

The City Despatch Post 1842-1852 Issues

A Study of America's
First and Most Versatile
Stamp-Producing Plate

By

SCOTT R. TREPEL



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The title of this treatise contains a well-known fact ("America's First") and an opinion ("Most Versatile") in describing the engraved metal printing plate used to produce City Despatch Post stamps in New York City from 1842 through 1852.

The City Despatch Post plate is historically significant because it is the first ever used to print stamps in the United States and, from a broader perspective, the entire Western Hemisphere. The City Despatch Post February 1842 issue date precedes the 1845 New York Postmaster's Provisional and the 1847 General Issue by three and five years, respectively.

To prove that the City Despatch Post plate is the most versatile stamp-producing plate in American philately, the author will illustrate how the physical transformations and use of the City Despatch Post issues are extraordinary in the field of philately, to a degree unrivaled by any other stamp-producing plate in America and possibly the world.

This highly-esteemed piece of metal, which probably no longer exists, deserves recognition as the most versatile plate for the following reasons:

Diversity of Issues

- The original City Despatch Post plate produced stamps that were issued over eleven years (1842-1852) by five different proprietors, and, at one point, the United States government;
- The plate of 42 subjects produced at least eight major Scott-listed stamps based on design and paper color: 6LB1, 40L1, 40L2, 40L3, 40L4, 40L5, 40L6 and 40L8 (Scott 40L7 was recently and correctly delisted);

Major Modifications to Plate

- The original plate (First State) was modified by one of its owners by changing the denomination of each of the 42 positions from 3c to 2c (Second State);
- The same plate was further modified by adding the initials "CC" to each position, reflecting new ownership of the private post by a man named Charles Cole (Third State);

Distinctive Plate and Paper Varieties

- The "CC" plate contained seven positions with the left "C" *hand-etched* on the plate (Positions 1, 2, 3, 7, 13, 19 and 25), while the right "C" on those seven and both "C"s on the other 35 positions were entered with a metal-stamping device;
- The same "CC" plate contained one position with the right "C" appearing inverted (Position 36);
- Stamps from the "CC" plate, including the Hand-Etched "C" at Left and Inverted "C" at Right positions, were printed on *four* colors of paper (Grayish, Green, Vermilion and Yellowish Buff).

Overprints and Control Marks

- One surviving example proves that some first-issue 3c stamps (Scott 40L1) were overprinted "United States" in manuscript when the government took over the City Despatch Post;
- Two surviving examples prove that some 2c stamps from the Second State plate (Scott 40L2) were overprinted "C&W" or "Cummings & Wright" to reflect a change in private ownership;
- Some "CC" stamps were initialled "C" by hand prior to sale, presumably as a control mark similar to the New York Postmaster Provisional initials "ACM" and variants.

Any one of the above attributes is worthy of recognition. That *all* of the above attributes belong to a single plate is truly fantastic, opening an entire field of study and collecting involving many different stamps and a decade-long history.

To focus the reader's attention on the stamp-producing plate of the City Despatch Post, the author has purposefully omitted some of the historical background found in earlier publications. Several authoritative articles have been written about the City Despatch Post issues, including the Perry-Hall monograph *100 Years Ago*, published in 1942 as a centenary tribute, and the much more recent *Penny Post* series by Calvet M. Hahn. The author also published a series in the *Penny Post*. Readers who wish to become better informed about the postal history aspects of the City Despatch Post are encouraged to carefully read the sources cited.

The City Despatch Post Die and Plate

The City Despatch Post stamp's simple design bears a portrait of George Washington, the name "City Despatch Post" and a value of "Three Cents." Two original proof impressions exist from another die that was not used to make the final plate; they are considered to be unadopted essays. One is ex Caspary and Middendorf (Figure 1), and the other (Figure 2) was found in England. Both now reside in private collections. Comparing these die essays to the issued stamp in Figure 3, there are three obvious differences in the essay design: 1) the oval-shaped ornaments at left and right have projections; 2) there is a spiked apostrophe between the "T" and "S" of "CENTS", and 3) there is more space between the top of Washington's head and the surrounding oval border.

There is no obvious aesthetic reason for abandoning the essay die in favor of the one that was ultimately used to make the plate. The essay design is taller in overall height. Perhaps the size was deemed too tall for the plate layout. The die block adopted for the issued stamp was subsequently cracked. In 1892 it reached philatelic hands and was used to make impressions called "reprint proofs".

Research by Dr. Julian Blanchard, published in 1956 in *The Essay-Proof Journal* (No. 49), provides a credible argument that Rawdon, Wright, & Hatch did not produce the original City Despatch Post plate and stamps. Dr. Blanchard was unable to conclusively identify the producer; however, based on the origins of the Washington vignette and the manner of lettering, Dr. Blanchard suggested Sherman & Smith, Durand & Co. or W. L. Ormsby (who engraved the American Letter Mail Company stamps in 1844) as possibilities.

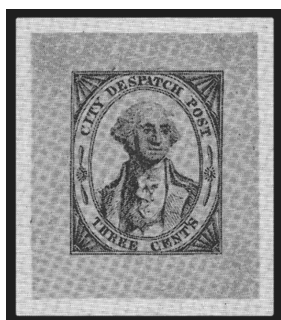


Figure 1.



Figure 2.

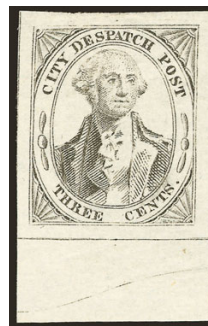


Figure 3.

Figures 1 and 2 are impressions from the City Despatch Post essay die. The issued stamp is shown in Figure 3. The differences are 1) the oval-shaped ornaments at left and right have projections; 2) there is a spiked apostrophe between the "T" and "S" of "CENTS", and 3) there is more space between the top of Washington's head and the surrounding oval border.

Stamps were printed from an engraved metal plate of 42 subjects, arranged in seven rows of six, measuring approximately 127 millimeters wide by 175 millimeters high (dimensions of the outer framelines of the engraved area). Impressions from the plate of 42 were printed in black ink on moderately thick grayish-white paper. The full "sheet" size—that is, a complete pane of 42—measures approximately 140 millimeters wide by 229 high (the largest paper size recorded). Whether more than one impression was made on a larger sheet of paper is not known. Gum was applied, which today appears slightly brownish with a crackly pattern and sometimes with a brushstroke

pattern.

There are today five complete sheets of the first City Despatch Post stamp. One of these is shown in Figure 4. **The five sheets are as follows:**

- 1) Ex Caspary, Lilly, Boker, Klein and Golden
- 2) Ex Middendorf
- 3) Ex Kapiloff*
- 4) Ex Norvin Green*
- 5) Ex Ackerman and Hall (Figure 4)*

* These sheets have full 144 by 229 millimeter sheet dimensions.

The existence of complete City Despatch Post sheets makes it possible for plating marks to be established for each of the 42 subjects. These marks, when visible on the stamp and sufficiently well printed, may be used to plate stamps from all of the subsequent printings. They were described by Frank S. Levi, Jr. in an article published in *The Collectors Club Philatelist* (Vol. 34, No. 2).

Remarkably, *not one multiple of any kind* is recorded for the subsequent issues printed from this plate by Mead/Cummings & Wright (40L2-40L3) or Cole (40L4-40L8). **Therefore, the author's 40L2-3 and 40L4-8 plate reconstructions were achieved only through the identification of one or more of the distinguishing marks that link each position back to the corresponding position among the 42 subjects on the City Despatch Post 40L1 sheet.**

Even with the original City Despatch Post sheet as a guide, plating stamps from later printings is very difficult for several reasons. First, the 42 subjects are surprisingly uniform, and unique plating marks are hard to find. Second, as the plate wore, many lines of engraving become very faint, and the distinguishing marks present in early impressions are faint or missing from later issues. Third, the guide dots and framelines, which are useful in plating, are often cut away during separation. Fourth, the Vermilion glazed paper used for some of the "CC" stamps frequently oxidizes, making it difficult to detect tiny plating marks beneath the blackish oxidation.

Greig's City Despatch Post Issue (February 1 to August 13, 1842) and U.S. Government Carrier Usage (beginning August 16, 1842)

The City Despatch Post stamps (Scott 40L1) were available when the formation of the post by Alexander M. Greig was announced on February 1, 1842. The stamps were used under private ownership until mid-August 1842, when the post was acquired by the government and re-established as the carrier department of the New York City post office. The latest use of Scott 40L1 is August 13, 1842, and the first day of operation of the U.S. City Despatch Post carrier department is August 16, 1842.

An example of the first issue (Scott 40L1) used on February 3, 1842, the third day of issue, is shown in Figure 5. The stamp is used on a printed notice announcing the services offered by the City Despatch, which was circulated throughout New York City during the first month. The latest 40L1 cover recorded is dated August 13, 1842, soon before the last day of operation as a private post (Figure 6).

The City Despatch Post 40L1 stamps continued to be used after the government acquired the post and re-estab-



Figure 4. Complete sheet of City Despatch Post 40L1.

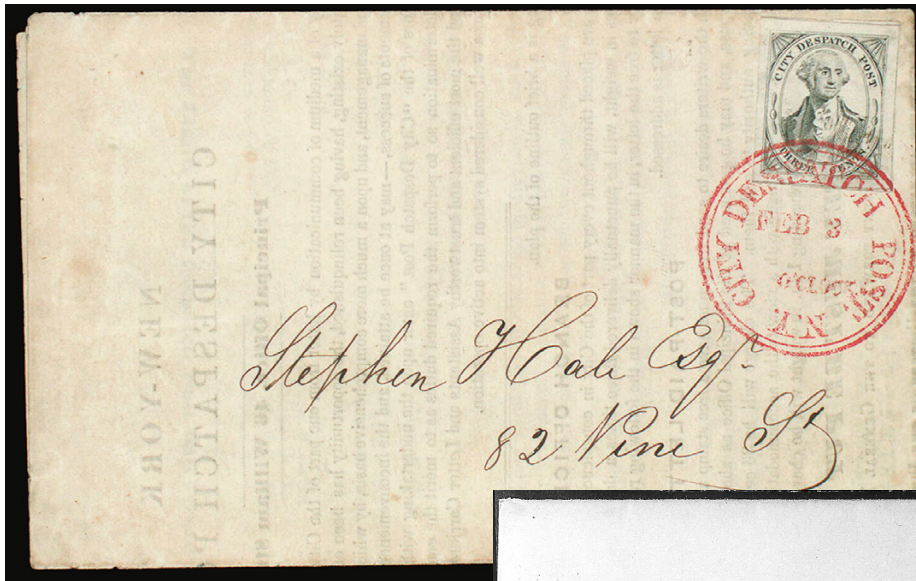


Figure 5. The first City Despatch Post stamp (Scott 40L1) used on February 3, 1842, the third day of issue. The folded notice is an advertisement for the City Despatch Post.

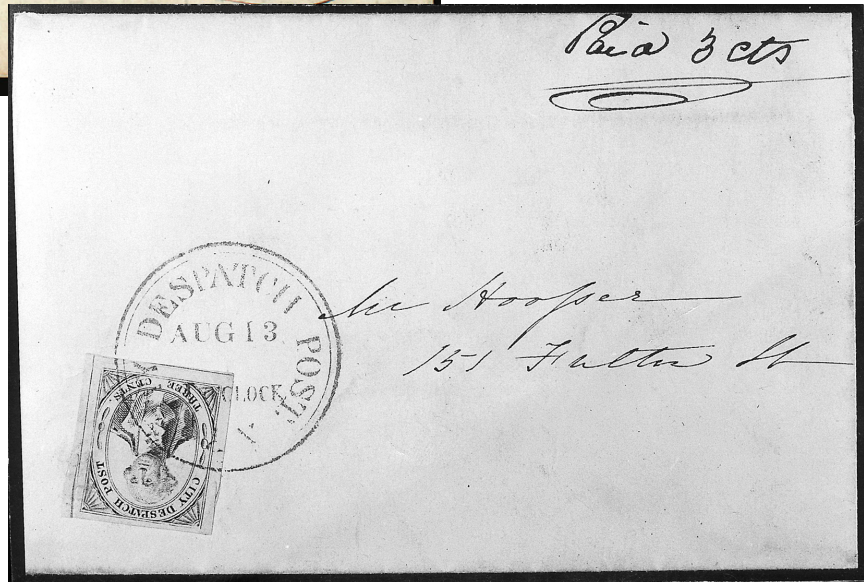


Figure 6. The latest recorded use of the City Despatch Post first issue (Scott 40L1), August 13, 1842, just days prior to the commencement of carrier service by the U.S. City Despatch Post.



Figure 7. The earliest recorded use of Scott 6LB1 by the U.S. City Despatch Post carrier department, August 16, 1842, the date on which the carrier service commenced operations.

lished it as the U.S. City Despatch Post carrier department. Examples of 40L1 cancelled “U.S.” are classified as Scott 6LB1, the earliest of all Scott-listed carrier stamps. The “U.S.” cancel may take the form of the framed “U.S.” obliterator or the “U.S. City Despatch Post” circular datestamp. The author estimates that fifteen covers survive with 6LB1. The earliest recorded use of 6LB1 is dated August 16, 1842, making it a first day of carrier usage (see Figure 7).

There is one recorded example of the City Despatch Post stamp with the words “United States” written in a faded purple/magenta ink over the “City Despatch Post” label. It is used on a folded cover with the “U.S. City Despatch Post” circular datestamp ostensibly dated August “19”, 1842, but the interior dateline has been quoted as August 16, which raises a dating question. The cover is photographed in the Ferrary sale catalogue (4th Sale, June 15-16, 1922, lot 137), and a reproduction of that image is shown here as Figure 8.

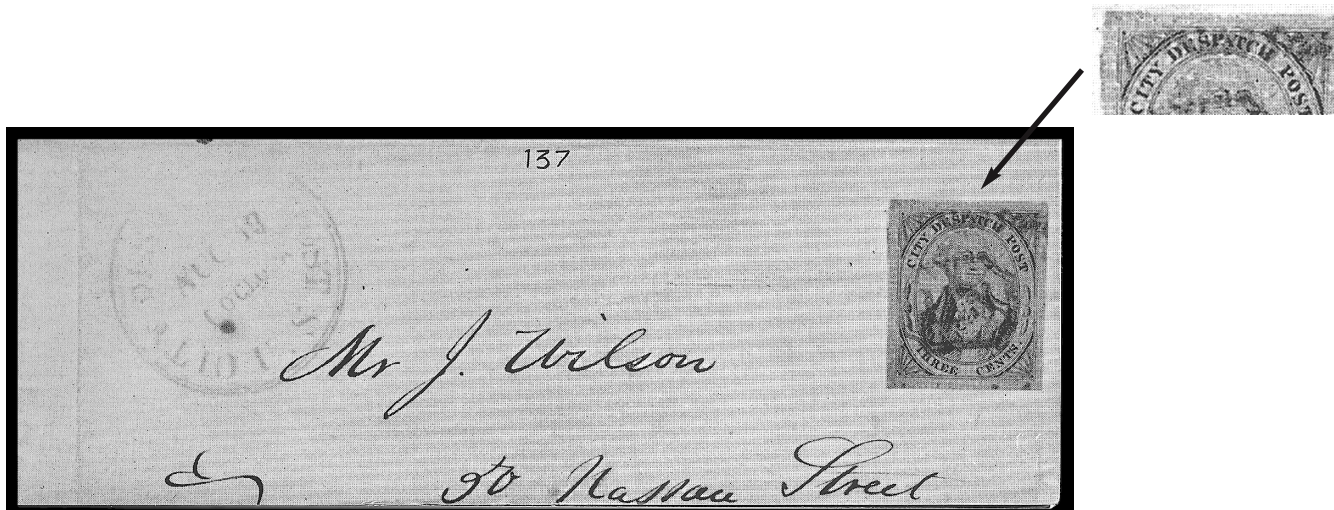


Figure 8. The Ferrary sale catalogue photo shows the “United States” overprint in purple/magenta writing at the top of the stamp. The ink faded out by the time of the 1950 Moody sale.

The Ferrary catalogue photo shows that the manuscript “United States” was legible at the time of the 1922 Ferrary sale. However, when the cover appeared in the November 1950 Harmer sale of the Moody collection (lot 268), the writing had faded so much as to be practically invisible. In the May 1966 *The London Philatelist*, John R. Boker Jr. stated: “The second [item displayed] is a cover from the Ferrari collection dated 19th August (three days after the carrier service started). The stamp is properly cancelled with the ‘U.S.’ in octagon, but it also has the words ‘United States’ in now almost faded-out purple ink written across the top of the stamp above the label ‘City Despatch Post’. I feel that this could well be an early official method of overprinting, almost immediately discontinued as impractical.” It was later offered in the 1973 Mohrmann sale of a portion of the Boker collection.

In describing the ex-Ferrary/Moody/Boker cover in his *Penny Post* series, Calvet M. Hahn states that the second digit of the “19” in the datestamp is actually an inverted “6”, making this an August 16 use on the first day of carrier service. The two August “16” covers with the “6” upright have 9 O’Clock (a.m.) and 4 O’Clock (p.m.) times. The Ferrary/Moody/Boker August “19” cover is 1 O’Clock (p.m.). If Mr. Hahn is correct in his statement that the datestamp has an inverted “6” and was actually mailed on August 16, then the “6” slug was correctly positioned for the 9 a.m. postmark, inverted for 1 p.m., then corrected for 4 p.m. This author has not personally examined the cover. Mr. Hahn might have had the opportunity to examine the dateline, or he might be relying on the Mohrmann description, which states “16 Aug. 1842”. At this point, the question is unresolved.

Abraham Mead’s Post Office City Despatch (December 1846 to March 1847) Second State of Plate—Change in Value from “THREE” to “TWO” Cents

Although the original Scott 40L1 issue from the First State plate was accepted by the U.S. carrier department (and as such is classified as Scott 6LB1), it was immediately superseded by the “United States City Despatch Post” issue (Scott 6LB3). The U.S. City Despatch Post carrier stamps in all of their paper variations were printed from a new engraved plate of 50 subjects arranged in two panes of 25. These were used until the government closed the U.S. City Despatch Post, as announced in a newspaper notice on November 28, 1846.

When the carrier department was discontinued, a former post office clerk named Abraham B. Mead immediately took control of the operation and established it as a private post with the name “Post Office City Dispatch”. Mead’s newspaper announcement is dated November 30, 1846, in which he states “Persons desiring to sent [sic] letters free can procure stamps at the Principal Office [Author’s Note: corner of Liberty and Nassau Streets, opposite the Post Office], or at either of the Stations, at 2 cents each, or \$1.50 per hundred.”

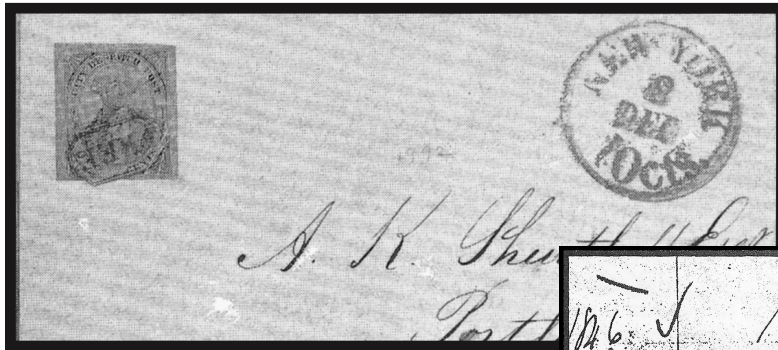
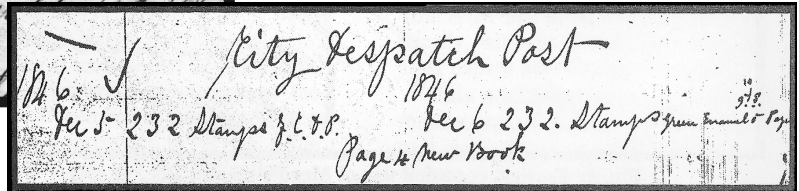


Figure 9 (below). Reproduction of the entry in Rawdon, Wright & Hatch’s records, showing that the “Green enameled” stamps were produced for Mead’s Post Office City Dispatch on December 5 and 6, 1846.

Figure 10 (above). Earliest recorded use of Mead’s 2c stamp (Scott 40L2), Dec. 8, 1846.



After the transition from a government carrier operation to a private post, the New York postmaster, Robert H. Morris, announced that the U.S. City Dispatch Post 3c stamps could be redeemed or used on mail, “I having made an arrangement with the ‘Post Office City Dispatch’ to pay them for the delivery of such letters.” There is one recorded cover with the obsolete carrier stamp accepted by Mead (ex Caspary and Middendorf).

Although Mead’s announcement states that 2c stamps were available on November 30, 1846, this cannot be the case. Mead was probably anticipating having stamps available, but the Rawdon, Wright & Hatch records indicate fulfillment dates of December 5 and 6, 1846 (Figure 9). The earliest Mead cover reported by Calvet M. Hahn is an 1846 stampless folded letter with the City Dispatch Post circular datestamp dated November 30. The earliest 40L2 cover is an 1846 folded letter to Portland, Maine, with the stamp tied by Mead’s red “Free” cancel and a separate red “New-York 10 cts. 8 Dec.” integral-rate circular datestamp. It was offered in Robert Kaufmann’s October 1978 private treaty catalogue, and the cover appears to be genuine (but not expertized). The next earliest 40L2 use is a folded cover (docketed 1846) with the stamp just tied by the red “Free” cancel and a matching “City Dispatch Post P.O. Dec. 9, 4 O’Clock” circular datestamp (Siegel Sale 860, lot 840).

Before Mead could obtain stamps of his own, the old City Dispatch Post plate—presumably acquired by Mead when he took over—had to be modified by changing the denomination from “THREE CENTS” to “TWO CENTS”



Figure 11. THREE STATES OF POSITION 38 (bottom row, second from left): FIRST) As it appears on original plate (Scott 40L1); SECOND) After “(T)HREE” has been erased and “(T)WO” engraved in its place on Mead’s modified plate (40L2-40L3); and THIRD) After “CC” tool-punched on plate by Cole (40L4-40L8). All other plating marks remain the same. The “W” of “Two” on Position 38 has a distinctive downward slant.

on each of the 42 positions. This was accomplished by burnishing out the “HREE” of “THREE” from each position on the plate, then re-engraving “WO” in place of these letters (see comparison in Figure 11). All of this work was done by hand, and each “TWO” is slightly different from the rest, which assists in plating subsequent “CC” stamps, especially when other plating features are obscured, cut away or otherwise invisible.

Post Office City Despatch Under Cummings and Wright (March 1847 to October-December 1847)

There is evidence, documentary and circumstantial, that Mead only briefly operated the Post Office City Despatch, beginning on November 30, 1846 (the announced date) and ending sometime in March 1847. It is known that the post was taken over by Alfred H. Cummings and Robert Wright, and there is documentation that this change took place no later than May 15, 1847, in the form of a receipt on that date from the “P.O. City Despatch”, signed “Cummings & Wright, Proprietors”. However, the takeover date probably precedes March 25, 1847, based on the existence of certain covers.

One key piece of evidence is a March 25, 1847, cover with the Cummings’ City Post stamp (55L3) used in conjunction with Mead’s red “Free” cancel and “City Despatch P.O.” circular datestamp (John A. Fox sale, May 22, 1970—see Figure 12). Also indicating a March takeover date is the existence of two distinct patterns of postmark application. On locally-addressed covers dated in December 1846, January and February 1847, the Mead 40L2 stamp is cancelled by the red “Free”, which is applied only once in conjunction with the circular datestamp (Figure 13). Beginning with a March 20, 1847, cover (Figure 14), the “Free” is consistently applied twice on local covers.

Figure 12 (right) is a cover dated Mar. 25, 1847, with Cummings City Post 55L3 cancelled by the “Free” in conjunction with the Post Office City Despatch datestamp, indicating that Cummings & Wright took over from Mead as early as March 1847.



Figure 13 (above) is a 40L2 cover dated Feb. 2, 1847, during the period when Mead operated the Post Office City Despatch. In this period, the “Free” cancel is consistently applied once to cancel the stamp.

Figure 14 (right) is dated March 20, 1847, and the double strike of “Free” is typical of the Cummings & Wright ownership period.



During the Cummings and Wright period, the Green 40L2 stamp continued to be used, and a second stamp on Pink glazed paper (Scott 40L3) was introduced. Examples of the Green 40L2 stamp are recorded on covers dated from December 1846 through October 1847. The Pink 40L3 earliest recorded usage is May 15, 1847. Calvet M. Hahn's published census in the *Penny Post* (October 2001) lists 36 covers with 40L2, but some of the stamps did not originate and several dates are incorrect. An analysis of corrected data indicates that the Cummings & Wright operation of the Post Office City Despatch—beginning in March 1847, as previously explained—might have ended as early as October 1847, but certainly terminated prior to January 27, 1848, when the first Cole “CC” usage is recorded (Figure 18).

Two different examples of a manuscript overprint are recorded on 40L2, one on cover and the other off cover. Both are shown in Figures 15 and 16. The cover is dated July 14, 1847, and the stamp on the cover has a manuscript “CW” overprint. The off-cover stamp has part of a New York red datestamp, and the stamp itself is overprinted “Cummings & Wright”.



Figure 15 and 16 (inset). Examples of the “CW” and “Cummings & Wright” manuscript overprints applied to the Mead 40L2 stamp. The cover is dated July 14, 1847.

The three latest reliable dates for 40L2 covers are September 15, 23 and October 13, 1847. All three were delivered to the post office for mailing to another city. The September 15 and October 13 covers have manuscript cancels on the stamps along with the red New York post office datestamp, which fits the cancellation patterns on out-bound mail at this time. The September 23 cover has a sharply defined red “Free” cancel, which is the latest use of the “Free” in red. Among the properly-dated genuine covers there are **no 40L2 or 40L3 usages between October 13 and December 13, 1847**, a span of two months. The entries in the Hahn census between these dates can be shown to be incorrect (a full analysis is beyond the author’s present scope).

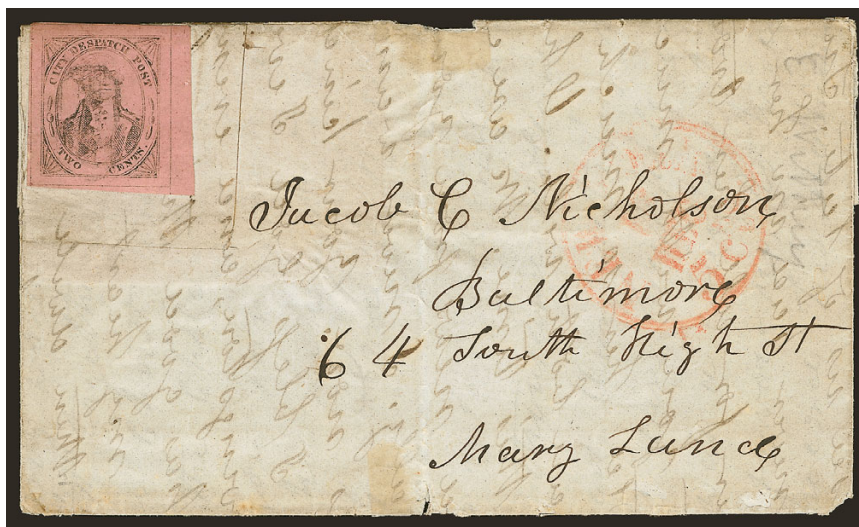


Figure 17. The 2c Black on Pink glazed paper (Scott 40L3), used on cover dated December 13, 1847. The use of black for the “Free” cancel and late 40L3 usage suggest a possible changeover to Cole’s management, because black ink does not appear on recorded covers during the Mead/Cummings & Wright period from Dec. 1846 through Oct. 1847.

December 13, 1847, is the date of the latest recorded cover with either 40L2 or 40L3 (it is 40L3—Figure 17). The earliest recorded use of the Cole “CC” stamp is a cover with 40L4b, dated January 27, 1848 (Figure 18). Therefore, certainly prior to January 27, 1848, and probably in proximity to December 13, 1847, the original plate was further modified by adding “CC” to each position. The December 13 cover is also significant as the earliest recorded example of the “Free” cancel in *black ink* rather than red. The use of black ink immediately carries over into the Cole period. The earliest “CC” covers (January 27, February 5, February 8, 1848) each have the stamp cancelled by the black “Free”.

The author proposes revising the timeline to reflect a change in man-

agement of the Post Office City Despatch from Cummings & Wright to Charles Cole in late October or November 1847. In this new scenario, Cole used up or accepted the Pink 40L3 stamps while his “CC” issue was being prepared, and he initiated the use of black cancelling ink, as seen on the 40L3 cover (Figure 17) and early “CC” covers.

**Post Office City Despatch
Under Charles Cole**

**(October-November 1847 to circa June 1850)
Third State of Plate—“CC” Initials**

The City Despatch Post plate enters its third, final and, in the author’s opinion, its most fascinating state of existence with the post’s takeover by Charles Cole. In his *Penny Post* series, Mr. Hahn delves into the question of the owner’s true identity: was it a man named Charles Cole, or another named Charles Coles? Readers are referred to Mr. Hahn’s analysis, which supports the Cole spelling without the “s”, and this author has elected to use the s-less Cole name.

The modified plate previously used by Mead and Cummings & Wright was acquired by Cole and altered to include his initials on each stamp. The so-called “CC” issues span a period from January 27, 1848 (the earliest recorded cover—Figure 18) through 1852. Cancellation patterns on dated “CC” covers indicate a possible bifurcation of the post’s operations. Furthermore, the absence of recorded covers from July 1850 through the end of 1851 suggests the post was dormant during this period. However, the Yellowish Buff 40L8 “CC” issue is known genuinely used starting from January 1852 (possibly in late 1851). The existence of a manuscript “Paid E. N. Barry” postmark on one 40L8 cover, circa 1852, is evidence that the City Despatch Post plate might have been used by a fifth proprietor, Edward N. Barry, for a final printing (on Yellowish Buff paper).

The process of adding the letters “CC” to each of the 42 positions was evidently a matter of trial and error. At best it was mediocre craftsmanship. At worst it was crude and amateurish. To explain how the letters were added to the plate, the author asks the reader to first study the reconstructed sheet in Figure 19.

The author’s “CC” plate reconstruction is a compilation of individual digital scans. It represents the most recent, yet unfinished, product of painstaking study and comparison, which was necessary because of a) the absence of multiples, b) the uniformity of the original City Despatch Post plate, c) the difficulty locating plating marks in late impressions from the worn plate, d) the tendency of glazed paper to oxidize, thus obscuring the impression and plating marks, and e) variable paper shrinkage among the different papers, which complicates the overlay process. Reconstructing the “CC” plate was possible only because each position can be traced to its Mead “Two Cents” and original Greig “Three Cents” states.

The author has successfully located a representative “CC” stamp for 38 of the 42 positions by using the guide dots located on most of the 42 subjects, the relative position of the stamp design to the surrounding dividing lines, consistent plating marks, and the unique configuration of each hand-engraved “Two” denomination. There are still four open positions. However, there are also two different “CC” stamps that do not match any of the plated examples. For now these two stamps cannot be precisely matched with their positions on the Greig (First State) or Mead (Second State) plate. With further study it should be possible to complete the puzzle and show a representation of the entire “CC” plate.

Hand-Etched “C” at Left and Inverted “C” Varieties

The letter C was entered twice on each subject for a total of 84 separate entries. Of this total, seven C’s were hand-etched once on each of seven positions with very poor results. The author describes this variety as “Hand-Etched” rather than using the Scott term “Sideways”, because the character of the variety is better described by its



Figure 18. Cole’s “CC” stamp on Green glazed paper, with the Hand-Etched “C” at Left plate variety (Position 25), used on January 27, 1848, the earliest recorded use for a “CC” stamp. The “Free” is struck in black, a color change that may mark the beginning of Cole’s ownership.

RECONSTRUCTION OF COLE'S "CC" PLATE

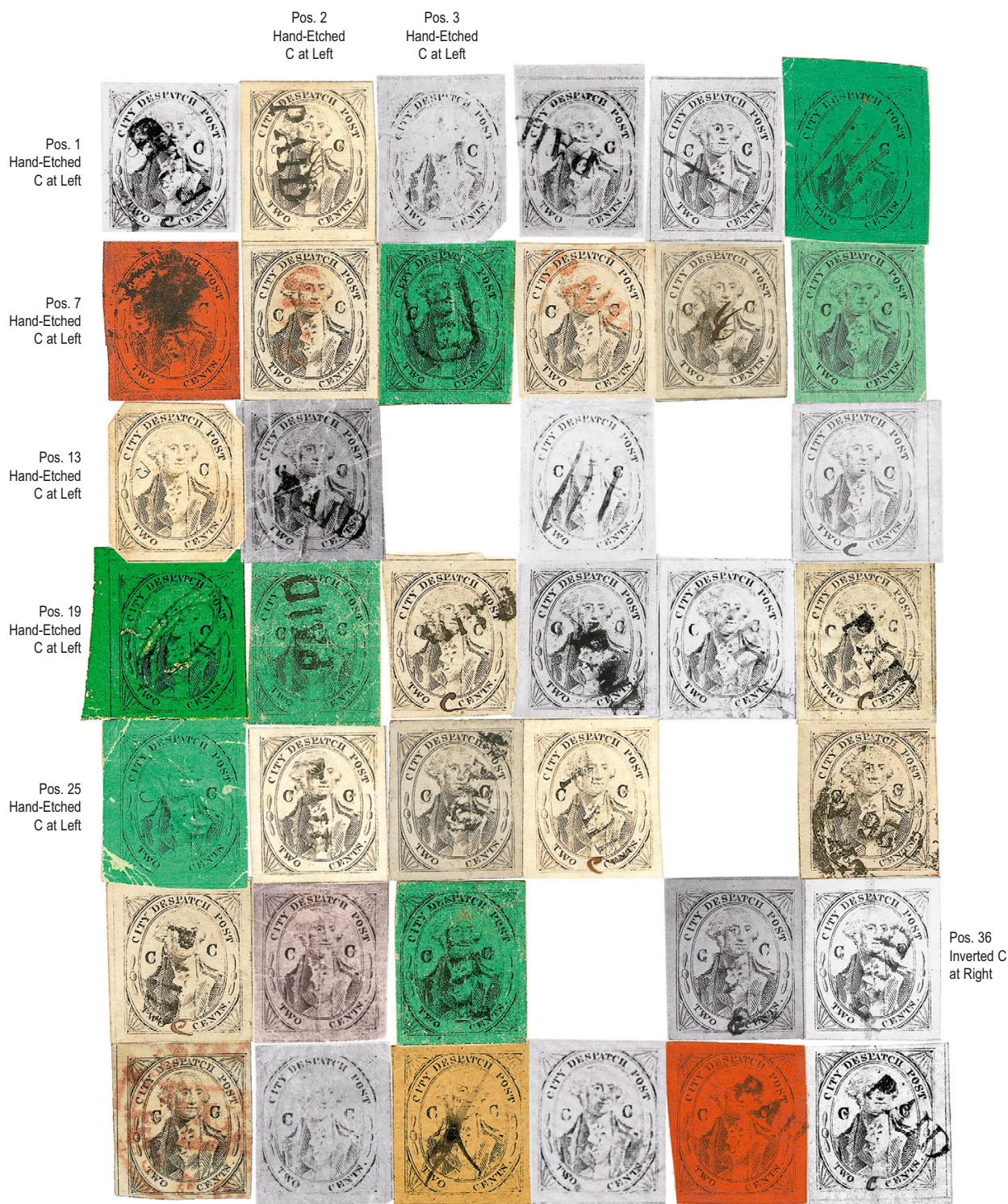


Figure 19. This compilation of digital scans shows 38 different “CC” stamps in their correct position on the sheet of 42. The Hand-Etched “C” at Left and Inverted “C” at Right varieties are identified. The location of the seven Hand-Etched “C” at Left positions along the left and upper left corner of the sheet indicates that the crude attempt to hand-etch letters started on the right side of the metal plate (see Figure 22).

HAND-ETCHED "C" AT LEFT AND INVERTED "C" AT RIGHT POSITIONS



Position 1



Position 2



Position 3



Position 7



Position 13



Position 19



Position 25

Figure 20. Hand-etched "C" at Left variety from seven different positions on the plate (Pos. 1-3, 7, 13, 19, 25). The shape of each "C" is distinctive. Positions 1 and 13 show extensive slippage of the etching tool.

Figure 21 (below right). The Inverted "C" at Right variety is not really inverted, but is in fact a mirror image (see detail below). It resulted from using a regular piece of type (mirror-image) instead of a right-reading letter punch to make the entry on the plate. The mirror-image C would leave a right-reading engraved impression on the plate, which in turn would create a mirror-image impression on the printed sheet, as shown. This mistake was made only on Position 36. The correct right-reading C punch was used for the remaining entries (except where the hand-etched C's were made).



As Printed

Inverted

Mirror Image



Position 36

process rather than the unintended orientation of the letter. One C was punched into the plate (Pos. 36) with a regular piece of type, which resulted in a printed mirror image that Scott incorrectly describes as “Inverted.” However, the author suggests retaining the term “Inverted” for its simplicity. Enlargements of these plate varieties are shown in Figures 20 and 21. In the Scott Catalogue, the Hand-Etched “C” at Left variety is given a “b” suffix to each basic number (40L4-40L8 “C at left sideways”). The Inverted “C” at Right is given an “a” suffix.

The seven Hand-Etched “C” at Left varieties are located along the left side of the sheet and the first three positions of the top row, which correspond to the upper right corner of the metal plate, which of course is a mirror image of the printed sheet. Figure 22 shows this segment of the sheet in mirror image to help the reader visualize where the hand-etched C’s were made on the plate. From this perspective it appears that someone attempted to add the initials to the plate using an engraver’s tool, beginning at the upper right corner of the plate. However, lacking the skill necessary to create well-formed letters, the person gave up after seven poorly-executed attempts.

Work on the plate continued with the use of a letter punch. However, one entry (Pos. 36) was made with the wrong instrument, a letter punch in mirror-image.

In printing, a mirror-image piece of type will create a right-reading printed impression. However, if the same mirror-image type is used to transfer an intermediate impression—for example, to the printing plate—then the result is a right-reading transfer that leaves a mirror-image impression on paper.

Although philatelists describe Position 36 as the Inverted “C” at Right variety, it is technically the Mirror-Image “C” at Right. The comparison photos in Figure 21 show how the “C” appears on the stamp and how it would appear if inverted or if flipped into a mirror image. It is also obvious that the font used for this entry differs from the font used for the other letter-punched entries.

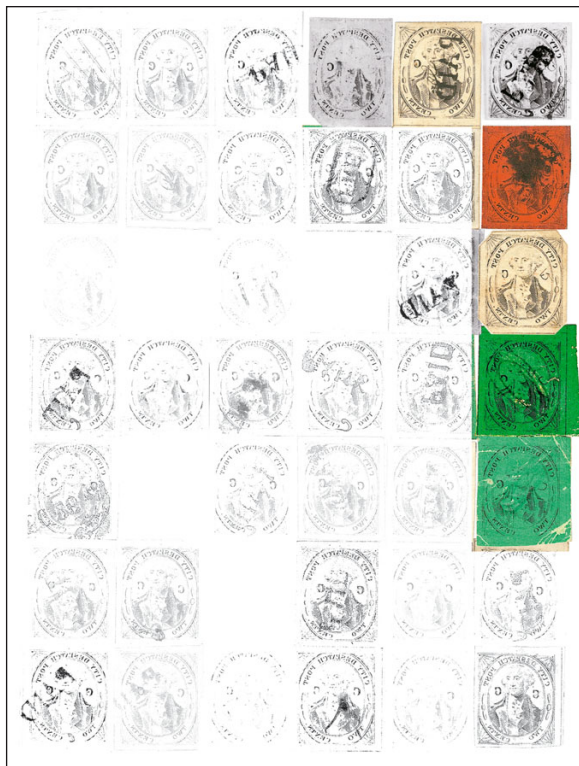


Figure 22. The “CC” plate in mirror image with the Hand-Etched “C” at Left positions highlighted. From this perspective, it appears that seven attempts were made along the right side before the effort was abandoned.



Figure 23. Scott 40L4c “C at right only” is based on a few stamps, such as the one on this cover. It is a worn impression and slightly rubbed example of Pos. 3. Another example of Pos. 3 (at right) shows the Hand-Etched “C” at Left, but late impressions from the worn plate have a very faint “C”.

“C” at Right Only (Scott 40L4c)

The Scott Catalogue lists a plate variety for 40L4 on Green paper described as “C at right only” (40L4c), which implies that one of the plate positions did not have a “C” entered at left (or right, as it would appear on the metal plate). This is incorrect. As shown in Figure 23, the Scott listing is based on stamps from Position 3, which has the Hand-Etched “C” at Left. Later impressions from the worn plate show the “C” very faintly, and the enameled paper is sometimes rubbed, causing the printed ink to flake off. However, examples from the same position are known that clearly show the crudely formed “C” at left.

Unless the Scott Catalogue policy is to include varieties based on worn impressions, the 40L4c “C at right only” listing should be dropped from the catalogue.

Plating a “CC” Stamp

With a basic understanding of the plate layout, the manner in which the entries were made and the major Scott-listed varieties (Hand-Etched “C” at Left and Inverted “C” at Right), the reader is prepared to assign any example of a “CC” stamp to its respective position on the plate. The author’s chart “Guide to Plating Cole’s City Despatch Post Stamps” and the enlarged photos of the 42 positions (see Appendix) may be used to narrow the search and identify a stamp by position.

By starting with the chart, the reader will be able to identify the Key Plating Marks that distinguish a small number of positions from their more uniform counterparts. To begin, the Scott-listed Hand-Etched “C” at Left and Inverted “C” at Right varieties are easily plated. Then come the lesser varieties not recognized by Scott, but which are useful in plating: Big Pupil at Left (Pos. 5, 6), “C” of “Cents” Double (Pos. 7, 11), “SP” of “Despatch” Joined (Pos. 21), Right “C” Double (Pos. 1, 5, 24) and Left “C” Double (Pos. 35, 36). Finally, if a subject stamp exhibits none of these Key Plating Marks, it is necessary to go to the two columns under “Positions of C’s”, which identify positions with the right C higher than the left and those with relatively level C’s. Once the search has been narrowed to a range of positions, it is necessary to use the chart details and photo enlargements to make a final determination, based on more subtle differences and the location of the tiny guide dot if present.

Readers should be aware that the author frequently resorted to more than one example to determine the characteristics of each position. Digital overlays of the original Greig sheet were also used to match guide dots and dividing lines to remove any question about the location of a “CC” stamp on the plate.

Papers Used for “CC” Printings

There are four basic papers upon which the Cole “CC” plate was printed. They are listed below with earliest recorded dates of use.

Green Glazed (40L4)—Earliest Recorded Use: January 27, 1848 (Figure 18).

Grayish White (40L5)—Earliest Recorded Use: February 13, 1848 (Figure 26).

Vermilion Glazed (40L6)—Earliest Recorded Use: August (31), 1848 (Pos. 19 stamp off cover—Figure 46).

Yellowish Buff Glazed (40L8 and the delisted 40L7)—Earliest Recorded Use: January 28, 1852 (Figure 64), or possibly in late 1851—the earlier cover dates are not considered reliable because of questions about whether the stamps originated on the covers. What was once called Yellow under a separate Scott number 40L7 is now known to be a misclassification of the same shade of paper.

The “CC” covers recorded by Mr. Hahn and the author (independently) reveal a possible production timeline. The earliest recorded covers from January-February 1848 have Green 40L4 stamps exclusively. The Grayish White 40L5 stamps first appear on covers dated in mid-February 1848. The Green 40L4 and Grayish White 40L5 are used concurrently and exclusively until the first appearance of the Vermilion 40L6 stamps in August 1848. After the Vermilion stamps appear, use of the Green 40L4 and Grayish White 40L5 seems to drop significantly. There are no genuine Grayish White usages after November 1848. Green 40L4 usage revives in mid-1849 with stamps showing poor impressions from a worn plate, probably from a second printing on Green paper. Finally, in late 1851 or 1852, the Green 40L4 reappears along with the new Yellowish Buff 40L8 printing.

From December 1848 through June 1850, the Green and Vermilion stamps are used exclusively. **From July 1850 until the end of 1851—a period of eighteen months—there are no “CC” covers, stamped or stampless.** The earliest reliable Yellowish Buff 40L8 usage is dated January 28, 1852 (Figure 64). The Green 40L4 cover in Figure 62 has a 3c 1851 tied by the New York circular datestamp dated December 10. If 1851, it is the first “CC” usage after the hiatus. If 1852, it becomes the latest “CC” usage. The appearance of the Yellowish Buff 40L8 after the eighteen-month hiatus indicates that the plate changed hands a fifth time. The “Paid E.N. Barry” manuscript postmark on 40L8 in Figure 65 is evidence that the new proprietor was Edward N. Barry.

It is remarkable that a series of local-post stamps spanning five years, from 1848 through 1852, should be so rare. Mr. Hahn’s “CC” cover census in his *Penny Post* series contains 87 covers, including a fair number with stamps that did not originate and others that are questionable. Relative to Blood’s and Boyd’s for the same period of time, the Cole covers are significantly rarer, indicating that the post was not a thriving business.

Readers should remember that the plate containing the Hand-Etched “C” at Left and Inverted “C” at right varieties was used on all four papers: Green, Grayish White, Vermilion and Yellowish Buff. The illusionary 40L4c “C at right only” variety (Pos. 3) has been seen only on Green paper (always poor impressions). It may also appear on Vermilion or Yellowish Buff, but never on the Grayish White paper used for early impressions.

Manuscript “C” Control Mark

The manuscript “C” initial is only found on some examples of the Grayish White 40L5 issue and no other “CC” issues. Certain Manuscript “C” stamps were definitely initialed prior to being affixed to their respective covers, which leads to the assumption that *all* Manuscript “C” stamps were initialed in sheets by the post’s operators prior to sale. For example, the cover in Figure 24 has the Manuscript “C” stamp tied to the cover in sideways position; however, the initial “C” is orientated to the design of the stamp, not to the cover, which is sufficient evidence that the stamp was initialed prior to use.

Two distinct handwriting styles are found among examples of the Manuscript “C” (see Figure 25). The so-called Elaborate “C”, with its flourishes, is always at the center of the stamp. The Simple “C”, diminutive and lacking flourishes, is always positioned between the “Two” and “Cents” of the stamp.

The earliest recorded Manuscript “C” Control Mark happens also to be the earliest of any Grayish White 40L5 covers or dated stamps. It is the cover in Figure 26, a small embossed Valentine envelope to Miss Susan Lewis, Syosset, Long Island, carried to the mails by Cole’s Post Office City Despatch and prepaid for the 5c rate. (This cover is misdescribed and misdated in Mr. Hahn’s census as a “2/15/48” usage to “Page & Lewis”). The stamp on this cover has the Simple “C”.

The latest reliably-dated use of the Manuscript “C” Control Mark is a June 15, 1848, cover to George W. Thompson, Hayneville, Alabama, carried to the mails but not prepaid. The stamp has the Elaborate “C”. The cover is ex-Casparly and now resides in the Mazza collection.

Including the earliest and latest usages, there are eight recorded covers with Manuscript “C” stamps that appear to have originated on the letter or envelope. Only one of these covers has the Elaborate “C” stamp (the June 15, 1848, cover cited in the preceding paragraph). The others have the Simple “C” stamp used earlier, between February 13 and May 27, 1848. On each cover the stamp is cancelled by the black “Paid” handstamp. Examples of Grayish White 40L5 stamps used after June 15, 1848, including those with the black “Paid” cancel, do not have the control mark.



Figure 24. The Manuscript “C” stamp is affixed and tied in sideways position, but the “C” is orientated to the design of the stamp, not the cover, which proves the stamp was initialed prior to sale.



Elaborat
e C
Detail.tif

Simple
C
Detail.tif

Figure 25. Two different handwriting varieties found among examples of Manuscript “C” Control Mark. At left is the Elaborate “C”, and at right is the Simple “C”.



Figure 26. This Valentine cover with the February 13 (1848) New York circular datestamp is the earliest recorded usage of the Grayish White issue. The stamp has the Manuscript “C” Control Mark (Simple “C” variety).

From this eight-cover database, it is tempting to conclude that 40L5 stamps were consistently initialled “C” in the period from February to June 1848, and that they were always cancelled with the black “Paid”. However, there are exceptions to the pattern. Two recorded Grayish White 40L5 covers in this February-June 1848 period have stamps without the initial. One is dated February 17 (1848) by the New York post office datestamp, and the other is dated May 29 (1848) by the Cole datestamp. Both have the “Paid” struck in red, not black. Another exception is an off-cover Manuscript “C” (Simple) stamp with the “Paid” struck in red.

Therefore, unless the exceptions can be removed from the database for good reason, the following conclusions are supported by the data:

- Only stamps on Grayish White (40L5) paper were initialled;
- The Manuscript “C” Control Mark was applied by at least two different persons associated with Cole’s post;
- The use of Grayish White stamps with and without the Control Mark is concurrent, although all of the initialled stamps known on genuine covers are dated in the February to June 1848 period;
- All of the Manuscript “C” Control Mark stamps, on or off cover, have the “Paid” cancel—most frequently in black, less frequently in red—which suggests a common source and/or locale of use;
- Of the ten recorded Grayish White covers used between February 13 and June 15, 1848, eight have stamps with the Manuscript “C” Control Mark, while *none* of the ten recorded post-June 15 Grayish White covers have stamps with the Manuscript “C” Control Mark, a pattern that strongly indicates stamps were not initialled after June 1848.

Cancellation patterns and Control Marks gleaned from covers and stamps indicate a strong possibility that the Cole operation had two offices operating simultaneously. Mr. Hahn reached the same conclusion. The section of this treatise on cancellations and usages provides more evidence to support this theory.

Plate Varieties and Manuscript “C” Control Mark—The Need for a Scott Catalogue Revision

By now it should be clear that the “CC” plate, with all of its varieties, was used to print stamps on Green, Grayish White, Vermilion and Yellowish Buff papers (apparently in that order). The Hand-Etched “C” at Left (from any one of seven positions) and Inverted “C” at Right (Pos. 36) varieties can conceivably occur on any paper and are so listed in the Scott Catalogue. The author has located Hand-Etched “C” at Left examples for each of the paper types. Examples of the Inverted “C” at Right have been recorded for the Green, Grayish White and Yellowish Buff papers, but not yet for Vermilion, although it is probably just a matter of time before one is located.

The Manuscript “C” Control Mark is found *exclusively* among the Grayish White stamps. However, the control mark may occur on any plate position, including the Hand-Etched “C” at Left or Inverted “C” at Right varieties. The Scott Catalogue confuses these varieties in its 40L5c and 40L5d sub-listings for the Manuscript “C” Control Mark. The catalogue also errs in describing the initial as “‘C’ in ms. between ‘Two’ and ‘Cents’” in both sub-listings 40L5c and 40L5d.



Figure 27. The stamp at left comes from Pos. 1. The stamp at right comes from Pos. 2. Both are the Hand-Etched “C” at Left variety, and both have a Manuscript “C” Control Mark. The Scott Catalogue description for 40L5d matches the lefthand stamp with the Simple “C” Control Mark, but not the righthand stamp with the Elaborate “C”.

As previously shown in Figure 25, the initial “C” comes in two varieties. Only the Simple “C” fits the Scott description for 40L5c and 40L5d, but the Elaborate “C” is no more or less significant as a control mark, and it should be included in the Scott description (or rather, it should not be *excluded* by definition).

The Scott description of 40L5d is “‘C’ at left sideways plus ‘C’ in ms. between ‘Two’ and ‘Cents’”, which adds to the confusion by combining one of the two major plate varieties with the narrowly-defined control mark.

The two stamps in Figure 27 have the Hand-Etched “C” at Left (same variety, different positions), and each has a Manuscript “C” Control Mark. However, the Simple “C” matches the Scott description, while the Elaborate “C” does not. Obviously, this is not the intention of the Scott editors, and it can easily be corrected.

The Scott editors also omit the Inverted “C” at Right (Pos. 36) with Manuscript “C” Control Mark. A detail of the one recorded example, used on a March 31 (1848) cover to Canandaigua, New York, is shown in Figure 28. It has the Simple “C” initial and

shows ink smears at top and bottom, which do not extend onto the cover, providing further evidence that the sheets were initialled before sale.

The author suggests the following revision of Scott's 40L5 listings to eliminate the confusion without the need for completely modifying the present classification (values are from 2003 *U.S. Specialized*):

40L5	L107	2c black, grayish	—	500.00
		On cover, tied by handstamp		1,500.
a.		Inverted "C" at right (Pos. 36)	—	—
b.		Hand-etched sideways "C" at left (Pos. 1-3, 7, 13, 19, 25)	—	—
c.		Ms. "C" control mark on 40L5	—	—
		On cover, tied by handstamp		4,000.
d.		Ms. "C" control mark on 40L5b (Pos. 1-3, 7, 13, 19, 25)	—	—
		On cover		—
e.		Ms. "C" control mark on 40L5a (Pos. 36)	—	—
		On cover		—

The ms. "C" control mark exists in two varieties: a small simple "C" between the "Two" and "Cents" and a large elaborate "C" at center. It is known only on stamps on Grayish White.



Figure 28. Inverted "C" at Right (Pos. 36) and Ms. "C" Control Mark. This variety is currently omitted from the Scott Catalogue. It should be listed as 40L5e.

Covers and Cancellations on the "CC" Issues

Based on more than 100 "CC" stamps and covers, the author has established a chronology of cancellations and postal markings associated with the post from Cole's takeover in late 1847 until its apparent dissolution sometime in 1852. The data yields a variety of cancelling formats involving five, possibly six, different handstamp devices, followed by manuscript cancels in pen-and-ink or pencil. Figures 29-33 illustrate the five different handstamp cancels found on "CC" stamps and covers. Figure 34 illustrates the revived use of the "Free" and "City Despatch P.O." devices (November 1849-April 1850), examples of which are struck in muddy or brownish red.

The author will discuss each cancellation and relevant covers in approximate chronological progression. To gain insight into patterns of cancellation usage, covers are clearly classified as either *to-the-mails* or *city-delivery*. With such a small sample population of covers, one must be cautious in drawing conclusions. However, a few observations are offered (in **boldface** type) to allow readers to analyze other examples to determine whether or not they conform to the patterns observed by this author. Some of these conclusions are repeated in the text when they apply to more than one cancel.



Figure 29
"Free"



Figure 30
"Paid"



Figure 31
4-Bar Grid



Figure 32
"City Despatch Post P.O." CDS



Figure 33
"Cole's City Despatch P.O." CDS



Figure 34
"City Despatch Post P.O." CDS & "Free" in brownish red

Figure 29—"Free" in frame, struck in black (also in red, see Figure 34)

Figure 30—"Paid", struck in black or red

Figure 31—4-Bar Grid, struck in black

Figure 32—"City Despatch Post P.O." cds, struck in black or red (time omitted)

Figure 33—"Cole's City Despatch P.O." cds, struck in red

Figure 34—"Free" and "City Despatch P.O." cds struck in brownish red (Nov. 1849—Apr. 1850)



“Free” (Black)

The first cancellation to appear on the “CC” issue is the “Free” in frame, struck in black. It is found on the three earliest known “CC” covers—Green 40L4 usages in 1848, dated January 27 (Figure 36), February 5 and February 8 (Figure 37).

As explained earlier in this treatise (see page 8), the author attributes the use of the “Free” in *black* (not red) to Cole, the successor to Cummings and Wright. If this attribution is correct, then the change in ownership occurred prior to December 13, 1847 (the first recorded use of the “Free” in black—see Figure 35), probably sometime in October or November.

The earliest recorded use of the “CC” issue (from the modified plate) is the Green 40L4 cover in Figure 36, dated January 27, 1848, which shows the continued use of the “Free” in black. The next earliest is a folded cover to Boston with the Green 40L4 cancelled by the “Free” in black and the “City Despatch Post P.O. Feb. 5 — O’Clock” circular datestamp struck in red, overstruck by the red “New-York 5cts 5 Feb.” integral-rate datestamp (John W. Kaufmann sale, Jul. 10, 1981, lot 340). This cover is followed by the February 8 cover in Figure 37.

The covers cancelled by the “Free” in black (Dec. 13, 1847-Feb. 8, 1848) were carried by the Post Office City Despatch to the post office for out-of-town mailing. Currently there are no recorded city-delivery covers with the “Free” in black. In fact, there are no recorded city-delivery covers handled by the Post Office City Despatch (under Cole) prior to May 1848.

The author acknowledges the presence of a few covers in Mr. Hahn’s census that are exceptions to the author’s observation that no city-delivery usages are found in this early period. However, each of the Hahn entries can be shown to have a dating problem or questions about whether or not the stamp originated.

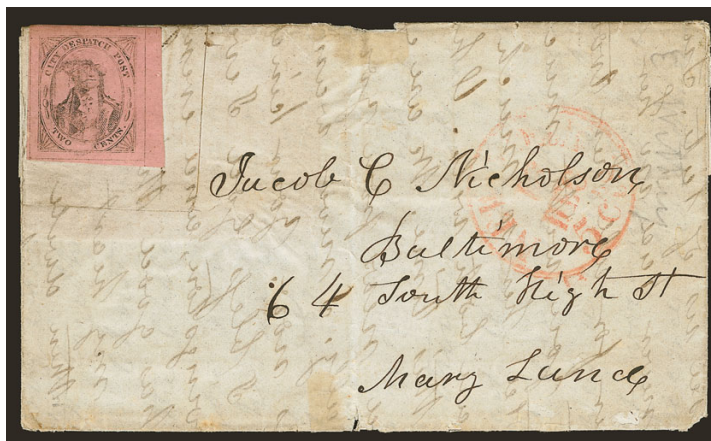


Figure 35. “Free” in black used December 13, 1847.

The absence of city-delivery letters in this January-April 1848 period raises the possibility that Cole was only carrying mail to the post office in the early phase of his operation. Although his undated printed advertising label (an example of which has been seen affixed to a cover) states “For the Reception of Mail and City Letters” (author’s emphasis), the fact that local letters start to appear only from May 1848 onward suggests that Cole may have limited his service to delivering mail to the post office for the first four months. Perhaps another office was established in May to handle mail between city correspondents.

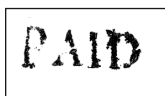


Figure 36. “Free” in black used January 27, 1848.



Figure 37. “Free” in black used February 8, 1848.

“Paid” (Black, Red)



The earliest recorded “CC” Grayish White 40L5 cover (Figure 38)—February 13, 1848—is also the earliest dated example of the “Paid” cancel (struck in black on this cover). The stamp has the Manuscript “C” Control Mark between “Two” and “Cents”.

If the year dates in the census data are correct, there are no city-delivery covers handled by the Post Office City Despatch (under Cole) prior to May 1848. The earliest city-delivery covers handled by the Post Office City Despatch are dated in May 1848, and the first use of the new “Cole’s City Despatch P.O.” double-circle datestamp is recorded in late May.

The use of black or red ink for the “Paid” cancel varies until late August 1848, when black ink is used for both the circular datestamp and the cancel. A cover with the “Paid” in red and a very faint datestamp (“Cole’s City Despatch P.O.” double-circle?) is shown in Figure 39.



Figure 38. “Paid” in black used February 13, 1848.



Figure 39. “Paid” in red used August 2, 1848.



“City Despatch Post P.O.” Circular Datestamp (Black, Red)

During the “CC” issue period, this datestamp always has a blank space to the left of “O’Clock” where the time should appear. The time was previously inserted when the same marking was used by the Mead and Cummings & Wright operations. The absence of a time slug is a clue to 1848 or later use on undated stampless covers. The presence of a time slug on covers bearing a “CC” issue raises the likelihood that the stamp does not belong.

The earliest recorded use of the old “City Despatch Post P.O.” circular datestamp in the Cole period is the February 5, 1848, folded cover to Boston (John W. Kaufmann sale, Jul. 10, 1981, lot 340), described in the previous section on the black “Free” cancel.

This datestamp is found *exclusively in red* on covers dated from February to early August 1848, during which period it is used with the “Paid” cancel in *either black or red*. A cover with the red cds/black “Paid” combination is shown in Figure 40.

Beginning in late August 1848, covers show fairly regular use of black ink for this datestamp.

After a four-month period in which there are no recorded city-delivery covers handled by the Post Office City Despatch—from November 1848 thru February 1849—the datestamp and “Paid” reappear on a locally-addressed cover dated March 19, 1849 (see Figure 41). The strikes on this cover are so poor, one wonders if the devices were put away for the cold months of 1848-49 and retrieved in March 1849. After March 19, 1849, manuscript cancels came into use on mail carried to the post office.



Figure 40. “City Despatch P.O. Mar. 28 —O’Clock” cds in red and “Paid” in black on 40L5 with Manuscript “C” Control Mark. Used March 28, 1848.

During the period from mid-1849 thru June 1850, manuscript cancels are used without any other markings on covers carried to the mails.

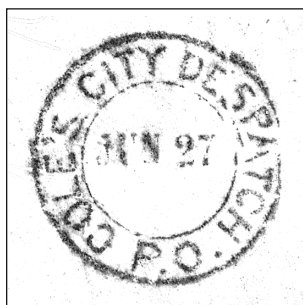
There are only seven recorded city-delivery letters in the manuscript cancel period (mid-1849 thru June 1850), each of which has the old “City Despatch Post P.O.” datestamp. Two are stampless: one is a January 5, 1850, conjunctive usage with Bush’s Brooklyn post; the other is a January 6, 1850, stampless cover with the “Paid” handstamp (and a 40L8 added). Four covers have the Green 40L4 cancelled by the old “Free” cancel in brownish red, dated in November 1849 (one) and March-April 1850 (three)—these are discussed further on (see Figures 57-61). The seventh cover bears 40L6 cancelled by a worn 4-Bar Grid, along with the “City Despatch P.O.” datestamp in black (see Figure 50).

This cover is undated but fits as an April 1849 usage (1848 is too early for the grid, and 1850 is too late).

The irregular use of the “City Despatch Post P.O.” datestamp, “Paid” and “Free” after October 1848 suggest that these devices were used by another office that handled city-delivery mail sporadically in 1849 and 1850. During the same period, Post Office City Despatch covers carried to the mails consistently have manuscript cancels in pen or pencil.



Figure 41. Poor impressions of old “City Despatch P.O. Mar. 19 — O’Clock” cds and “Paid” in muddy red with ink-clogged 4-Bar Grid in black, used March 19, 1849.



“Cole’s City Despatch P.O.” Circular Datestamp (Black, Red)

The earliest recorded use of the large double-circle datestamp reading “Cole’s City Despatch P.O.” is the May 27, 1848, folded cover to Judge Oakley at City Hall in Figure 42. The datestamp is struck in red. The Grayish White 40L5 stamp is cancelled by the “Paid” in black, which is struck again on the cover. The stamp also has the Manuscript “C” Control Mark between “Two” and “Cents”.

No genuine, correctly-dated *city-delivery* covers carried by the Post Office City Despatch are recorded prior to this May 27, 1848, usage, which coincides with the earliest known use of

the new Cole’s double-circle datestamp.

It is purely conjectural, but the author suspects that in proximity to this May 27, 1848, cover, the fledgling Cole operation was augmented with additional staff and possibly a new office to facilitate local street routes to handle mail between city correspondents. A new datestamp device was introduced. Stamped letters were cancelled “Paid”. Perhaps the “Paid” was applied in black by one clerk, and the datestamp was struck in red by another clerk. This mode of operation continued until changes were required in late August 1848, which leads to the next group of covers.



Figure 42. “Cole’s City Despatch P.O.” double-circle in red with “Paid” in black, used May 27, 1848.

Use of “Paid” Cancel on Mail to the Post Office

Post Office City Despatch covers dated during and after August 1848 lead to a significant theory:

Prior to September 1848, the “Paid” was used on mail carried to the post office for out-of-town mailing. However, beginning in September 1848 the “Paid” no longer appears on covers carried to the post office. Evidence suggests that postal officials may have prohibited use of the word “Paid” on mail sent thru the mails. In November 1848 the 4-Bar Grid (Figure 31) is first recorded and is used to cancel stamps on out-of-town mail instead of the “Paid”, which is restricted exclusively to city-delivery mail.

It is logical that postal officials would object to anyone writing or stamping the word “Paid” on letters that did not have government postage prepaid. The “Paid” on an unpaid letter would force the receiving (or delivering)

office to justify to the addressee why postage was due. Readers should remember that prepayment was neither customary nor mandatory when the local posts were operating in the 1840's and early 1850's.

Although the theory is logical, the evidence to support the author's theory is scant, and there is no documentation of a post office order to local posts demanding that they cease using the word "Paid" on mail entering the post office when United States postage was not paid. However, recorded covers support the theory.



Figure 43. The "Paid 5" on the cover at left and the Manuscript "C" Control Mark on the stamp at right are so similar, it appears that they were applied by the same person connected with the local post.

The Post Office City Despatch, like any other local post, would bring both unpaid and prepaid letters to the post office for out-of-town mailing. The local-post stamp paid for to-the-mails service. If government postage were prepaid by the sender, either by coin, stamp or possibly an account kept with the local post, then the letter would be marked "Paid", and the postage received from the sender would be given to the post office when the letter was deposited into the mails. However, if regular postage were not prepaid, then the post office of origin would rate the letter with the amount of postage due from the addressee. The cover in Figure 43 demonstrates how a fully prepaid letter was marked by the Post Office City Despatch in July 1848. It also shows the similarity between the "Paid 5" marking and the Manuscript "C" Control Mark found on some 40L5 stamps.



Figure 44. The "Paid" on this Aug. 26, 1848, cover is crossed out in blue ink used by the N.Y. post office. It was rated 5c postage due.

Changes in cancelling formats occur soon after August 26, 1848. Beginning with a September 2, 1848, cover (ex Kapiloff, Siegel 1992 Rarities sale, lot 259), the "Paid" is used only on city-delivery mail. It is consistently struck in black with the "City Despatch Post P.O." in black (Figure 45). At the same time, the Vermilion 40L6 stamp makes its appearance; the earliest recorded date is August 31 on an off-cover Position 19 with Hand-Etched "C" at Left (Figure 46).



Figure 45. Beginning in September 1848, only city-delivery letters are handstamped "Paid" as shown here.

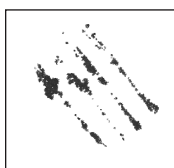
It is uncertain whether the use of "Paid" on to-the-mails letters was curtailed soon after August 26, 1848, because **there is a surprising absence of to-the-mails covers in the record for September and October 1848.** The Hahn census lists outbound covers dated October 5 and 14 (both ex Boker), but these are very questionable. The October 21 cover listed by Hahn has been confirmed as 1849, not 1848. The next reliably-dated outbound cover is dated November 18, 1848 (ex Kapiloff, Siegel 1992 Rarities sale, lot 262). It has the earliest recorded strike of the 4-Bar Grid, which is discussed next.

Reflecting on what has been observed thus far, in September and October 1848 there are city-delivery letters with the "City Despatch Post P.O." datestamp and "Paid" cancel struck in black, but no to-the-mails covers. Then, beginning in November 1848 and continuing thru February 1849, there are to-the-mails covers, but no city-delivery covers. It is almost as if the two services were mutually exclusive in this period.



Figure 46. Datestamp "Aug 31" (1848) is earliest recorded on Vermilion.

4-Bar Grid



After the hiatus in to-the-mails covers in September and October 1848, a series of outbound covers appears in the record beginning on November 18, 1848. **The reappearance of outbound mail coincides with the introduction of the 4-Bar Grid. It is always struck in black, and, when used to cancel the stamp on outbound mail, no other marking is used. Perhaps the grid was created in response to problems with the post office over handstamping "Paid" on mail.**

The covers in Figures 47-49 show typical to-the-mails usage of "CC" issues in this period. The 4-Bar Grid is used to cancel the stamp, and the New York post office datestamp is applied to indicate the postage due. The absence of a "Paid" marking indicates postage was due from the addressee.



Figure 47 (top left). 40L6b Hand-Etched "C" at Left, used November 19, 1848.

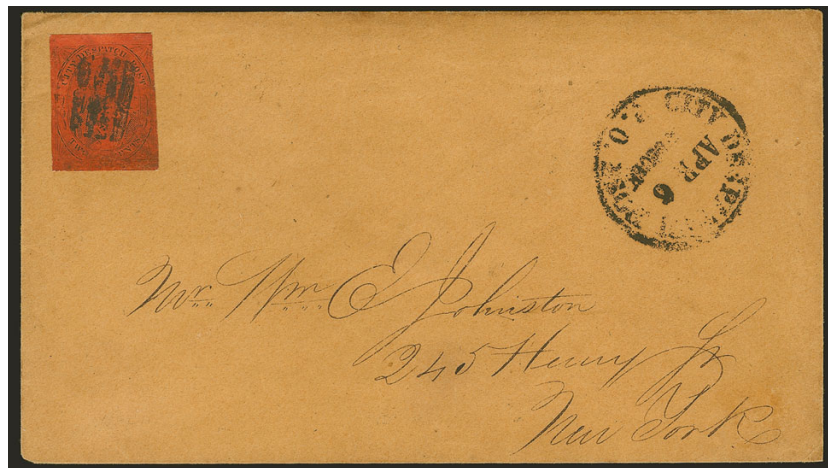
Figure 48 (left). 40L5 Hand-Etched "C" at Left, used November 23, 1848.

Figure 49 (above). 40L6 used March 7, 1849.

After October 1848, the next reliably-dated city-delivery cover is dated March 19, 1849, and shown in Figure 41. It is unusual in that the stamp is cancelled by a blurry ink-caked strike of the 4-Bar Grid, with the "City Despatch Post P.O." and "Paid" struck in muddy red. Something was obviously wrong with these devices. The previous use of the datestamp and "Paid" occurred in October 1848, and they were relatively clear strikes in black. After March 19, there is an April 6, 1849, cover with the 4-Bar Grid and "City Despatch Post P.O." struck in black (Figure 50). This is an unusual use of the 4-Bar Grid on city-delivery mail. The markings show deterioration.

After this April 6, 1849, cover with the Vermilion 40L6, there are no city-delivery covers in the record until November 1849, when the first of four Green 40L4 usages with the old "City Despatch Post P.O." datestamp and "Free" cancel is recorded. During this period, manuscript cancels are used on covers carried to the mails. These covers continue the chronological review.

Figure 50. 40L6 used April 6, 1849, with 4-Bar Grid and "City Despatch Post P.O." datestamp in black.



Manuscript Cancels (Pen or Pencil)

The use of pen or pencil to cancel Post Office City Despatch stamps may have started as early as June 9, 1849, if the untied Green 40L4b (Position 13 Hand-Etched "C" at Left") is accepted as a genuine use on cover (Figure 51). By October 1849 the use of pen or pencil was certainly the standard practice, as evidenced by the well-tied October 22, 1849, cover in Figure 53. Pen or pencil is used on covers dated thru June 1850, the last month before the hiatus until Post Office City Despatch covers are recorded again in the late 1851-52 period.

The Green 40L4 stamp (including plate varieties) is used consistently in this period. In fact, no reliably-dated or genuine covers with the Grayish White, Vermilion or Yellowish Buff stamps are found in the record for the period following April 6, 1849, thru June 1850.

All of the covers with stamps cancelled in manuscript are to-the-mails usages. Other than the four covers described in the next section, there are no city-delivery covers from this period, and there are no city-delivery covers with manuscript cancels.



Figure 51 (top). 40L4b Hand-Etched "C" at Left, used June 9, 1849.



Figure 52 (far left). 40L4 used October 21, 1849.



Figure 53 (near left). 40L4 used October 22, 1849.

Figure 54 (far left). 40L4b Hand-Etched "C" at Left, used Mar. 7, 1850.

Figure 55 (near left). 40L4 used May 27, 1850.



The to-the-mails covers with manuscript cancels are usually addressed to cities in the northeast region of the United States. The cover in Figure 56 is the only recorded cover addressed to a foreign country; in this case, Germany. The large German immigrant population in New York City in the mid-nineteenth century provided some demand for local-post service to carry letters to the mails. Covers to Germany are recorded for several of the New York local posts, such as Boyd, Swarts, Gordon, Hanford and Adams. They are typically written in the distinctive Old German style.

The cover in Figure 56 is also the last recorded cover before the eighteen-month hiatus, which suggests that the Post Office City Despatch closed soon after June 1850 and did not reopen until late 1851.

Figure 56. 40L4b Hand-Etched “C” at Left, used June 27, 1850, on folded letter to Germany. This is the only recorded Post Office City Despatch cover addressed to a foreign country. It is also the latest “CC” usage before the hiatus from July 1850 until the end of 1851.

Revived Use of “City Despatch Post P.O.” Datestamp and “Free” in Brownish Red

In the period when “CC” issues are usually found on covers carried to the mails with stamps cancelled in manuscript (and no other markings applied), four covers and one stamp appear in the record to strongly suggest that a separate city-delivery service was operating concurrently, at least for part of the time. These items are shown in Figures 57-61. The covers are remarkable in their similarity to the Cummings & Wright-era covers, as represented by the cover shown previously in Figure 14. The reader’s attention is drawn

to the consistent double strike of the “Free” cancel—once on the stamp and once on the letter.

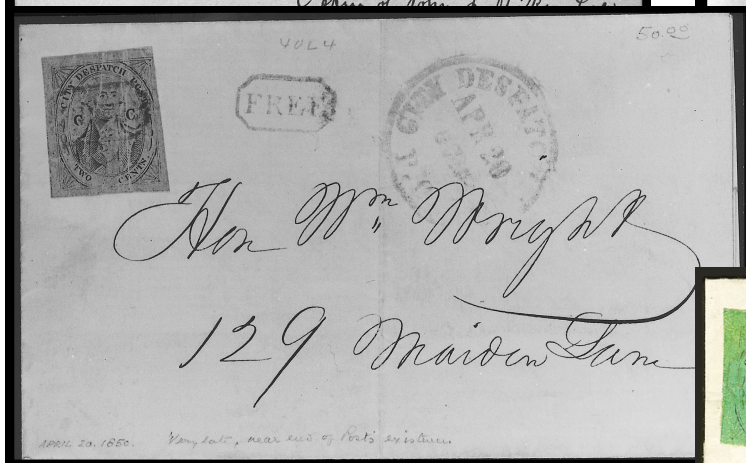
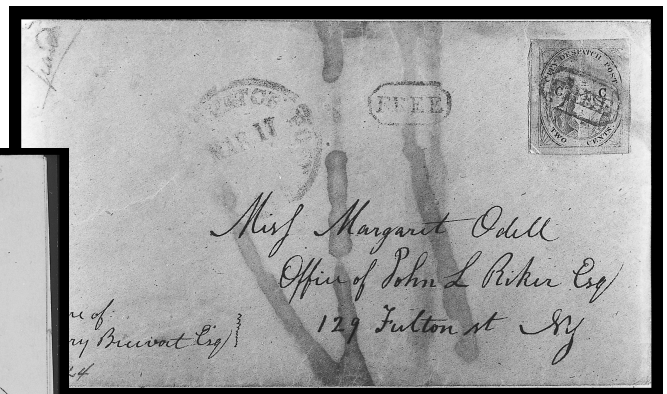


Figure 57 (top left). 40L4 used November 4, 1849.

Figure 58 (top right). 40L5 cancelled by datestamp and “Free” in brownish red

Figure 59 (bottom left). 40L4 used April 20, 1850.

Figure 60 (center right). 40L4 used March 17, 1850.

Figure 61 (bottom right). 40L4b used April 30, 1850.

The markings on these four covers and one stamp are the old “City Despatch Post P.O.” datestamp and “Free” cancel, applied in a brownish red ink. The poor impressions of the datestamp indicate deterioration. Prior to November 1849, the last covers with the datestamp were dated March 19 (Figure 41) and April 6 (Figure 50), and both of those showed deterioration.

Recalling the early phase of the post, covers cancelled by the “Free” in black (Dec. 13, 1847-Feb. 8, 1848) were carried to the post office for out-of-town mailing. Not until November 1849 is the “Free” used again, and then in brownish red on city-delivery mail.

Prior to September 1848, the datestamp was used on both to-the-mails and city-delivery covers. In September and October 1848, it was used only on city-delivery letters (the only mail recorded in those months). Then, in March and April 1849, it is found in a deteriorated state on two city-delivery covers. Later, in November 1849 and March-April 1850, it reappears in another color, combined with the old “Free” cancel, on city-delivery mail.

The use of the Grayish White 40L5 with the brownish red “Free” is no less intriguing. The last recorded 40L5 cover is the November 23, 1848, cover shown in Figure 48. The date on the off-cover stamp in Figure 58 is unclear, but is probably at least a year later (November 1849). In the interim, Green and Vermilion stamps were used.

These patterns of usage again suggest a post with two offices operating simultaneously, but the exact functions of each are unclear from the evidence at hand.

The Final Phase (Late 1851 thru 1852)

The artifacts of the Post Office City Despatch in its final phase are so rare and enigmatic, it is impossible to establish any clear patterns of usage. No markings were used. The only recorded covers have manuscript cancels. The Yellowish Buff 40L8 was probably printed and issued in this period, but the existence of undated or questionable covers makes it difficult to establish a reliable issue date.

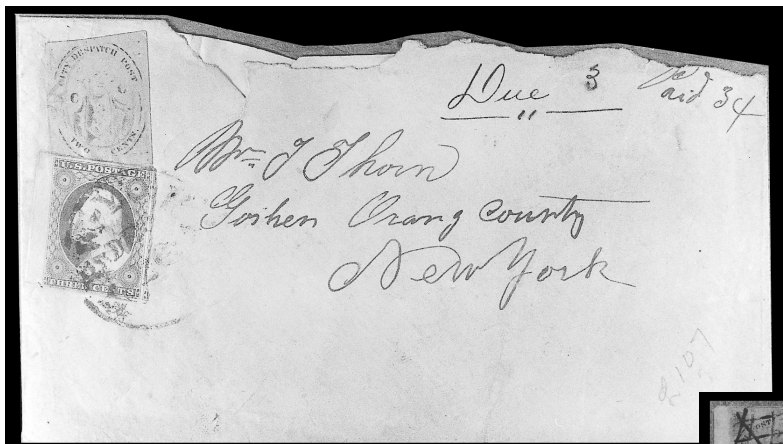


Figure 62. 40L4 used with 3c 1851. Carried to the post office and marked “Due 3”. The “Paid 3c” at upper right in the sender’s hand suggests that the local post was paid for postage, but the stamp was not affixed until after the “Due 3” was applied.

The Yellowish Buff 40L8 cover in Figure 64 is a genuine folded letter datelined January 26, 1852, with a black “New-York 5 Cts Jan. 28” datestamp indicating postage due. It is an absolutely reliable dated usage of 40L8 (ex Knapp, who bought it from the discoverer, and Hall). The stamp is cancelled by a manuscript “X” in black ink.

The last cover shown (Figure 65) is a most unusual usage of 40L8, which was partly torn off before the manuscript “Paid E. N. Barry” was applied. The Barry connection has never been proven, but this cover suggests that he might have taken over the Post Office City Despatch in its final phase.

The cover in Figure 62 is a Green 40L4 usage with the 3c 1851 regular issue. The New York datestamp is dated December 10, which could be either 1851 or 1852. The cover in Figure 63 is either a Green 40L4 or Yellowish Buff 40L8 from Position 36 (Inverted “C” at Right). The stamp was heavily cancelled in pen with a 3c 1851 affixed over it. The photo comes from Needham’s files and there is no date indicated, but it must be 1851 or 1852.



Figure 63. 40L4 or 40L8, Position 36 with Inverted “C” at Right, used with 3c 1851. Date unknown. Sender’s notation “Prepaid” at lower left.



Figure 64. 40L8 used on January 26, 1852, dated folded letter to Philadelphia. This is a reliably-dated genuine use of 40L8.



Figure 65. 40L8 used on city-delivery cover. The stamp is partly torn off, then marked “Paid E. N. Barry” in manuscript.

Summary and Conclusion

This study of the City Despatch Post issues began more than fifteen years ago and was expected to be a brief event with limited discovery. The author had no idea that the stamps and covers of this New York City local post would prove to be so complex and perplexing. Even as these concluding remarks are written, the author is nagged by the four unidentified positions on the “CC” plate and by the erratic usages that challenge the orderly mind.

In introducing the subject, the author was determined to demonstrate that among the countless creations of postal history, the City Despatch Post plate deserves special recognition, by virtue of its longevity, versatility and the proliferation of stamps made from it. With so many words and images presented, the reader is left to decide whether or not the author’s case is convincing.

As a subject for study, the City Despatch Post issues are a fertile field. A seemingly innocuous cover can actually be a rare and vital piece of the story. For example, the Vermilion 40L6 cover in Figure 50 was recently sold for less than \$900. Its humble appearance did little to inspire collectors. Yet this cover tells a part of the story that might never have been known without it, because there is currently no other example of the 4-Bar Grid used with the “City Despatch Post P.O.” datestamp, and its April 1849 date falls within a significant transitional period of the post’s operation.

It is the potential for discovery—correction, the *certainty of discovery*—that renders this publication a temporary expedient. There is a distinct possibility that the author’s plating has errors. There is a great likelihood that some of the theories based on recorded covers will be proven wrong with the emergence of previously unobserved covers. Some of the cover dates rejected by this author may prove to be correct and genuine, thereby altering the patterns gleaned from the data.

For all of these shortcomings and the certainty of error, the author asks for the reader’s indulgence and forgiveness. To those who wish to ferret out new discoveries, the author assures that the effort will be rewarded. Having experienced many different aspects of philately over a fair number of years, the author can attest to the challenge and satisfaction in studying the City Despatch Post issues.

As a final remark, it is appropriate to acknowledge the assistance of the following individuals for their contributions to this work: Calvet M. Hahn, Leonard Hartmann, Dr. Norman S. Hubbard, Leonard Kapiloff (deceased), Larry Lyons, Thomas C. Mazza, Richard Schwartz (deceased) and Dr. Jay Weiss.

APPENDIX—PLATING GUIDE TO THE CITY DESPATCH POST 1842-1852 ISSUES



GUIDE TO PLATING COLE'S CITY DESPATCH POST "CC" STAMPS (SCOTT 40L4-40L8)

Pos.	KEY PLATING MARKS Scott Var	Hand-Etched C at Left Pos C.ti	Inverted C at Right Pos	Big Pupil at Left Pos	C of CENTS Double Pos	SP Joined Pos	Right C Double Pos	Left C Double Pos	POSITIONS OF C's		Plating Notes
									Right C Raised Pos	C's Level Pos	
1	t ^m O1 Pos						X			<	Hand-Etched C at Left; Right C Double
2	t ^m O2 Pos									<	Hand-Etched C at Left; Right C Double
3	t ^m O3 Pos									<	Hand-Etched C at Left; Right C Double
4									X		Weak entry of left C; double dividing line at top; dot in C of CENTS
5				X			X			<	Big Pupil at Left; Right C Double ; wide space between W and O of TWO
6			X							<	Big Pupil at Left ; normal space between W and O of TWO
7	t ^m O7 Pos				X				X	<	Hand-Etched C at Left; C of CENTS Double ; weak entry of right C
8								X			Wide space between W and O of TWO; 2 or 3 dots to right of TWO
9								X			Normal space between W and O of TWO; weak entry of right C
10									X		Strong entry of left C; break in bottom of right C
11					X					<	C of CENTS Double ; bruises around C's in early impressions; traces 2nd E of erased THREE
12									X		Bottom of T of TWO incomplete; two dots to right of TWO
13	t ^m O13 Pos									<	Hand-Etched C at Left ; extended serif at top right of W
14									X		Double dividing line at left; slanted O of TWO
15?											—
16									X		Both C's uniform and nearly level
17?											—
18									X		Wide O of TWO; bruises around right C in early impressions
19	t ^m O19 Pos								<		Hand-Etched C at Left ; right C incomplete at bottom
20								X			Bruises inside left C; double frame line at bottom; extended serif at top right of W touches O
21						X			<		S and P of DESPATCH Joined Together ; dot inside O of TWO
22									X		Bruise and line across left C; right C incomplete
23								X			Left C incomplete; small break in bottom of right C; dash above O of TWO
24							X				Right C Double ; incomplete C at left
25	t ^m O25 Pos								<		Hand-Etched C at Left ; double dividing line at top; bruises inside right C
26									X		Double position dot; bruised spot inside right C; dot in O of TWO
27								X			Two dots above frame line over ES; bruises around both C's
28									X		Slanted O of TWO; bruise inside right C
29?											—
30									X		Dot in O of TWO; right C incomplete
31								X			Position dots in top and bottom dividing lines; dot in frame line above P of DESPATCH
32									X		Bruise in right C; TWO uniformly engraved
33									X		Right C close to face
34?											—
35								X		<	Left C Double ; bottom of right C incomplete
36	a		X					X		<	Inverted C at Right; Left C Double
37								X			Bruises around right C; heavily shaded O of TWO
38								X			Right C incomplete; large O of TWO
39									X		Bottom of left C and right C incomplete; serif of W touches O of TWO
40									X		Bottom of left C incomplete; bruise inside right C
41									X		Break in bottom of left C; double dividing line at bottom; left C closer to oval than Pos. 42
42									X		Break in bottom of left C; double dividing line at bottom

POSITION 1



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)
Hand-Etched C at Left (Scott "b" var)
Right C Double

POSITION 2



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)
Hand-Etched C at Left (Scott "b" var)
Bruise inside right C
Partly double dividing line at top

POSITION 3



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)
Hand-Etched C at Left (Scott "b" var)
Double dividing line at top
Left C missing in late worn impressions

POSITION 4



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



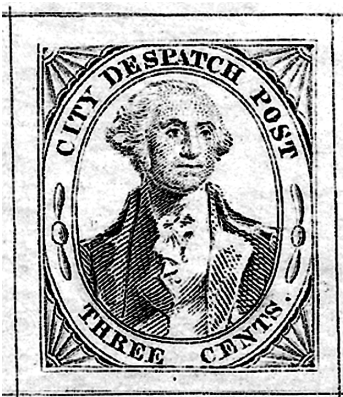
Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Weak entry of left C
Double dividing line at top
Dot in C of CENTS

POSITION 5



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



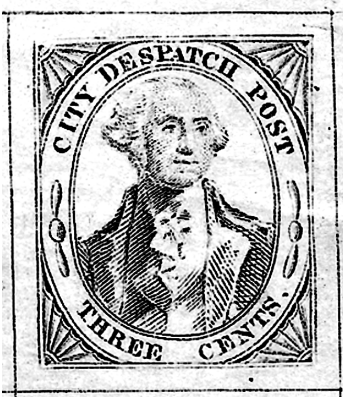
Second State (40L2, 40L3)



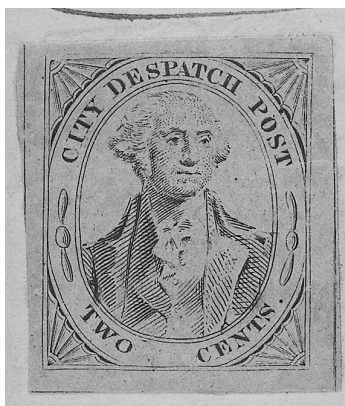
Third State (40L4-40L8)

Big Pupil at Left
Right C Double
Wide space between W and O of TWO

POSITION 6



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



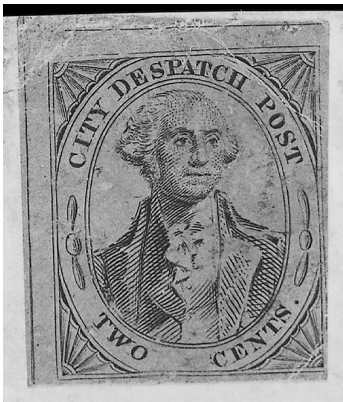
Third State (40L4-40L8)

Big Pupil at Left
Normal space between W and O of TWO

POSITION 7



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



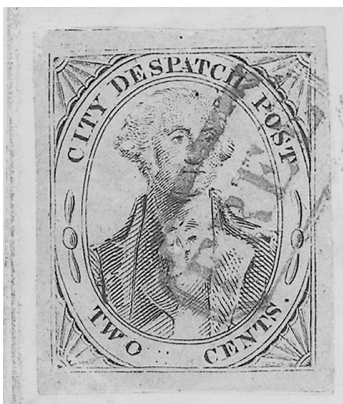
Third State (40L4-40L8)

Hand-etched C at Left (Scott "b" var)
C of CENTS Double
Weak entry of right C

POSITION 8



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Wide space between W and O of TWO
Two or three dots to right of TWO

POSITION 9



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



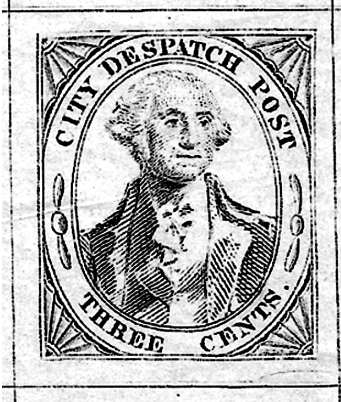
Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Normal space between W and O of TWO
Weak entry of right C

POSITION 10



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Strong entry of left C
Break in bottom of right C

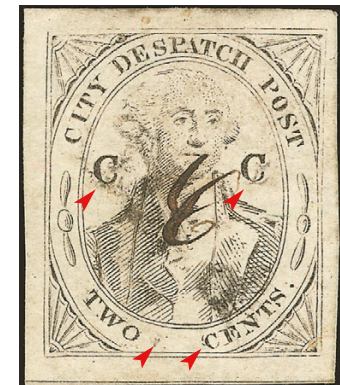
POSITION 11



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



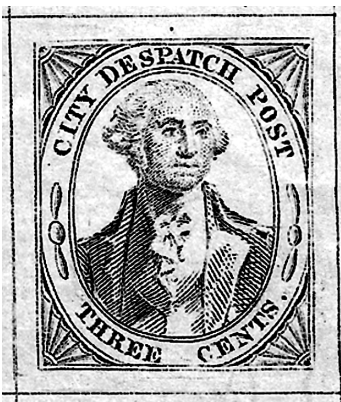
Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

C of CENTS Double
Bruises around C's in early impressions
Traces of second E of erased THREE

POSITION 12



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



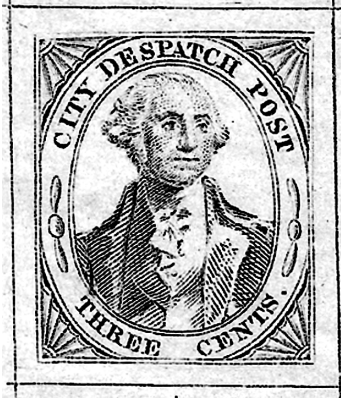
Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Bottom of T of TWO incomplete
Two dots to right of TWO

POSITION 13



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

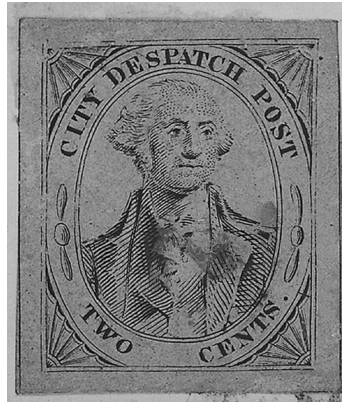
Hand-Etched C at Left (Scott "b" var)
Extended serif at top right of W

Second State (40L2, 40L3)

POSITION 14



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Double dividing line at left
Slanted O of TWO

POSITION 15



First State (40L1, 6LB1)

Second State (40L2, 40L3)

Third State (40L4-40L8)

POSITION 16



First State (40L1, 6LB1)

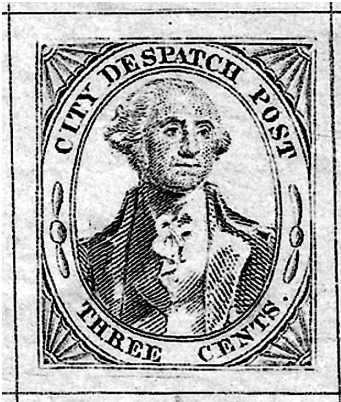


Second State (40L2, 40L3)

Third State (40L4-40L8)

Both C's uniform and nearly level

POSITION 17



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)

Third State (40L4-40L8)

POSITION 18



First State (40L1, 6LB1)

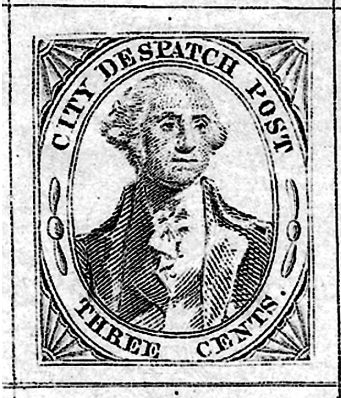


Second State (40L2, 40L3)

Third State (40L4-40L8)

Wide O of TWO
Bruises around right C in early impressions

POSITION 19



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Hand-etched C at Left (Scott "b" var)
Right C incomplete at bottom

POSITION 20



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Bruises inside left C
Double frameline at bottom
Extended serif of W touches O

POSITION 21



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

S and P of DESPATCH Joined Together
Dot in O of TWO

POSITION 22



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



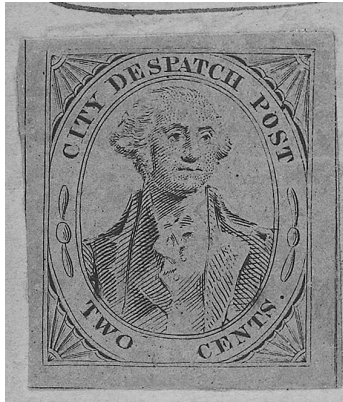
Third State (40L4-40L8)

Bruise and line across left C
Right C incomplete

POSITION 23



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Left C incomplete
Small break in bottom of right C
Dash above O of TWO

POSITION 24



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Right C Double
Incomplete C at left

POSITION 25



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



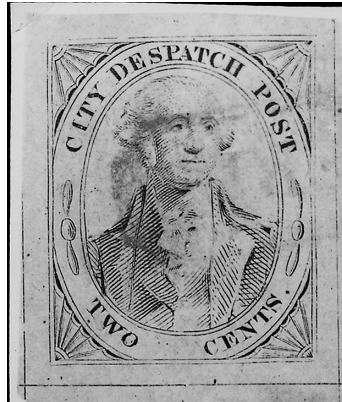
Third State (40L4-40L8)

Hand-etched C at Left (Scott "b" var)
 Double dividing line at top
 Bruises inside right C

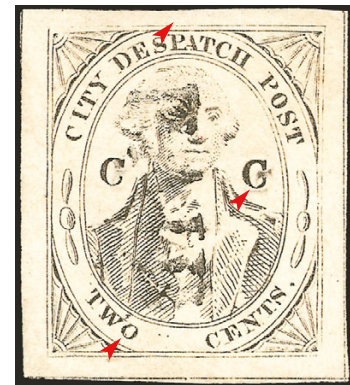
POSITION 26



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Double position dot
 Bruised spot inside right C
 Dot in O of TWO

POSITION 27



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



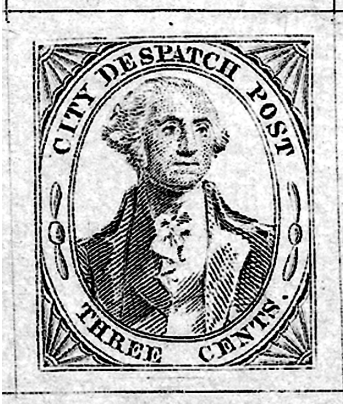
Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Two dots above frameline over ES
 Bruises around both C's

POSITION 28



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Slanted O of TWO
Bruise inside right C

POSITION 29

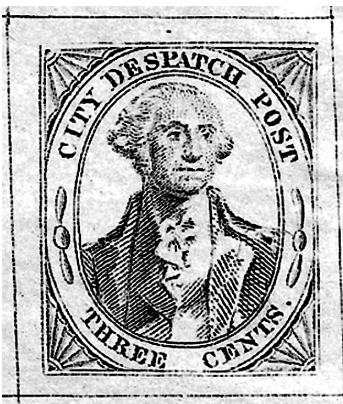


First State (40L1, 6LB1)

Second State (40L2, 40L3)

Third State (40L4-40L8)

POSITION 30



First State (40L1, 6LB1)

Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Dot in O of TWO
Right C incomplete

POSITION 31



First State (40L1, 6LB1)

Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Position dots in top & bottom dividing lines
Dot in frameline above P of DESPATCH

POSITION 32



First State (40L1, 6LB1)

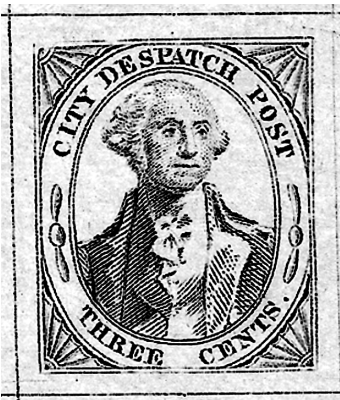
Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Bruise in right C
TWO uniformly engraved

POSITION 33



First State (40L1, 6LB1)

Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Right C close to face

POSITION 34



First State (40L1, 6LB1)

Second State (40L2, 40L3)

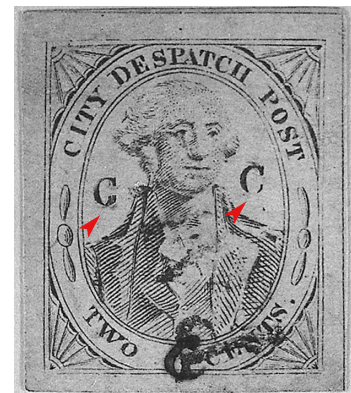
Third State (40L4-40L8)

POSITION 35



First State (40L1, 6LB1)

Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Left C Double
Bottom of right C incomplete

POSITION 36



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Inverted C at Right (Scott "c" var)
Left C Double

POSITION 37



First State (40L1, 6LB1)

Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Bruises around right C
Heavily shaded O of TWO

POSITION 38



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Right C incomplete
Large O of TWO

POSITION 39



First State (40L1, 6LB1)



Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

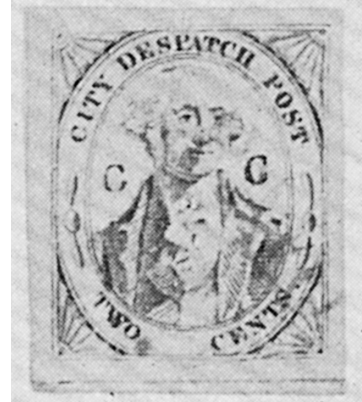
Bottom of left C and right C incomplete
Serif of W touches O of TWO

POSITION 40



First State (40L1, 6LB1)

Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

POSITION 41



First State (40L1, 6LB1)

Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

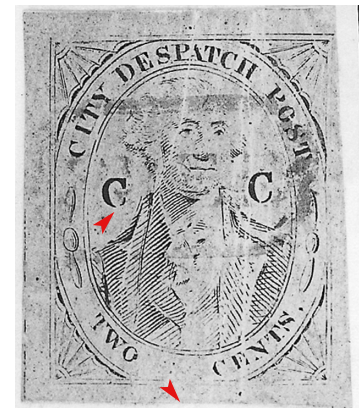
Break in bottom of left C
Double dividing line at bottom
Left C closer to oval than Pos. 42

POSITION 42



First State (40L1, 6LB1)

Second State (40L2, 40L3)



Third State (40L4-40L8)

Break in bottom of left C
Double dividing line at bottom

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