

## New York, New York

### *New York City's Postmaster Robert H. Morris*

New York City's former mayor and progressive new postmaster, Robert H. Morris (1802-1855), took office on May 21, 1845, and quickly organized his staff. Morris hired his brothers-in-law, Marcena Monson Jr. and Alonzo Castle Monson (1822-1902), to help manage the enormous post office operations, which had recently been relocated to the "New Post Office" inside the Dutch Reformed Church building on Nassau Street. Morris served as New York's postmaster for the next four years, a period of great change in the nation's postal system. He was replaced by William V. Brady on May 19, 1849, after Whig candidate Zachary Taylor assumed the presidency. Morris was



Robert Hunter Morris (1802-1855)

later elected Justice to the Supreme Court of the First District of New York. He died suddenly from a heart attack on October 24, 1855, at age 53.



Alonzo Castle Monson (1822-1902)  
Source: [www.shvillagereview.blogspot.com](http://www.shvillagereview.blogspot.com)

Morris' brother-in-law, Marcena Monson Jr., served as Assistant Deputy Postmaster. Marcena's brother, Alonzo, was a 23-year old Yale and Columbia Law School graduate in 1845. Calvet M. Hahn reported that Alonzo went off the *Official Register* in July 1846 and, therefore, must have left his post office job, but the uninterrupted supply of ACM-initialed stamps through 1847 strongly indicates he did not leave in 1846.

After the end of Morris' postmaster term, Alonzo departed for California in 1849 and became a judge. He did not return for his brother-in-law Robert's funeral in 1855, but headed home in 1857 after losing his house and money in a poker game.

Alonzo sailed from San Francisco on August 20, 1857, aboard the S.S. *Sonora* and transferred at Panama to the S.S. *Central America* on its ill-fated journey. Caught in a hurricane, the ship went down. Alonzo was among the 153 passengers and crew rescued, while approximately 425 lost their lives. Also lost were hundreds of bags of mail and \$1.2 million in gold, which contributed to the Panic of 1857 (the gold was salvaged in 1987). In 1899 Alonzo built a home in Southampton, New York, which he called *Mons Repos* ("my place of rest" in French).

### *The New York Provisional Stamp*

The Act of March 1845 postal reforms went into effect on July 1, 1845. Postmaster Morris embraced the idea of using stamps for prepayment, and he is on record stating that he issued envelopes with his name and rate stamped on them (Morris claimed that \$2 worth of envelopes were sold, but no example has been found). Morris decided to issue adhesive stamps sometime prior to July 12, 1845. His letter book contains the following announcement to postmasters in four cities:

Post Office, New York, July 12, 1845

My dear Sir:

I have adopted a stamp which I sell at 5 cents each. The accompanying is one. I prefer losing the cost of making them to having it insinuated that I am speculating out of the public. Your office of course will not officially notice my stamp, but will be governed only by the post office stamp of prepayment. Should there by any accident be deposited in your office a letter directed to the City of New York with one of my stamps upon it, you will mark the letter unpaid the same as though no stamp was upon it, though when reaches my office I shall deliver it as a paid letter. In this manner the accounts of the offices will be kept as now, there can be no confusion, and as each office is the judge of its own stamps there will be no danger from counterfeits.

Robt. H. Morris, P.M.

To Postmasters Boston, Philadelphia, Albany, Washington

The July 14, 1845, edition of the *New York Express* carried the following advertisement:

The public is respectfully informed that the undersigned has caused to be prepared stamps for the prepayment of postage, made for five cents each, which will be sold in parcels of five and upwards. To prevent counterfeits they will be sold only at this office and at the branch office. The public may therefore be assured that any stamps which may be offered for sale at any other than the two post offices are spurious and will not be considered as prepayment.

From Morris' letters and announcements it seems certain that the new 5c stamps were in his hands by Saturday, July 12, and placed on sale the following Monday, July 14, 1845. The earliest documented use is July 15. Therefore, the New York and Baltimore issues (announced on July 15) were the first of the Postmasters' Provisionals, followed shortly after by the New Haven provisional (based on the engraver's July 14 bookkeeping entry for making the die).

The New York provisional is the most elegantly executed and widely used among the group of provisionals issued by eleven different offices between 1845 and 1847. It is the only stamp among the 1845-47 provisionals known to have been distributed to other cities.

The stamp, printed in black from an engraved plate of 40 subjects, bears George Washington's portrait, based on an oil painting by Gilbert Stuart. The Rawdon, Wright and Hatch firm's success in engraving and printing the New York provisional earned them the contract — without competition — for the first General Issue in 1847. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the New York provisional is how it demonstrated the efficacy of adhesive postage stamps to the public and to Congress, paving the way for the Post Office Department's General Issue.

~~R. H. Morris Post Master  
 Printing 2590 impressions O. O. Stamps } 25 90  
 from up to Jan 7/47 }  
 431 sheet paper & gumming } 12 93  
 38 83~~

~~R. H. Morris Post Master  
 Engraving steel plate for Post } 40  
 Office Stamps }  
 Printing 1000 impressions No. 10 }  
 167 sheet paper } 5 01 55 ct  
 gumming do } 3 6~~

New York  
Post Office

1845	Deliveries	July 12	30 Imp - Stamps of 1.5c
1845	Oct 1	100 Imp - Stamps	14 54 " "
	19	400 " "	15 120 " "
	Dec 22	103 " "	16 270 " "
		August 28	200 " "
1847	Jan 7	100 Imp Stamps	Sept 17 200 " "
			Oct 3 126 " "
			Nov 25 400 " "
		1846	Jan 28 500 " "
			Apr 3 500 " "
			July 3 30 " "
			15 187 " "
		August 21	150 " "
		June 18	100 " "

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Rawdon, Wright & Hatch production records for the New York provisional plate and stamps

**Rawdon, Wright & Hatch Production**










The original RW&H records of the delivery dates and quantities (total 3,590 panes of 40), as well as separate billing entries for the engraved plate, 598 sheets of paper and gumming, are shown above. The charge for engraving the plate was \$40.00. Paper and gumming were billed at the rate of 3c per folio sheet. "Impression" is the term used for printing each pane of 40 stamps (six panes to a sheet of paper). The quantities listed by date are "impressions," or panes, billed at the rate of one cent per pane.

Beginning on July 12, 1845, and ending on January 7, 1847, RW&H made eighteen deliveries to the New York post office, for a total of 3,590 panes of 40, or 143,600 stamps. The total cost for printing was \$35.90, which is shown in two separate entries of \$10.00 and \$25.90. In addition, 598 sheets of gummed paper were furnished for a total cost of \$17.94, which is shown in two separate entries of \$5.01 (167 sheets) and \$12.93 (431 sheets). The invoiced quantities are 10 panes and 2 sheets short of round numbers of 3,600 panes, 144,000 stamps and 600 sheets of paper. This difference probably represents printer's waste or defective sheets that were returned. Production rates varied over the 95-week period the New York provisional stamps were current (July 12, 1845, to June 30, 1847), but the average was 1,500 per week.



***Control Initial Varieties***

The initials of Postmaster Morris and his in-law employees, Marcena Monson Jr. and Alonzo C. Monson, are written on almost all of the stamps seen today. The initials were applied in different shades of magenta ink before the stamps were sold and evidently served as a control or authentication device. During the eighteen-month period of production there were changes in the paper used and in the manuscript application of control initials to each stamp. The major and minor Scott Catalogue listings for the New York provisional reflect the specialized classification of paper colors and initial types. The Scott Catalogue lists the different varieties according to the chart below.

<b><i>Scott Classification of New York Control Initials</i></b>				
 <p><b>Without Signature</b> Bluish Paper (9X1e) Blue Paper (9X2d) Gray Paper (9X3b)</p>	 <p><b>RHM Top to bottom</b> Bluish Paper (9X1d) Blue Paper (9X2a) Gray Paper (9X3a)</p>	 <p><b>RHM Bottom to top</b> Gray Paper (9X3a)</p>	 <p><b>Small RHM Level</b> Bluish Paper (9X1d variety) P.F. certificate</p>	 <p><b>MMJr Bottom to top</b> Bluish Paper (9X1c)</p>
 <p><b>ACM All letters connected</b> Bluish Paper (9X1) Blue Paper (9X2) Gray Paper (9X3)</p>	 <p><b>AC M AC connected</b> Bluish Paper (9X1a) Blue Paper (9X2b)</p>	 <p><b>A C M No letters connected</b> Bluish Paper (unlisted sub-variety) <b>See lot 80</b></p>	 <p><b>A.C.M. With periods (two styles of "C")</b> Bluish Paper (9X1b)</p>	

***Paper and Gum Varieties***

The RW&H records shown on page 71 list eighteen deliveries of stamps between July 12, 1845, and January 7, 1847. Assuming that each delivery represents a separate printing, it is obvious that much of the variation in paper and gum seen in the surviving stamps occurred as a result of changes in paper selection and gum formulation over the course of eighteen months. Only the more pronounced paper color varieties — the Blue and Gray — are classified in the Scott Catalogue. The gum found on stamps ranges from a thick, yellowish gum to a thin, whitish gum, which is very similar to the gum used for the 1847 Issue.

***Multiples***

Postmaster Morris' announcement of his new provisional issue states that the stamps "will be sold in parcels of five and upwards." The sheet format was probably intentionally created in eight horizontal rows of five to facilitate cutting the stamps into strips of five. Further supporting this contention is the relative rarity of vertical-format multiples and blocks. Specialists have estimated that verticals pairs are seven to eight times scarcer than horizontal pairs.