bank notes, specie and other valuables committed to their charge. "Having superior

126

facilities on the Southern roads, we are enabled to convey Merchandize, at *mail speed*," in advance of any other medium, to nearly all the Southern cities and towns. Particular attention paid to collecting Notes, Drafts and Bills, and the purchase of Goods.

P. & Co. are agents for W. & J. T. Tapscott & Co.'s EMIGRATION and EXCHANGE HOUSE, and can furnish Bills of Exchange on England, Ireland, Scotland and France. ~~Also~~ Also Passage Certificates for those wishing to bring their friends from that country, at low rates.

Express for New York and the East leaves office 139 Main street, at 2 15 and 6 15 P. M.

For Willimantic and the East at 2 45 P. M.

For New Britain, Plainville and Bristol, 2 45 P. M.

N. B.—Packages should be marked "Care of Phillips & Co.'s Express."

Phillips & Co., express office, 139 main
Phillips Daniel, (P. & co.,) h 137 main

It is not until the 1852 directory that we find Adams & Co. listings reported under that name in the record. This directory shows Adams, Phillips and Thompson all at 6 Central Row while another express, Valentine & Co. is found at 4 American Row. The listings from the business portion of the directory can be seen below:

Expresses.

Adams & Co., south, office 6 Central Row

ADAMS & CO.'S New Haven, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington Express Office, No. 6 Central Row, Post Office Building.

Phillips & Co., east and west, 6 Central Row

PHILLIPS & CO.'S Willimantic, Norwich and New London Express Office, No. 6 Central Row, Post Office Building.

Thompson & Co., north, 6 Central Row

Valentine & Co., steamboat, 4 American Row

VALENTINE & CO.'S Southern and Western Express, No. 4 American Row, Hartford. Valentine & Co. having made arrangements with the line of steam-

boats running between Hartford and New York, would respectfully give notice to the citizens of Hartford and vicinity that they are now prepared to receive and deliver packages, parcels, etc., at the following places, viz.:—Middletown, Haddam, East Haddam, Deep River, Essex, Lyme, Saybrook and New York. Particular attention paid to the collection of notes, drafts and bills.

JAMES P. PACKARD, Agent.

Office in New York, 1 Nassau st.

The Phillips operations ennumbered above with the various shifts reported in the advertisements gives the flavor of the final years of the Adams-Phillips operation until the formation of the Adams Express Company in 1854.

Other New England Covers

Only a few handstamp and label covers have been reported for the New England operations of Adams and Co. between the ending of the independent mail period and the formation of the Adams Express Company. At New London, the *American Stampless Cover Catalog* reports a 27mm blue circle reading: FORWARDED BY/ADAMS & CO'S/EXPRESS/FROM/NEW LONDON, CT./D. HOMER/AGENT, used in 1845. I have been unable to find any other record showing a D. Homer as an agent at the New London office. Peregrine Turner was the agent there and was cited along with Webb and Mr. Parks of Norwich as "faithful and popular agents" in the 1858 edition of Stimpson's history. There are two examples used in 1852 of the 45 × 28mm diamond used at New London by Turner. One is in black on part of a cover, the second in red is seen here as Fig. 18. It reads: FORWARDED/BY/ADAMS & CO EXPRESS/FROM NEW LONDON/P. TURNER/AGENT. There is no rate mark showing.

Another item from the catalog source is a red 39 × 27mm box used in 1849 reading: FROM/ADAMS & CO./NORWICH./W.E. PARK./AGENT. Mr. Park died sometime prior to 1858.

The Boston office gives us one of the better selections of label styles so that we can use these to date items by style. The earliest is on a letter from Salem to New York that was in the Bartels stock and later part of the Sloane

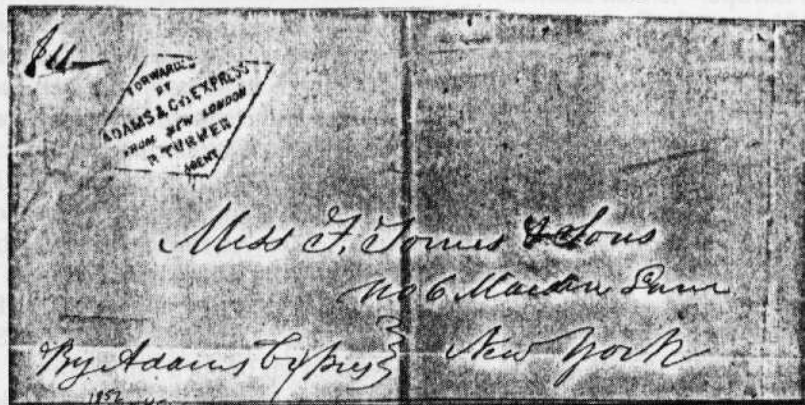


Fig. 18.

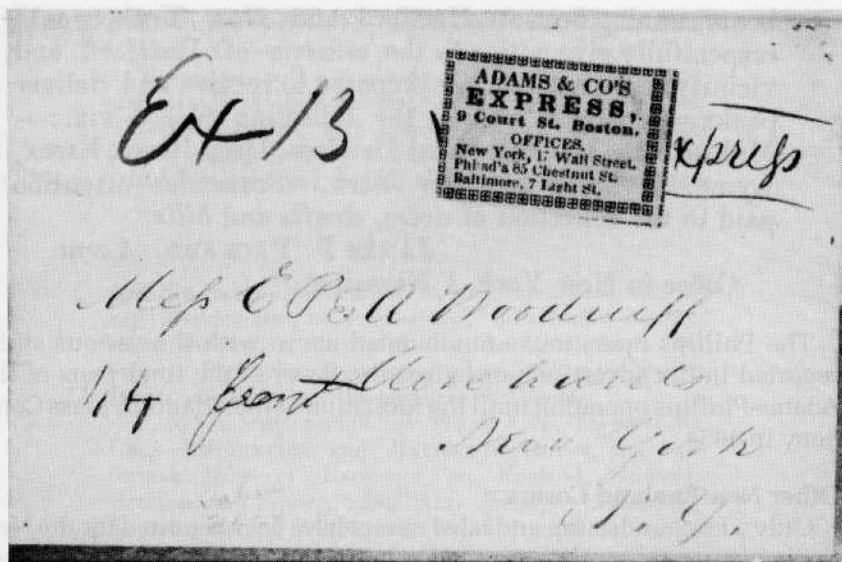


Fig. 19.

holding. It bears a light green label and is addressed to Messrs. Woodruff in New York (known for the Brattleboro provisional covers addressed to them). Datelined Salem February 24, 1846 this is rated "13" which I interpret as 13 cents not 13 bits. It is seen as Fig. 19. I record a similar label with a March(17?), 1845 during the independent mail period, with the Baltimore office listed at 8 Light street, and New York at 7 Wall, the address before renumbering in 1845.

The next Boston style I record is a vertical green label used on a cover dated January 26, 1848, Fig. 20. It is ex-Gibson and ex-Hardy. The word "EXPRESS" is in hollow letters in this style, and the Baltimore address is now 162 Baltimore St.

The next style is on a blue-green label with identical wording but solid letters in the "EXPRESS" but with the Baltimore office at 162 Baltimore street. An example of this style was offered as lot 159 at Frajola's sale of the remnants of the DeWindt collection. An undated green 41 x 47mm label on a cover with the same design but have the Baltimore office at "8 Light St." and reading at bottom, "Packages and Letters for-/warded to all parts of Europe." is also known.

An interesting, and probably unique, error version of this style label is seen as Fig. 21. This has the "Goods entered at Custom House and forwarded" bottom line, but the error is that both Baltimore (162 Baltimore st.) and Pittsburgh (85 Fourth st.) have lost their first numerals and read "62" and "5". The item is datelined at Boston October 23, 1850.

A still later style has a circular format. It is known on two covers. One is an unpaid 5 cent rate cover, sold by John A. Fox and David Phillips, postmarked Boston July 11 and addressed to "Mrs. Alvin Adams c/o Robert Booker, Esq." This is probably the same man who first hired Adams at his hotel in Woodstock, Vt. The second example, Fig. 22, shows the text: NEW YORK SOUTHERN & CALIFORNIA/ADAMS & CO'S/EXPRESS/84/WASHINGTON ST./BOSTON. It is identical except for being a drop letter to Peter Richards in Boston with a Boston circular datestamp of April 12th. Both

*Order
in
New York
Adams Express*

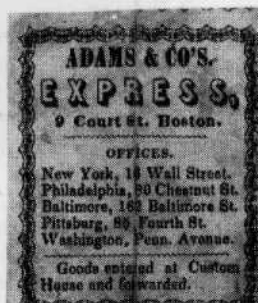


Fig. 20.

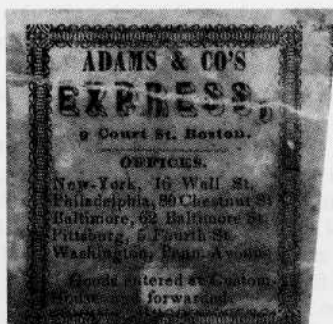


Fig. 21.



Fig. 22.

covers have been trimmed at an odd angle at the bottom. While neither is dated, I do not record the 84 Washington Street advertised prior to January 1851 so these must be 1851-4, probably circa 1852-3.

Overseas Connections

Just as Harnden found Willmer & Smith unsatisfactory after a time, Adams & Co. also found it necessary to change agents. By June of 1846, we find J.R. Greaves & Co. serving as agents at Liverpool. Already cited is an advertisement from Phillips show that Talcott's General Emigration and Foreign Exchange Office was used in 1848. They, too, proved unsatisfactory. A major change was announced in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* on October 31, 1849:

TRANSATLANTIC PACKAGE EXPRESS AND GENERAL EUROPEAN AGENCY—EDWARDS, HALE & CO., in connection with Messrs. CHAPLIN AND HORNE, of ENGLAND and the MESSAGERIES NATIONALE, of FRANCE, receive and forward Packages and Parcels, Goods, and Merchandise to and from all parts of Europe. Goods arriving by steamers or sailing vessels consigned to inland towns in America, are sent at once to their destination by Adams & Co's Expresses, and goods or parcels intended for delivery in any part of England or France, are received by ADAMS & CO., at all their various offices, and forwarded "Through" to the consignee, by Edwards, Hale & Co.

Our Houses of business in Liverpool and London, are prepared to give the greatest attention to the collection of accounts, and all business of a private and confidential nature and speedy transmission of legal and other documents, and the execution of commissions of every kind. We are also authorized to draw on the Provincial Bank of Ireland and all its branches throughout that country, and to furnish drafts for small sums payable in London or Liverpool. Our friends who may be disposed to favor us with the shipping of their goods from England to America, will please to direct their correspondents abroad to order such goods to be given in charge of CHAPLIN & HORNE, (who have branches in every principal town in the Kingdom) care of Edwards, Hale & Co., Liverpool or London.

All packages from this country should be marked "Transatlantic Package Express," care of Edwards, Hale & Co.

OFFICES:

In America.—New York, 70 Wall St.; Phila. 80 Chestnut St.; and at all the places of business of ADAMS & CO., in the U.S.

IN EUROPE—Liverpool, Columbia, Bldg.; London, Chaplin & Horne's, Gresham St., and at all other offices and agencies of CHAPLIN & HORNE, throughout the Kingdom and in France.

Oc 31—1m*

Thursday, November 1, 1849

Edwards Hale & Co. served as an agent through at least 1850 according to ads in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*. Sanford & Co. brought the English papers on January 29, 1851 while Edwards Sanford the Adams & Co. Liverpool agent who handled the cover shown as Fig. 5 advertised on March 10, 1851 with their local address at Adams & Co. Note the familial-type relationship to Edward Sanford, co-owner and agent of Adams & Co.

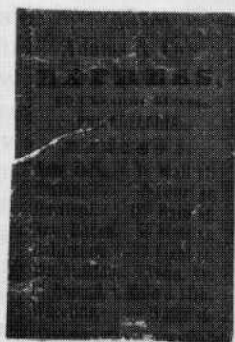
Middle Atlantic Labels 1845-54

The only Adams & Co. label I record thus far out of New York in the post independent mail Adams & Co. period is an orange label variety seen on the cover, Fig. 23. It is on a June 12, 1849 letter to Norwich, Conn. with the label pasted over a manuscript "Pr. Adams Express."

To me one of the more interesting of the Middle Atlantic region labels is the red example used on an August 24, 1846 letter from Philadelphia to New York. This was the outer wrapper for a book and contained a letter



Fig. 23.



*Paid 2
E.F.S.*

*Wm W Richards Esq
Care of Mr A Richards
Corner of Front & Pine Street
New York*

Fig. 24.

regarding a shipment and the return part of it. It can be seen as Fig. 24 and the label gives us the addresss of the Richmond, Va. office as well as the fact that a new office is set up at Wheeling, Va. (now W. Va.) which didn't yet have the location available when the label was printed. Of particular interest is the rating, presumably two bits (25 cents) marked, "Paid 2, E.F.S." the initials of the Philadelphia Agent, Edward F. Sanford, who along with Shoemaker—his partner—and William Dinsmore shared ownership of Adams & Co. with Alvin Adams.

The same vertical style is found in blue used at Baltimore on a cover of August 1845 posted from there to New York, Fig. 25. It shows the Baltimore address is 7 Light street at that time. This vertical style is a favorite of Adams & Co. in this period. The cover is rated 2/- (25 cents).

There is an unusual style label in yellow found on a money letter from Tyrone, Pa. The item is undated but I would expect it to be from about 1852-4. Addressed to Philadelphia, it contained \$143.56 and is rated 4/- (50 cents). Shown as Fig. 26, it reveals the Tyrone agent to be D.E. Robinson.

Adams & Co. was a big user of printed corner cards. Perhaps the most common variety is the series of red shields found at the major offices of

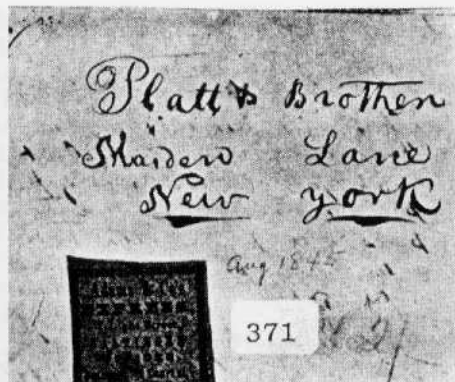


Fig. 25.

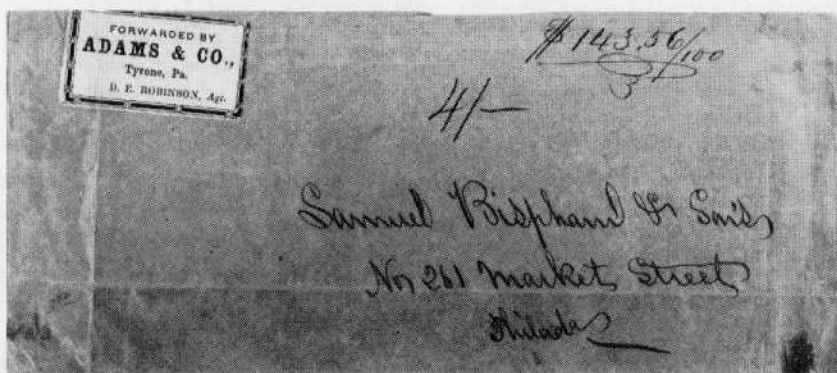


Fig. 26.

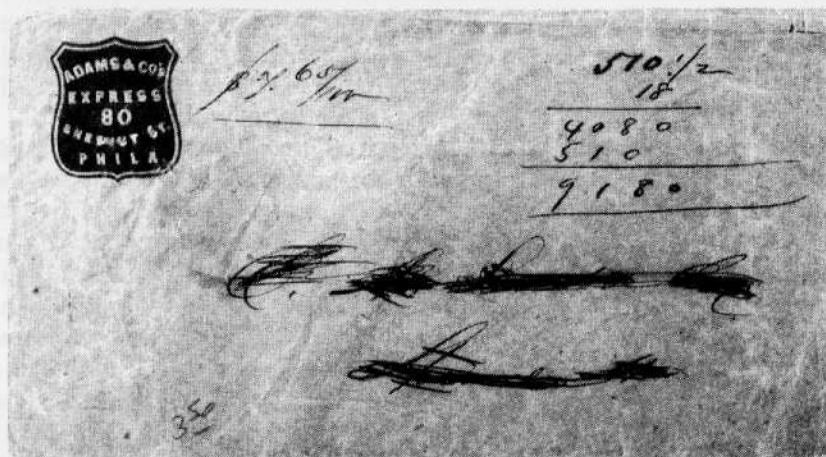


Fig. 27.

Boston, Philadelphia and New York. An example of this style from Philadelphia is seen as Fig. 27.

Eastern Growth

One of the elements that spurred growth of the company in the Middle Atlantic was successful negotiation of a Treasury Department contract to take charge of government monies between the Custom House at New York and the Mint in Philadelphia.

Large sums of monies were involved and Henry Plant was assigned by

Dinsmore to be the messenger. He held the position for about six months, establishing the operation on a firm footing until he was replaced by John Dunning. The reason for that change was that Dinsmore needed him in New York to take over the Hartford & New Haven express division upon the death of E.A. Johnson. Plant held that post until November 1854 when he was succeeded by W.L. Crane, a clerk in the New Haven office. The reason Plant was removed, this time, was that he was promoted to head the Harnden Division in the South with a base in Augusta, Ga. This he did so successfully that, when the Civil War broke out and Adams had to find someone to handle the operation in the South, he transferred the title of the entire southern operation to Plant who then became the president of the Southern Express Company.

John Hoey in his 1877 Alvin Adams obituary interview tells us that it was not until 1846 that the company could see its way clearly. He specifically commented upon the exclusive New York–New Haven R.R. contract of \$1,700 a month, which I noted earlier was advertised in January 1849. He also noted that Adams & Co. was the first express into California in 1849 and that, while the California company was separate, Alvin Adams was seriously hurt in his personal finances when the California company failed. He did not mention Adams & Co's growing monopoly position in the East.

I have already cited Sanford & Shoemaker advertisements showing them as proprietors of the express in the Philadelphia area, long after Adams & Co. had its own operations there. Other students have been puzzled by seeming contradictions in the *modus operandi* of the company. The arrangements and interrelationships can be better understood if we follow the discussion of one of the participants, A.L. Stimson, author of the previously cited history of the expresses. His brother, John K. Stimson, had been a schoolmate of Dinsmore and had been asked to join the company by him. In 1850 the two Stimsons were involved in opening the south to the express business. As Stimson tells it:

It is almost incredible that, rapidly as Expresses had increased in the Eastern States, after the example had been set by Harnden in 1839, they were not at all in use in most of the slaveholding States until 1850. Now (in 1858) they are pretty thoroughly awake to the importance of such facilities, as a commercial lever, and are seeking to supply their deficiency; but Stimson & Co. (John K. & A.L. Stimson) found it rather "hard sledding," when, in 1850, they started the first regular Express that was ever in use in New Orleans and Mobile,⁸ and the far Southern and Southwestern States; and their expenses exceeded their income. In 1851 they took Addison Brastow into copartnership with them, and he became the resident manager in New Orleans. Their office in New York was with Adams & Co.—whose business had so enlarged as to occupy two stores, Nos. 16 and 18 Wall Street. A. & Co., in the following year, received a half-interest in Stimson & Co's business, and it assumed the style of Adams & Co's New York, New Orleans and Mobile Express. S.&Co. were induced to accede to this for two reasons, viz: 1st, because Adams & Co. would otherwise have established on that route an Express of their own, against which it would have been hopeless to contend; and 2nd, because A. & Co. agreed to arrange it with the owners of the Harnden line that they should not run an opposition.

It was not then a remunerative Express, but it was bound to become the key to constantly extending lines and increasing routes into the Southwest, as the Adams Express Co. are now demonstrating.

8. Stimson ads in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* begin December 20, 1850 with Brastow as partner with New York offices at 19 Wall St. and using steamship transport. On June 12, 1851, Adams reports its New Orleans express without mention of Stimson.

Shortly after the commencement of the N.O. Express by S. & Co., John Hoey became associated with John K. Stimson, under the style of Hoey & Co. and started the New York and Charleston Steamship Express. Both of these gentlemen were still in the employ of Adams & Co.

This description shows that various employees were allowed to have their own separate expresses but as they got more successful, Adams & Co. became a joint owner. The arrangement makes it difficult to draw precise lines as to just when the express became part of Adams & Co. rather than an independent operation. In the case of Sanford & Shoemaker, it is clear they became full partners with Alvin Adams and William Dinsmore at some point.

Adams as a Monopoly

Stimson refers to possible competition from Harnden's Express as though it were a legitimate separate entity in the 1850's, but was that correct or was Alvin Adams giving the real story when he stated in his 1870 autobiography that he acquired the Harnden domestic assets shortly after Harnden's death and kept the two firms separate for "certain reasons"? Was he confusing the Adams Express Co. organization of 1854 when Harnden was a separate department, although totally owned, with the Adams & Co. structure of earlier years?

We know Harnden was split into foreign and domestic operations during Harnden's life and most domestic lines sold off. The foreign operation seems to have stayed with Brigham. It advertised in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* from its Philadelphia offices at 61½ Walnut at various times. On November 28, 1850, it offered remittances to Ireland and Scotland without charge or discount. On March 27, 1851, it offered drafts on France and passages from Londonderry as part of a passenger and exchange office. On December 1, 1851, a news notice reported that shortly before, Harnden's English operation suspended operations owing in excess of £60,000. It seems unlikely this operation ever involved Adams.

On the domestic side, Harnden sold off portions of his routes before his death in 1845. The western route from Albany went to Wells while the Boston to Albany went to Thompson. The New York south to Philadelphia and beyond went to Hatch in 1843, but reverted and was resold August 7, 1844 to William A. Livingston and Johnson Livingston. The former quit after a few months and went to work with the upstate New York express of Livingston, Wells and Pomeroy, leaving ownership with Johnson Livingston who continued to operate until early 1846 when he seems to have become associated with Sanford and Shoemaker of Adams & Co. The latest record I have is seen as Fig. 28 dated March 26, 1846. Note that Winchester is the New York signatory and that shipment is to Sanford, who is to take it on to Washington D.C.

Livingston & Co. advertised in the Philadelphia papers at various times. As with the 1846 freight bill, it advertised July 4, 1845 as "Livingston & Co. (late Harnden & Co.);" stating its clerks and agents are positively forbidden to handle letters or mailable matter because of the express laws. On July 5 an insertion is noted, which in a December 15, 1848 ad advertises passages to Chagres and California from its Philadelphia office at 43

LIVINGSTON & Co.
[Late HARNDEN & Co.]
EXPRESS
FORWARDERS.

PACKAGES, BANK NOTES,
Specie, &c. &c.
FORWARDED DAILY TO AND FROM
PHILADELPHIA.

BILLS, DRAFTS AND ACCOUNTS
COLLECTED.
Custom House and all Agency and
Transient Business attended to
PROMPTLY.

PACKAGES RECEIVED
At Harnden & Co's, 6 Wall st.,
AND FORWARDED TO:
**No. 43 South Third Street,
PHILADELPHIA,**

FOR
BALTIMORE, WASHINGTON,
NORFOLK, CHARLESTON,
CINCINNATI, WHEELING,
PITTSBURGH, ST. LOUIS, &c.

New York, March 26 1846
Received from *African Missionary Society*
On *N.Y.*
Marked *Observatory*
Washington
DC
Contents as represented,
to be forwarded to **PHILADELPHIA** for *Am. Soc. J.B.*
Dangers of Seas, of Fire, Water, Breakage, Leakage, and all other
accidents excepted, unless insured by mutual agreement.
Received for the Proprietors. *S. H. Winchester*

Fig. 28.

S. Third St. January 15, 1849 it advertises passage in the *Gray Eagle*. On February 20, 1849 we have ads from the same office as, "Livingston, Howard & Co., Express Forwarders to Reading and Pottsville." This is a new routing and not part of the old Harnden route. Howard was an old express going back to the independent mail period. A similar ad appears May 16, 1851. Subsequently the company turns into Howard, Earl & Co. with the Harnden name, as can be seen on the previously unreported label, Fig. 29. This became Howard & Co. in January 1854 when Earl disposed of his interest.

The Philadelphia to New York portion of Livingston & Co. has obviously disappeared between 1846 and 1848 and the company is basically out of the express business until the merger with Howard's Express. The old New York-Philadelphia route is left to Adams & Co.

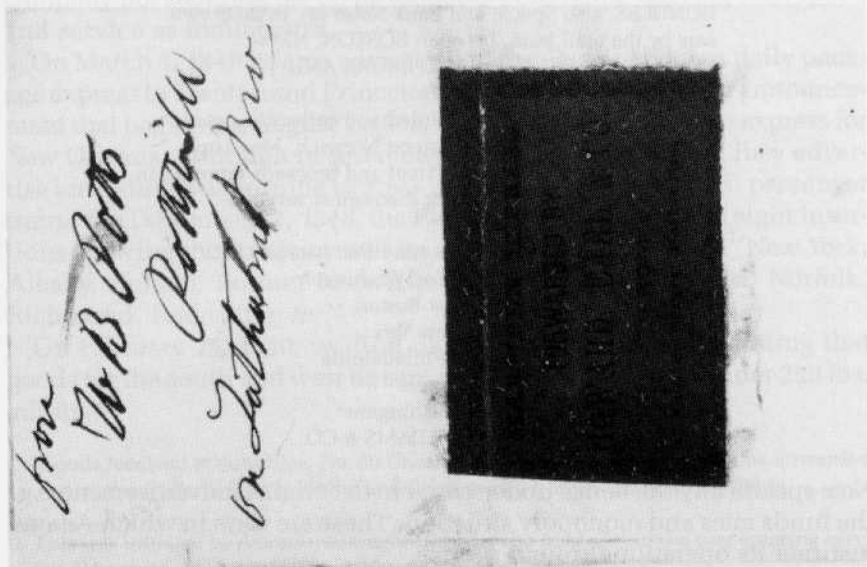


Fig. 29.

Returning to Stimson's discussion of what happened to Harnden, he tells us that in 1845 the domestic operations went to Brigham, Blake, Coolidge [sic] and Wheeler. Brigham sold out quickly. Then "about 1848, C.H. Valentine bought out Blake so the owners were Valentine and Coolidge in 1849. This is Joseph Coolidge, a partner in Augustine, Heard & Co. According to a notice of ownership change which I have, dated September 1, 1847, Harnden & Co. announced it had:

disposed of the entire right and interest in the Express Department of our business between New York and Boston and Providence and New York to Messrs. Blake, Coolidge & Wheeler. . .

Stimson then tells us that J.M. Thompson bought out C.H. Valentine while L.W. Winchester bought out Coolidge. The result was the firm of Thompson Livingston & Co. with Thompson, Livingston, Winchester, Shoemaker and Sanford involved.

As can be seen, Winchester and Livingston were involved in Livingston & Co. in 1846 while Sanford and Shoemaker were part of Adams & Co. throughout. Further, Livingston & Co. was not operating as an express on the Philadelphia to Boston route for some years according to its ads. Harnden shows up as a label with a New York office at 6 Wall Street and a Philadelphia office at 43 South 3rd beginning August 2, 1849 and running through late 1852 with the Providence office added.

For many years Adams & Co. advertised as a monopoly on the route between New York and Washington. I find such an ad in the *Boston Transcript* of February 5, 1847 with a June 12 (1846) insertion date:

QUICKER THAN THE QUICKEST.

ADAMS & CO'S EXPRESS

J.R. GREAVES & CO., Agents Liverpool, ENG.

The subscribers respectfully inform the public that they continue to transmit Goods, in Small CASES and BUNDLES, also Specie and Bank Notes &c. in their own cars by the mail train, between BOSTON, NEW-YORK, PHILADELPHIA, BALTIMORE AND WASHINGTON.

Drafts for acceptance forwarded and collections made on any of the above cities; also on Norwich, New London and New Haven, Connecticut and proceeds returned in Eastern current funds without discount at very reasonable rates.

The public should bear in mind that we run ONLY Express between New York and Washington.

Offices: No. 9 Court street Boston
16 Wall street New York
85 Chestnut st. Philadelphia
7 Light st. Baltimore
Penn Avenue, Washington

Je 12 1s tc

ADAMS & CO.

Note specifically the items, underscored in the original advertisement, e.g. the funds rates and monopoly situation. These are ways in which Adams justified its operation through service.

We know that the Hope Express was not in operation for some years to come (1850) while Gay, Kinsley announced they would begin an extension of their New York to Boston service to Philadelphia March 21, 1848. However, on January 28, 1849, Sanford & Shoemaker announce in the *Public Ledger*:

having purchased with Mr. R.B. Kinsley, the express route from New York to Boston via Newport and Fall River. These gentlemen are fully competent to conduct the business with correctness and dispatch.

Gay, Kinsley & Co. began May 18, 1847 from existing operations and also had C.H. Valentine as an associate. Gay and Valentine's interests were bought out as per the above notice on January 28, 1849 and Sanford & Shoemaker really ran the line as Kinsley had his hands full as President of a bank in Newport, R.I. Thus, this competition lasted less than a year. The next challenge is noted in the *Public Ledger* of November 24, 1852:

OPPOSITION TO MONOPOLY

—NEW YORK AND PHILA. INDEPENDENT EXRESS—
WILLIAMS, ROBERTS & CO.

having, at the request of several influential merchants of the cities of N.Y. and Phila., established the above Express, will commence running on TUESDAY, the 23d. inst. Their arrangements enabling them to reduce the present rates one-half, they respectfully solicit the patronage of the public.

Parcels, freight, &c., under the charge of special Messengers. Offices—203 BROADWAY, between Fulton and Day Sts.

63 WALNUT ST., Phila., near the Exchange.

J.C. WILLIAMS: New York

J.T. BOLTON, Phila.

A.J. ROBERTS :

no. 24-1T*196

Wednesday, November 24, 1852

Speed and Service Competition

To compete throughout the Adams & Co. express period, we find the company not standing pat on its monopoly but rather offering both speed and service as inducments.

On March 4, 1848 Adams advertised in the *Public Ledger* a daily package express to Trenton and Princeton. On July 27th, there is an announcement that beginning August 1, 1848, Adams & Co. will have an express for New Orleans, "through in seven days."⁹ On December 20th, they advertise an additional morning express to New York via the 9 a.m. passenger trains. On December 22, 1848, the Philadelphia office begins eight insertions showing the company will forward holiday presents to "New York, Albany, Buffalo, Boston, Norwich . . . Baltimore, Washington, Norfolk, Richmond, Petersburg, &c."

On February 15, 1849, we find Sanford & Shoemaker requesting that goods for the south and west be sent in packages weighing under 250 lbs. adding:

Goods received at our office, No. 80 Chestnut St. by 3½ o'clock P.M. will be forwarded across the ice in season to arrive in Baltimore in 24 hours from Philadelphia . . .

9. This was initiated by Adams messenger Daggett who died within the year entering service. He served Adams & Co. from 1848 to his death.

This service relates to the fact that for a ten-day period, beginning February 9th, the mail line had been interrupted by ice in the Susquehanna and the post office had mail delays.

A series of ads in the *New York Pathfinder*, *Boston Courier*, *Massachusetts Spy*, and *Boston Evening Transcript* focus upon the speed and exclusive service Adams provided. An example published in the *Transcript* of August 14, 1849 illustrates these:

ADAMS & CO'S
NEW EXPRESS
ARRANGEMENT

Having made arrangements with the Philadelphia Railroad Company, the subscribers now offer increased facilities for the transmission of Freight to Philadelphia in 25 hours from Boston, Baltimore in 37 hours and New Orleans in 7 days—*ahead of all other Expresses*. In addition to the above increased facilities, they will forward freight as low as any other Express.

The public should bear in mind that Adams & Co. runs the *only and exclusive* Express to Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, Wheeling, New Orleans, &c. &c.

Drafts transmitted for acceptance and collection made as usual on New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore Washington, or New London, Norwich, New Haven, &c. &c. at the lowest rates.

Goods entered at the Custom House.

July 19 1849

ADAMS & CO.

The new arrangements apparently began in July 1849. The announcement of new service with Edwards, Hale, previously referred to appears October 31, 1849. On November 15, 1849, the ads tell how they operate to Pittsburg:

ADAMS & CO., run their Western Express cars to Baltimore by the Phila., Wilmington and Baltimore R.R. Co's Passenger train and from Baltimore to Cumberland by the Baltimore & Ohio R.R. Co's Passenger train. From Cumberland to Pittsburg they send three daily lines. Their arrangements for speed cannot be excelled.

By December 6th, we find:

MESSRS. ADAMS & CO. are forwarding Packages, Merchandise, &c., to Pittsburg in two days, and to Cincinnati in four days from Philadelphia. They are making this time regularly, and carrying full loads in their wagons across the mountains. The charge of Messrs. Adams & Co., on goods by their "Fast Freight Line," are much below the usual Express prices.

On the 17th, the ads claimed to have delivered goods from Philadelphia to Cincinnati in less than 3½ days and the following day we find an expansion of the holiday concept introduced in the preceeding year:

A CARD. HOLIDAY PRESENTS.—

ADAMS & CO'S EXPRESS.

Messrs. ADAMS & CO., No 80 CHESTNUT St., have made special arrangements to transport Holiday Presents, and deliver them on the 25th inst., or earlier if desired.

Parcels, Packages, and cases will be received for New York,

Trenton, Princeton, Wilmington, Baltimore, Washington, Lancaster, Harrisburg, Carlisle, Chambersburg, and Lewiston, until the 24th inst.

For Boston, Worcester, Norwich, New Haven, Hartford, Springfield, Providence, Newport, Fall River, Albany, Norfolk, Richmond, Petersburg, Cumberland, Pittsburg and Wheeling until the 22d. inst.

Packages should be plainly marked with street and number of consignee's residence, and (when desired) "delivered on the 25th inst."

Messrs. Adams & Co. run the Only Express to Washington, Norfolk, Richmond, Petersburg, Fredericksburg, Harrisburg, Carlisle, Chambersburg and Lewistown.

Their general arrangements are greatly superior to those of any other Express, and their charges lower.

N.B. Particular care will be taken to have the packages carefully handled.

D18-td24r

On September 4, 1850 we find discussion of the frequent failures of the southern mails to reach Baltimore with Adams & Co. advertising, on the 10th:

ADAMS & CO. have chartered the steamboat *George Washington* to carry their express for the South to Chester, during the interruption of the R.R.

On October 5, 1850 the company announced a change in its custom house brokerage in New York and stated that importers who send duly attested papers can have their entries made with great despatch.

By an advertisement of January 15, 1851 we find that Adams has added a fast freight to Pittsburg so that they can send merchandise to that town in three days. A very unusual service is noted July 16, 1851—a bit over two weeks after the new 3 cent prepaid postal rates went into effect:

THE THREE CENT PIECES.

An arrangement has been made by the officers of the Government with Messrs. Adams & Co., by which Postmasters are to be supplied with three cent pieces, on remitting the amount to the U.S. Mint at Philadelphia, which they may require within reasonable limits. The demand for these pieces since the new postage law has gone into operation has been very great, and the acting Secretary of the Treasury suggests to Postmasters to be 'moderate as possible in their calls.'

On August 5th, Adams & Co. moved their Philadelphia offices to 166 Chestnut, below 4th. This can help date covers.

Earlier I quoted Stimson on his express in New Orleans and Mobile. In June and July 1851 we find Adams & Co. advertising the establishment of an office in New Orleans with Addison Brastow as the company's agent and partner. Mr. Brastow was Stimson's partner in his operation. The following ran in the *Boston Daily Mail*:

ADAMS & CO'S EXPRESS
TO NEW ORLEANS—per Steam
ship CHEROKEE, June 26, 1851
and Steamship WINFIELD
SCOTT July 1, 1851, ADAMS & CO. will

despatch Freight, Specie, Gold Dust, Jewelry, Valuable Packages and Parcels to New Orleans and Mobile.

We have recently leased and fitted up the spacious and eligible building No. 72 Camp street, New Orleans and established Mr. ADDISON BRASTOW as our Partner and Agent at that point where he will attend to the transportation, delivery and forwarding of Freight at the lowest ruling rates and to the REMITTANCE OF MONEY entrusted to this conveyance to avoid the expense of drafts and the insecurity of the mails. Freight for this point need not be prepaid but if destined for places beyond it should be prepaid to New Orleans (sic).

Prompt and faithful attention given to the COLLECTION of Drafts, Notes and Bills.

ADAMS & CO.

16 and 18 Wall street New York
84 Washington street Boston

je 28 tf

As can be seen, this is an apparent complete takeover of the Stimson operation by Adams & Co. without the slightest acknowledgement. Brastow is taken in directly as partner.

On September 30, 1851, the *Public Ledger* comments that Adams & Co. is the only company now carrying goods through from the East. Our Canal, it says has been a very serious drawback, with water lower than it has been for years and good detained must remain until we have more water,

but Adams & Co's Express brings the goods right through, water or no water, and the agents here have the right kind of go-ahead mettle about them. . .

October 24, 1851 saw an ad giving more information about Adams & Co's speed to the West as well as its exclusive contracts on the Pennsylvania Railroad:

ADAMS & CO'S WESTERN EXPRESS

Line to PITTSBURG 38 hours;

to Cincinnati 3½ days; to Louisville 4 days; to St.

Louis 7 days.

Packages, Merchandise, Specie, Bank Notes, &c. &c., forwarded daily to PITTSBURG, WHEELING, CINCINNATI, ST. LOUIS, NEW ORLEANS, and all the Principal WESTERN towns and cities.

We run the only EXPRESS CARS, and have the only MESSENGERS on the Pennsylvania Railroad. Our Western goods go through to PITTSBURG from LOCKPORT in our own Packet Boats, and are forwarded immediately on their arrival, either by the river or via CLEVELAND, as the consignees may direct.

We have arranged with the Railroad Companies from MADISON to INDIANAPOLIS, and from LOUISVILLE to LEXINGTON, and offer superior facilities to parties wishing to forward goods to these points, or their vicinity.

The superiority of our general arrangements has enabled us to greatly reduce our charges for freight, especially on small packages, and we will guarantee our shippers time, and lower charges, than can be obtained from any other route or Express Company.

Oc 24-lmr ADAMS & CO.

On January 5, 1852, the company announced new express arrangements to Columbia and York, Pa, using a special messenger and receiving packages to 5 p.m. On May 3, 1852, they announced a new arrangement between Philadelphia, Chester, Wilmington, Newark, Elkton, Northeast, and Havre de Grace via the Philadelphia and Baltimore Railroad with a special messenger express leaving at 8 a.m. On the 19th of June, we find Wells Fargo advertising Philadelphia service and asking goods to be left at the Harneden office. This is the first major competition since 1846.

On June 21, 1852 a Cape May express is advertised by Henry Gorman, who for many years "has been connected with the concern of Messrs. Adams & Co." August 3rd, Adams notes its Western Express closes at 8pm and goods left later go by the next day's express.

Conjunctive Local Service

With the elimination of the independent mail business beginning in July 1845, the Adams & Co. partners in Philadelphia, Sanford and Shoemaker, decided to move into the local city despatch business. They did this by working with a former employee of the American Letter Mail Co., William Stait, and forming the Eagle City Express Post.

The earliest known cover handled through Eagle City is seen here as Fig. 30. It is datelined August 16, 1845. William Stait and his Eagle City and Stait's Despatch used a variety of handstamps, labels and adhesives. The information on these presented in the *Scott Specialized* and the *American Stampless Cover Catalog* is only partially accurate, the former having fallen prey to a Needhamism while the latter didn't authenticate its sources correctly.

The Eagle City operation was always located at the Adams & Co. office throughout its existence and the markings end in November 1851 shortly after Adams & Co. moved (in August) to the Wilson Building at 166 Chestnut. Only a few covers from the late period are recorded. One shows a 1 cent rate. Although the Eagle City Post ended in 1851, Stait continued to provide messenger service to the Adams express office.

An advertisement in the February 12, 1848 *Public Ledger* tells us how the Eagle City operation handled Valentine mail:

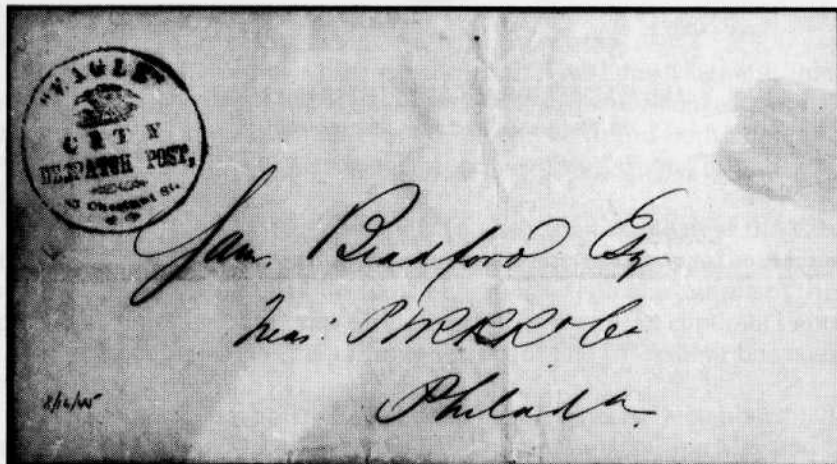


Fig. 30.

EAGLE CITY POST

At Adams' Express

80 Chestnut Street.

We have organized a force of thirty persons, clerks and carriers, for the use of St. Valentine. The Eagle Post will call at its Red Boxes as late as 9 P.M. for several evenings. The Mother Office (Adams' Express) will be kept open late until the night of the 20th inst.
fe 12-1T* STAIT & CO.

It should be noted that the best known Philadelphia local, Blood's, also had red boxes. Blood was located at 48 South Third Street, but moved May 25, 1848 to 28 South Sixth Street. Its old office was above Girard's Bank, while in the basement there was another City Despatch. That company advertised July 22, 1848 that it was for sale as the owner was leaving the city. It would appear Stait bought it, for by winter he was advertising as being at that office as well as the Adams & Co. office. With the move there seems to have sprung up a rivalry with Blood, for there are various ads suggesting something. Too, we have an odd ad on August 22, 1848:

LONG EARS!!!—The public are very respectfully informed that W. STAIT, of the EAGLE CITY POST, has not long ears or a red head. A word to the anti-donkeys, &c. &c.
au 22-1T*

This appears to be a political reference to the Swarts local with its picture of Zachary Taylor in red. Stait comments on the plethora of Blood's ads in the *Public Ledger* with a small note of December 2, 1848:

THE EAGLE CITY POST, whose principal Offices are at Adams' Package Express, House's Telegraph, the Western Telegraph, and 48 S. Third, is pursuing the even tenor of its way without inflicting a flood of 'advertisements upon the reading public.' It is prepared to perform all that any other post promises to undertake.

N.B. A special Messenger for City, State, or any part of the World, at half an hour's notice.
d2-1T* STAIT & CO.

Stait had begun serving the telegraph companies at least as early as late 1847. His telegraph messenger delivery operation used small yellow labels in many cases. One of the earliest I record is a use on a wire from the N.Y. and Washington Magnetic telegraph dated December 24, 1847, Fig. 31. Received at the telegraph office at 31 Merchants' Exchange it was deliv-

N. Y. AND WASHINGTON MAGNETIC TELEGRAPH OFFICE, }
31 Merchants' Exchange, Philadelphia.

The following was received at this Office,

Dated *Trenton Dec. 24* 1847.

Nathan Frothingham Esq.



ered to the Trotter Company. I might add that at some point Trotter set up an account with Stait for we find letters picked up at the postoffice and delivered by Stait to Trotter. A variety of these yellow labels are known.

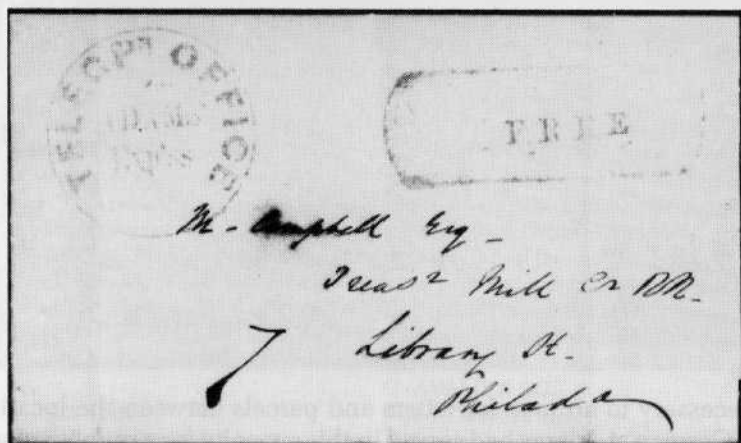


Fig. 32.

Two other groups of telegraph handstamps used by Stait are known. Both are associated with his Eagle City operations at Adams. The first, Fig. 32, is a large red circle reading "TELEGRAPH OFFICE/BY/ADAMS/Exp'ss" which can be found rated with a "3" in the circle or with an oval boxed FREE as shown here on a March 14, 1849 use.

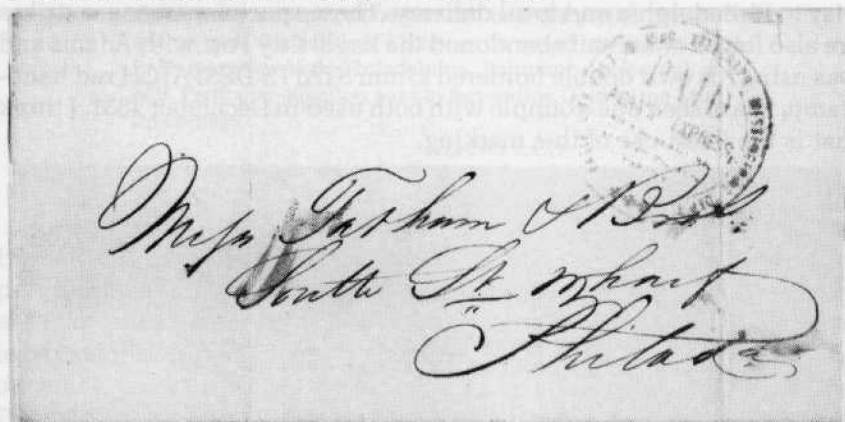


Fig. 33.

The second variety shows the new connection with the Magnetic Telegraph Company when Stait provides their regular messenger service. These are red 37mm double circles which can be found both rated and PAID as seen in Fig. 33. All are inscribed with the Adams' Express 80 Chestnut Street address.

The Stait's Despatch Post items begin with the purchase of the City Despatch located at 48 South 3rd street as noted above. They use the Adams name as one of the offices into 1851. Fig. 34 is a typical example of this operation using the 2 cent rate for delivery. The earliest 2 cent rate I note is May 1845 on an Eagle City although a 3 cent rate in October has been observed.

As noted above Stait advertised special messengers in December 1848. During the summer, Philadelphians liked to vacation at Cape May and it

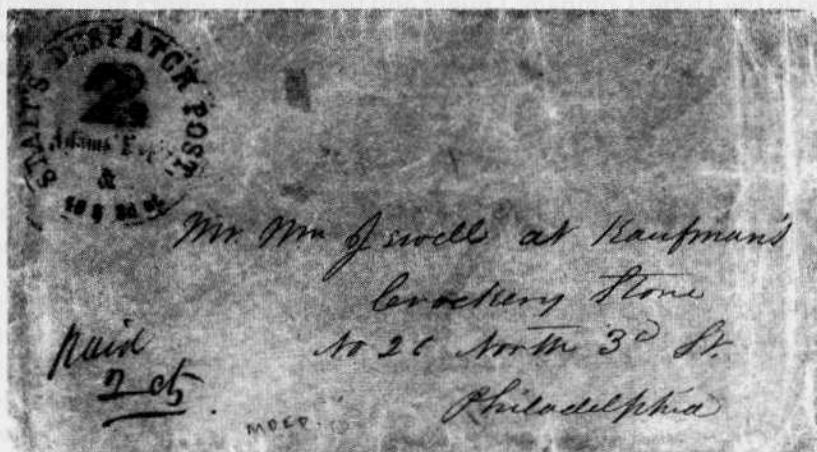


Fig. 34.

was necessary to arrange for letters and parcels between the locations. Henry Gorman at Adams had served in this capacity for a number of years until in the summer of 1852 he went into business for himself. A number of covers from Cape May handled by Stait are known. They bear the red 36mm SPE^{CL} MESS^{GR}/FROM/Eagle Post/80 Chestnut St. and may or may not have a rating inside the circle. The example shown here as Fig. 35 has a circled 5 and a circled 2 rate to cover the transit on the boat from Cape May to Philadelphia and local delivery. These special messenger strikes are also found after Stait abandoned the Eagle City Post with Adams and was using his own double bordered 27mm STAIRS DESPATCH red hand-stamp. I have seen one example with both used in December 1851. I think that is the latest use of this marking.

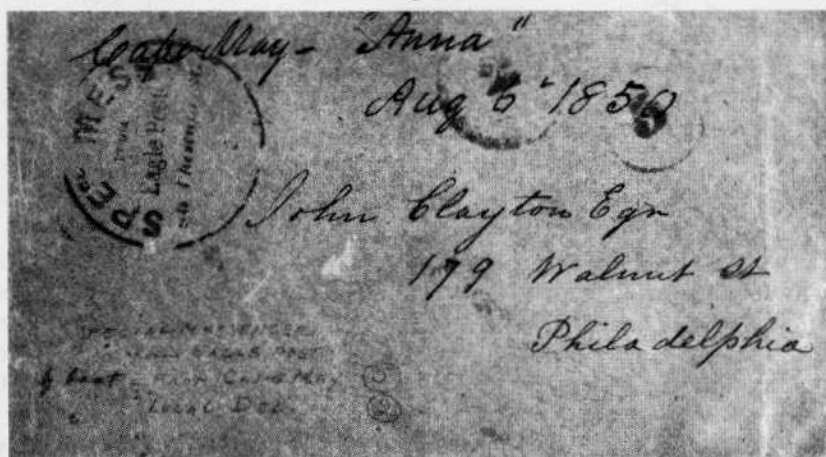


Fig. 35.

Unlike the Stimson and other examples, the Stait example is one where the conjunctive use by an employee resulted in the employee separating out completely and succeeding in his own company. The Eagle City operation was abandoned and with it the Adams & Co. connection.

Golden California

A significant portion of the Adams & Co. operation was devoted to the

express business in California. The company claimed to be the first express in the region. The first ad was September 7, 1849, in the *Public Ledger*:

ADAMS' & CO'S CALIFORNIA EXPRESS

The subscribers respectfully give notice that they have extended their Express to California and will transmit letters, parcels, packages, specie, &c. &c. via the Isthmus of Panama, by every steamer for Chagres, sending a special Agent through, each trip, who will take charge of our freight and attend in person to its immediate delivery.

Our first Express will leave New York on Saturday, 15th September, in the steamer *Empire City*, under the direction of Mr. D.H. Haskell, who has for several years been favorably known to the public as a clerk in our Boston office, and has been admitted a partner, to reside at San Francisco and to have the entire control of our business there. N.B.—Letters for Valparaiso, Callao, Oregon, and the Sandwich Islands, will be forwarded by every steamer for Chagres.

ADAMS & CO.,

Se7-T14R

80 Chestnut Street

A similar set of ads in the *Boston Courier* began September 26th and ran through October 17th, noting additionally:

We are prepared to forward letters, parcels and small packages of merchandise by a 'Special Messenger' on the 1st and 15th of every month; Freight to be prepaid.

Gold in any amount can be remitted or if the parties prefer we can give them *Bills of Exchange* on any of our houses either in Boston, New-York, Philadelphia, Baltimore or New Orleans.

N.B. Particular attention paid to forwarding Gold to the Mint for coinage.

ADAMS & CO

2 awis &4awostf:S26

Boston Sept. 26, 1849

According to Stimson, both Adams and Dinsmore initially opposed Haskell's California proposal wanting operations where they could give personal attention. Arriving in San Francisco, Haskell took a small shanty either owned or agented by I.C. Woods. Every few weeks this shanty had to be extended. Finally John M. Freeman, another Adams & Co. man came out and was put on the payroll at \$600 a month. The charge for freight was 75 cents a pound up to 15 pounds. A daguerreotype went for \$3. All payments were cash in advance. At Chagres the freight would be sent ashore in lighters and transferred to river canoes to go to Cruces where it would be put on pack mules for the trip to Panama City. Hopefully, there a Pacific steamer would be waiting to carry it to California.

Many Adams men served as messengers to California. Among these was Hiram Dixon, Fred A. Stimson, Swett, John Sanborn, Wallace, John Dunning, Parview, Morton and Trembly. It is probable that Berford, the Pittsburgh agent and John M. Freeman also served as messengers. Once the freight reached California another group of men needed to take it to the "diggins." Small independent operators such as Ballou were used, but Fred Stimson (died 1865) and the Tracy brothers (Edward and Theodore F. and T. Felix) were Adams employees engaged in this task as well. Felix and Stimson went between Shasta and Marysville while Edward was

Adam's agent at Shasta and Theodore worked at Placerville. At the mines buckskin bags of gold, weighted out at an estimated \$17.50 an ounce were accumulated for the return trip.

Many of the Adams men became involved with other Western expresses. Among these was Berford, who advertised his own operation January 26, 1850. John M. Freeman purchased a half interest in Hawley's in July 1850 and then sold out to Adams and became the Adams agent in Panama. Dunsmore's nephew, Charles E. Bowers, went out early and began his own express in late 1849. The Langton express was formed by a man Adams & Co. employed initially in California. Edward Tracy worked with the Hawley operation and eventually with his brothers set up a series of expresses. All were hired by Haskell. John W. Carrington eventually worked with A.M. Hinckley while Blackburn replaced Dixon as bookkeeper and later went into business as a partner of S. De la Cova in Aspinwall. For about three years Freeman Cobb had charge of the California Express in the New York office. He eventually went to Australia and is known today for founding Cobb & Co. the famous Australian stage line.

The California operation originated as a three-man partnership with Adams, Dinsmore and Haskell. While some sources indicate Dinsmore got out, this appears to be incorrect. What did happen is that profits were so large that Sanford and Shoemaker bought their way in. These profits helped finance new offices in New York at 59 Broadway and may have contributed to some of the other eastern expansions mentioned earlier.

Nevertheless there were problems. Haskell initially kept a close eye on operations but eventually began to rely upon his manager Isaiah C. Woods. There was a \$25,000 robbery from the Sonora stage and in March 1854 a major argument with local agents representing Newell & Co. (a Todd & Co. successor) that handled an important part of the lines to the mines. Friends of the Newell operators began a run on Adams & Co. that weakened the company.

Pushed apparently by Sanford and Shoemaker, the eastern operators, worried about what was going on, dissolved the copartnership with D.H. Haskell May 12, 1854. The eastern operators kept the forwarding business to California and agreed to cover California drafts. Haskell then associated himself with Isaiah Woods as his partner and the two persuaded Alvin Adams to remain as a *special* partner with no liability beyond \$25,000 that he would put into the firm and allow them to keep the Adams & Co's California Express name. At the time Adams was the largest shipper of gold in California with volume about double that of Wells Fargo.

In the east, on July 1, 1854 a consolidation of all the Adams & Co. operations was made to create a limited stock company, Adams Express Company. This consolidation did not include California but did include Adams & Co's Eastern, Southern and Western Divisions, Harnden & Co., Kinsley & Co., J.M. Thompson & Co. as well as Hoey & Co's Charleston Express and Livingston and Winchester's Savannah Express. Woods appears to have had financial dealings with Page, Bacon & Co., of such a nature that when that company failed February 21, 1855, it brought down the California Adams & Co. two days later. Adams & Co. California never reopened. The bulk of the business went to Wells, Fargo. The Adams Express Company

in the East was hurt to the extent it was covering California drafts and Alvin Adams was personally hurt according to Hoey. The freighting operation to the east was reassigned by the Adams Express Company to John M. Freeman, John K. Stimson and Josiah Hedden operating as Freeman & Co's California Express. Freeman Cobb, who had returned from Australia in 1857, at that time became a silent partner in the company.

Alvin Adams tells us that the California operation extended to 35 offices plus one in Portland Oregon. There was also an agency in Panama. I record stampless covers with handstamps from all but four of the California offices. The ones I note are: Angels, Auburn, Benecia, Camp Seco, Chinese Camp, Coloma, Crescent City, Diamond Springs, Don Pedros Bar, Georgetown, Grass Valley, Jackson, Los Angeles, Marysville, Mok Hill, Monterey, Montezuma, Mormon Island, Mud Springs, Murphys, Nevada, Ophir, Prairie City, Rattlesnake Bar, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Jose, Shasta, Sonora, Stockton and Yankee Jims. All are known as ovals. Circles are known at Sacramento, San Francisco and Stockton.

Not all covers used handstamps: a letter written October 3, 1851 at San Francisco is shown as Fig. 36. As can be seen it was marked "Paid" and "Sent by Mr. Howes of Adams & Co. express" to New York where it was put in the mail unpaid to go to Boston on November 17, 1851. This letter probably travelled via the Georgia to Panama and at Chagres was put on board the *Daniel Webster*, which reached New York November 16th.

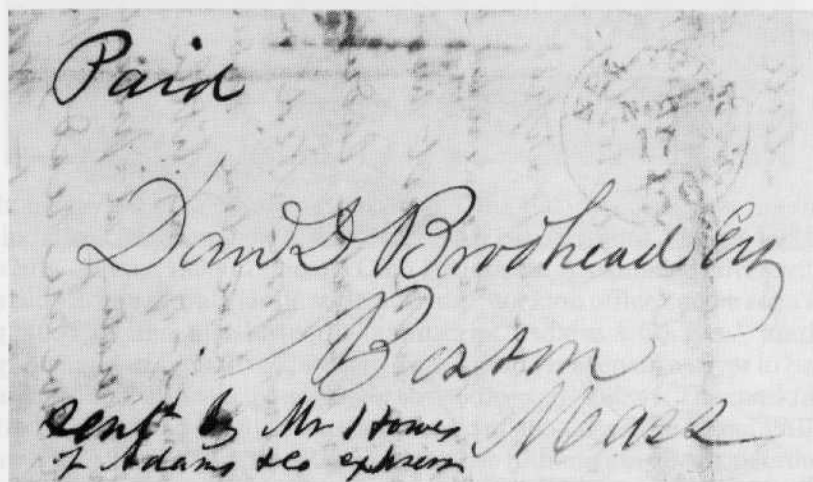


Fig. 36.

It is more difficult to find east to west letters, carried by Adams & Co. to California. Fig. 37 is an example posted in New York by Adams & Co. with the black 33mm circle NEW 10 YORK/FEB/5, the sailing date in 1852 of the *Cherokee* to Chagres to meet up with the *New Orleans*. This is a case where Adams & Co. preferred to give the letter to the postal service rather than carry it themselves.

One of the scarcer double line ovals is this red example of the Prairie City office used on a Tandler & Co. cover to San Francisco. The Tandler correspondence has been tampered with by the application of second strikes of various western express markings, but no fakes are reported with only one express handstamp. This item can be seen as Fig. 38.

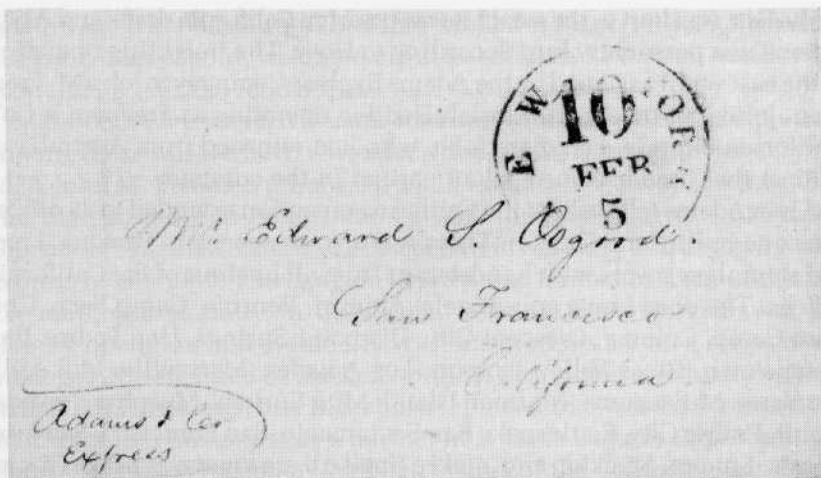


Fig. 37.



Fig. 38.

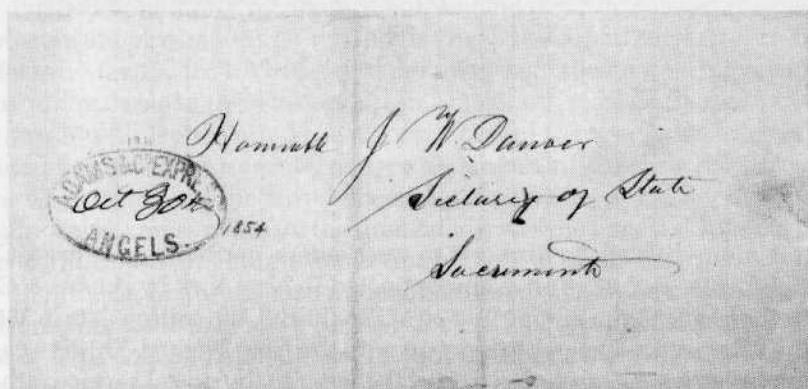


Fig. 39.

Even rarer is this example from the office at Angels, California used October 30, 1854 from the Denver correspondence. This use is after the separation of the two Adams & Co. operations; this represents the Haskell company, Fig. 39. It apparently contained a package of legal papers relative to filing a mining claim.



Fig. 40.

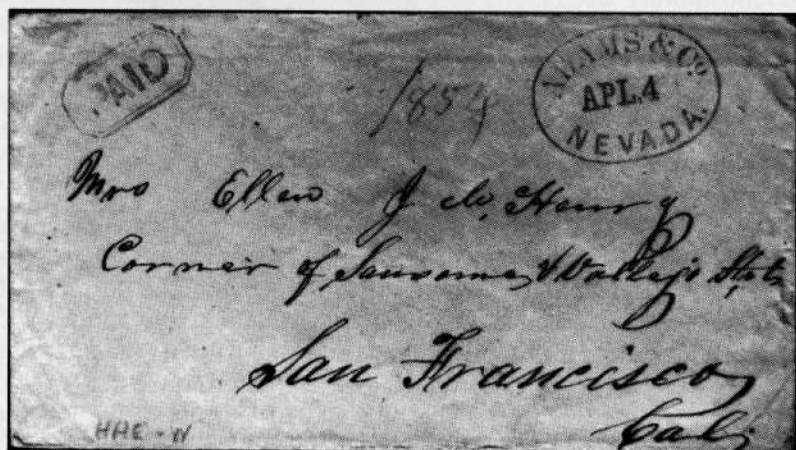


Fig. 41.

In my review of Ken Kutz's *Gold Fever*, I illustrated a cover showing the Coloma and Mormon Island markings. This can be found on page 268 of the July–August 1989 *Collectors Club Philatelist*. An undated cover with the blue 37mm double circle style from the Stockton office can be seen as Fig. 40. This item also bears the manuscript “Adams & Co. Exp.” marking. A single line small oval variety from Nevada is seen on a cover to San Francisco that appears to have been street directed, Fig. 41. The marking is in red and dated April 4, with a notation of 1854 use. The boxed PAID, which is a standard Adams & Co. marking has hitherto only been recorded in 1852–3 so that this would be a new late use if the date is correct.

The double bordered PAID is sometimes found used alone as witness the cover here as Fig. 42. This item is a power of attorney granted to the new California Governor, John Bigler (1852–6) by Alexander Anderson permitting the governor to sign for his salary. It is dated June 30, 1852.

The Move to Australia

Following upon the move to California in 1849, Alvin Adams and Dinsmore were ready to listen to the solicitations of a steamship company that the new Australian fields would also yield an express bonanza and that they could supply regular steamer passage. This was in 1852 about the time the firm moved into its new 59 Broadway building in New York. Adams

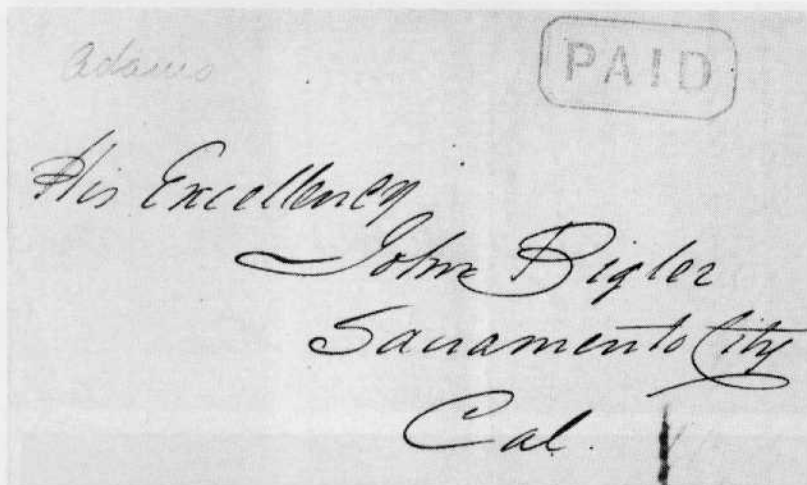


Fig. 42.

& Co. sent its Cincinnati agent, George Mowton to Melbourne to establish a branch in that city. This was done and the first advertisement appeared in the Melbourne Argus announcing the despatch of the first Express to England and America on May 14th, 1853.

The problem was that Mowton was an experienced express agent but not thoroughly grounded in exchange and banking, a requirement for the position. At the same time that Mowton arrived, Freeman Cobb, formerly the head of the New York office of the freight department of the California Express, had gone on a tour of Europe in 1852 and ended up in Australia where he started a stage line, Cobb & Co. which generated a fortune so that he could retire in 1857 a wealthy man. He became a silent partner in the Freeman & Co. operation between New York and California upon his return.

Adams in his autobiography in 1870 noted that "in 1852 we opened a banking house in Melbourne and a branch at Sydney" and in 1855 closed the Australian operation. In the *Collectors Club Philatelist* May-June 1982, Allan Levy gives a detailed look at the Australian operation that need not be repeated here.¹⁰ What was clear is that setting up transportation to the gold fields proved difficult and the company had to suspend that service July 3, 1854 because of "unsatisfactory express lines" as it announced. With a new postal act in 1855 that inhibited overseas shipments, and Mowton's unsuitability in the role of banker and commercial agent rather than express man, the operation was folded with considerable financial loss in June 1855. Mowton returned to the United States and became the agent for coal mines in Pennsylvania.

Allan Levy illustrated several Adams & Co. covers with use by the Australian operation in his article; Ken Kutz shows an example carried by Adams to Australia in his book *Gold Fever*, while in my review of that book I illustrated an example with the New York Adams & Co. corner card sent via Mowton to Robert Carrington. The addressee is apparently the brother of the John Carrington who worked for Adams and later Hinkley in California.

10. Allan Levy, "Adams & Co. Express—the Melbourne, Australia Branch," *Collectors Club Philatelist*, Vol. 61, no. 3, May-June 1982, pp. 141-150.

Adams Express Company

When the Adams Express Company was formed July 1, 1854 as a limited stock company it had a number of components as Stimson tells us. There was Adams & Co., Livingston's Philadelphia Express, Harnden & Co., Kinsley & Co., Livingston, Winchester & Co.'s Savannah Express, Thompson, Livingston & Co., Hoey & Co's Charleston Express and Thompson & Co.

Kinsley & Co. had been formed in 1850 when Rufus B. Kinsley joined with E.S. Sanford and S.M. Shoemaker to buy Gay's portion of Gay, Kinsley. Thompson & Co. was purchased from Harnden by J.M. Thompson for \$3,000 and subsequently he brought in R.L. Johnson (1853) and Wm. N. Melcher, the Boston clerk. Stimson tells us Adams & Co. bought the operation in 1854 (page 104 of his 1858 edition). Adams had as directors and co-owners Adams, Dinsmore, Sanford and Shoemaker. Thompson, Livingston (formerly Harnden) had J.M. Thompson, Johnston Livingston, E.S. Sanford, S.M. Shoemaker and L.W. Winchester (the New York manager).

The Express Company was established as a limited stock company with 12,000 shares and a capital of \$1.2 million. Alvin Adams was president and Wm. B. Dinsmore as vice president. Additional directors were Edward S. Sanford, S.M. Shoemaker, Johnston Livingston, Rufus B. Kinsley, Col. John Bigham and George W. Cass. The latter two were from Pennsylvania and Cass was a railroad executive. The company's overseas agent, Edwards, Sanford & Co. united in 1855 with Livingston, Wells & Co. to become the American European Express with H.S. Lansing as president. This lasted until the withdrawal of the Collins line of steamships so that the firm decided to close in March 1858.

Early in 1855, Adams withdrew to Boston and George Cass became president; he didn't last long, withdrawing to become president of the Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroad. By 1858 Dinsmore was president; Sanford, vice president; Thompson, secretary and the managers were Livingston, Dinsmore, Thompson, Sanford, Shoemaker, Kinsley, Clapp Spooner, John Bingham and Alfred Gaither who was in charge of the Western Division.

One of the more unusual covers of this period can be seen as Fig. 43a and b. It is handstamped by a blue shield on the back (43a) at the Adams Express office 59 Broadway in New York while the front shows it came "per Tasmania via Callao per hand of Mr. Burlingame" "Care Messrs Adams & Co. New York" who arranged for it to go to Bridgeport, Conn. The use of two different Adams names suggests this originated in Australia before the close of that office in 1854 or early 1855 and went transPacific to Callao.

A unique Adams advertising cover is seen in Fig. 44. This red oval promotes the Adams Express Company as the Lightning Line in 1855. At that time the Ohio and Mississippi was open (July 11, 1855) between Vincennes, Ind. and East St. Louis. This originated in St. Louis and went to Massachusetts so it originated in Gaither's Western Division.

Fig. 45 shows a typical freight bill of the company just before the Civil War. It covers the transport of \$87 from Marengo, Iowa to St. Louis. The managers listed at the left are the men who run the company. As can be seen neither Alvin Adams nor his son Waldo are listed for New England although Waldo was Boston superintendent. New England was handled by Thompson and Kinsley.

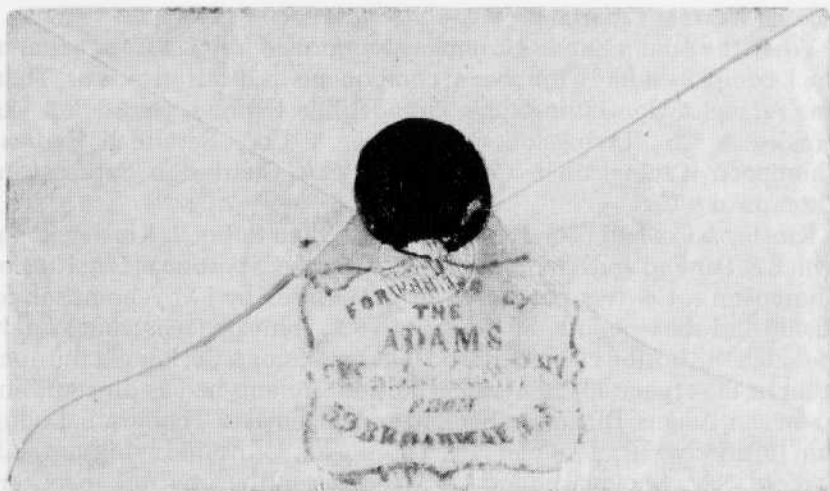


Fig. 43a.

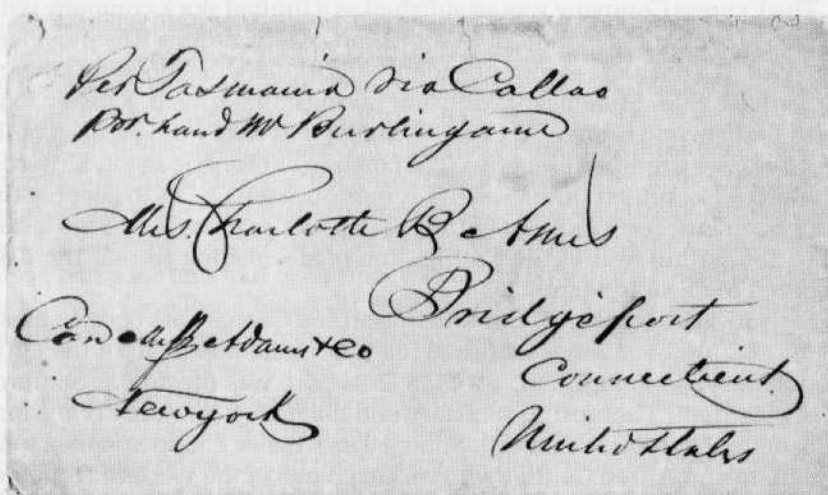


Fig. 43b.



Fig. 44.

The five years after the outbreak of the war were great growth years for the Adams Express Company. The company had no competition in D.C.

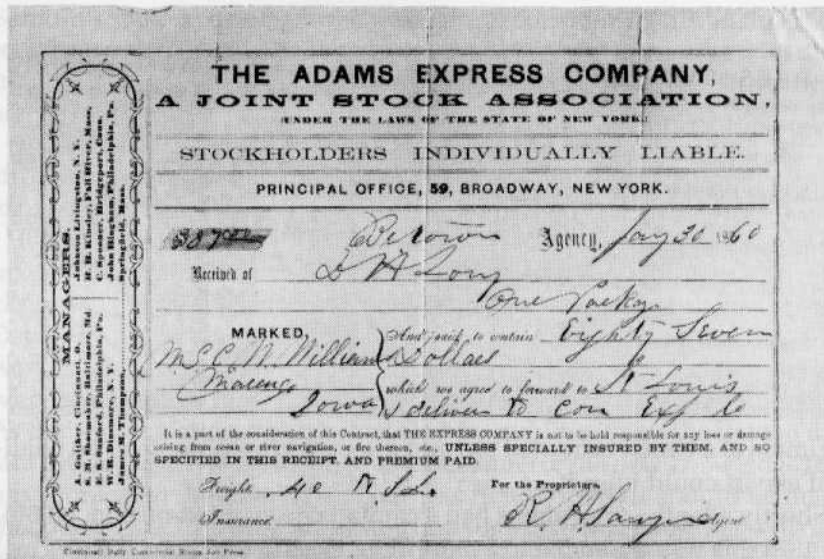


Fig. 45.

and Maryland. It had good connections with Senator Sumner and Secretary of War Stanton so that it was the sole express serving the blockade forces around the Confederacy.

There was strong southern sympathy among many Adams employees and the company was not adverse to making a profit shipping munitions south just prior to the attack on Ft. Sumter. Alvin Adams, himself, was in Charleston and saw the bombardment of Sumter from the parapets. A scandal was in the offing when the Adams role in munitions shipments was discovered.

Looking at the overall picture, Adams realized that it was necessary to separate the southern operations completely. On May 1, 1861 the entire Adams Express Co. operation in the Confederacy was turned over to Henry Plant, head of the Southern Division, and a new company, the Southern Express Company was formed. While the Southern did use Adams handstamps for a short time, these were quickly exchanged for Southern Express handstamps. To show Union sympathy, John Hoey in the New York office initiated the "Free for the Regiment" service to New York regiments in Washington. At the same time political connections were burnished and Adams applied to service the front lines. Many of the orders from Washington to the field in Virginia were carried by Adams messengers. When New Orleans fell, Adams provided some of the first services in the town.

One major Adams field of activity was servicing the blockading forces stretched around the Confederate borders in Florida and the Carolinas. Fig. 46 shows a cover from this operation bearing a yellow "FORWARDED BY/Adams' Express Co./FROM/BARRANCAS/Florida." It is on a soldier's package containing \$200 that is being sent home to Vermont from this fort outside Pensacola, Fla, which fell in 1862.

As happens too frequently, this cover was misrepresented at auction as better than it is by being described as a Confederate use. The auctioneer so described it based upon a silly APS certificate. This is from a Union

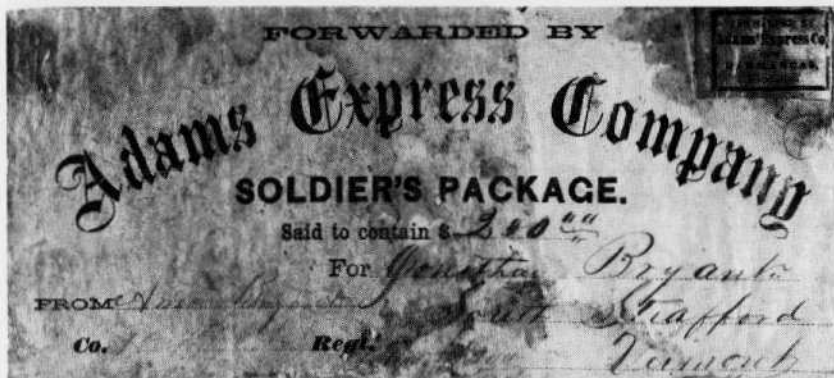


Fig. 46.

regiment at a Union occupied fort and directed to a Union state; no qualified expert could miss it.

Shortly after the war Adams had a capitalization of \$10-million, (1866). By 1875 this was expanded to \$12-million, exactly ten times the original sum in 1854. The big expansion was in anticipation of a move into the West. In January 1870, Adams did not have an office in Kansas, Colorado, Indian Territory or New Mexico and only penetrated Missouri for 200 miles. August 1, 1875, Wells, Fargo withdrew from the Atchison, Topeka, the Leavenworth and Galveston and the Missouri River, and Gulf and Adams took possession the same day. By 1880 they were running messengers over 3,400 miles of railroads west of the Mississippi.

Alvin Adams died September 1, 1877 of thoracic dropsy. Until his death he had maintained an office in Boston at the company headquarters there, commuting from his estate in the suburb of Watertown, Mass. It was remarked that it was not until the last year of his life that his hair turned grey. Adams interests and friendships were almost entirely business although he had some interest in the arts. He had no hobbies and did not contribute to charities although he did open his Watertown estate to the public once a week.

Adams' funeral was one of the largest ever seen in Boston. It was attended by most of the business leaders of the community while Hoey and Dinsmore came up from New York. It was as part of his funeral obituary interview that Hoey gave the information that the company was worth \$27 million at the time and that it employed 15,000 people. It was one of the major companies of the period.

William B. Dinsmore, senior, died in 1888 and was succeeded by his son, William B. Dinsmore who had married Adams' daughter in 1867. The younger Dinsmore remarried and at the time of his death in 1906, his wife was the daughter of jeweler George R. Downing. In 1858 his father helped finance the Overland Mail.

Edward S. Sanford had some links to Vanderbilt and Gould at various points in his career. He was involved with the Philadelphia railroads and heavily involved in the American Telegraph Co. and the Western Union Company that absorbed it and ultimately came into Gould's hands.

Sanford's interest in telegraphs was natural considering his business career. It may well be that the involvement of William Stait in the telegraph messenger service in 1847-51 period directly ties to this later Sanford activity.

The Adams Express Company pulled out of New York in 1976 but it is still to be found listed in the Boston telephone books. It is no longer in the express business but rather is an investment banking firm.

It was the purpose of this work to focus upon the origins of the Adams operation, particularly the independent mail period. I have specifically chosen to cut off the detail work with the creation of the Adams Express Company although giving a brief picture of subsequent operations. The work is intended as a partial tribute to the late Elliott Perry and Arthur Hall who have done pioneering labors in the field of the independent mails. As their joint manuscript is scheduled for publication in the not too distant future, edited and amended to cover some of the new knowledge that has accrued in the interval since it was first written, it should be noted that portions of this work are authorized for use in that book that will deal with the independent mail activities of Adams, among others. As can be seen I have attempted to follow the lead those two men set in their studies by the heavy use of contemporary newspapers and city directories to establish the facts behind an operation. Information and listings contained herein are not authorized for use in catalogs produced for profit without specific attribution and copyright recognition.

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