

# Pomeroy's Letter Express

## A Tale of Deceit, Success and Shutdown

**The Story:** George Pomeroy founded Pomeroy & Co. in 1841, as an express operating between Buffalo, Albany and New York City handling small packages and bank notes. Only the Post Office Department was supposed to carry letters from one city to another but Pomeroy was handling an ever-increasing amount of mail matter. To shield himself from the government campaign against letter carrying expresses George Pomeroy publicly disposed of his interest in Pomeroy & Co. and on June 26, 1844 announced the Pomeroy Letter Express to carry pre-paid mail. Adhesive stamps were issued and Pomeroy dominated his route because he was cheaper and more efficient than the post office. Secretly George Pomeroy continued to be involved in the predecessor express company.

**Plan:** To show the adhesive stamps of the Pomeroy Letter Express, an Independent Mail Company, and show stampless covers indicating that Pomeroy & Co., the express package service, continued to carry letters. The adhesives on covers are best presented by color.

**Purpose:** To explain the operations of Pomeroy Letter Express on the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the company.

**Treatment:** To show and explain the intricacies of carrying intra-city mail using prepaid adhesive stamps.

**Importance:** New York State had the largest population of any state and cheap, efficient letter handling between the various cities was demanded. Pomeroy fulfilled the need as a successful Independent Mail Company ultimately causing the Post Office to issue U.S. stamps at a lower rate in 1847. Pomeroy showed that prepaid mail worked.

**Study and Personal Research:** The exhibitor has prepared extensive census data to explain the rarity of each cover and stamp. The exhibitor has published his plating study of the adhesives which has led historians to rethink the earlier beliefs on the production of the Pomeroy adhesives.

**Rarity:** Many of the covers shown here are great rarities including two Independent Mail covers with the stamps of three different companies which are acknowledged as the most important covers of the Independent Mail era. The selected covers often show unusual usages.

### Pomeroy's Blue Adhesive

#### A Great Distance — A Single Rate — Two Day Delivery



Folded letter dated September 2, 1844 from Rochester to New York City and delivered by Boyd's Post on September 4 at 9am. This letter traveled over 400 miles. PF



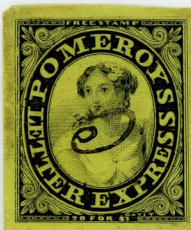
## Pomeroy's Letter Express

John E. Gavit was the engraver who produced the Pomeroy Letter Express stamps. Gavit was Pomeroy's brother-in-law. All of the various color adhesives on thin bond paper began to see use in early July 1844. There is no significance to the different colors of Pomeroy Letter Express adhesives. Usages do not correspond to specific originating offices and the rate is the same for all the Pomeroy stamps and all of the colors were used at the same time.

### The Genuine Issued Stamps



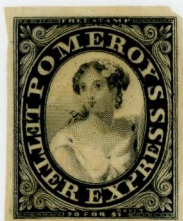
Brown on  
thin pelure PF



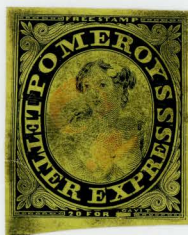
Black/greenish yellow  
on wove paper



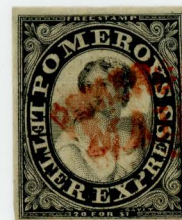
Blue on  
thin bond



Black on  
thin pelure



Black/greenish yellow  
Value Incomplete  
"20 for \$ \_\_\_" PF  
Position 11R



Black on  
thin bond PF



Deep blue on  
thin pelure PF



Red on  
thin bond



Lake on  
thin bond PF



Orange on  
thin bond

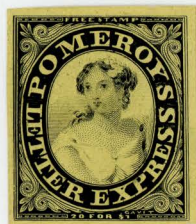
## Pomeroy's Letter Express

### The Thick Wove Paper Stamps

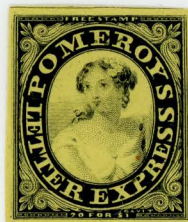
Front



Black/buff  
without gum



Black/yellow  
buff tint on back  
without gum



Black/yellow  
colored through  
without gum



Black/orange yellow  
colored through  
with gum

Back



### Wove Paper Stamp Size Comparison with Pomeroy Stamps Printed on Thin Bond Paper



With the stamps aligned at left edge it is clear the blue stamp on thin bond is narrower than the black on yellow stamp on thick wove paper.

Stamp image size on thin bond paper is 21mm x 26.5mm.  
Stamp image size on thick wove paper is 22.5mm x 26.75mm.

#### Attempt to represent

In March 1842 George Pomeroy attempted without success to secure a Post Office contract to handle the mails. The government was committed to being his adversary.



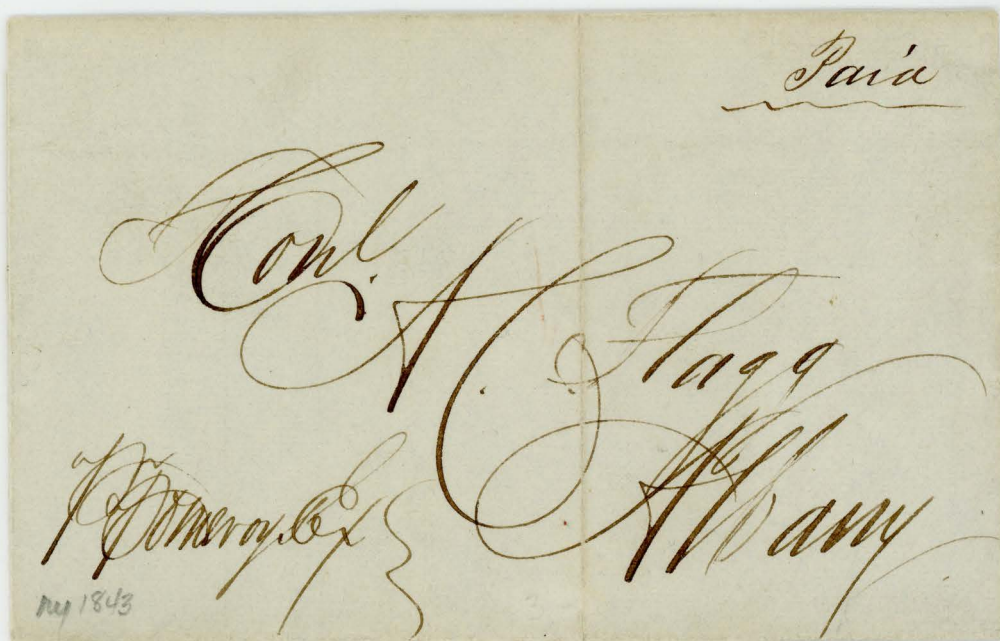
**Pomeroy & Co.'s**  
Uses: 1843

Stampless

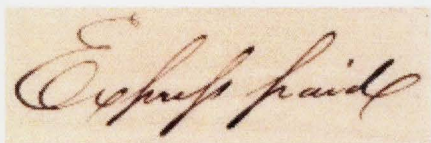
## Pomeroy & Co. Express



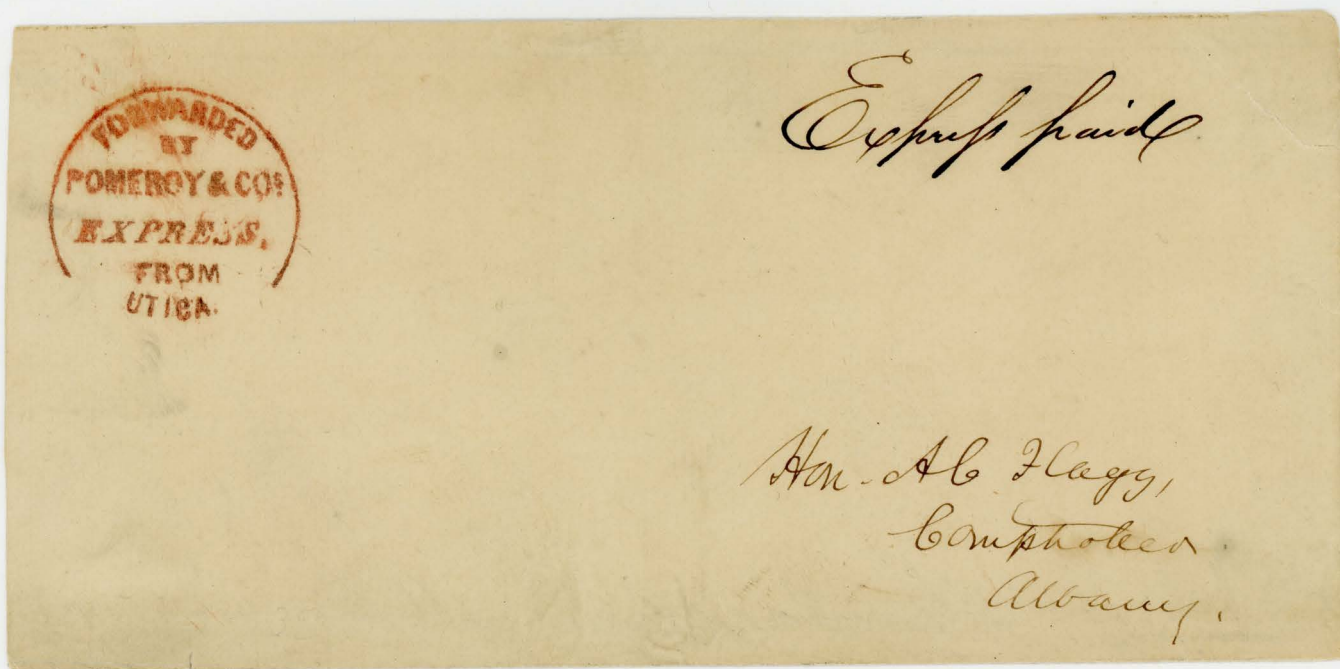
Pr Pomeroy Express



Folded letter carried by Pomeroy Express dated May 10, 1843 from New York to Albany.



Express Paid



Folded letter carried by Pomeroy & Co.'s Express from Utica to Albany. This handstamp is known used July-September 1843.



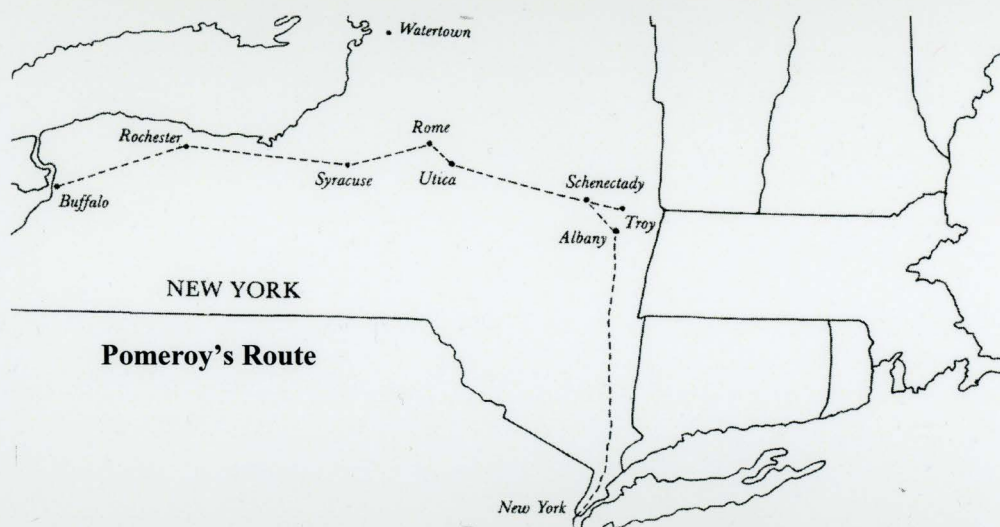
Pomeroy & Co.'s  
Uses: 1843 and 1844

Stampless

## Pomeroy & Co.'s Express



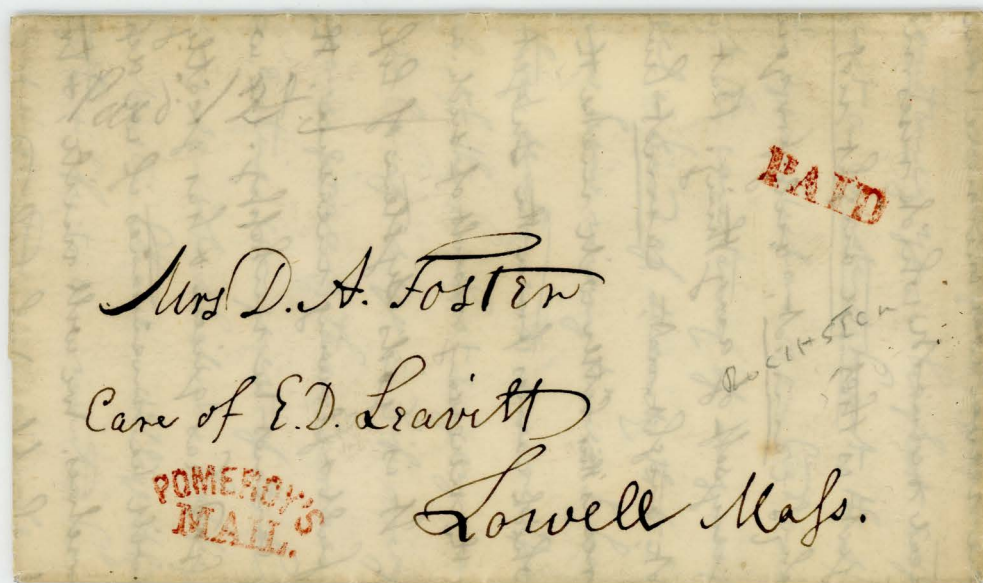
Folded letter dated  
Nov. 7 1843 from  
New York to Albany



POMEROY'S  
MAIL.

PAID

(5x16.5mm)



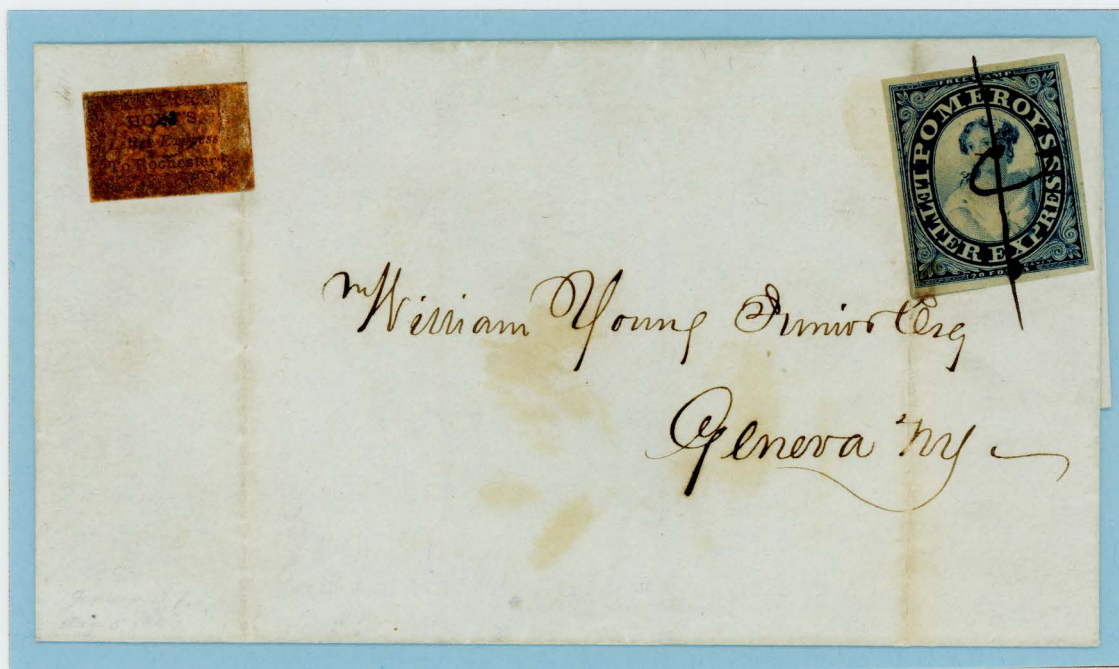
Folded letter dated August  
8, 1844 from Rochester to  
Lowell, Mass. These  
handstamps are those of  
Pomeroy & Co.'s Express.  
Pomeroy's Letter Express  
was already operating  
connecting service with  
other Independent Mail  
companies. In this case  
Hale's might have been  
engaged to bring the letter  
to Lowell, Mass. from  
either Albany or New York  
City. They would have  
been paid 5 cents.



## Pomeroy's Letter Express

### Conjunctive Use with Hoyt's Letter Express

The Hoyt's Letter Express route ran on the Genesee Canal from Rochester to Danville, stopping at Mt. Morris, Cuylerville, Genesco, Spencer's Basin, Piffordinia, Avon and Scottville. They connected with Pomeroy's and the Express Company—Livingston, Wells & Pomeroy for mail going east and south. David Hoyt was the agent for this aforementioned express company at Rochester. Hoyt's operated only from August 5, 1844 to September 5, 1844.



Genesee Valley  
Canal Route Along  
the Genesee River  
and Canaseraga  
Creek

Hoyt's black on vermillion (5¢) adhesive and Pomeroy's (5¢) adhesive on a folded letter dated August 5, 1844 from Genesco to Geneva which was carried by Hoyt's to Rochester and by Pomeroy's to Geneva. **The earliest of the five reported examples of the Hoyt's adhesive on cover. PF**

#### Better Service

Pomeroy made the trip from Albany to Buffalo or back in 36 hours. Mail headed west was 12 hours ahead of the government at Utica, 24 hours ahead at Rochester and 36 hours ahead at Buffalo.



## Pomeroy's Letter Express

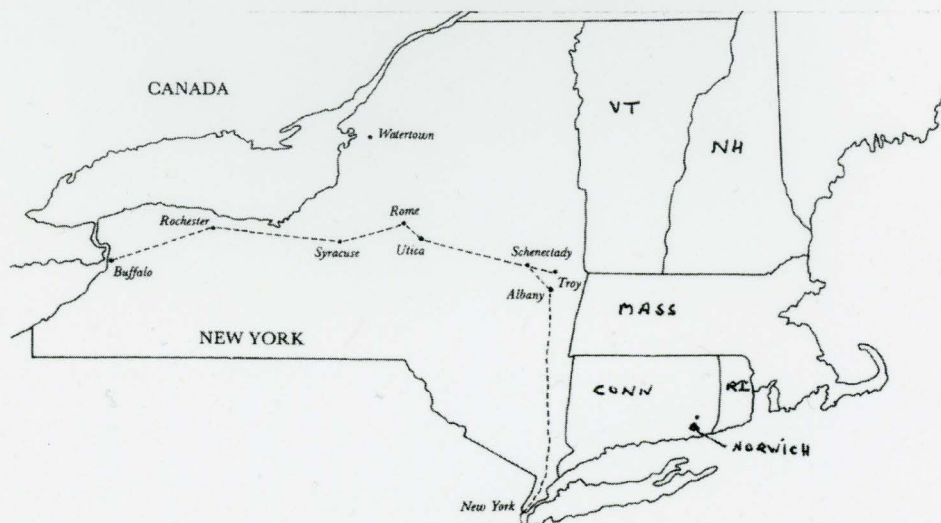
### Triple Conjunctive Use with Two Independent Mail Adhesives

Pomeroy made agreements with other Independent Mail Companies to "hand off" mail headed farther to another city not along the route covered. Thus two or more companies could be involved in the handling of a letter. This is known as a "conjunctive use" or a "triple conjunctive use" if three companies handled the letter. The rate would be shared by the participants handling a letter and they would pay each other by pre-purchasing each other's adhesives or by paying cash.

Wells' Letter  
Express collected  
15¢ to get this letter  
delivered. Three 5¢  
stamps were applied.  
Wells paid Pomeroy  
10¢ for the trip from  
Buffalo to Norwich  
by applying two  
Pomeroy stamps.  
Pomeroy would have  
paid 5¢ for the trip  
from New York to  
Norwich using the  
American Letter  
Mail Co.



A folded letter dated July 21, 1844 from west of Buffalo to Norwich, Connecticut. Undoubtedly Pomeroy carried this letter from Buffalo to New York City and likely engaged the services of the American Letter Mail Company to bring the letter from New York to Norwich, Connecticut. PF



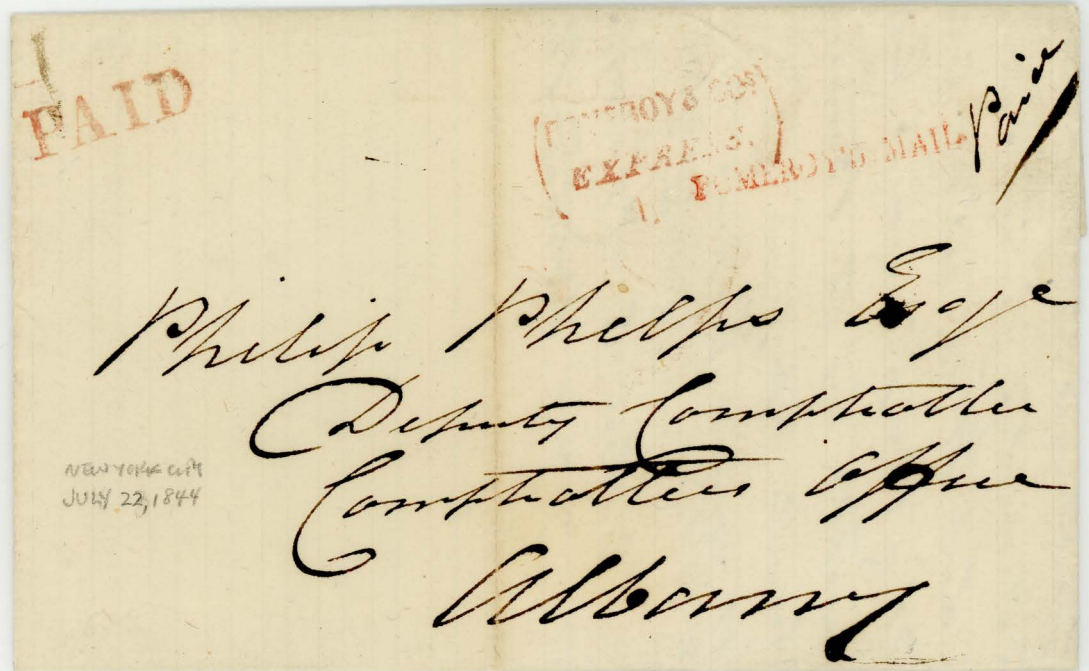


## Pomeroy's Letter Express and Pomeroy & Co. Express

Despite having publicly disposed of his interest in Pomeroy & Co.'s Express there is evidence that this was just a deceitful gesture in an attempt by George Pomeroy to shield himself from the government campaign against the express company carrying of mail.

(POMEROY & CO'S)  
EXPRESS.

Pomeroy & Co.'s  
Express applied  
in New York



A stampless folded letter dated July 22, 1844 from New York to Albany. Pomeroy Letter Express adhesives were clearly available at this time for this route yet this letter has a "Pomeroy & Co.'s Express" handstamp applied in New York and an identical straightline "Pomeroy's Mail." handstamp also applied in New York. The red "PAID" was applied by Pomeroy in Albany and is a handstamp of Pomeroy's Letter Express. PF

**POMEROY'S MAIL.**

Pomeroy's Mail  
applied in  
New York

**A combination of Pomeroy & Co. handstamps and a Pomeroy Letter Express paid on a letter when it was said only the Pomeroy Letter Express was carrying the mail.**

**PAID**

Pomeroy's Letter Express  
Paid (6x22mm) applied in Albany

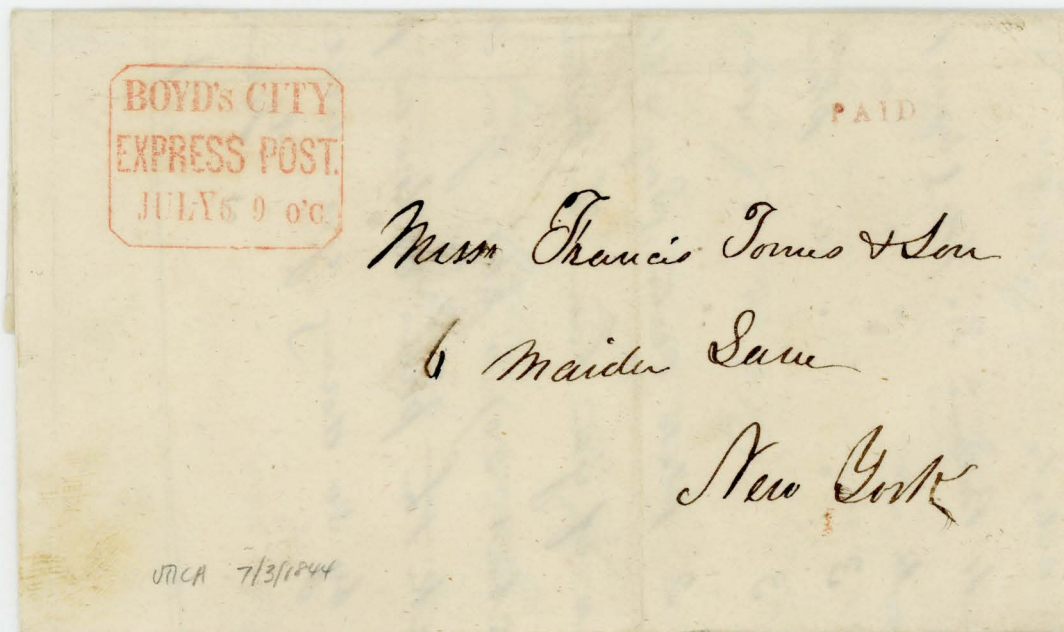
There certainly appears to be no separation between Pomeroy & Co. Express and Pomeroy's Letter Express.



## Pomeroy's Letter Express

### Delivery Arrangement with Boyd's Local Post

Pomeroy reached an agreement with Boyd's Local Post in New York City where Boyd's would deliver mail received from Pomeroy directly to a home or business address in New York City. Boyd's would collect their 2¢ fee from the recipient.



PAID

Pomeroy "PAID"  
(5x10.5mm)  
Applied at Utica

A July 3, 1844 folded letter from Utica, NY to New York City and delivered by Boyd's City Express Post on July 5, at 9am. The tiny "PAID" was applied by Pomeroy at Utica. PF



PAID

Pomeroy "PAID"  
(6x18.5mm)  
Applied at Buffalo

FREE

Boyd's "FREE"  
indicating they had  
been paid by  
Pomeroy for the  
delivery in New  
York City.

A July 8, 1844 folded letter from Buffalo to New York City and delivered by Boyd's City Express Post on July 10, at 9am. Sender wrote "Pomeroy's Express" at bottom left and ms "Paid" at the top. The large red "PAID" was applied by Pomeroy in Buffalo. Pomeroy also collected the 2¢ for Boyd's and Boyd's having been paid delivered the letter for "FREE." PF



Independent Mail Co. Conjunctive Use

Black on Yellow Stamps

## The Unique East Bound Triple Mixed-Franking Independent Mail Letter with three Different Company Adhesives

(Wells') Letter Express to Pomeroy to American Letter Mail



**FORWARDED BY THE  
AMERICAN LETTER MAIL CO  
Office 56 Wall Street N. Y.**

A letter dated August 5, 1844 from W. Binghamton & Co. in Cleveland to Pierpont & Hotchkiss in New Haven, Connecticut. Conjunctive service from Letter Express from Cleveland to Pomeroy's Letter Express in Buffalo for the trek to New York and by the American Express Letter Mail Co. for the final leg to New Haven. The Letter Express owned and operated by Henry Wells collected the full payment of 15¢ from the sender as indicated by the applied three black on green letter express stamps (one vertical pair and a single stamp). Wells paid Pomeroy 10¢ for the trip from Buffalo to the final destination by applying two black on yellow Pomeroy Letter Express stamps. Pomeroy, in turn, paid the American Letter Mail Co. 5¢ for the trip from New York to New Haven. They did this by applying one American Letter Mail Co. large eagle stamp. The total Independent Mail rate was 15¢ compared to a government rate of 25¢. PF

### Savings for the People

Pomeroy charged 6¼¢ to carry a letter from Buffalo to New York when the Post Office fee was 18¾¢. Pomeroy stamps could also be purchased in quantity at a cost of 20 for \$1.00 for a further discount to 5¢. 6¼¢ represents the exchange rate in Spanish coins, a necessity due to the U.S. coin shortage in 1844.



# The Unique West Bound Triple Mixed-Frinking Independent Mail Letter with three Different Company Adhesives

## American Letter Mail to Pomeroy to (Wells') Letter Express



Partially Restored

A letter originating outside of New York City (Possibly Philadelphia) and given to the American Letter Mail Company who carried the letter to New York City where they gave the letter to Pomeroy Letter Express for the rest of the trip. Pomeroy was paid 10¢ by the application of a horizontal pair of lake Pomeroy Letter Express stamps. Pomeroy took the letter to Buffalo and turned it over to (Wells') Letter Express for the final leg to Chicago. A bisected 10¢ Letter Express stamp was applied to pay the 5¢ for the balance of the journey to Chicago. PF

(Wells') Letter Express

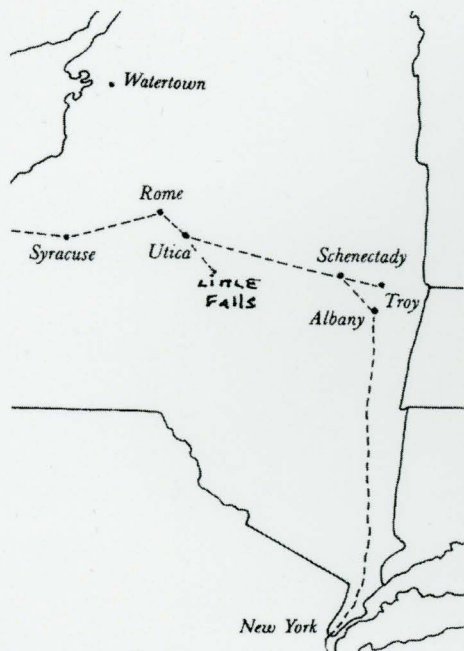


The 10¢ stamp is bisected to pay a 5¢ rate.



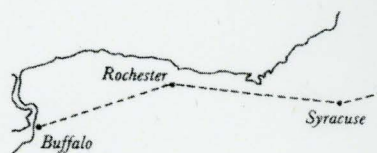
## Pomeroy's Letter Express

## New York City to Little Falls, N.Y.



Folded letter dated July 18, 1844 from New York City to Little Falls, N.Y. which is 22 miles from Utica. The total traveled distance was 219 miles. There are 19 reported examples of the lake stamp on covers. This is the earliest recorded lake stamp on a cover. PF

## New York City to Buffalo, N.Y.



Pomeroy's 5¢ lake adhesive on a folded letter dated August 19, 1844 from New York to Buffalo. The total traveled distance was 376 miles. Still only a single rate charge! PF



**Pomeroy's Letter Express****Southbound  
Ithaca to New York City**

Folded letter dated August 15, 1844 from Ithaca to New York City, delivered by Boyd's on Aug. 19 at 9am. Ithaca is 54 miles south of Syracuse on Pomeroy's main route. Pomeroy probably scheduled trips to Ithaca and only charged a single rate for this letter. PF

**West and Northbound  
Albany to Oswego**

Folded letter dated August 30, 1844 from Albany to Oswego. Oswego is 40 miles north of Syracuse. Pomeroy probably scheduled trips to Oswego and only charged a single rate for this letter. PF



A Triple Rate Letter  
A Collect Letter

Orange Red Stamps

## Pomeroy's Letter Express

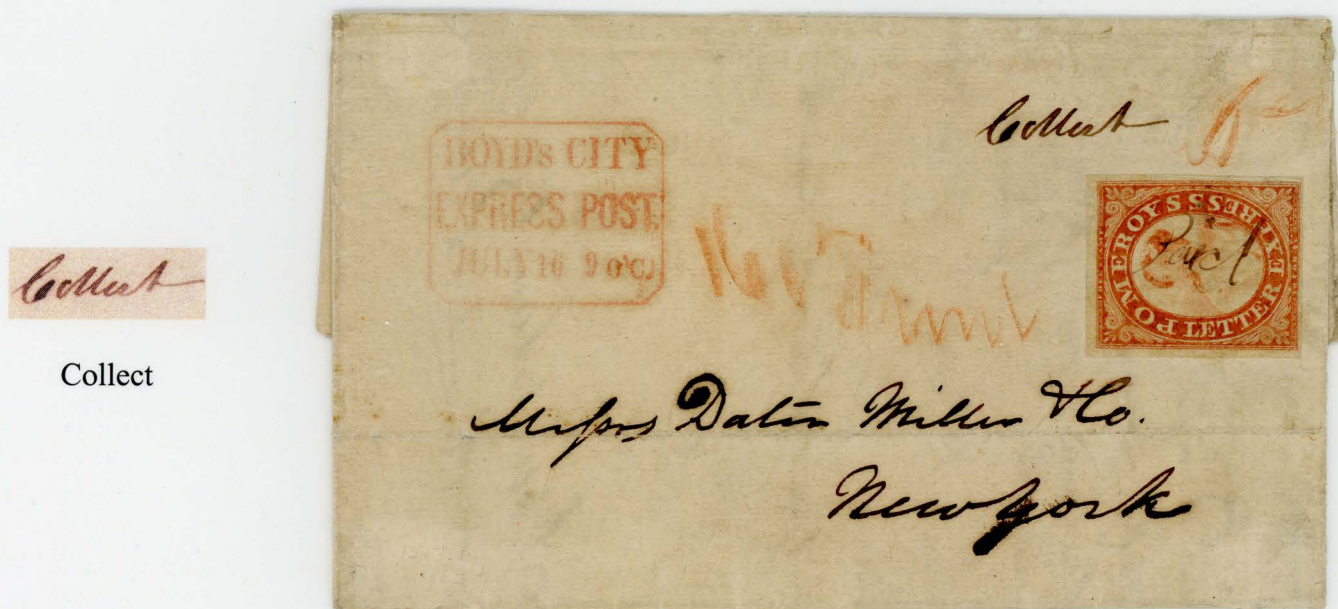
### Largest Recorded Multiple of the Pomeroy's Orange Red Stamp



Pomeroy's mail  
and "PAID"  
applied in  
Albany

Folded letter dated August 16, 1844 from Albany to Norwich, New York in Chenango County was off the Pomeroy route. Norwich is 54 miles from Utica or 58 miles from Syracuse. The round trip required about 110 extra miles of travel or two extra rate trips, thus a triple rate change. **The only recorded triple rate Pomeroy cover with the orange red adhesive.** PF

### Orange Red Stamp on a Collect Letter



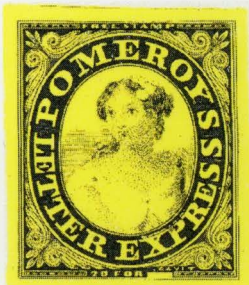
Collect

Folded letter dated July 15, 1844 from Utica to New York City sent "Collect" and rated as a single charge. The 6¼¢ was "PAID" and the orange red Pomeroy stamp was applied with "Paid" written on it. Boyd's delivered the letter on July 16 at 9am. to "160 Front" Street. PF

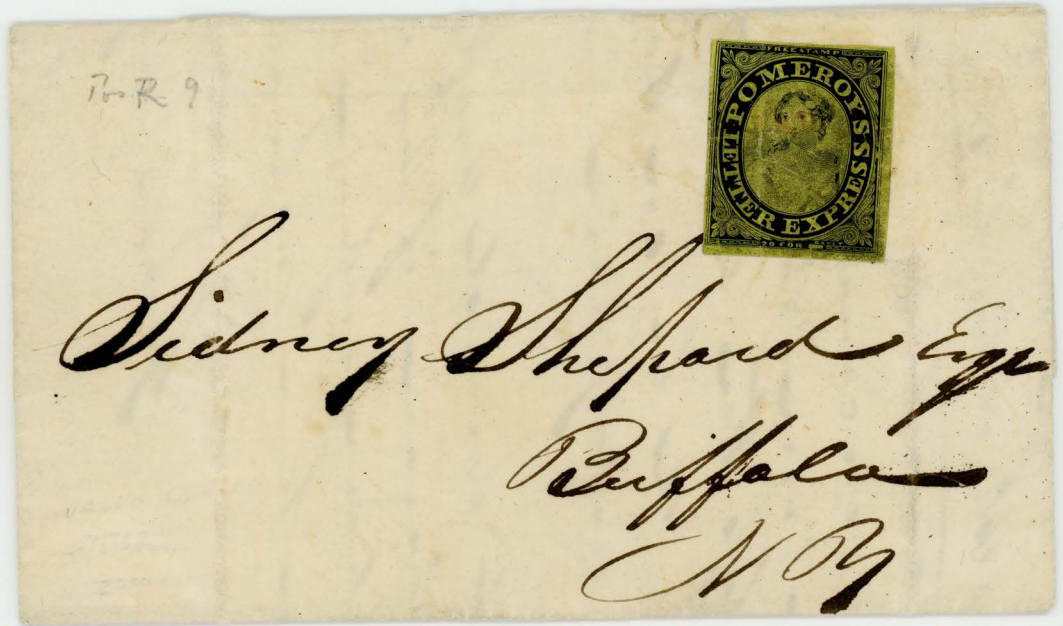


# Pomeroy's Letter Express The Value Erased Stamps

The value erased stamps were probably initially intended to have a different rate such as 10 cents but it was decided immediately that there would be no other rate than 20 for 1 dollar or 6¼¢ each. These stamps therefore have no rate significance.



Value Incomplete



Pomeroy's 5¢ yellow adhesive with the **value incomplete** on a folded letter dated July 27, 1844 to Buffalo. Twenty recorded examples of this adhesive on cover. The exhibitor plates the stamp to position 9R. PF

## The Value Not Erased Stamps



20 FOR \$1

Value Complete  
Position 8L

Folded letter dated August 5, 1844 carried by Pomeroy's Letter Express from New York to Albany.

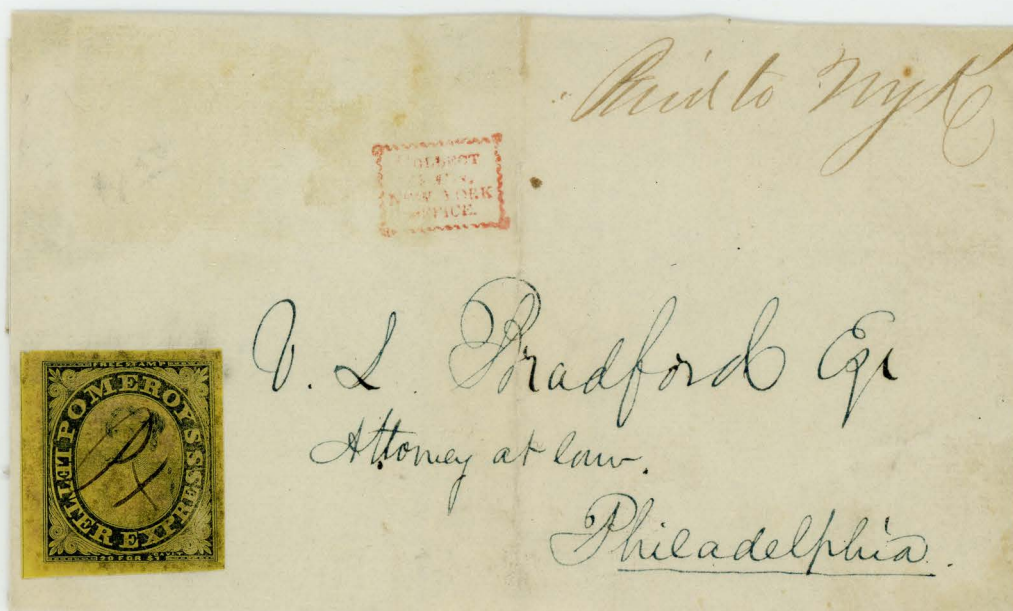


## Proof that the Black on Yellow Value Erased Stamps and those without the Value Erased were not printed on the same sheet

It was previously believed that the value erased stamps were in positions 4L, 8L, 13L, 14L, 5R, 7R, 9R, 10R, 11R, 12R, 13R, 14R 15R, 16R, and 17R and the other positions were not value erased. The L and R indicate the left or right pane of 20 (4x5). The "not erased" stamps can be plated by the positioning details of the numeral and letters in the value tablet.

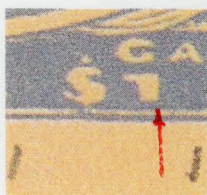


The stamp on this cover without the value erased is Position 13R



By Pomeroy to New York and Hale & Co. to Philadelphia.

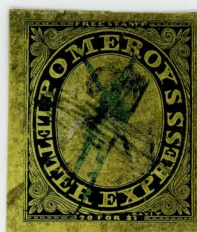
Position 7R



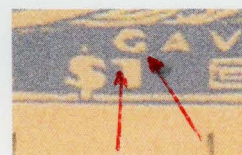
Position 13L



See shape of "1"



Position 9R



These four stamps disprove the old theory that the value erased stamps and those without the value erased came from the same sheet.

### Shutdown

The Postmaster General of the United States took George Pomeroy to court in 1844 to stop Pomeroy's Letter Express from carrying the mail. Pomeroy announced he would stop operating at the end of August 1844 but continued to transmit some mail in September and into mid-October of 1844. Pomeroy won his case against the Post Office but the government began invoking penalty clauses in mail contracts with the railroads upon which Pomeroy was dependent. This stopped Pomeroy's mail carrying activities. Pomeroy dissolved his company ten months before the Independent Mail Companies would be shut down by law. The Independent Mail Companies were ended by the Act of March 3, 1845, effective July 1, 1845 which imposed heavy fines for the private carriage of mail matter over "post roads."