

The Providence *Silent Precancel*

- or is it a “Control Mark”?



Introduction

- The discovery of a number of covers and adhesives has led to a re-examination of what had previously been termed a *silent precancel* on the U.S. 3¢ stamp, 1851-57 Issue.
- The adhesives have either a single horizontal and/or vertical ruled line (or both) in black pencil and/or red pencil (or both) spanning the stamp from edge to edge.
- Each off-cover single, as well as those on cover and/or on piece, are cancelled/tied by a black Providence, RI postmark of the period.

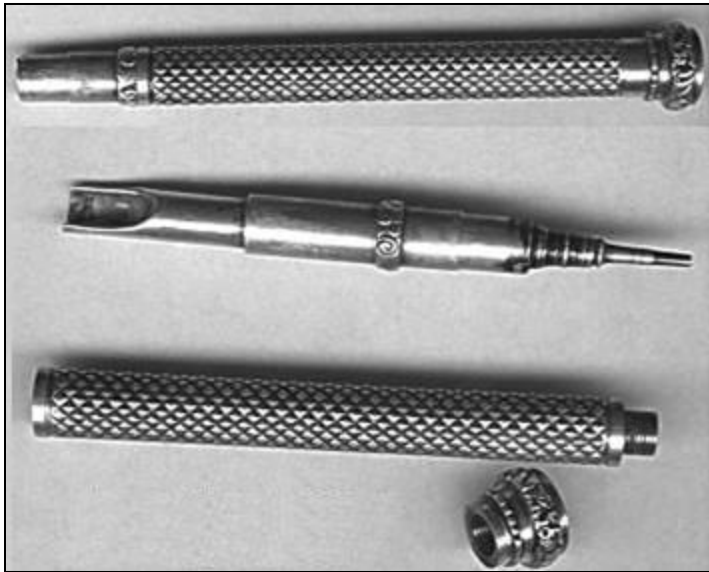
The *Silent Precancel*

- *Silent precancels* are precancels that do not contain the town name in the imprint on the stamp. These are often called “Lines and Bar Types”.
- The earliest precancels came before the postage stamp, with printed cancellations on a few stampless covers.
- Hale, Pomeroy, *et al.* used penstroke precancels, with limited uses seen on the U.S. 1847 Issue, and the method reaching its peak in the 1890’s.



- Devices used were held most often by Post Office in 20th Century and by Companies using them in the 19th Century. These could be handstamps, pen/ink, crayon, and/or pencil markings.

Writing Implements of the Period



Albert G. Bagely (NY) combo, circa 1846, silver, diamond pattern, amethyst capstone, 4 1/4" closed, "BAGLEY", – this is an early pen/pencil reverse combo with the reverse but not the telescoping case. From the John C. Loring Collection.



A.W. Faber
"Artists' Pencil,"
circa 1860: This is the
first leadholder with all
the features required
to make an excellent
drafting pencil.



Porte-Crayon, circa 1850
First appeared in the
18th century. Still used
today by artists to hold
charcoal, crayons,
pastels, and graphite.

Early Precancel Users

From: *The History of Precancels*, by N. R. Hoover (PSS 769.568 Hoo, 1989) cites on p. 13 a *precancel* in single red ink horizontal line on cover with Providence postmark.

Chapter VI - EARLY PRECANCEL USERS (The Precancel Bee 6/33/1-2, 7/33/3)

In so far as is known, this is the first attempt to make a chronological list of early users of precancels. Such a list must necessarily be in a more or less skeletonized form. It represents covers which the writer has seen or which are sufficiently described in the catalog to be made part of this record.

With this as a nucleus, it would be interesting if those owning precancel covers or having access to them, would supply the editor with data which will make it possible to extend this compilation. We may in time get a representative record of the early users of precancels.

Issue	Description	Mailed by	Mailed to	Remarks
1844	2 ink lines crossing at right angles in center (Hale & Co.)(red or black)	not known	Wm. M. Meredith Philadelphia	Owned by Allan R. Brown
1847	Wheeling, W. Va. 5¢ and 10¢	not known	Mr. Menzies New York	Owned by S. G. Rich 2 of the 5¢ and 1 of the 10¢ are definitely known to exist.
1851	2 horizontal ink lines 3 1/2 mm apart	not known		A. R. B. This was a drop letter in Berlin, Vt. A.R.B.
1851	The mysterious "Paid" cover of which quite a number exist	not known		A rumor has been circulated that this cover emanated from Phila., but it has never been confirmed.
1851	Single red ink horizontal line	not known		In addition this cover has Providence postmark. A.R.B.

The Providence “*Silent Precancel*”

The *Silent Precancels: a Catalog of Lines, Bars, & Designs on 19th and 20th Century Stamps Used Postally in the United States*, by David W. Smith (PSS 769.568 Smi, 1995) cites on p. 125 the Providence *silent precancel*, “Used by: Brown University”.

PROVIDENCE cover 400.00
1 red or black ruled penline
Used by: Brown University

1851: 3



A

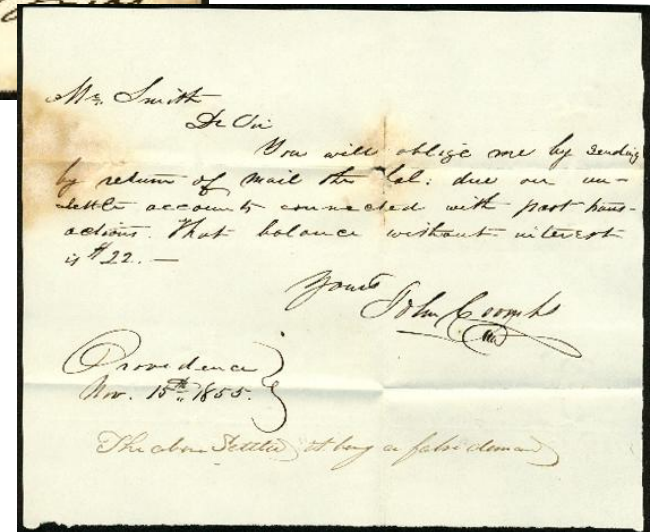


(Cover and enclosure in the M. Gutman collection)



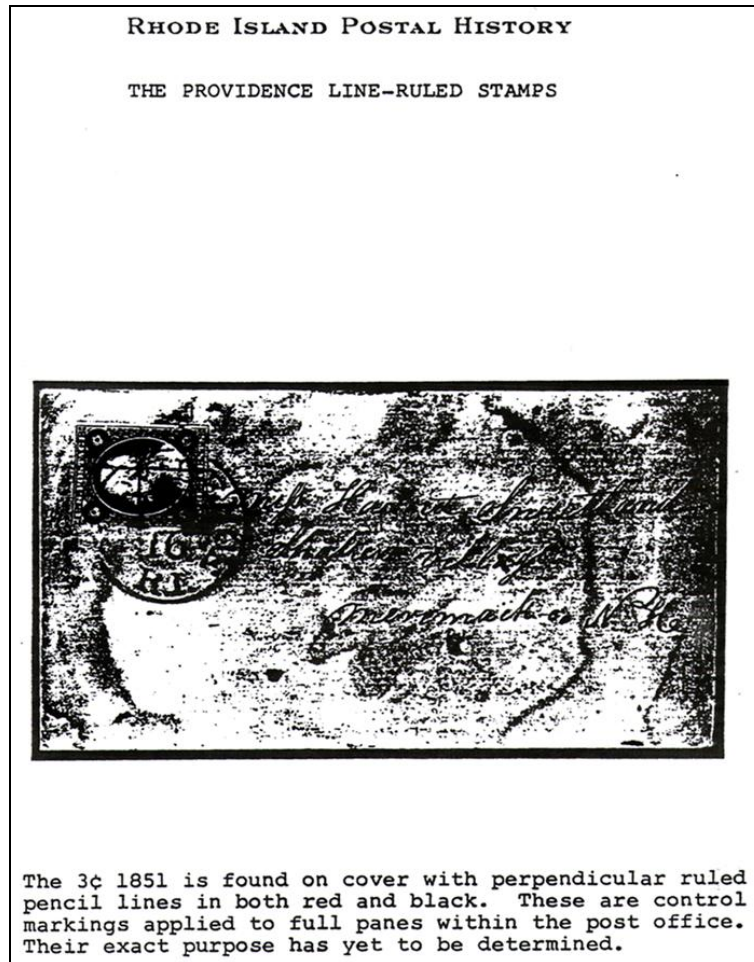
TOWNS - - - 1
TYPES - - - 2

125



The Providence “*Line-Ruled*” Stamp

The *Rhode Island Postal History* by Richard B. Jordan illustrated the following cover in black and white (Exhibit Photocopy, USPCS, Inc., 1988, p. 66).



R. Jordan writes at the bottom:

“The 3¢ 1851 is found on cover with perpendicular ruled pencil lines in both red and black. These are control markings applied to full panes within the post office. Their exact purpose has yet to be determined.”

Census Data

- Examination of ~600 Providence covers from 1851 through 1860 and the discovery of thirteen (13) year dated letters/covers assists in determining the estimated period of use from April 1855 through October 1857.
- Adhesives ruled in BLACK pencil and/or RED pencil/crayon (H/V or both).
 - 38 off-cover adhesives identified (all examined - two on piece).
 - 31 covers identified (two [3] yet to be examined).
- Adhesives are cancelled with a “Providence, R.I.” postmark of the period.
- Control Mark yet to be seen on other adhesives of era (1¢, 5¢, 10¢, 12¢).
 - NOTE: see the Comstock Foochow covers.

Control Marking Types

<u>Implement</u>	<u>Color</u>	<u>Direction</u>	<u>Tally</u>
Pencil	Black	Horizontal (–)	41
Pencil	Black	Vertical ()	0
Pencil	Black	H & V (+)	3
Pencil	Red	Horizontal (–)	21
Pencil	Red	Vertical ()	1
Pencil	Red	H & V (+)	1
Pencil	Red & Black	H & V, V & H	1
Pencil	Unknown (H or V)		<u>1</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>			69

On-Cover Specimens

41R1L

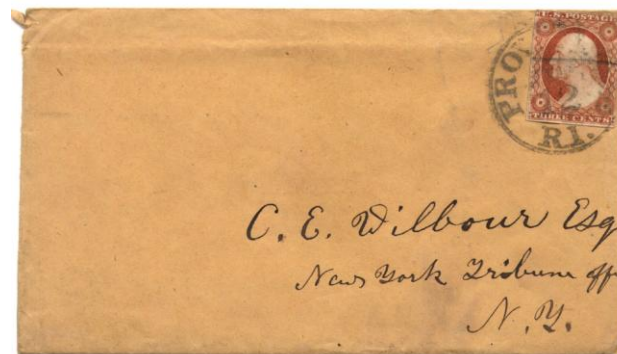
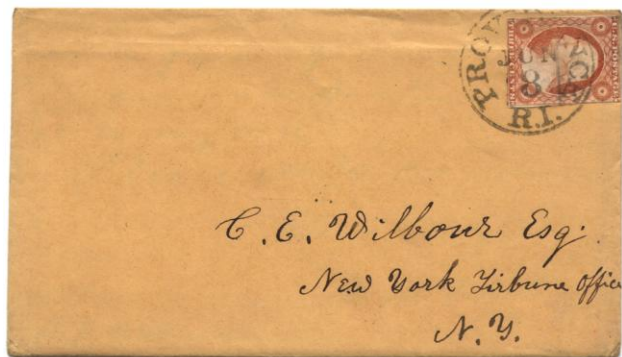


Black pencil H, June 8, 1855 w/letter from U.W. Lowto, Brown University to C.E. Wilbour, Tribune Office, NY

30L3



Black pencil H, July 12, 1855 w/letter from U.W. Lowto, Brown University to C.E. Wilbour, Tribune Office, NY



Off-Cover Specimens



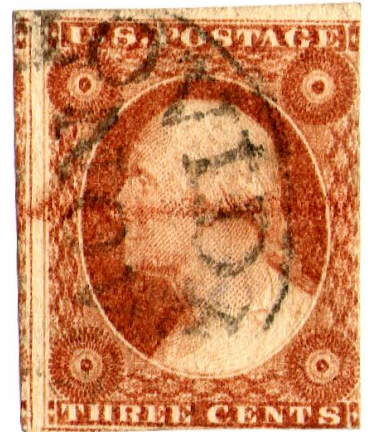
97L1L



69R1L



9L1L



3L4



57L4



33L2L



99R3



77R7(?)

Off-Cover Specimens, cont.



58R3(?)



31L3



29R3



23L4



1R6



9L5L



1R5L

On-Cover Specimens



Black pencil H, Sep 7 (1856), Plate 36L3



Black pencil H&V, Jun 12 (1856), Plate 10L5L



On-Cover Specimens



Black pencil H, July 23 (1855), Plate 2L/3



Black pencil H, Mar 22, 1856, Plate 6/7
Docketed "opened by Mrs. Jonathan Slade Mar 25 1856"



(Collection of R. Weber)



On-Cover Specimens

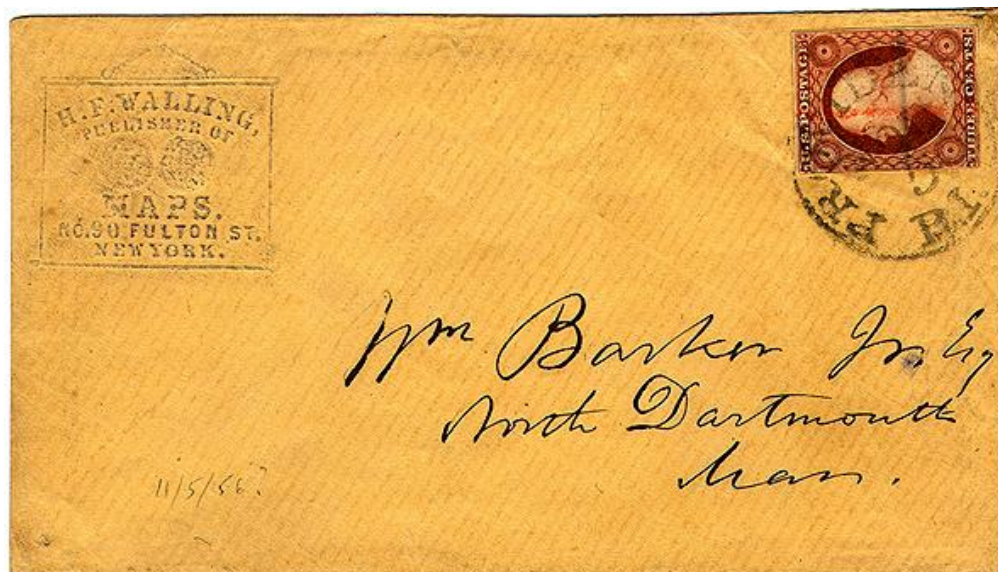


Black pencil H, Jun 4 (1855), Plate 33L1L



Red Pencil/Crayon H, Jan 22 1856, Plate 44R3
w/letter from A.M. Rhodes to Albert G. Wilbur

On-Cover Specimens



Red Pencil/Crayon V & Black pencil H,
Nov 5 (1856), 31R3
Cc: Walling Publisher of Maps, NY to
Wm Barker, N. Dartmouth, Mass
(Collection of R. Weber)



Black pencil H, Oct 8 (1857),
#25 Plate 6/7
To: George W. Greene, Esq.
107 E 27th, New York
(Collection of R. Weber)

Dr. Chase Knew of Control Marks

- The discovery of two control marked singles (each on piece) and the rediscovery of the “line ruled” cover illustrated in Richard Jordan’s *The Rhode Island Postal History*, reveals that Dr. Carroll Chase knew of this marking.
- Interestingly, we find no mention of the marking in any of his published works.
- Dr. Chase’s handwriting is well known and easily recognizable, as he made it a point during his pioneering efforts to plate the 3¢ 1851 stamp of writing the position and plate number on the reverse of the stamp.



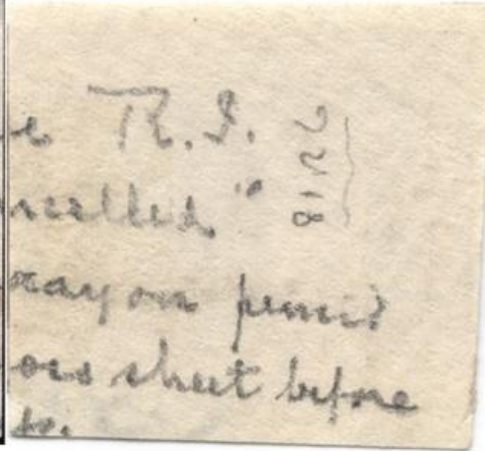
- He would also add other observations on the reverse of 3¢ 1851 stamps and covers.
- So while he did not publish his findings, he did leave us with the following.....

The Chase “Precancelled” Piece

36L6



81R6



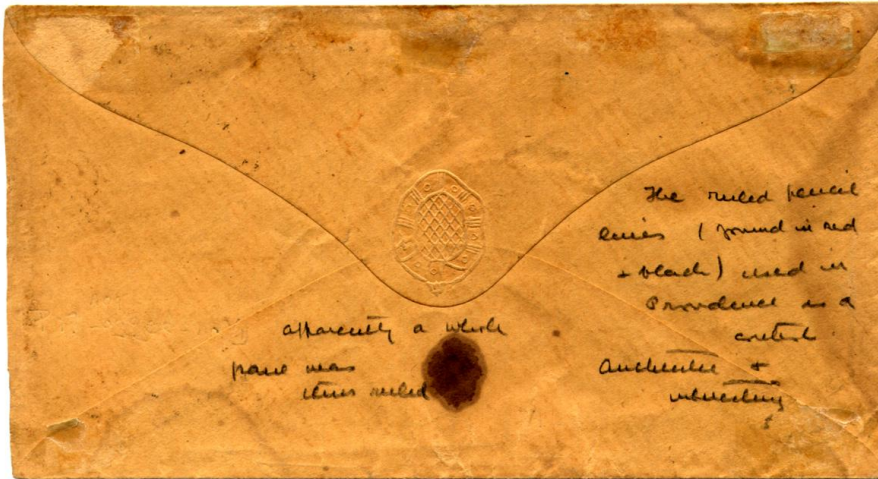
Reunited Piece -
April 2005

It is interesting that
Chase refers to these
red markings as a
“Precancel”

We shall see his thoughts
as this evolved.

Chase writes: “Providence R.I. “Precancelled” by red crayon
pencil line across sheet before cutting into.”

The Chase “Control” Cover



Provenance: Chase, Jordan, Grossman

Black pencil H & V, Jan 16 (1857), Plate 6/7

Dr. Chase notes on reverse: “The ruled pencil lines (found in red & black) used in Providence as a **control**. Authentic & Interesting.”

Then he writes: “Apparently a whole pane was thus ruled.”

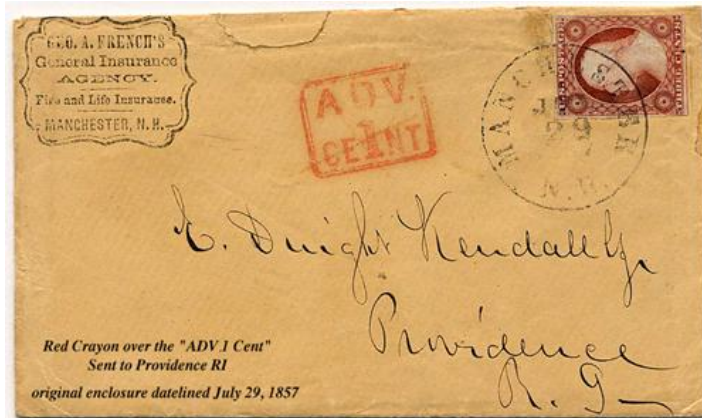
To: Mrs. Harriet Sweetland, Shakers Village
Merimack Co N.H.

From “Precancel” to “Control”

- I would proffer that Dr. Chase first discovered the two Plate 6 singles with red “lines” on cover (or piece) and put forth his first theory: that these adhesives were “precancelled” by red crayon pencil line across sheet before cutting into.”
- At some later date, Dr. Chase discovered the “Sweetland” cover with the adhesive ruled in black both horizontal and vertical. I suggest that Dr. Chase after seeing this surmised that “the ruled pencil lines (found in red & black) used in Providence” were “as a **control**”.
- It is worth noting at this point that a "precancel" can be considered a type of control marking, but not all control markings are "precancels." Another type of control marking is a PERFIN.

Providence “Advertised” Covers

Examination of nineteen (19) covers “Advertised” at the Providence Post Office during this period and beyond (1855-1870’s) show either a black pencil or red or blue pencil/crayon marking on the cover front (often obliterating the Advertised marking). The pencil/crayon markings, when compared to the control marks on the 3¢ 1851 stamp, are for all intensive purposes identical.



Who Did The Ruling and Affixing?

The ruling and affixing is open to interpretation and most likely will never be known, but one plausible hypothesis follows:

- The numerous addressee's and sender's, the black and red marked Advertised covers, the various 3¢ plates marked, as well as the 2.5 year period of use suggest that the Providence Post Office ruled multiple panes.
- The different types of colored ruled lines and orientations suggests that the stamps/panes were not disseminated (Why? - to prevent pilfering or misuse). Multiple account holders could prepay for a pane (or less) of 3¢ stamps at a time. This is also an issue of convenience.
- A customer/account holder arrived with a pile of letters, where the postal clerk would affix the “proper” control marked, prepaid stamps to the covers (the patron might have affixed the stamps just as easily).
- The postal clerk accepted them as stamped letters, applied the Providence, RI postmark, and entered them in the postal stream.

Multiple Account Holders

- **Brown University** - no on-campus P.O. until 1926, Barnas Sears President from 1855-67.

Can tie at least ten (10) covers to Brown students (Lowto, Lyman, Heywood), professors (Wilbour, Greene), and family members (Larned, Sweetland, Green). Probably first and primary account holder.

- **H.F. Walling Publishers** - in 1855-57 H.F. Walling, a NY Firm, was mapping the city of Providence, and had an office in the city. Can tie one (1) cover to Walling, it is a corner card embossed example. This cover only one with a red/black control mark.

- **Corliss Steam Engine Company** - the Company was incorporated in 1856 in Providence. Can tie one (1) cover to Miss Nellie Corliss in Newburgh, NY - dated Nov 2 1856. There was a Robert Whitehill of Newburgh, NY that manufactured the Improved Corliss Engine.

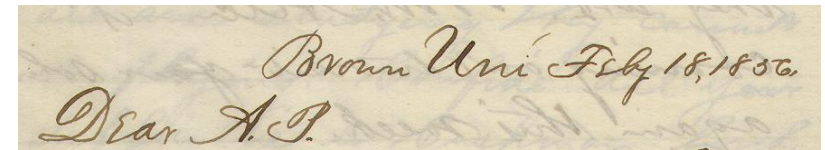
- **Comstock Steamships** - the Comstock's had a long history in the Steamship Industry in Providence as Owner's, Captains, etc. Can tie two (2) covers to William Comstock who was involved in the China trade.

- **Slade Family** – Had Ferry in operation ~200 years until 1876 when Taunton River bridged. Can tie one (1) cover to Mrs. Jonathan Slade, Somerset Mass. Jonathan ran the company with brother William. Their family was from Somerset.

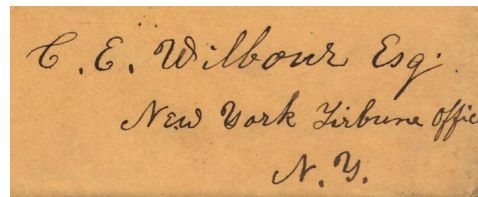
Brown University



Ezra Harvey Heywood attended in 1850's for undergraduate studies. Addressed to his wife Angela Fiducia.

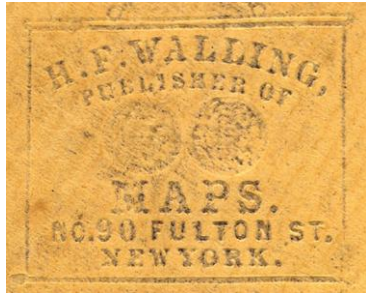


C.E. Wilbur, Class of 1854, America's First Egyptologist.
In '54 went to NY Herald Tribune under Horace Greely.
Letters from a former student asking for position.

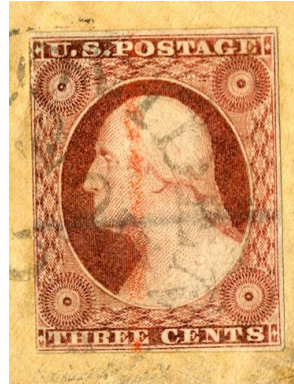


George W. Greene, Esq. - former Brown University Professor (1848-1852)
Moved to NYC to devote time to writing & study (confirmed 107th E. 27th, NY)

H.F. Walling Publisher of Maps



Embossed Corner Card
H.F. Walling.
Publisher of Maps
90 Fulton St. New York

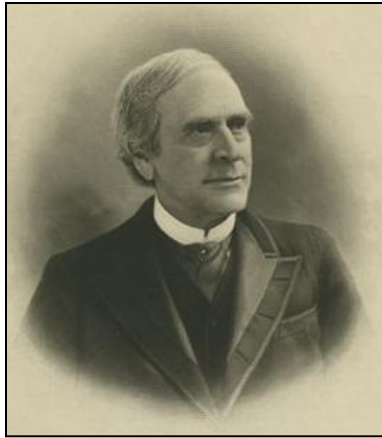


WALLING, Henry Francis, cartographer, born in Burrillville, RI, 11 June, 1825; died in Cambridge, MA, 8 April, 1888. He was educated at public schools and was fitted for college, but became assistant librarian in the Providence athenaeum. He studied mathematics and surveying, and entered the office of Barrett Cushing, a civil engineer in Providence, whose partner he became in 1846. He began topographic work in 1849, and prepared atlases containing full maps and scientific descriptions of most of the northern states. In 1855-57 he oversaw the mapping of the city of Providence. It was said that "to him more than to any one else is due the better appreciation of good maps.

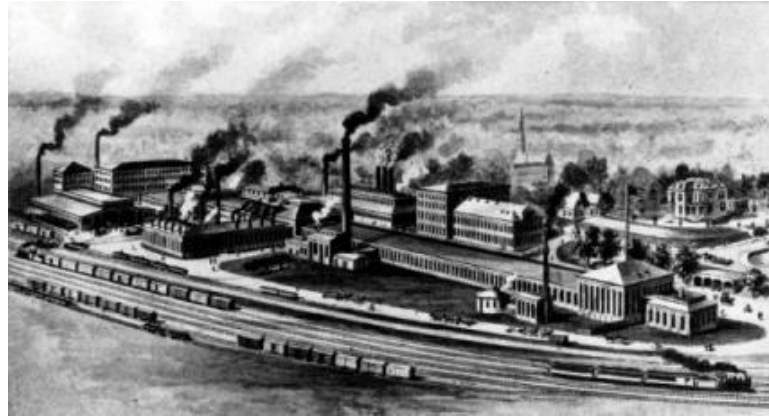


Map of the City of Providence, Rhode Island,
from Surveys under the Direction of H. F. Walling. 1857.
Graphics Collection, the RI Historical Society, Providence.

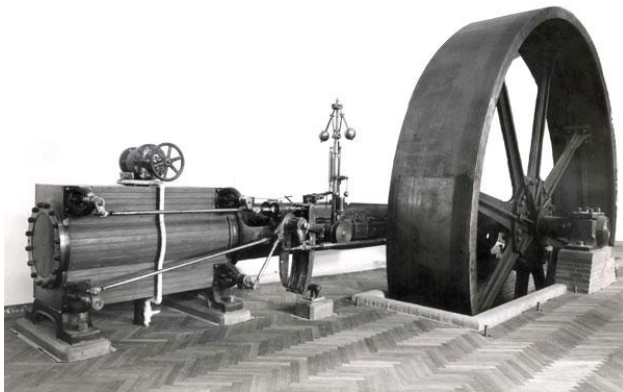
The Corliss Steam Engine Co.



Geo. N. Corliss.



The Corliss Steam-Engine Works in Providence



1859 Corliss Steam Engine

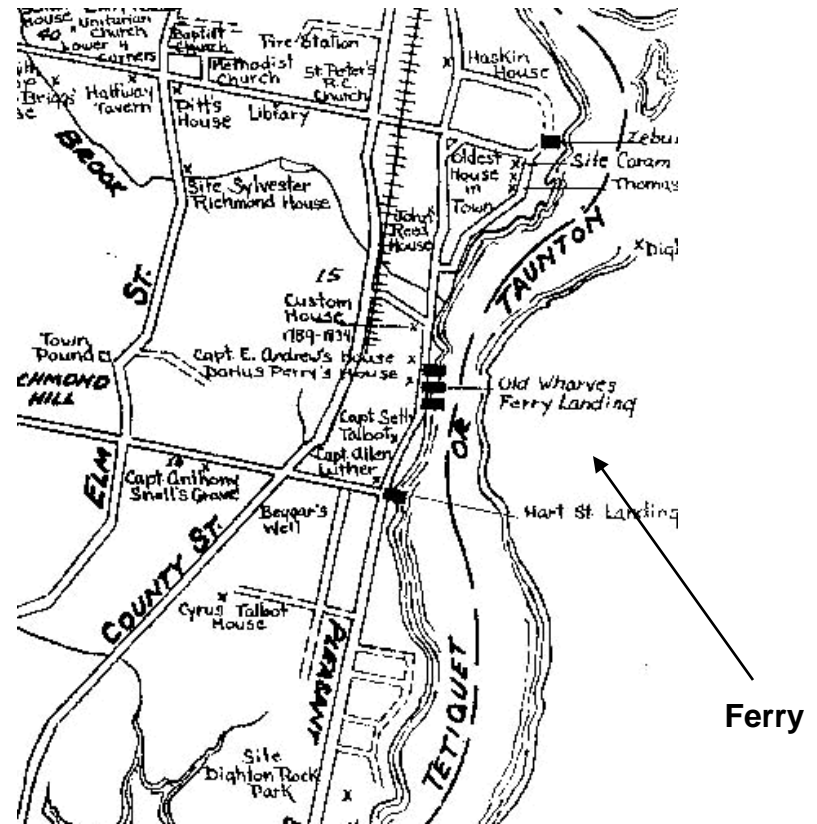


During the 1850's, a Robert Whitehill of Newburgh, NY manufactured the Improved Corliss Engine. This letter is addressed to a Nellie Corliss in Newburgh

Slade's Family & Ferry Operation



Docketed on reverse: "opened by Mrs. Jonathan Slade Mar 25 1856"



William Slade was a large landholder in the 1670's, his domain including the ferry across Taunton river, which has ever been known as Slade's Ferry, and this ferry remained in possession of the family until the river was bridged in 1876, at which time it was operated by William L. Lawton and Jonathan Slade.

The Comstock Correspondence



This cover, franked with 38¢ worth of 1851-issue stamps, was carried via British Mail to Hong Kong, where it was forwarded on to Foochow, China. The sender pre-paid 38¢ such that the letter would go out on any available steamer. The Prussian Closed Mail rate at this time to Hong Kong was 38¢. The British Mail rate however was 33¢. This was carried via an American Packet Steamer, thus the U.S. retained 21¢ of the postage. With Britain credited with "12" (ms) for the remainder. 3¢ of this was the standard British fee, and 9¢ was the surcharge for delivery to Hong Kong. Arrived Hong Kong Feb 1, 1857. Provenance: *Sevenoaks, Rogers, Hackmey.*

The Comstock Correspondence, cont.



NOTE:
Only the
3¢ stamp
is control
marked.

Prussian Closed Mails to Hong Kong

This cover, franked with 38¢ worth of 1851-issue stamps, was carried via British Mail to Hong Kong, where it was forwarded on to Foochow, China. The sender pre-paid 38¢ such that the letter would go out on any available steamer. The Prussian Closed Mail rate at this time to Hong Kong was 38¢. Carried on Cunard steamer "Canada". Arrived Hong Kong on Feb 1, 1857. Provenance: *Richardson*.

Final Thoughts

- Between mid-1855 and late-1857, control marked 3¢ 1851 adhesives were post-cancelled with the Providence, RI CDS and accepted for postage at the Providence Post Office.
- Brown University appears to be a main “account” holder, with other prominent businesses/families partaking, such as: Corliss Steam Engine Co.; H.F. Walling Publishers; Slade; Comstock; Steere, *et al.*
- It should be noted that 1855 was the year that compulsory prepayment went into effect on April 1st.
- Could Welcome B. Sayles, the Providence Provisional Postmaster, have enacted this "control marking" process over this 2.5 year period until the new system of prepayment was firmly in place?

Acknowledgements

Dr. W.F. Amonette	Michael S. Gutman	Robert McCaughey	Charles C. Temple
Richard Celler	Robert R. Hegland	Stanley M. Piller	Tim Treen
Samuel Cox	W. Wilson Hulme	Don Richardson	John Valenti
Mark S. Friedman	Richard B. Jordan	Arnold Selengut	Greg D. Weber
Gary Granzow	John Kellerman	Charles C. Souder	Roy P. Weber
Thomas E. Greene	Stephen Kittle	David W. Smith	
Maurice B. Grossman	Rob Lund	Mr. Swanson	

References

1. Robert F. Chambers R.I. Cover Collection (B&W photocopies).
2. *The History of Precancels*, by N. R. Hoover (PSS 769.568 Hoo, 1989).
3. *Rhode Island Postal History*, by Richard B. Jordan (Exhibit Photocopy, USPCS, Inc., 1988, p. 66).
4. *Silent Precancels: a Catalog of Lines, Bars, & Designs on 19th and 20th Century Stamps Used Postally in the United States*, by David W. Smith (PSS 769.568 Smi, 1995).
5. *Postal History and usage of 1907 and Earlier Precancels*, by Charles C. Souder.
6. *The 3¢ Stamp of the United States 1851-1857 Issue*, by Carroll Chase, Quarterman Publications, Inc., Revised 1975.

