

BLOODS Part 1: 15L2

By

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The private post juggernaut of Philadelphia during the 1840's and 1850's was the product of Daniel Otis Blood. He took control of the first private post in Philadelphia, founded in 1842 by Robertson & Co. Through a series of brilliant innovations and savvy undaunted business aggressiveness, Bloods reached the zenith of local mail service. The city government "was no match,"¹ and by 1862 resorted to the "nuclear option" of federal government monopoly! Daniel Blood had been the chief clerk of the Public Ledger newspaper, see **Figure 1**.

A twenty-year legacy for the centuries! The author will attempt to re-live this story through a series of postal history articles. Each article is dedicated to a single stamp issue, and will advance chronologically by earliest recorded date for each issue, irregardless of Scott Catalogue listing, from the data base compiled by the author over the past fifteen years. Each article will present a description census and photographic census to the extent reasonably possible. For issues greater than thirty five recorded examples, the census will be reserved for special covers displaying important combinations, foreign countries, and earliest recorded postal service. A comprehensive review of handstamp markings will be reserved for a future series.

First Local Posts

By the late 1830's several private companies beginning with Harndens, Adams, and Hales, took advantage of the latest transportation technology, *railroads*! Their companies prospered by *independently* transporting parcels and packets of letters between cities in the northeast, and for much cheaper than the government. By August 5, 1839 Harnden advertised delivery to "any part of the City."² Precious few examples, however, from the various companies, messengers, and forwarders definitively *prove* delivery to a street address.³ Many came to operate in conjunction with private city posts for delivery to a street address.

The **New York Penny Post** was the first private company in the United States⁴ dedicated solely to local city delivery of mail. On December 20, 1839 the *New York Journal of Commerce* announced 75 deposit locations, three cents due on delivery.⁵ No prepayment stamps were issued. Approximately 52 stampless covers

¹ Rumsey Philatelic Auction 13, lot 1033, December 3, 2004. 2010 PFC 483752.

² <http://www.genealogybank.com/gbnk/newspapers/doc/v2%3A10945F2563DD7908%40GB>

³ Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, sale 834 lot 694 (March 6, 2001) is an American Letter Mail Co. example from February 4, 1844.

⁴ Calvet M. Hahn, "The First New York Local, Part IV," *The Penny Post*, Vol. 8, No. 4, July 2000, (Whole Number 32), pages 37-43.

⁵ Calvet M. Hahn, "The Beginning of Adhesive Postage In The U.S.," *The Penny Post*, Vol. 5, No. 4, October 1995, pages 9-10.

have survived.⁶ By not requiring prepayment, however, liquidity problems caused the New York Penny Post to fail,⁷ and by necessity reorganization under Alexander Greig on January 14, 1842 as the City Despatch Post.

England issued the first prepaid stamps in the world on May 6, 1840. By February 1, 1842⁸ the **City Despatch Post** distributed solicitation circulars. “Ornamental stamps”⁹ could be purchased at 36 cents per dozen prior to depositing letters into any of their 75 collection boxes. Volume discounts of \$2.50 per 100 stamps were available.¹⁰ The earliest recorded stampless cover was February 7, 1842. Greig’s City Despatch Post was the second producer of adhesive stamps in the world! *Scott Catalogue* 40L1, in the Locals Section, was also the first stamp issued in the Western Hemisphere.

Greig’s company was so successful that by May 31, 1842 the federal government was interested in ownership. Consummated by August 16, 1842,¹¹ the 40L1 adhesive stamp design was altered by simply adding “United States,” converting into government “carrier” stamps, *Scott Catalogue* 6LB2. The **United States City Despatch Post** series of stamps can be found in the Carrier Section.¹² The first recorded day for both stamp and stampless postal service was August 16, 1842.¹³

Another dedicated private post did not return to New York for almost two years until **Boyd’s Local Post** was established on June 17, 1844. The first recorded Boyd’s stampless cover is June 26, 1844.¹⁴ The first cover prepaid by stamp was the next day, June 27, 1844.¹⁵

Philadelphia Despatch Post

Philadelphia was the second city in the United States to be privileged with a private company dedicated solely to delivery of local mail within the city. By Monday December 5, 1842 *The Pennsylvania Inquirer & National Gazette* announced the Philadelphia Despatch Post delivered letters twice every day to any part of the city, three cents, and had a Principal Office at No. 83 south Second sty.[sic] see **Figure 2**. James Halsey is believed to have managed the Philadelphia Despatch Post. Halsey was listed in McElroy’s *Philadelphia City Directory* for

⁶ Robert B. Meyersburg, “More About the New York Penny Post,” *The Penny Post*, Vol. 6, No. 2, April 1996, (Whole Number 22), page.26.

⁷ Robert B. Meyersburg, “The New York Penny Post,” *The Penny Post*, Vol.5, No. 3, July 1995, page 22.

⁸ Calvet M. Hahn, “The Beginning of Adhesive Postage In The U.S.,” *The Penny Post*, Vol. 5, No. 4, October 1995, page 13.

⁹ Elliot Perry and Arthur Hall, *100 Years Ago / February-1842-August*, American Philatelic Society, New York, 1942, pages 9-10.

¹⁰ Gordon Stimmell, “Local Mail Posts In The United States,” *The Penny Post*, Vol. 7, No. 3, July 1997, (Whole Number 27), page 17

¹¹ Elliot Perry and Arthur Hall, *loc. cit.*, pages 19-21.

¹² Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, sale 1005 lot 216 (March 2, 2011).

¹³ Scott Trepel, “City Despatch Post,” *The Penny Post*, Vol. 2, No. 3, August 1992, pages14-19.

¹⁴ Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, sale 908 lot 4626 (March 17, 2006).

¹⁵ Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, sale 817 lot 700 (November 15, 1999).

1843, at the same address, 83 South Second Street as a shoemaker. He was not listed in either 1841 or 1842.¹⁶

Three days later, on Thursday December 8, 1842 the “local affairs” column of the *Public Ledger*, **Figure 3a**, promoted the “Philadelphia Despatch Post,” as a City Despatch Post for the delivery of letters and papers, similar to one in New York, which had been a “great accommodation to business men.”

In the same issue under “classified advertisements,” Robertson & Co., **Figure 3b**, announced that the PHILADELPHIA DESPATCH POST established a City Despatch with letter boxes stationed at most public places, and on a corner of nearly every square. They had two deliveries per day, 10 AM and 3 PM. Postage was three cents paid by receiver. Also, “free” **stamps would soon be available at 37 ½ cents per dozen**. Important letters could be *registered* at the Principal Office for 6 ¼ cents each. This private company’s **name was The Philadelphia Despatch Post, described as a City Despatch Post, owned by Robertson & Co., and fashioned after the former City Despatch Post in New York founded by Grieg.**

Robertson

Not much is known about the likely proprietor of the Philadelphia Despatch Post. Wm. H. Robertson was a merchant in 1841-2 at 20 Walnut Street, and during 1843-4 at Prince and Jupiter.¹⁷ In 1843 a *second* W.H. Robertson was located at 673 N. 2nd Street. He was a retiring gentleman, and apparently betrothed in 1842 to a Perot, possibly from the family of the contemporary postmaster in Bermuda.¹⁸

Robertson was the proprietor for over two and one half years, from very late 1842 until mid 1845. Under Robertson’s tenure, three different stamp types were issued. The first two were “*primitive*” octagonal stamps, one in black, another in red. The third stamp launched the famous series of “*striding messenger*” pictorial stamps.

Circular Handstamp Marking

The Philadelphia Despatch Post promptly created a 28 millimeter circular time handstamp with peripheral inscription “PHILA. DESPATCH POST”. The center of the marking stated either “10AM” or “3PM,” the time of delivery from the principal office.¹⁹ The earliest recorded example, December 19, 1842, within two weeks of opening, and from the 10 AM delivery, shown in **Figure 4**, is the *only example in black ink*. During Robertson’s several year’s ownership, the author has identified a timed circular handstamp on 29 stampless covers, and another 32 handstamp markings in combination with any of the three types of Philadelphia Despatch Post prepaid stamps. The marquee circular handstamp appears

¹⁶ Steven M. Roth, “PHILADELPHIA DESPATCH,” *The Penny Post*, Vol. 5, No. 4, October 1995, page 29.

¹⁷ Calvet M. Hahn, “The Beginning of Adhesive Postage in the U.S.,” *The Penny Post*, Vol. 5, No. 4, October 1995, page 22.

¹⁸ Robson Lowe, “Philadelphia Local Posts,” *The Chronicle*, Vol.28, No. 2, May 1976, (Whole No. 90), page 84.

¹⁹ Vernon R. Morris Jr., “Robertson and The City Despatch,” *The Chronicle*, Vol. 54, No. 3, August 2002, (Whole No. 195), pages 177-182.

approximately equally divided between covers “collect” (stampless), and “prepaid” (by stamp).²⁰

Sixty of the 61 recorded hand stamps were in red ink, such as the one shown in **Figure 5**, an excellent early strike of the 10 AM delivery.²¹

Prepayment Stamp

To avoid liquidity problems experienced by the New York Penny Post, the Philadelphia Despatch Post offered prepaid stamps and volume discounts. “Primitive” octagonal stamps were produced from the “3 PM” handstamp, manuscript initialed “R & Co,” but all lacked adhesive gum and were affixed by wax. “**Primitive,**” as created from a handstamp. Primitive, as flawed stamp design specific for delivery time. Primitive, as “soon to be extinct octagonal shape.” Primitive, as lack of adhesive gum. Primitive, as precursor of pictorial and “head” stamp images. And primitive, positioned at the base of the “family tree” of postage stamps of the world for the subsequent one hundred seventy years. Although the term “primitive” may not be very flattering, the author uses this term complimenting the transformative and innovative advancements in human services and industry.

The Philadelphia Despatch Post was the third entity in the world to produce prepayment stamps, after Great Britain, and New York City.²² The Philadelphia Despatch Post initially issued two octagonal stamps, which were the ninth and sixteenth different prepayment stamp issued in the world, as each entity issued more than one stamp.²¹ Discovery of this octagonal stamp was not until 1889.²³

The earliest recorded prepayment stamp issued by The Philadelphia Despatch Post was the black octagon, classified in the 2013 *Scott Catalogue* as 15L2. For many decades it has been incorrectly believed that only five stamps had survived. While true that only five are available to stamp collectors, a sixth has been quietly resting in the famous Taping Collection,²⁴ incarcerated in the British Library for over 120 years!²⁵ High resolution scans of this cover and letter contents are provided for **the first time in philatelic literature**, with grateful permission from the British Library.

Descriptive Census

- (1) (December) 1842; year docket on reverse; folded letter, local delivery; bold “3 P M”, manuscript “R&Co”; two black PAID handstamp cancels, one bold, red large single line numeral 3 cancel, and indistinct red cancel; red 10 AM circular “PHILA DESPATCH POST” handstamp. To: “*Treasurer of the Am. Sunday /*

²⁰ For an article in a future series on stampless Blooms.

²¹ Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, sale 927 lot 1062 (December 20, 2006).

²² Scott Trepel, *Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries*, sale 868, November 14, 2003, pages 4-5.

²³ John Tiffany, “BLOOD & CO.’s DESPATCH POST.,” *The American Philatelist*, Vol. III, No. 4, January 10, 1889, pages 102-103.

²⁴ Stanley M. Bierman, M.D., *The World’s Greatest Stamp Collectors*, Linn’s Stamp News, 1990, pages 51-58.

²⁵ Gordon Stimmell, “A Voyage To View Ancient Treasures,” *The Penny Post*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 1995, pages 22- 23.

School Union / 146 Chesnut St [sic]". Siegel sale 868, November 14, 2003, lot 2046; Harmer sale 1071, March 20, 1957, lot 561, Caspary. Ex Hollow bush.

- (2) January 13, 1843; folded letter, local delivery; faint "3PM," manuscript "R&Co"; bold black PAID handstamp cancel, large red "T configuration of many letters" cancel; red timed circular "PHILA. DESPATCH POST" handstamp on reverse, red auxiliary PAID. To: "*The Revd. Georges Boyd D.D. / Rector of St. John's Church N.L. / North 2d. Street above Poplar. Lane / Philadelphia*". Siegel sale November 13, 2000 lot 428. PFC 365,986. Lyons collection.
- (3) March 20, (1843); folded letter, local delivery; "3 P M," manuscript "R&CO;" faint black PAID, and red circle of dots cancel; red 3PM circular "PHILA. DESPATCH POST" handstamp, red auxiliary PAID, manuscript "20". To: "*N.R. Potts Esq / No. 304 N. 6th. / on N. E. cor. 7th & Spring Garden*". Siegel sale 830, November 13, 2000 lot 427. Morris collection.
- (4) April 20, 1843; cover front, local delivery; "3 P M", manuscript "R&Co"; red double outline numeral 3 cancel, faint black PAID cancel; magenta manuscript April 20; non-contemporary pencil year date 1843. To: "*Mr Shrack & Co / No 80. 4 St near Race*". Frajola, June 7, 1990 Middendorf sale lot 375; Siegel 927 December 15, 2006 lot 1058, Richardson. Ex Gibson. PFC 320504.
- (5) May 19, 1843; folded letter, local delivery; "3 P M", manuscript "R&Co"; (red) large single line numeral 3 cancel, bold black PAID; (red) 10 AM circular "PHILA. DESPATCH POST" handstamp. To: "*Mr.. J H. Booth / No 145 N..10th Street / Philad / Pa*". Harmer sale 1071, March 20, 1957 lot 562, Caspary. Ex Boker. The 1889 Discovery copy.
- (6) June 13, 1843; folded letter, local delivery; "3 P M", manuscript "R&Co"; red large single line large numeral 3 cancel, bold black PAID; red 3PM circular "PHILA. DESPATCH POST" handstamp; To: "*Charles Keen Esq / Cashier Kensington Bank*". Tapling Collection, British Library.

Photographic Census

- (1) **Figure 6 a,b,c:** Treasurer; cover, stamp, and time handstamp
- (2) **Figure 7 a,b,c,d:** Boyd; cover, stamp, cancel, and time handstamp.
- (3) **Figure 8:** Potts; cover.
- (3) **Figure 9:** Potts; letter contents.
- (4) **Figure 10:** Shrack; cover.
- (5) **Figure 11:** Booth; cover.
- (6) **Figure 12 a,b:** Keen; cover and stamp
- (6) **Figure 13 c:** Keen; letter contents.

Cover Types

All six surviving stamps are on cover! Five on folded letters, one on a cover front panel. None on envelopes, which were not quite yet available.

15L2 Characteristics

Figure 14 is an analysis of the six 15L2 survivors. The stamp design is the circular Philadelphia Despatch Post handstamp inscription “PHILA. DESPATCH POST / 3 PM” on paper without gum. A “primitive” *octagonal* stamp was created by cutting the paper as close to the circle as possible, apparently in a random manner by hand, rather than by a uniform machined process. The many corners do not consistently align on the stamps. *15L2 by definition is a black stamp.* The earliest recorded Philadelphia Despatch Post stamp of any type was 15L2, on a cover nonspecifically dated “1842.” *The earliest recorded stamp being black is certainly consistent with the earliest handstamp marking in black ink* (December 19, 1842). See **Figure 4!**

The center of the stamp is home to numerous markings, all too often cluttered in an indecipherable pattern, such as census number 1. Two characteristics, however, are uniformly present. All six examples were initialed “R&Co,” as a likely control marking. See **Figure 15**. Furthermore, on close inspection, all six surviving stamp designs are “3 PM,” in black of course, quite precisely and consistently located in the same configuration and placement as the handstamp markings. No stamps are “10AM”. The author submits that of the two handstamps available, **“3PM” and not 10AM was selected to create 15L2 stamps.** As an unusual characteristic, P was closer to the 3 than the M. See **Figure 16a**.

Numeral “3” is best seen on census numbers 3 and 4. The numeral appears just to the right and below the mid point of the vertical line of “P” in PAID. “P” is best seen on census numbers 1, 3, and 6, as high and just left of “A” in PAID. See **Figure 16b**. “M” is best seen on census numbers 1, and 5, as it overlaps between the top of “I” and “D” of PAID. See **Figure 16c**. Some examples reveal the underlying time more clearly than others simply because PAID was *not* precisely and consistently struck.

Since PAID in black appears on all six examples, it was considered, but rejected as a possible third stamp design characteristic. Location of PAID on the stamps, is regularly in the center, but not as consistently positioned as “3PM.” PAID in black was more likely an obliterator of the inappropriately predetermined “3PM” stamp delivery time. Perhaps expedient, it may have been more trouble to fabricate a new mechanical handstamp without time marking, than to manually handstamp obliterate “3PM” on all stamps sold.

Cancellation Types

Figure 17 summarizes 15L2 cancellation types. *All six surviving examples possess a black PAID handstamp.* See **Figure 18**, for the cancellation *presumably* at the time of service. Moreover, census number 1, and 5 demonstrate more than one strike of PAID in black.

Every member of the entire census was also cancelled in red by various markings. Three of the six examples were cancelled by a red 12 mm tall single line

numeral “3,” census numbers 1, 5, and 6, shown in **Figure 19**.²⁶ Although census number 5, to the author’s best knowledge, has not been photographed in color, no tall numeral “3” markings for the Philadelphia Despatch Post in black ink have been recorded. It may be safe to assume census number 5 was red.

Figure 20, census number 4, is the only example canceled by a red 6mm short small double outline numeral “3.”

Figure 21, census number 2, is the only huge red “T configuration of letters” cancel, which appears to have been composed by many *letters*, perhaps forming many small red “PAID” markings, and *possibly unique*. The cross members of the “T” shape, however, are not 90 degrees to each other.

Figure 22 is census number 3, the only cancel by a red small “circle of dots,” one of *two recorded* from all Philadelphia Despatch Post covers.

It appears that the stamp *time* was intended to be obliterated by the black PAID handstamp, since the stamp design had no bearing upon the delivery time. PAID in black most likely consummated sale of a stamp. Two examples, census number 1 and 5, each reveal more than one black PAID marking, as if the second strike better obliterated the time. Two of these three occur on 10AM deliveries, perhaps to better obliterate the incorrect 3PM design, and avoid possible delivery time confusion.

The author believes that PAID in black may have been useful at time of sale, and also time of service, but it’s primary purpose was not to prevent reuse. Red cancellations were much more conspicuous, served best to prevent reuse, and were applied at time of service.

Auxiliary Handstamps

Auxiliary handstamp markings on the cover did not cancel the stamp. **Figure 23** summarizes the markings which appear on the small group of covers with a 15L2 stamp. Auxiliary markings are *all in red ink*, which the author maintains was *applied at the time of service*. All five of the folded letters had been handstamped *in red by the company timed circular marking*, shown in **Figure 5**. Four of these five appear on the cover front, whereas census number 2 appears on the reverse flap.

Only census number 4 has no handstamp marking, but also is the sole example remaining only as a front panel. The author speculates that the original full cover probably included a red circular time handstamp. The author further speculates that the red timed handstamp was “3 PM,” since only one faint PAID in black appears on the stamp center!

The other auxiliary handstamp marking is PAID in red. See **Figure 24**. Census number 2 and 3 demonstrate this marking.

²⁶ Vernon R. Morris Jr. MD, “Robertson And The City Despatch,” *The Chronicle*, Vol. 54, No. 3, August 2002, (Whole No. 195), page 179.

Service Location

Figure 25 summarizes the addressee locations. All six examples were local Philadelphia delivery, five to a street address, and one to a business without address. None were delivered to the post office for outbound mail. None of course are “from the mail” as the post office carrier department had a monopoly delivering all incoming inter-city mail. Also, it appears that none of these six originated outside of present day Philadelphia carried privately (bootlegged) from far away.²⁷

Figure 26 is a contemporary map which displays the data base delivery locations. Only three were delivered within the old city of Philadelphia, census numbers 1, 4, and 5. The remaining three were delivered slightly north of the old city, one each to adjacent districts. Census number 3 was addressed to Spring Garden district. Census number 2 was delivered to the Northern Liberties. Census number 6 was delivered just beyond Northern Liberties to Kensington. Not until July 1, 1845 was delivery outside the old city forbidden.

Dates of Service

The Philadelphia Despatch Post inaugurated prepayment service during its first month of operation, December 1842, via black octagonal stamps, designated in the *Scott Specialized Catalogue* as 15L2. The earliest recorded stamp, census number 1, was 1842, and must have been subsequent to the December 8, 1842 announcement that “stamps would soon be available,” and prior to December 31, 1842. The latest recorded 15L2 was six months later, June 13, 1843.

15L2 was the ninth different issued prepayment stamp in the world! It was manufactured by the third geopolitical entity to issue prepayment stamps!²⁸ Furthermore, during these six months, no other private post was in operation throughout the United States! From this six month period, the six known examples are distributed relatively equally, one in each month, except February 1843. Given a 0.5 to 1% survival rate, the original universe of 15L2 covers may have ranged been 300-600.²⁹

Combinations

No combinations with federal use exists. None in the data base are outbound via the federal government. No “drop” letters to the Philadelphia Post Office are recorded.³⁰

Theory

The author submits the first circular time handstamps were in black ink, and soon converted to red. Sixty of the recorded 61 markings during well over two years were red. Only the first, on December 19, 1842, was black, see **Figure 4**. The author also suspects the entire *first group of black 15L2 stamps was likely produced before*

²⁷ *Ibid*, page 184.

²⁸ Scott Trepel, *Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries*, sale 868, November 14, 2003, pages 4-5.

²⁹ Personal email communication from Richard F. Winter on January 11, 2013.

³⁰ Vernon R. Morris Jr., MD, “What is a ‘Drop Letter and a ‘Drop Dead Letter’?,” *The Chronicle*, Vol.55, No. 3, August 2003, (Whole No. 199), pages 171-177.

conversion to red ink, and further asserts that conversion was before the end of 1842.

Census number 1 was date unspecific, but designated “1842,” and therefore prior to December 31, 1842. Census number 1 also bears a red auxiliary time handstamp in *red!* Since the Philadelphia Despatch Post was using black ink through December 19th, it appears that census number 1 bears a black stamp placed into postal service after December 19, 1842, but before December 31, 1842. Also, the timed handstamp conversion to red ink likely occurred during that twelve day interval.

The stock of black stamps appears to have been sold and exhausted within six months, as the latest recorded 15L2 example is June 13, 1843. The next article will discuss, the “primitive” red stamps, which begins and ends several months later than the respective black stamps. ***The author maintains the Scott Specialized Catalogue listing numbers are chronologically incorrect for the first two issues of the Philadelphia Despatch Post. 15L2 predates 15L1!***

Of the two types of available Philadelphia Despatch Post time handstamps, *3PM rather than 10AM was selected to produce octagonal shaped stamps.* All six examples reveal a 3PM (no 10AM) delivery time, barely decipherable among the various handstamp markings in the stamp’s center.

As neither part of the stamp design, nor intended to prevent reuse, *PAID in black instead served as an obliterator of the flawed stamp design which inappropriately included a delivery time.* At the time of sale, a black PAID handstamp likely obliterated the black “3PM,” since the actual delivery time in the future was indeterminate. A second strike of a black PAID may have been applied *on the day of service for 10 AM deliveries,* to better obliterate a known incorrect delivery time, and minimize potential addressee confusion.

The author believes the various **red handstamps were applied on the day of service.** The auxiliary markings were applied on the folded letter after it was deposited into a collection box, since the covers certainly would not have been available to the company prior to service. Red cancellation of black stamps was sufficiently conspicuous to better prevent reuse and cause additional service by the Philadelphia Despatch Post. **The red cancellation served to prevent reuse, but the black PAID served to obliterate an inappropriate stamp design “time” of delivery.**

Resale of a stamp from one patron to another prior to service should not have been a concern, and would not adversely affect the company to any significant extent since no service had been performed yet, and the company already received payment. No shortage of stamps is known to have existed for potential upward black market pricing.

Significance

Two important United States postal history milestones occurred circa 1842. The Philadelphia Despatch Post was the **third geopolitical entity in the world to issue prepayment stamps.** Predating the Philadelphia Despatch Post was only England in May 1840, and the City Despatch in New York City in February 1842. To put this important event into perspective, fourth was Switzerland in March 1843,

and fifth Brazil in August 1843. Postmaster Provisional stamps in the United States were years away, July 1, 1845, and the United States did not issue federal stamps until July 1, 1847!

Secondly, the Philadelphia Despatch Post was **for eighteen months the only private post in the United States dedicated solely to city delivery of letters.** Another private post did not appear in New York, or elsewhere in the United States, for the sole purpose of prepaid intra-city letter service until Boyd's Local Post on June 17, 1844. Although other private independent mail companies, individual forwarders, and a few maverick carriers privately delivered letters, their primary mission and service was intercity letter transportation.

1842 transformed postal service to a new level through specialization and innovation. Greig's City Despatch Post, and Robertson's Philadelphia Despatch Post were a **new paradigm** of postal service, restricted exclusively to intra city mail and introduced many innovations such as letter registration, prepayment stamps for patron convenience, scores of deposit boxes throughout the city, multiple deliveries each day, and volume discounts!" This was an evolutionary step in mail service which developed by the late 1840's to a level virtually unchallenged by the government in *Philadelphia, the city with the second largest population in the United States, and third largest English speaking population in the world.*

Summary

The Philadelphia Despatch Post, described as a City Despatch Post, and owned by Robertson & Co., had been fashioned after the former City Despatch Post of New York founded by Greig. New York, however, had no private post company from August 1842 until June 1844. Early in this interval, the Philadelphia Despatch Post advertised on December 5, 1842 three cent delivery paid by recipient, twice a day, letter boxes at nearly every corner, and *registered letters* for 6 ¼ cents! The Philadelphia Despatch Post was the third geopolitical entity in the world to issue prepayment stamps for postal service!

The Philadelphia Despatch Post designed a circular handstamp incorporating their name just inside the perimeter, and delivery time in the center. The earliest surviving stampless example was December 19, 1842, **Figure 4**, and the only one recorded in black ink, of 61 known. Of the two handstamps available, the author maintains that "3 PM" was selected to manufacture derivative "primitive" octagonal prepayment stamps. A flawed stamp design, however, had been produced which inappropriately designated delivery time. By necessity, the time was obliterated by a large black PAID struck across the center, probably at the time of sale; and, for 10AM deliveries, a second black PAID was likely struck to better obliterate the incorrect 3PM. *It appears that black PAID was not a cancellation mechanism, but rather a black obliterator of a black stamp design.*

The Philadelphia Despatch Post issued primitive stamps first in black, consistent with initial use of black ink for the first circular time handstamps. Only six stamps have survived, all on cover. The earliest recorded cover was in "1842," and by process of deduction must have been in late December. The latest recorded example, June 13, 1844 has been incarcerated in the British Library for well over a

century as part of the *Tapling Collection*. Photos of the cover and letter contents are believed to be the first released to the philatelic literature.

On the day of service each 15L2 was cancelled in red to prevent reuse. Various configurations included two different style numeral threes, circle of dots, and a huge "T." At the time of service, auxiliary handstamp markings in red were applied on the cover, typically the red circular company time handstamp, and sometimes also a red PAID. The address destinations were local but diverse, with half confined to the old city, the other three to several districts immediately north.

The Philadelphia Despatch Post deserves and has secured its special place on the world stage of written communication advancement, and in the pantheon of philatelic rarities.

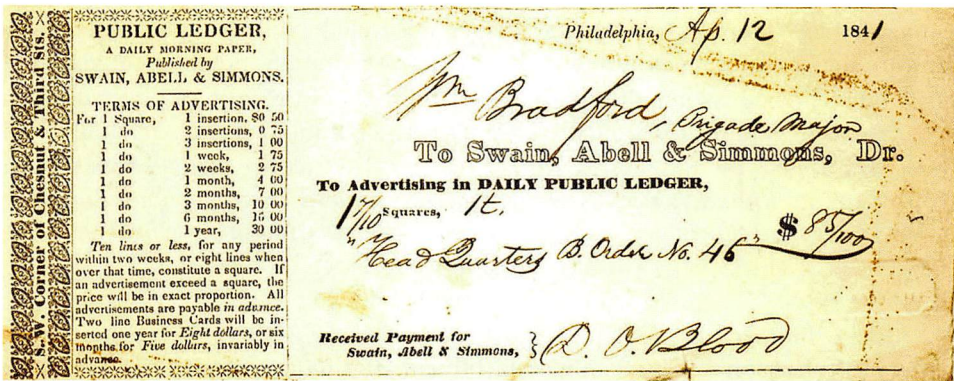


Figure 1. Receipt of \$85. on April 12, 1841 by Daniel Otis Blood, chief clerk at the *Public Ledger* newspaper, for advertisements.

The newspaper was founded in 1836 and located on the Southwest corner of 3rd and Chestnut Streets. Courtesy of Martin Richardson.

An Accommodation.
 We invite attention to the following. The enterprise is one which deserves a generous support from the community.
Philadelphia Despatch Post.
 Letters, &c. deposited before 9 o'clock, A. M.—
 Taken for delivery at 9½ o'clock, A. M.
 Letters, &c. deposited before 2 o'clock, P. M.—
 Taken for delivery at 2½ o'clock, P. M.
 A delivery of Letters, &c. twice every day: by which means answers may be received the same day that Letters are deposited.
 Letters, &c. deposited at the Principal Office, before the hours of 10, A. M., or 2, P. M., will be taken for delivery at that time. The Postage, to any part of the city or vicinity, 3 cents.
ROBERTSON & CO.,
 Principal Office, No. 83 south Second st.

Figure 2. The first known announcement of the Philadelphia Despatch Post appeared on Monday December 5, 1842 in *The Pennsylvania Inquirer & National Gazette*.

Philadelphia Despatch Post for the Delivery of Letters—A City Despatch Post for the delivery of letters and papers, has just been established in the city by Robertson & Co, for the accommodation of business men. Letter boxes have been placed at most of the public places, and on the corners of the principal squares, when the letters will be taken and delivered twice a day, if deposited within certain hours. The postage is a trifle, to be paid by the receiver. A similar Post was established in New York, and was considered a great accommodation to business men.

PHILADELPHIA DESPATCH POST.—
 The subscribers inform the citizens that they have established a CITY DESPATCH POST for the delivery of LETTERS, PAPERS, &c., from any part of the city or its vicinity to another, with greater promptness and despatch. They have stationed letter boxes in careful hands at most of the public places, and at a corner of nearly every square, where, if letters, &c., are deposited before 9 A. M., will be taken out for delivery at 10 A. M.
 And if deposited before 2 P. M., will be taken out for delivery at 3 P. M.
 If deposited at the principal office before 10 A. M., or 3 P. M., they will be taken out for delivery at that time.
 The charge of postage is 3 cents, paid by the receiver of the letter. Those wishing to pay, may deposit the same in the boxes with their letters. There will soon be *Free Stamps* left for their accommodation at the different stations. Price 37½ cents per dozen.
ROBERTSON & CO'S,
 Principal Office, 83 South SECOND Street.
 N B—Letters and Notices of importance may be registered at the Principal Office, and delivered at 6½ cents each. d7-91*

Figure 3. Three days after the first announcement, on Thursday December 8, 1842 the *Public Ledger* ran an editorial in the local affairs column, as well as an advertisement in the classified section.



Figure 4. December 19, 1842 cover addressed to Hudson, Ohio, manuscript 25 for federal rate over 300 miles. The only example of the timed Philadelphia Despatch Post circular handstamp in black ink. Ex Hollowbush and Schwartz. Offered in Lowe September 1, 1972, lot 1624; last sold in the Lowe October 26, 1973 sale, lot 1897. An excellent early strike.



Figure 5. 28 millimeter circular time stamp for the 10 AM delivery by the Philadelphia Despatch Post. The “A” is slightly closer to the “10” than to the “M.”



Figure 6a.



Figure 6b.



Figure 6c.

Figure 6. Census Number 1, addressed to “Treasurer” shown as cover in Figure 6a, stamp in Figure 6b, and the time stamp partially obliterated by black PAID in Figure 6c.



Figure 7a



Figure 7b.

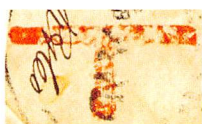


Figure 7c.

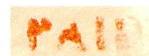


Figure 7d.

Figure 7. Census Number 2, addressed to “Rev. Boyd,” shown in cover in Figure 7a, stamp in Figure 7b, and huge “T” configuration cancel in Figure 7c, and auxiliary marking “PAID” in red as Figure 7d.



Figure 8. Census Number 3, addressed to “Potts.”

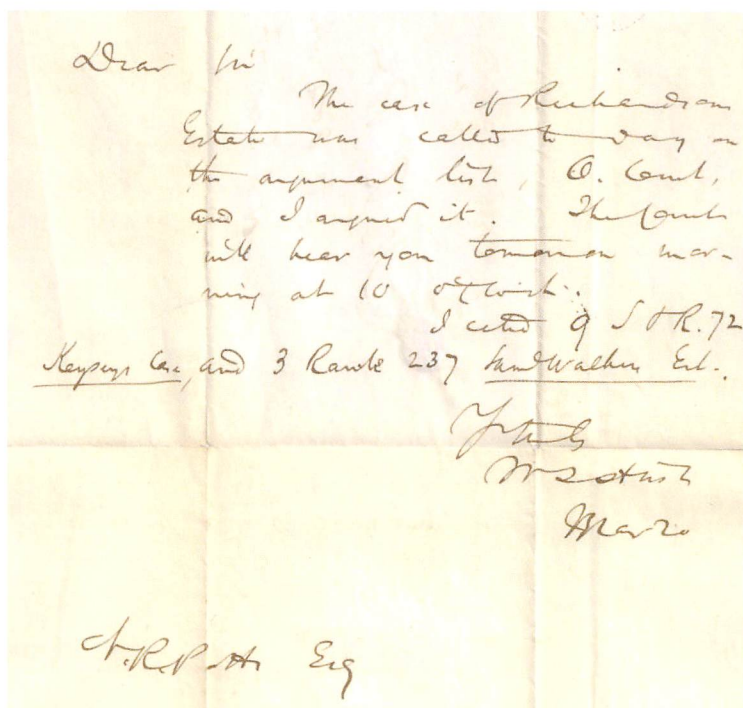


Figure 9. Census Number 3 letter contents.



Figure 10. Census Number 4, addressed to “Shrack.”



Figure 11. Census Number 5, addressed to “Booth.”



Figure 12a.



Figure 12b.

Figure 12. Census Number 6, addressed to “Keen,” shown as cover in Figure 12a, and stamp in Figure 12b.

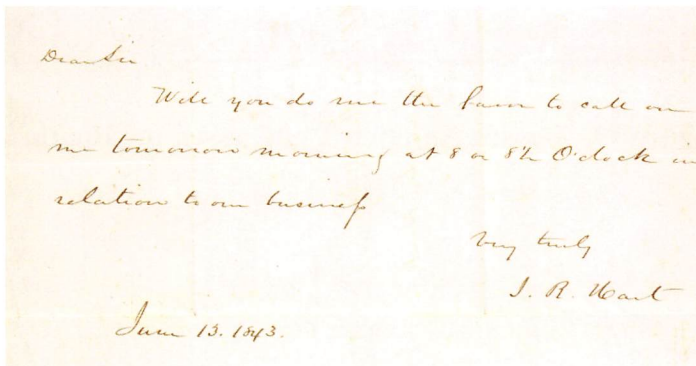


Figure 13. Census Number 6 letter contents.

DATE	COVER	BLACK 15L2	15L2 CANCEL	AUXILIARY HANDSTAMP	ADDRESSEE
1. (December) 1842	Folded letter	1. Bold "3 P M" 2. "R&Co"	1. Red 12mm single line numeral "3." 2. Red indistinct mark 3. Two black PAID, one bold	1. Red "10 AM" circular "PHILA. DESPATCH POST"	"Treasurer of the Am. Sunday School Union/ 146 Chestnut St" OLD CITY
2. January 13, 1843	Folded letter	1. Faint "3 P M" 2. "R&Co"	1. Large red "T" configuration 2. Bold black PAID	1. Red PAID 2. Red "10 AM" circular "PHILA. DESPATCH POST" on reverse	"The Revd. Georges Boyd D.D./ Rector of St. John's Church N.L./ North 2d. Street above Poplar Lane/ Philadelphia" NORTHERN LIBERTIES
3. March 20, (1843)	Folded letter	1. "3 P M" 2. "R&Co"	1. Red circle of dots 2. Faint black PAID	1. Red PAID 2. Red "3 PM" circular "PHILA. DESPATCH POST"	"N.R. Potts Esq/ No. 304 N. 6 th / on N.E. cor. 7 th & Spring Garden" SPRING GARDEN DISTRICT
4. April 20, (1843)	Front	1. "3 P M" 2. "R&Co"	1. Red 6mm double line numeral "3" 2. Faint black PAID	none	"Mr Shrack & Co/ No 80. 4 St near Race" OLD CITY
5. May 19, (1843)	Folded letter	1. "3 P M" 2. "R&Co"	1. (Red) 12mm single line numeral "3" 2. Two black PAID, one bold	1. (Red)"10 AM" circular "PHILA. DESPATCH POST"	"Mr...J.H. Booth/ No 145 N..10 th Street/ Philad/ Pa" OLD CITY
6. June 13, 1843	Folded letter	1. "3 P M" 2. "R&Co"	1. Red 12mm single line numeral "3" 2. Bold black PAID	1. Red "3 PM" circular "PHILA. DESPATCH POST"	"Charles Keen Esq./ Cashier Kensington Bank." KENSINGTON DISTRICT

Figure 14. 15L2 Data Base.



Figure 15. Manuscript “R&Co” was a control mark applied on the stamps in each and every surviving cover.

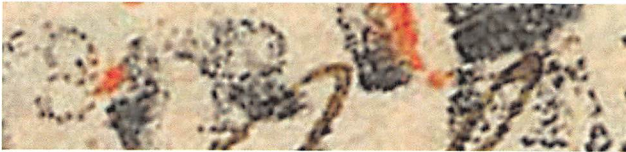


Figure 16a.



Figure 16b.



Figure 16c.

Figure 16. 15L2 stamp marked in center of all examples with “3 P M” time, shown in its entirety best by Census Number 1 in Figure 16a. “P” is best shown by Census Number 6 in Figure 16b. “M” is best shown by Census Number 5 in Figure 16c.

15L2 CANCEL		
Total	Cancel Type	Census Number
6	Black PAID	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
3	Red 12mm single line 3	1, 5, 6
1	Red 6mm double outline 3	4
1	Huge red “T”	2
1	Red small “circle of dots”	3

Figure 17. 15L2 Cancel Analysis.



Figure 18. All six surviving stamps were cancelled by black “PAID,” best shown in Census Number 6.



Figure 19. Half of the surviving stamps were cancelled by the red Philadelphia Despatch Post 12 mm tall numeral “3” single line handstamp.



Figure 20. Only one of six was cancelled by a red 6mm short numeral “3” in double outline.

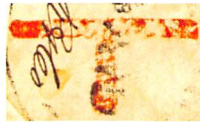


Figure 21. Only one of the six was cancelled by a red huge “T” configuration composed of many not quite distinguishable letters.



Figure 22. Only one of the six examples was cancelled by a red “Circle of Dots” configuration.

AUXILIARY HANDSTAMPS		
Total	Handstamp Type	Census Number
3	PHILA. DESPATCH POST / 10 AM	1, 2, 5
2	PHILA. DESPATCH POST / 3 PM	3, 6
1	PHILA. DEPSTACH POST / unknown	4
2	PAID	2, 3

Figure 23. 15L2 Auxiliary handstamp analysis.

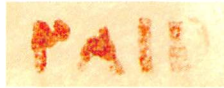


Figure 24. A third of the census demonstrated a red PAID elsewhere on the cover, no contact with the prepayment stamp.

ADDRESS		
Total	District	Census Number
2	Old City	1, 4, 5
2	Spring Garden	3
1	Northern Liberties	2
1	Kensington	6

Figure 25. Address Analysis.

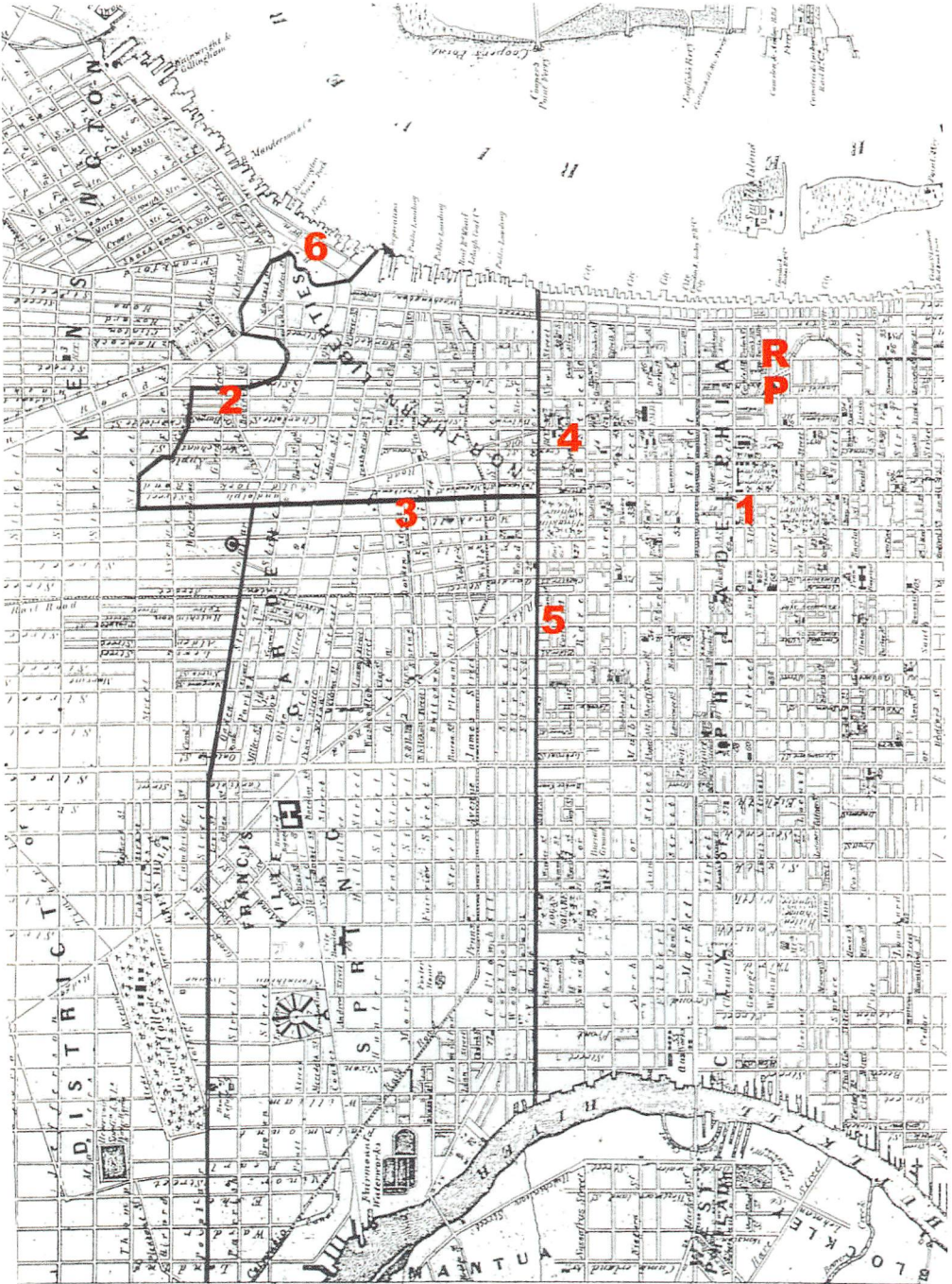


Figure 26. Map of Philadelphia circa 1850. Principal Office marked as red “R” for Robertson. Red “P” locates the main post office at the Merchants Exchange Building. Census numbers address located by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.