



Lot 552

LOT 552° ✉

The incomparable “Rush” cover, described by Philip H. Ward, Jr. as
“the most important cover known to American philately”

ESTIMATE \$400,000-500,000

DESCRIPTION

10¢ Black (2), Positions 55-60L, **horizontal strip of six with interpane sheet margin at right**, Position 57L (third stamp from left) is the “Harelip” **plate variety**, mostly full to large margins except at bottom center where just barely into framelines, tied by multiple strikes of **red “5” numeral in circle cancel with matching “PHILADA. RAILROAD” straightline** handstamp applied at the New York City post office on an envelope **to Paris, France**, from Benjamin Rush in Philadelphia to his father, Richard Rush, the American minister to France, sender’s directive “*Via New York, British Mail Steamer of the 27th Septem. ‘Europa’*”, carried on the RMS *Europa*, departing September 27, 1848, arriving in Liverpool October 9, red “10 OC 10 48”(October 10, 1848) London receiving datestamp and matching “**COLONIES/&C. ART. 13**” Anglo-French accountancy handstamp, carried by rail to Dover, across the channel to Boulogne, and then by rail to Paris where “**ANGL./ 3/ BOULOGNE-S-MER/ 3/ 11 OCT 48**” arrival datestamp was applied (also tying strip), manuscript “15” (grams) weight notation at upper left partly on stamp, manuscript “33” (decimes) due marking, additional notations on back possibly applied at Paris post office, docketed upon receipt “*B.R. [Benjamin Rush] Sep. 26 and copies inside of same date.*”

PROVENANCE

John F. Seybold, J. C. Morgenthau, Sale 29, 3/15-16/1910, lot 42, to Gibson (Seybold’s handstamp on back)

Henry C. Gibson, Sr., Philip H. Ward, Jr. sale, 6/14-15/1944, lot 34, to Rust

Philip G. Rust, H. R. Harmer sale, 5/5-6/1971, lot 128, to Dr. Kapiloff Siegel Auction Galleries, Sale 912, 5/13/2006, lot 501, to Mr. Gross

CENSUS, LITERATURE AND EXHIBITION REFERENCES

USPCS census no. 8100

<https://www.uspcs.org/resource-center/censuses/1847-cover-census/>

Illustrated in Gordon Eubanks, Jr., “Covers with Three or More 1847 Stamps,” *Chronicle* 254

Scott R. Trepel, “United States Classic Covers” (special color feature for Ameripex 1986), *Chronicle* 130, May 1986

New York International Philatelic Exhibition 1926 (Gibson)

Collectors Club of New York 2/24/1926 (Gibson; Elliott Perry talk)

ARIPEX 1984 (Dr. Kapiloff, Grand Award)

ISRAPHIL 1985 (Dr. Kapiloff, Grand Prix International)

Collectors Club of New York “Aristocrats of United States Philately” exhibit, December 2000 (Gross)

World Stamp Show 2016 Court of Honor (Gross)

CERTIFICATION

The Philatelic Foundation (1975 and 2006)

CONDITION NOTES

Very Fine; small nicks in corners at top right and bottom left mended with paper and archival tape; the strip appears sound, but there are pre-use creases affecting all stamps

HISTORY AND COMMENTARY

The Remarkable Rush Cover

The Rush cover, as philatelists have named it, is one of two known covers with a 10¢ 1847 strip of six, the largest recorded multiple on cover. It is one of ten 1847 covers showing the Retaliatory Rate, two of which are addressed to France. For many, the Rush cover is held in the highest esteem—or, as Philip Ward wrote in 1944, it is “the most important cover known to American philately.”

This small envelope took two weeks to reach Richard Rush at *soixante-trois* Rue de Lille in Paris. The envelope had been mailed by Rush’s son, Benjamin, from Philadelphia on Tuesday, September 26, 1848, reaching the New York post office just in time to be placed on board the Cunard steamer *Europa*, set to sail on Wednesday from the docks at Jersey City.

After a transatlantic journey of twelve days and another two days from Liverpool to London and across the channel to France, the envelope was carefully slit open around the wax seal. Rush had just celebrated his 68th birthday, four thousand miles away from his home in Philadelphia. The arrival of a letter from his son must have cheered the old man.

Since 1847, Rush had been living in Paris, serving as the American minister to France. This was a time of great social unrest in the wake of several bad harvests and the Irish Potato Famine. In 1848 Karl Marx published his *Communist Manifesto*, and in Europe there was widespread revolt against aristocratic governments. The turbulent events of 1848 culminated in another French revolution and election of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte as president.

Richard Rush’s political mind must have been acutely aware of the circumstances in which his son’s letter was transported. As an advocate of protectionist tariffs during his tenure as Secretary of Treasury in the John Quincy Adams administration, Rush must have looked upon the envelope with a certain degree of irony. Here was a piece of mail clearly marked for the next British steamer from New York, stamped with six 10¢ Washington stamps for no other reason than to retaliate against Great Britain over its protectionist treatment of the transatlantic mails.

The six stamps overpaid the 58¢ U.S. postage by two cents. The 33 decimes collected from Rush on delivery was roughly equivalent to 66¢. The total postage charged on this letter was approximately \$1.24, a significant sum in 1848. The dispute between the United States and Great Britain over mail subsidies had just arrived on Rush’s doorstep.



Richard Rush

continued on next page

Lot 552 continued

The Rush Cover's Journey to France

Although it is addressed to France, not Great Britain, this remarkable 1847 Issue cover reflects the political and economic dispute between the American and British governments, because it had to be carried to Liverpool for further transit to Paris. The story of protective postal tariffs and retaliation is a lesson for modern times.

As noted by Richard Rush on the envelope itself, the letters enclosed were dated September 26 (1848). Presumably the notation "*copies inside of same date*" refers to copies of letters sent by other ships, a common practice during this period. Benjamin evidently enclosed duplicates of other letters in this envelope, which explains its weight (one-half ounce, or 15 grams).

The impending departure of the 1,834-ton Cunarder *Europa* was known to Benjamin, who wrote explicit directions at the lower left to send the letter "*Via New York, British Mail Steamer of the 27th Septem. 'Europa'.*" Scheduled packet sailings were advertised in newspapers. In this instance, he was cutting it close, because the Cunard advertisement in the September 26 *New York Commercial Advertiser* stated that the *Europa* would "sail from her dock, Jersey City, on Wednesday (27th) at 12 o'clock precisely." Benjamin's letter had to make the northbound train trip to New York City for processing at the post office, then the bags of mail had to be carried by a small harbor vessel across the Hudson River to Cunard's docks at Jersey City.



Cunard's
RMS *Europa*

One indication that time was short is the presence of the "PHILADA RAILROAD" straightline and "5" in circle. These markings were applied to the envelope and stamps on arrival at the New York post office after the mail bags were removed from the train and opened by postal clerks. In this case, the Philadelphia post office did not waste time cancelling the stamps and postmarking the envelope. They hurriedly tossed it into the mail bags to be handed over to the route agent on the northbound train.

There was no "Philadelphia Railroad" or "New York and Philadelphia Railroad" by name. Mail was carried along routes of the New Jersey Railroad and Transportation Company, the Camden and Amboy Branch, and the Philadelphia and Trenton Railroad. Cunard's advertisements specifically state that mail for their Liverpool sailings had to go through the New York post office first. Therefore, the train bringing mail from Philadelphia would have carried it past Jersey City to New York City.

For this first leg of the journey, Benjamin Rush had to pay the domestic postage of 5¢ per half-ounce for a distance up to 300 miles. The letter was judged to weigh just over the half-ounce limit and thus required 10¢ domestic postage.

Under normal circumstances, before the 1848 Retaliatory Rate Period and before the treaty with Great Britain was signed, the one-shilling (24¢) per half-ounce British packet postage could never be prepaid. It was always collected from the addressee, or the letter traveled by a non-contract ship and was charged the basic ship-letter rate.

When the Ocean Line started carrying mail in June 1847, the packet postage had to be prepaid. Immediately, however, the British discriminatory charge on letters arriving by American packets effectively doubled the rate. Once the 1848 treaty established a system for exchanging credits, the sender of a letter to Great Britain could prepay the total postage.

In the case of Benjamin Rush's letter to his father in Paris, the situation was different, because it was mailed during the Retaliatory Rate period. Regardless of the shipping line used, British or American, Benjamin was required to prepay the packet postage, which in this case was the double rate due to weight. He must have known that the 48¢ prepayment was nothing less than a penalty aimed at the British, but paid by him.

With its mail from the New York post office on board, the *Europa* departed from the Cunard docks on Wednesday, September 27, 1848, as scheduled. The voyage included a stop at Halifax, Nova Scotia. On October 9 the *Europa* reached Liverpool. The mail was brought by train to London, and the back of the envelope was postmarked with the London office's red "10 OC 10 48" (October 10, 1848) receiving datestamp.

The trip from London to Paris via the English Channel took about 14½ hours. The port of departure was Dover, which was connected to London by rail. The French receiving datestamp indicates that the letter entered France at the port of Boulogne, rather than Calais. Boulogne was used as an entry point for only thirteen months, beginning in January 1848 after the railway was nearly complete. The datestamp on the Rush cover reads "ANGL./3/BOULOGNE-S-MER/3/11 OCT 48" ("Angl." is an abbreviation for Angleterre, or England).

Once the letter reached the Paris post office, it was weighed and rated for postage charges to be collected from the addressee. When the clerk in Paris weighed the letter, he wrote "15" by hand in the upper left corner, partly over the U.S. stamps, indicating the weight in grams. However, there are additional notations on the back, including a "16", which might indicate that the letter was weighed again at 16 grams. The "33" in large numerals on the front of the envelope represents 33 decimes due from the addressee, roughly equivalent to 66¢.

Mail between England and France was weighed in bulk, and whichever country incurred sea postage and transit costs was compensated by the country that collected postage. The "Colonies/&c. Art. 13" marking refers to Article 13 of the letter bill that accompanied the mail, identifying the letter as unpaid mail arriving from overseas. Under this arrangement, Great Britain received 10 decimes (20¢) per 7.5 grams. In the case of the double-rate Rush letter, the amount received was 20 decimes (40¢). That leaves 13 decimes for France, which corresponds to the rate for a letter weighing between 15 and 20 grams, and traveling 205 kilometers from Paris to Boulogne.

In the final analysis, of the \$1.26 paid by two members of the Rush family, the U.S. received 60¢ (including the overpayment), the British received 40¢, and the French received 26¢. Had the letter been mailed just a few months later, after the U.S.-British postal treaty took effect, the postage would have been half of the amount paid by the Rushes.

To pay the punitive Retaliatory Rate postage, Benjamin Rush used a strip of six 10¢ stamps cut from the end of the sixth row of the left pane of 100—Positions 55-60L. Benjamin could never have imagined that the strip of six would survive to become the largest recorded multiple of the 10¢ 1847 on cover (only one other strip of six is known on cover, used from Mobile to New York). He must have also been oblivious to the small plate flaw on the third stamp from the left (Position 57L), appearing as a short diagonal line across Washington's upper lip, which philatelists unkindly label the "Harelip" variety.

Into the Hands of Covetous Collectors

The first collector known to have owned the Rush cover is John F. Seybold, the son of German immigrants who settled in Syracuse, New York. At age 23, Seybold started a department store, the success of which provided the funds to pursue his childhood interest in stamp collecting.



John F. Seybold

Seybold patronized dealers from around the world during the 1880s and 90s, acquiring approximately 90,000 stamps off cover and what was regarded at the time as the world's most important collection of stamps on covers. Some of his best covers were pictured in a series of articles published in *The Perforator* from 1902 to 1905.

In 1909 there was a tragic turn in Seybold's life. According to contemporary reports, he became emotionally distraught and withdrawn. On August 12, 1909, the 51-year old Seybold committed suicide with a bullet to his right temple.

The Seybold collection was bought from the estate by a New York banker named John T. Coit and the prominent New York dealer, Julius Caesar Morgenthau. The sale price was \$26,000, considerably less than the value placed on the collection by the court appraisers. When Morgenthau put the Seybold collection into three auctions between March and April 1910, he specifically stated that nothing had been sold privately. However, some items known to have been in the collection did not appear in the auction catalogues. Whether Morgenthau actually sold items privately or some material was "held out" from the estate sale will never be known.

The first Seybold auction on March 15-16, 1910, at The Collectors Club of New York, contained an extraordinary array of postal history rarities. Unfortunately, none of the U.S. could be illustrated in the catalogue, because anti-counterfeiting laws prohibited photographic reproduction. Seybold owned both covers with 10¢ 1847 strips of six (the Rush cover and the other from Mobile). The Rush cover was listed as lot 42 with a five-line description. It was sold for \$110 to Henry C. Gibson.

Henry C. Gibson, Sr., the scion of a wealthy Philadelphia family and an accomplished banking professional and businessman in his own right, started collecting stamps and covers around the time of the first Seybold sale. Gibson's interest in the 1847 Issue and classic multiples developed early, and his acquisition of the Rush cover in 1910 was followed soon after by the purchase of the famous 10¢ 1847 "Bible Block." Remarkably, Gibson was only 27 when he owned both of the greatest 10¢ 1847 items.



Henry C. Gibson, Sr.

On June 14, 1944, The Collectors Club of New York was again the venue for offering the Rush 1847 cover. The sale of the Henry C. Gibson collection of "United States Postage Stamps on Original Covers 1845-1940" was conducted by Philip H. Ward, Jr., the Philadelphia dealer and auctioneer who had helped Gibson buy and sell important items and collections.

Four lots in the small black-and-white Gibson sale catalogue stand out. On page 12 is the 5¢/10¢ 1847 cover to Heidelberg, which realized \$850. Page 14 features the U.S.-Canada mixed franking with a strip of the 5¢ 1847, which realized \$6,000. On page 15 is the 5¢/10¢ 1847 Retaliatory Rate cover to Belgium, which brought just \$700. Finally, the Rush cover appears on page 16. It sold for \$4,000.

Following the Gibson sale, the Rush cover did not appear at auction for another 27 years. In the H. R. Harmer sale of May 5-6, 1971, a large group of outstanding classic U.S. covers was offered. The title page lists three owners of collections contained in the catalogue, including the unattributed owner of the Rush cover, Philip G. Rust.

Rust owned a farm in Georgia, but he was hardly your average struggling farmer. A chemical engineer by training and former employee of the DuPont company, Phil Rust met, fell in love with and married Eleanor Francis du Pont, a fifth generation heiress to the family fortune. Rebuffed in his desire to take a senior position with the company, Rust moved his family to the rural community of Thomasville, Georgia. In between chores on the farm, Rust quietly formed a spectacular collection of classic U.S.



Philip G. Rust

covers, buying in sales throughout the 1950s and 60s. The quantity of 1847 Issue covers owned by Philip Rust over decades is truly staggering. Viewed as a whole, it is one of the greatest collections of 1847 covers ever formed.

The next collector to own the Rush 1847 cover was another gentleman who kept a low profile for many years. His name was Dr. Leonard Kapiloff, and he had been a close personal friend of Robert A. Siegel since the 1930s.



Dr. Kapiloff (left) and Bob Siegel

"Doc" Kapiloff was a dentist by training, but earned his livelihood and fortune from real estate. The only dentistry he practiced was volunteering at a free clinic. With his financial success, Dr. Kapiloff was able to enjoy philately by acquiring items that appealed to him. He developed a deep interest in classic U.S. covers, particularly the 1847 Issue. When the

Garrett 1847 collection was offered privately in the early 1980s, Dr. Kapiloff stepped up and bought it intact. That transaction has been called the last great land grab in philately.

Dr. Kapiloff already owned many outstanding 1847 covers, including the Rush cover. Combined with the Garrett collection, he was able to form a spectacular exhibit for public display. He made his debut at ARIPEX in 1984 and took the Grand Award. The Kapiloff 1847 collection went on to win the Grand Prix International at ISRAPIL in 1985. In 1992 he asked the Siegel firm to sell it, along with his 1851-57 collection. Held back from the sale were a few of his favorites, including the Rush cover.

The Rush cover entered the market through the Siegel firm on May 13, 2006, described in a single-item hardcover catalogue that fully explored its history and ownership. With the major international philatelic exhibition in Washington, D.C. just two weeks away, Mr. Gross authorized Charles Shreve to bid on his behalf. When the gavel was brought down, Mr. Gross was on his way to eventually becoming the only collector to own all four iconic 1847 covers since Henry Gibson in 1944. The Rush cover was placed on an exhibit page, like the Koh-i-Nor in the State Crown, and it surely helped Mr. Gross capture the Grand Prix National in 2006. ■