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## ***PORTER, BARTON & CO. AND THE FREE FRANKING PRIVILEGE***

**By: David Przepiora**

The free franking privilege was certainly a valuable perk to small size post offices. But to Porter & Barton Co. it must have been very lucrative. Company partners Augustus Porter, Benjamin Barton and James Barton were all postmasters, and Peter B. Porter was a congressman for 6 years.

As a result of the 1763 Devil's Hole Massacre above the Niagara escarpment, Sir William Johnson forced the Indian chiefs to give up their claims on the land along both sides of the Niagara River from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie. A mile-wide strip along the eastern side eventually became the New York State Mile Reserve.

Peter B. Porter settled in the pioneer community at Canandaigua in the Finger Lakes region of New York. Porter, a lawyer, was active in the State Republican party at the turn of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. In 1800, when all land west of the Genesee River, now divided into eight counties, was organized under the name Ontario County, Peter B. Porter served as its county clerk (1797-1804). He was soon after joined there by his brother Augustus Porter. The Porters were granted by the state of New York a lease on the Niagara Portage Road including the docks at Lewiston (above the Falls) and Fort Schlosser (below the Falls) by an Act of 1803 (Adams, 1927). In 1802 Augustus Porter obtained the contract for carrying the mails from Utica to Fort Niagara and, during the same year, was elected to the New York Legislature in place of his brother, Peter B., who had withdrawn in his favor.

The Porters also purchased the lands east of Prospect Point (Niagara Falls) and upriver to the east of Gill Creek at an auction, February 26, 1805, being acreage on the "Mile Strip," to open a grist mill and tannery. Augustus Porter also leased the Stedman Farm property (near Fort Schlosser) and moved there in 1806. He lived there until 1809 when he moved closer to Niagara Falls then known as Manchester. The islands in the Niagara River were still owned by the Seneca Tribe. On October 1, 1809 Augustus Porter became postmaster at (Fort) Schlosser until April 1, 1811 when that post office was discontinued and the name changed to Manchester. Augustus Porter continued as postmaster at Manchester until 1818 when the name was changed to Niagara Falls. Augustus Porter remained postmaster there until 1836.

Starting in 1806, when the legislature had permitted the sale of lands in the vicinity of Black Rock, the Porters accumulated sizable holdings in that area. They purchased lots along the Niagara River at Black Rock (annexed to the City of Buffalo in 1853) and leased the landing place at Black Rock. In 1807 the firm of Porter, Barton & Co. was formed to do a general forwarding business from Oswego, via Lake Ontario to Lewiston then via the Portage to Schlosser, up the Niagara River to Black Rock and Lake Erie to Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Mackinaw, Chicago and Fort Wayne.

The firm handled nearly all the business of the American fur companies, as well as that of large Indian traders. With its monopoly of transportation along this much-used route, Porter, Barton & Company controlled the portage business using the Niagara River" (Chazanof, 1970).

Benjamin Barton settled in Lewiston in 1807, but had previously become interested in business with Peter B. Porter. As soon as the Mile strip on the Niagara River was surveyed into farm and village lots, he attended the sale at the office of the surveyor-general in Albany; that was in 1805. While there he met Porter and their long friendship began. Shortly after settling at Lewiston, Benjamin Barton became postmaster there. (1807 – 14)

News of the Black Rock acquisitions by the Porters aroused Paul Busti (Holland Land Company Agent) to order all possible efforts be made to frustrate it. (The Holland Land Co. was promoting land at Buffalo) Joseph Ellicott responded by urging the Holland Company to buy several thousand acres of state land at Black Rock to sabotage Porter's scheme, but he had no success. The best he could get was authority to lend money to any person who would purchase land between the sites of Buffalo and Black Rock for the same purpose. When it became obvious a town would be laid out at Black Rock, Busti emphasized the need to push Buffalo's interests by the use of political influence in Albany and an aggressive advertising campaign to attract settlers.

Peter B. Porter was equally determined to ensure the success of the Black Rock settlement where his trading company made large investments. He enjoyed considerable influence in Albany, and with his election to Congress (1809-1815), it expanded to Washington. In the House of Representatives, he quickly won attention as a spokesman for the people of the American frontier which made it easier to act on behalf of Black Rock where he took up residence in 1809.

Shortly after arriving in Washington, Congressman Porter acted to relocate the customs houses on the Niagara Frontier, then found at Buffalo and Fort Niagara. His proposal would have placed them at Black Rock and Lewiston where Porter, Barton & Company had erected trading facilities.

This effort brought him into conflict with another influential western New Yorker, Erastus Granger, the Collector of Customs and Buffalo Postmaster (1804 – 1818). A Granger relative had served in the Cabinet under former President Thomas Jefferson (Gideon Granger Postmaster General 1801-14) whom the collector could claim as a personal friend. The conflict ignited when Porter engineered passage of a resolution in the House of Representatives to study the possible move of the customs houses to Black Rock and Lewiston. Personal interests aside, he could argue with merit that most of the trade going west went through Black Rock, and most of the ships arriving at the eastern end of Lake Erie docked in its harbor.

In addition, most of the goods arriving in Western New York below the falls were unloaded at Lewiston rather than Fort Niagara. It must have been a nuisance for Porter, Barton & Company to obtain entry and clearance papers at Buffalo and Fort Niagara. Customs Collector Granger had no objections to making Lewiston the port of entry below the falls. On the other hand, he strongly opposed moving the port of entry above the falls from Buffalo to Black Rock. News of Porter's resolution in the House of Representatives caused Granger to complain of the congressman's "highly improper" actions and to assure Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin that he, Granger, had no private motives or personal interests in opposing the proposed changes. He could conduct his duties at Black Rock as easily as at Buffalo. He could not, however, neglect his duty by remaining silent because he saw no reason for the relocation.

According to Granger, Buffalo had a good harbor where ships often unloaded, and it was the seat of Niagara County which then included both present-day Erie and Niagara Counties. It was also a fast-growing community with forty three families and counted among its inhabitants a number of young merchants and professional men. Most of the importations from Canada were made by Buffalonians. On the other hand, Black Rock's harbor was of limited use because of rapids in the Niagara River just off the shore.

At Black Rock large tracts of state land around it remained to be divided for sale, and the settlement itself had only four families, a tavern, a store owned by Porter, Barton & Company, and a ferry house serving travelers crossing the river to Canada.

Rather than make a politically sensitive decision, Congress gave President James Madison responsibility to determine the location of western New York's customs houses. The President did his best to settle the difficult matter by the appearance of a compromise. A proclamation on March 16, 1811, placed the port of entry at Black Rock "from the first day of April to the first day of December in every year" and at Buffalo "for the residue of each and every ...year." This action must have been a disappointment to Granger and the leaders at Buffalo. Madison had in effect placed the customs house above the falls at Black Rock during the shipping season and moved it to Buffalo only during the winter months. Porter's prestige had been exerted well at the highest levels of government on behalf of his new home town.

Congressman Peter B. Porter was a member of the Foreign Relations Committee. Porter was an advocate of an open war with England both because he "felt bitter over England's conduct on the high seas" and because he "feared her close relationship with the Indians" (Chazanof, 1970), but also because "he wanted to add to his already sizable land holdings and was not averse to expanding into Canada. He sought, too, a monopoly of the shipping trade for his company (Porter, Barton & Company) on the Great Lakes. When the War of 1812 was declared, Peter B. Porter was made Quartermaster General of NYS militia. He gave that up shortly to recruit and lead a brigade of militia. He was very successful and would later be promoted to major general.

The Indian title to all the islands in the Niagara River, previously reserved for them, had been extinguished by the State of New York "only a few weeks before" October, 1815 for "\$1,000 cash and \$1,500 a year in perpetuity" (Porter, 1900).

Augustus Porter acquired Goat Island in October 1815, sharing ownership of it with Peter Porter after November 16, 1816, when the deed was finally given to the elder brother by the State of New York. Augustus had originally applied for ownership of Goat Island in 1811, but at the time the State needed a place for a second prison (the first having been built in New York City), and was considering using Goat Island for such a purpose, or as an arsenal, especially since western New York was badly prepared for war with England. By 1819, the State had decided to build a prison in Auburn, New York, and the war with England had come and gone. In 1814, Augustus Porter, a judge, "still wanted Goat Island, and he finally outwitted the State, and obtained it" (Porter, 1900) by a legal maneuver.

James Barton (Benjamin's son) became postmaster at Black Rock in 1817 and served until 1828. The Porter Family sold its lands near Niagara Falls to New York State in 1885, where Frederick Law Olmsted later created the Niagara Reservation, now called Niagara Falls State Park.

Cover sent express by General Peter B. Porter to Captain Harris US Dragoons. Sent July 3, 1814, the day before General Brown's Army took Fort Erie. General Porter and his militia joined Brown just after the fort surrendered and later took part in the battles of Chippewa, Lundy's Lane and the siege at Fort Erie.





Cover sent express from Buffalo on June 27, 1815 to Augustus Porter. Cover was sent by Nathaniel Sill a minor partner of Porter, Barton & Company. Letter advises Porter that the 10<sup>th</sup> Regiment is returning to Manchester.



Cover sent May 30, 1816 manuscript Schlosser(?) and franked "A . Porter PM Free".



Cover mailed by Augustus Porter at Buffalo, October 22, 1817. He used his free frank as postmaster at Niagara.



Cover sent to Gideon Granger June 10, 1819 at Canandaigua, where he had settled after his Washington service.



Cover sent from Black Rock on September 16, 1825 franked J Barton PM.

Cover datelined September 27, 1829 to Augustus Porter. Cover sent from Detroit via steamboat and arrived at Buffalo September 29 where it received red date stamp and steamboat and free markings.

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## TO BATAVIA BY WAY OF BATAVIA

By: Peter Peloquin

I have two entires in my collection that were addressed to (presumably) the same family in New York State with the same completely wrong result. This is surprising because the letters originated in two different countries ten years apart.



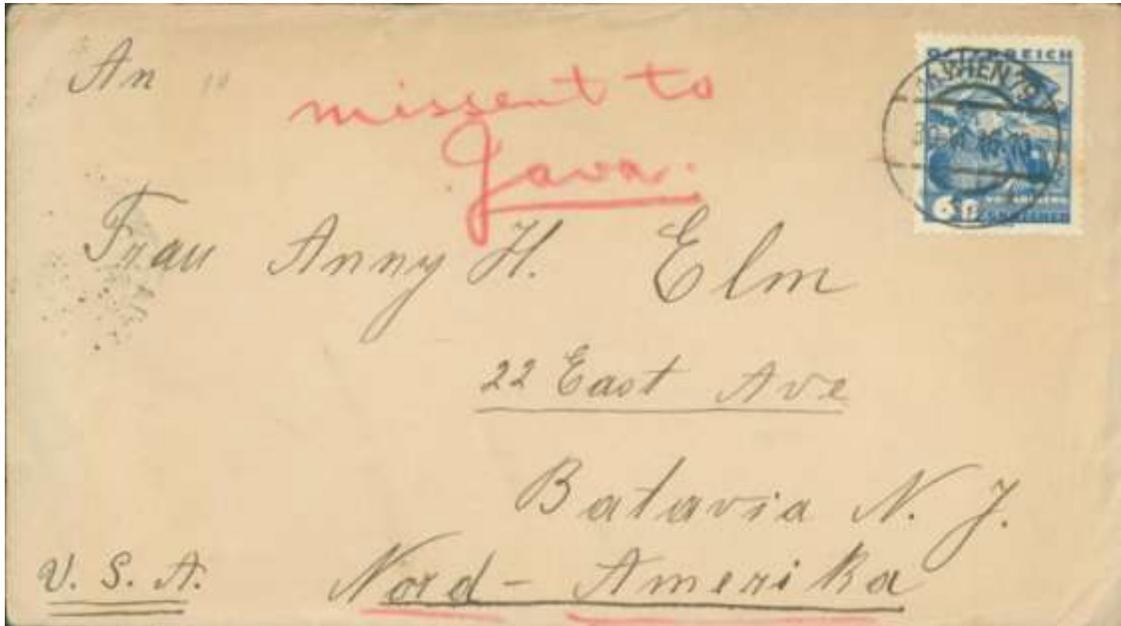
The first, seen above, was sent to Mrs. J. Y. Elm at 20 East Avenue, Batavia New York, U. S. A. Nord Amerika from Emov Tassner, Lippenfeld, Pfalz (Germany) . It has a bahnpost cancel that is not very clear but appears to be dated November 26, 1926. The cover was misdirected by approximately 10,000 miles (by air routes), as shown by the two backstamps, which can be seen below.



The first is Weltevreden, Netherland-Indies, sometimes referred to as the Dutch East Indies- (hereafter N. I.) and is dated December 26, 1926. The second is Batavia, N. I. on the same date. The Batavia N. I. Post Office clerk highlighted the Batavia, New York USA portion of the address in reddish color crayon.

The backstamps make sense from an historical perspective. Both post offices ceased to exist many years ago. They were twin cities in the Netherland-Indies. The two cities, as well as several small towns, combined to form the Indonesian capital city of Jakarta upon the country's independence in 1945. These cities were on the island of Java.

The second cover, seen below, was addressed to Frau Anny H. Elm at 22 East Avenue, Batavia, New York, U.S.A. Nord-Amerika. This time the mailing was from H. Glaser from Wien (Vienna) Austria with a clear cancel dated June 30, 1936.



The receiving cancel is Batavia (again N. I.) on July 23, 1936. This time, the clerk at the Batavia, N. I. Post Office highlighted the words “Nord-Amerika” and added the notation “**missent to Java,**” both in what appears to be the same reddish color crayon as on the other cover.



There is no receiving postmark from the Batavia, New York Post Office on either cover so it is not possible to determine how long it took to correct the errors. I believe that it would be a safe presumption that the mail would take at least four weeks, based on the approximate time of three weeks to one month that it took for each cover to travel a much shorter distance to arrive in the Netherland-Indies.

This time would have been dramatically reduced if the letter had been sent by a clipper ship flight from Manila in the Philippines to San Francisco, California. This service had just started in December 1935 but flights were becoming more frequent. There is no indication that the 1936 cover was sent by air mail. The postage on the envelope would not cover the cost of air mail.

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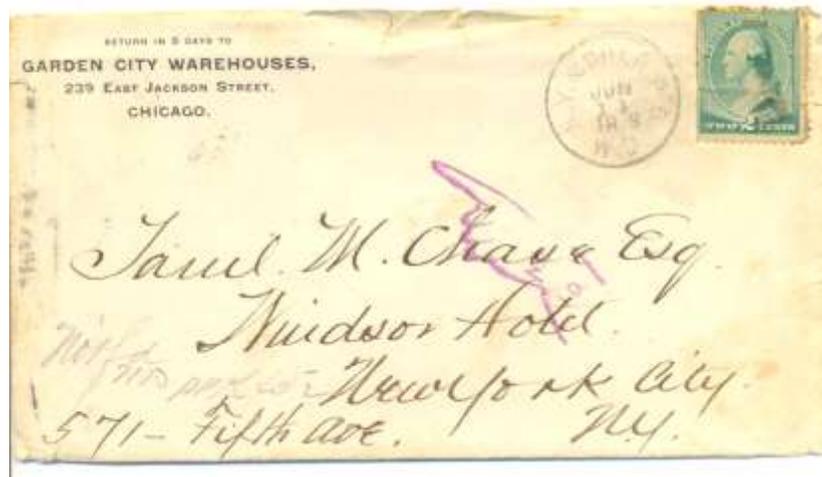
## LETTER RETURNED; SHOULD IT HAVE BEEN?

By: Peter Peloquin

The cover as shown was found in a dealer's low-price cover box. It is worn and not in good condition. The auction expression "opened roughly at top" would not begin to describe it. I considered it to be quite interesting anyway. The cover was sent June 11, 1889 and had a return address of the "Garden City Warehouses, 239 East Jackson Street, Chicago". The addressee was Samuel M. Chase, Esq. Apparently he was a guest at the Windsor Hotel at 571 Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, New York.

The Garden City Warehouses still have locations on Jackson Street but I believe that the present headquarters office is at a different building in the same area.

The cancellation is an RPO cancel. It is the New York and Chicago Railway Post Office WD (Western Division) Trip 8 – June 11<sup>th</sup>. No year is given in the cancellation.



This was the Contract Route Number 559, which ran between Chicago, Illinois and Cleveland, Ohio.

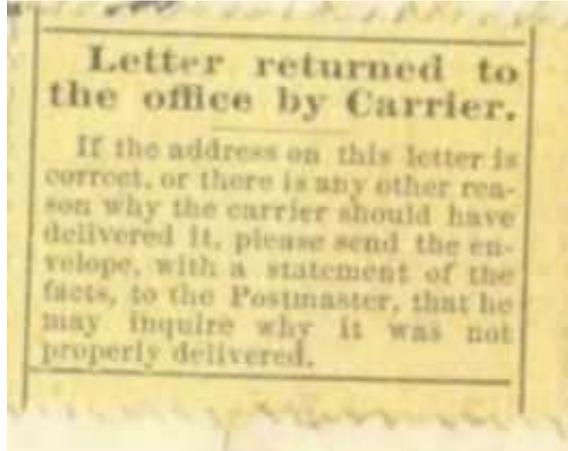
This cover was addressed to New York City, so it would probably pass through two other contract routes. There are no cancellations or backstamps to prove this. The first of these would be Contract Route Number 115- the Middle Division, which ran between Cleveland, Ohio and Syracuse, New York. The final leg would be the Contract Route Number 114- the Eastern Division, which ran between Syracuse, New York and New York City, New York.



The backstamp is June 13, 1889 NYC "H". A second backstamp was applied, presumably after the attempts to deliver the letter. It read "New York/ July 5/ 10:30 am /1889. The canceller is a duplex type and the branch number appears to be a five, but it is not complete.

An official yellow post office sealing label was applied to the flap. It reads as follows:

**“Letter returned to the office by Carrier.** If the address on this letter is correct, or there is any other reason why the carrier should have delivered it, please send the envelope, with a statement of the facts, to the Postmaster, that he may inquire why it was not properly delivered.”



A large purple marking shows a hand with a finger pointing to the return address at the warehouse, indicating return to the sender. It has a “N. Y.” (Post Office) marking on the wrist. On the front of the envelope is a pencil marking “notified”, and additional illegible lettering. The reason for return is not clear; possibly Mr. Chase had checked out by the time the letter arrived or had stayed at a different hotel.

When I opened the envelope, I found out that the “filler” for the envelope was the original two-page letter. Both pages were written on “Garden City Warehouses” stationery. The letterhead consists of a line engraving by the Chicago Engraving Company. It depicts one of the Warehouse buildings. Outside the building are six horse-drawn carriages with boxes stacked up in the back of each carriage. The letterhead also shows several people, who are attired in period dress, going into the building. They all appear overdressed for going to a warehouse.

Samuel M. Chase, the addressee cited above, is listed on the letterhead as the proprietor of the warehouse.

Thomas B. Shaw, the writer of the letter, is apparently writing to his boss describing the day’s activities as “business is very quiet”. Since the letter evidently never did reach the “proprietor” at the hotel, it was probably a good thing that it was not a day with a lot of problems.



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## ***LETTERS REMAINING IN THE SCHENECTADY POST OFFICE***

**By: Bob Bramwell**

The title of this article refers to the requirement established by resolution of the Confederation Congress in October, 1782, *That the Postmaster General's deputies respectively, shall regularly publish, at the expiration of each quarter, ... in one of the most convenient public newspapers, for three successive weeks, a list of all letters at that time remaining in their offices.*<sup>1</sup>

Students of postal law and its implementing regulations may be familiar with this requirement, which was put in place as a way to reduce the number of letters being sent to the General Post Office as “Dead Letters”. The List of Letters was seen as a way for Addressees to become aware that a letter was sitting in a local post office awaiting, in almost all cases, their payment for and receipt of that letter. Congress hoped to accomplish two things: first, to increase revenue of the post, and second, to decrease the cost of transporting Dead Letters to Philadelphia (with its attendant bookkeeping).

Postal historians recognize this as “advertising” undelivered letters, and since the 1782 resolution went on to state *“and at the expiration of the subsequent quarter, shall send such of the letters so published as then remain, as dead letters to the general Post Office, where they shall be opened and inspected by the Postmaster General, who shall carefully preserve them, with the papers therein respectively contained”*<sup>1</sup> ... it became common practice to place this bundle of letters safely away from the ordinary work area. Since this was the era of Across the Counter Delivery, it soon became part of the published notice for the Postmaster to add *“Persons calling for the above Letters, will please to say they are advertised”* to focus the clerk’s attention on finding that particular bundle of unclaimed letters – as opposed to the unclaimed letters from the current quarter.

What, you wonder, can a postal historian learn from reviewing a published List of Letters Remaining (LLR) at any particular post office? I was first attracted by the idea that the LLR gave me a clue to the geographic area served by the Schenectady post office. I had the notion that while the new Confederation Post declared itself to have a monopoly over mail carried on the Main Line from Falmouth to Savannah, the prior Provincial Post of New York had been put in the hands of entrepreneurs and that I could discover from notices published in New York City and Albany how and where that post was carried out. I was also frankly curious to understand, if I could, what role the Albany post office had in mind for a sub-office in Schenectady, which is only 16 miles distant from the main office and in the same county.

For most of us, access to copies of local newspapers from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries has been daunting until the emergence of by-subscription genealogy research engines. Mine is GenealogyBank, about \$70 per year. It has impressive runs of the primary “newspapers of record,” albeit with many gaps. It allows navigation to specific newspapers and keyword or key-phrase searching. An hour or so of playing around usually allows you to find what you’re looking for – if it is within their digital archive.

So I searched in the Albany newspaper archives, which went back to 1788, for the phrase “Schenectady Post Office” and came up with – among a number of notices – one that blew my mind once I fully understood its implications. It is reproduced in **Figure 1** exactly as it appeared on page 4 of the April 18, 1793 edition of the *Albany Gazette*.

Figure 1. Notice of Letters Remaining in the Schenectady Post Office on April 1, 1793 (i.e. as of the quarter ending March 31<sup>st</sup>).



Since March 31, 1793 was a Sunday, and the Gazette at that time was published weekly on Thursdays, I believe this notice was published on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> successively (so I was fortunate to find it, the earlier editions not have survived, or made their way into the *Gazette* archive). As you can see, this notice is short and sweet. Transcribed in **Figure 2** below for clarity, the notice contains 12 named addressees, represents 14 letters remaining in the post office (notice the “3” after Cornelius Philips’ name) and names 8 places to which letters are destined. It was issued by Joseph Shurtleff, the first federally appointed postmaster of Schenectady<sup>2</sup>.

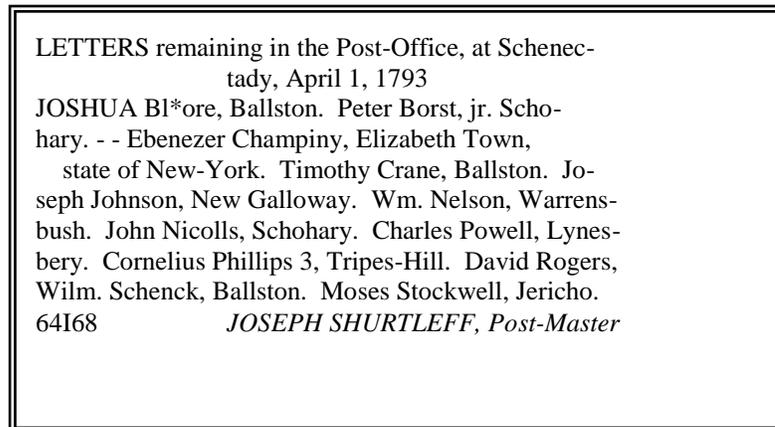


Figure 2. For clarity, this is a transcription of the Notice shown in Figure 1.

In common with all early notices of Letters Remaining, this list is the post-master’s best effort to reproduce the addressee’s name and location as given by the writer. Despite the extent to which spelling was phonetic at this time, it was probably reasonable to hope that if someone saw their name in the newspaper they would recognize it (on this list, David Rogers’ name is unique: he is the only addressee residing in Schenectady who hadn’t picked up his letter). The same is true with place names, which on the Mohawk River frontier were often based on the original Dutch patents or English land grants of the 1700’s. Warrensbush (land purchased by Sir Peter Warren in 1737) is one of many such examples, most of which have disappeared from usage. Warrensbush is part of the present Town of Florida. The large geographic area to which newspapers circulated made these notices reasonably effective in accomplishing Congress’ purpose.

Why did this small notice in an Albany newspaper capture my attention? Well, it seemed to contradict all accepted wisdom of when Schenectady got a post office! This notice was published on April 18, 1793, reporting as of March 31<sup>st</sup>.

All prior literature about the Schenectady post office put its beginning after April 18, 1793. Kay & Smith's *New York Postal History* places the beginning as of November 17, 1793. The USPS's fully researched date for Schenectady is April 25, 1793 – despite having a letter in the PMG's letter book dated January 9, 1793 replying to Shurtleff on an unspecified topic.

Now we have clear evidence that the Schenectady post office had been in operation prior to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1793, but how much prior? I suggest that Kay & Smith had the date of Joseph Shurtleff's appointment about right, November 17, but either they or their editor let a typo slip in which changed 1792 to 1793. There is another piece of evidence for this in Kay & Smith: Table 1, *Post Offices in Existence by Years*, (page 11) shows that there were 21 post offices operating in New York State by the end of 1792, with 11 of them newly opened that year. Table 2, *Post Offices Established Before 1800*, (page 12) must therefore show 11 post offices as having opened in 1792, but it shows only 10. I believe at one point Schenectady was known by Kay & Smith to be the 11<sup>th</sup> post office opened in 1792 but that information did not survive in the final text.

As to the USPS date, it is well known that in many cases the dates associated with opening of post offices is actually the date recorded for receipt of the first quarterly report for that post office. I feel that is the case for the USPS's April 25, 1793 date. An important factor supporting this conclusion is the reported opening dates for early post offices to the west of Schenectady identified in Kay & Smith: Canajoharie (December 2, 1792) and Whitestown (December 3, 1792). It stands to reason that Schenectady was “open for business” about the same time or even earlier so that mail could flow smoothly in both directions.

There is one final piece of information, made available through analysis of LLR's of the Albany post office, which supports the idea that the Schenectady post office was in operation in 1792. At the end of the June 1791 quarter a total of 192 letters-remaining were advertised by the Albany postmaster; 9 of them were addressed to Schenectady, a larger number than to any town except Albany itself (84). At the end of the March 1793 quarter – when Schenectady was in operation – there were no letters addressed to Schenectady, and similarly none advertised in any later quarter I have been able to study for the Albany post office. The Albany post office no longer had reason to hold any letters addressed to Schenectady residents, or to anyone located in a town better served by (i.e., located closer to) the Schenectady post office. With enough data from Albany LLR's we should be able to see the shift of business from Albany to Schenectady and the emergence of a specific “service area” around that office.

With the limited information presented here, only a glimmering of the service area can be shown, but I think it is still informative. **Figure 3** on the next page shows a map identifying the destinations of the 14 letters advertised by postmaster Joseph Shurtleff as of April 1, 1793.

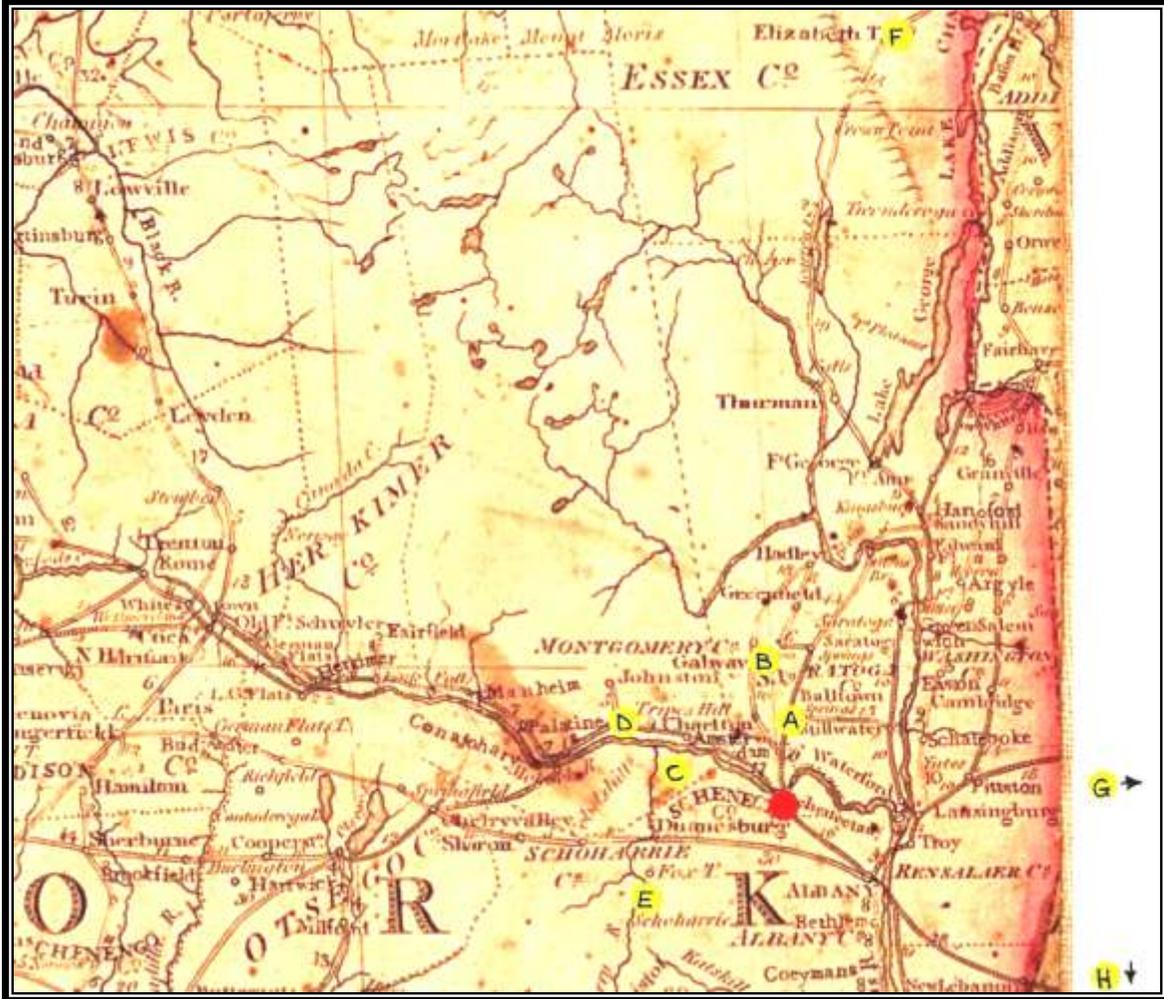


Figure 3. Location or direction & distance from Schenectady of Addressees for whom letters were advertised as of April 1, 1793

A	Ballston [Saratoga], 10 miles north
F	Elizabeth Town [Essex], 120 miles north
H	Jericho [Nassau], 180 miles south-east
G	Lynesbery, Connecticut?, unknown
B	New-Galloway [Saratoga], 17 miles, present Galway
E	Schohary [Schoharie], 25 miles south-west
D	Tripes-Hill [Montgomery], 21 miles west, present Tribes Hill
C	Warrens bush [Montgomery], 15 miles west, present Florida township

Since the LLR shows the destination of a letter but not the origin, we are left to speculate as to those letters that remained simply because their transportation had not yet arrived versus those that would remain until picked up or sent to the Dead Letter Office. In this case it seems fairly clear that letters to F, G and H had to get to Albany in order to be directed north, east and south. Letter E, to Schoharie, is less clear-cut because Schoharie town is on a turnpike from Albany that almost certainly had a post-rider in 1792; that might have been a letter written in Schenectady, but it is unlikely we will ever know. Hope springs eternal, I guess.

When the Albany post office was established by act of the New York legislature in 1776 it took responsibility for existing mail service between New York City and Albany, and from Albany westward through Schenectady and Johnstown to Canajoharie that dated back to 1763<sup>3</sup>.

With no post office in Schenectady, mail was dropped and picked up at Robert Clinch's tavern. In June, 1790, Schenectady resident Moses Beal became post-rider between Albany and frontier towns in Montgomery County<sup>4</sup>. Apparently a successful businessman, Beal acquired coaches and by the spring or summer of 1793 he had converted his western mail and newspaper route from horseback to coach as evident from the following notice, published in the *Albany Gazette*.



### The MAIL-STAGE

Every Friday, at 2 P.M. starts from Lewis's tavern, Albany, and arrives at Canajohary, the next day - where it meets and exchanges Passengers with the Whitestown Stage. On Monday at 6 A.M. the Mail-stage leaves Canajohary - - between 9 and 10 passes Yates and Fonda's - - the passengers dine at Stanton's tavern - the same afternoon arrive in Schenectady, & in the forenoon of Tuesday, at Albany. Fare 3<sup>d</sup> per mile - 14 lb. baggage allowed to each passenger -- & 150 lb rated the same as a passenger.

### MOSES BEAL.

N. B. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays the STAGE will be appropriated to the accommodation of Ladies and Gentlemen on Parties of Pleasure. Apply at No. 45, State Street, Albany

Figure 4. Promotional notice and its transcription of

stage coach service published by Moses Beal.

Notice that this schedule means that mail accumulated at the Schenectady post office bound for western towns would be picked up Friday evening (passengers dined and slept Friday in Schenectady, where Beal kept a nice brick hotel "providing accommodation suitable to the most discriminating gentlemen") Mail accumulated at the Schenectady post office bound elsewhere would be picked up Monday evening, as eastbound passengers enjoyed Beal's hospitality.

So on Sunday, March 31, 1793 a full week's mail heading to Albany for distribution north, east and south would be in the Schenectady post office, with but 2 days of western mail. Of the 14 letters, we know the postmaster would not be sending David Rogers' letter anywhere, but we are quite sure three letters are going to Albany. We're not sure whether a letter from Schenectady destined for Schoharie would be sent to Albany for redirection, or held in Schenectady. Finally, the 9 letters addressed to locations in Saratoga and Montgomery Counties probably fall within the service area of Schenectady's post office. This will be investigated further based on the analysis of later quarters' notices of LETTERS remaining at the post-office, at Schenectady.

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Footnotes appear on the next page.

## Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> The resolution as adopted is very different from what was written by the drafting committee, which proposed that the Dead Letter function be included in each deputy postmaster's responsibilities. I suspect Members of Congress thought better of that idea, it being too great a temptation, and too complex to administer. The draft stated *That the Postmaster General and his deputies shall respectively regularly publish in some public newspaper of the State wherein their respective offices shall be a list of all letters which shall severally have remained in their respective offices by the space of three weeks and at the expiration of six months thereafter shall open and inspect such letters and shall carefully preserve the same with the papers therein respectively contained, insert in a book, to be kept for the purpose the date of every such letter and the name and place of direction on the same and publish such direction (purporting thereon if such is the case that the letter contains valuable inclosures or other matters of importance to the parties) in one of the public newspapers aforesaid and deliver such letter.* [Journals of Congress, page 674]

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Shurtleff (1743 – 1815) settled in Schenectady after serving in the Revolution as Quartermaster of General Schuyler's Northern Army with the rank of Major. He and General Washington were acquainted, so his appointment might be considered "presidential". Shurtleff served as postmaster from 1792 to 1810, after which he went on to serve as County Clerk after Schenectady was separated from Albany County in 1809.

<sup>3</sup> Sir William Johnson, founder of the frontier settlement Johnstown some 25 miles west of Schenectady and above the Mohawk River, wrote in a well-authenticated letter now held in the New York State Archive *Apr. 4, 1763. The mail was sent for the first time to Schenectady.* An equally respected source wrote *the first mail to reach Schenectady was received on the third of April 1763.* In this case the author does not indicate from whence the mail came. If it were from Albany, the dates make good sense, as a post-rider could easily make the 16 miles from Albany to Schenectady in less than a day and the distance from Schenectady to Johnstown the next. [cited by Dr. O'Callaghan in *Documentary History of New York*]; [Judge Sanders, *Early History of Schenectady County*]

<sup>4</sup> Post-riders considered carrying the mail an important job, largely because of the trust implicit in being selected. But a post-rider had to supply his own horse and tack, care for his horse and pay for his own meals while on the road. Fending off assaults was a part of the job. For all that, the pay wasn't great. I mean a penny for picking up or delivering a letter *on the way*? For that reason, most post-riders were also newspaper subscription and delivery agents, for which they had to supply their own saddlebag, as the PMG ruled that unless a publisher paid the postage his newspapers could not be carried in the locked portmanteau.

This notice published by Moses Beal illustrates the difficulty of keeping his customers current, and also shows a bit of the nature of postal service before the federal Post Office Department gained traction.

**On the 10th day of June**  
next, twelve months will expire, since the subscriber began post-riding, into the county of Montgomery—during which period, he has endeavored to be as punctual as he possibly could; and he hopes his endeavors have met the approbation of his customers. He has now to inform them, that it is his wish and desire, to settle off with the Printers, to determine, whether it will be in his power to continue the business any longer.  
This hint, to all his good paymasters, is sufficient; and those who are not good, (if any he has on his list of subscribers) he hopes, will be stimulated, to come forward, and convince the world, that they have as strict a sense of honor and honesty as any of their neighbors.  
Printed receipts are lodged at the several places where he leaves the papers, which will be given to all who call and make payment.  
The subscriber takes it for granted, that (should he continue riding) no person will discontinue his papers without giving him notice thereof, either personally, or in writing, and making full payment for the sum they may be owing him, agreeably to the original terms of subscription.  
**MOSES BEAL**  
Albany, May 26, 1791.

## COVER OF THE ISSUE

By: David E. Williams



As I peruse various online auction sites, such as eBay or Bidstart, I am always searching for New York State covers exhibiting star cancels. As I record new discoveries not appearing in the original *Star Cancels of New York State* (published by ESPHS in 1987), I occasionally find a cover that I cannot live without. Such is the case with the cover illustrated above.

Star cancels from Patchogue are not that hard to find. As a matter of fact, in the original edition of his work mentioned above, Dave Proulx noted four different star types from Patchogue. Among these was what Proulx noted as star type “19,” seen at right and as illustrated in the original publication.



I have personally seen at least a half dozen covers from Patchogue bearing this style of star, or like this, but without the outer ring. Whether the missing outer ring is just the case of a poor strike, or in fact a new subtype, I have not been able to determine.

However, the star shown on the cover above is definitely a new type. The double outer ring and the near perfect star geometry make this unique. However, because it is somewhat similar to the original type 19 star, it will be designated as a new Type “19A”. This one is from 1891. Covers bearing Proulx’s original star type “19” are recorded from 1881 to 1897.

Fellow ESPHS member Doug Penwell has found an even more unique version of the Patchogue star type 19. It will appear in the September 2014 *Excelsior!* as the Cover of the Issue.