

AN EARLY BURLINGTON POSTMARKED COVER

By Ed & Jean Siskin

Burlington, New Jersey was founded by two Quaker groups in 1677, five years earlier than Philadelphia. It was a planned community and the original draft map of the town prepared in 1678, contains many of the same street names that exist today. In 1681, when New Jersey was divided into two providences, East Jersey and West Jersey, Burlington was named the Capital of West Jersey. As Capital, it became a significant port city. Sometime shortly thereafter, a post office must have been established to receive and distribute incoming mail. The exact date is uncertain. In 1693, Andrew Hamilton functioning as Postmaster General under the Neale patent, identified two post offices in New Jersey, Burlington and Amboy. This identification in 1693, is often considered the establishment date of these two post offices, although almost certainly they had existed earlier.

From 1693 until 1776, there are only a few instances of official recognition of a post office in Burlington. The only recognitions we have been able to find are mentions in the Queen Anne Act of 1710, which established British responsibility for a postal system in the American colonies, and in the rate charts of 1764, 1766, and 1775. There are also newspaper references to a Burlington post office in 1743 and 1754, but no other official recognition of this post office's existence has been found.

Until 1754, the Burlington post office apparently was fairly active since it was directly part of the path for letters traveling between Philadelphia and New York. In 1754, Benjamin Franklin, who had become co-Deputy Postmaster General in October 1753, rerouted the Philadelphia-New York mail to travel via Trenton rather than Burlington, which substantially reduced Burlington's postal importance. The reason for this change was that the Burlington route required five ferry crossings, while the Trenton route could make do with two. Reducing the number of ferry crossings was crucial since each ferry crossing represented a potential for a significant delay to the mail. Ferries were required by law to carry mail for free, therefore they tended to wait until a crossing was to be made for a paying customer before taking the mail across.

Burlington's post office continued to function until about November 1776. At that time, the depredations of the British army chasing General Washington's rebels across New Jersey resulted in the collapse of the postal system in New Jersey. Apparently, the Burlington post office was not reopened until October 18, 1797 with the appointment of Thomas Douglass as its first postmaster under the new United States Post Office.

There are few covers recorded which traveled through the Burlington post office during the Colonial period. The earliest dated September 25, 1699, traveled from Burlington to The Falls (Trenton). This cover, shown in *Figure 1*, was sold in our collection in 2006. That cover and other early covers have no town post mark. Our records had indicated that the earliest Burlington postmark was dated August 1774. That cover was sold in Richard Frajola's Auction Number 26.

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Fig. 1: Cover sent from Burlington to The Falls (Trenton) datelined September 25, 1699. It has no town marking.

Ex Siskin Collection

Chris Records has brought to the Society's attention a new find. This cover is shown in *Figure 2*. The cover has a "Burl^{ton}" townmark, a 2 pennyweight rate (the correct rate from Burlington to New York) and a July 15 Franklin Mark. The cover is endorsed by Lawrence Sweeny, a New York attorney to whom the letter had been shown. The cover contains a dateline of July 7, 1767, shown in *Figure 3*.



Courtesy Chris Records

Fig. 2: Newly discovered cover datelined July 7, 1767, showing a town marking of Burl^{ton} and rate of 2 pennyweight (see overlaid enlargement of townmark).



Courtesy Chris Records

Fig. 3: Showing dateline of July 7, 1767.

This cover is now established as the earliest documented Burlington postmark.

The content is a letter from James Kinsey (1731-1803) to a client in New York. At this time Kinsey was a prominent attorney in Burlington who had succeeded his father John Kinsey Jr. and a brother John Kinsey III as chief counsel to the West Jersey Proprietors. Later, James Kinsey would be a delegate to the Continental Congress (1774-1775) and would become Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court (1789-1803). The addressee, William Bayard (1727-1804), was a New York City merchant. He was a member of the Stamp Act Congress in 1765. During the Revolutionary War, he sided with the Loyalists and raised a provincial regiment for the British Army. His lands were confiscated and he died in England in 1804.

The contents, provided below, concern the efforts to discourage people from stealing timber from lands possibly owned by the West and East Jersey Proprietors.

Note: Transcribing this letter proved to be a real challenge, but hopefully the authors with significant help of Jean and Bill Walton rose to the occasion.

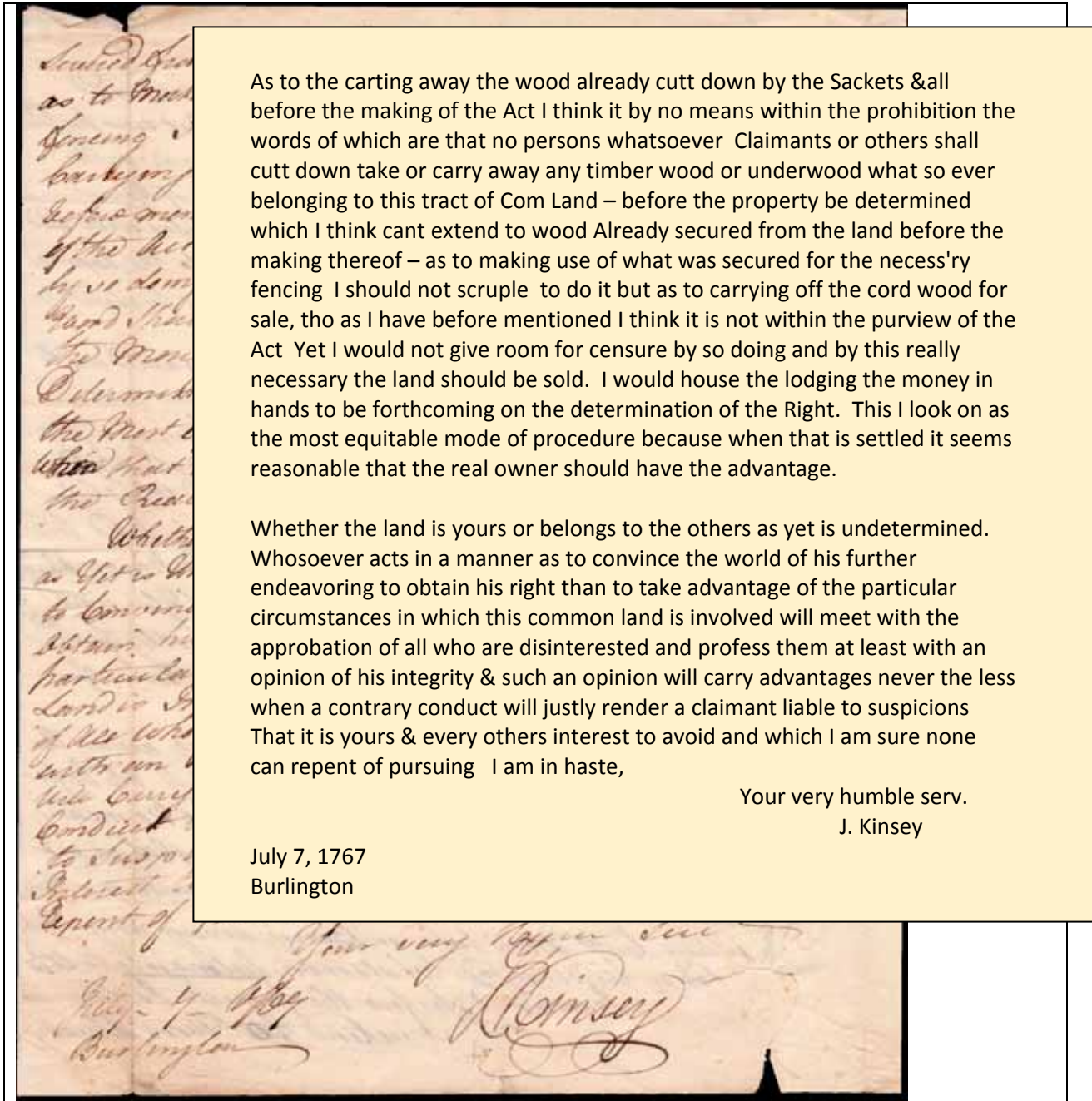
Dear Sir

I just recd yours of 29 instant and in answer thereto inform you that the act now passed is only a continuation of the former law made in the Yr 1765 – 5 GEO 3 with which Mr. Stevens or many of your acquaintance at New York can furnish you with and render it unnecessary for me to put you to the expense of a Copy from the Clerk of Assy of whom at present it is only to be had.

I am glad you have enabled me to contradict an assertion that was current with us at the time of the Bills passing the House of Assy that there was many thousands of cord destroyed since the expiration of the last Act and that you was amongst the number of those who had been allow continuing that practice and it was observed by some of the house that you acted as if you were conscious of your claim & being unjustly founded in so doing I think it best not to leave room for observations of this kind.

By the time you receive this Mr. Parker probably will have the copies of the Law to

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This cover was found amongst a number of old papers and material contemporary to this period which is now in Chris's hands. Anyone wishing to contact him may do so at therecords5@gmail.com. A nice find!

NEW JERSEY'S STAMPLESS MAIL: COUNTY POSTMARKS

By Robert G. Rose

Only three handstamped town postmarks that include the county name have been reported on mail posted during the stampless period that ended in 1855.¹ These county postmarks are from Greensburg in Mercer County, Newton in Sussex County and Middletown Point in Monmouth County.

The Greensburg post office was established on January 5, 1854. Its name was changed to Wilbutha on April 16, 1883. Coles records fewer than 10 covers with this marking. However, the author has seen only two examples in the last 35 years. Illustrated below in *Figure 1* is a cover to Schuylerville, in Saratoga County, New York with a PAID 3 in a circle.² Though undated, the second cover known to the author contained a letter dated September 9, 1855,³ at the end of the domestic stampless mail period. Thus, the use of this postmark would have been restricted to little more than a year and a half.



Fig.1: Prepaid single letter rate not over 3,000 miles.

The Greensburg postmark is most probably a handstamp attributed to Edmond S. Zevely. He was a significant supplier of wooden postmarks to those post offices which failed to meet the \$200 minimum revenue required for government furnished handstamps.⁴ Below is a cut from a Zevely advertizing circular that was mailed to small post offices which included the same town and county design as used in the Greensburg postmark with its paid marking.⁵



Fig. 2: Zevely county postmark on 1850's advertizing circular.

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Newton, in Sussex County, used a three-line handstamp in red from 1824 to 1827.⁶ Coles states that the “strikes are all poor” as evidenced on the cover below.⁷ Fewer than ten examples have been recorded.⁸



Fig. 3: Ten Cents single letter rate, unpaid, 30 to 80 miles, on April 7, 1824 folded letter from Newton to New York City.

The third county postmark, and perhaps the most interesting of New Jersey’s county postmarks, are those from Middletown Point in Monmouth County. The first use of this handstamp was in 1846. Illustrated below in *Figure 4* is the postmark in red with the “1846” date struck lightly at the bottom of the handstamp.



Fig. 4: Ten Cents single letter rate over 300 miles to Chicago with “1846” in red postmark and matching “Paid” and “X” rate marking.

In 1847, the year date was removed from the handstamp. Illustrated below in *Figure 5* is the only recorded cover of the red handstamp without the year date.⁹ This folded letter was postmarked on August 26th and is marked “*FREE*” in red italics to the postmaster in Sharon Springs, New York. Coles records a single copy of the postmark with the 1846 crossed out and a manuscript “1847” written in, but the author had never seen this cover.¹⁰



Fig. 5: Red postmark used in 1847 with year date removed and matching “FREE” to postmaster in Sharon Springs, New York.

From 1848 to 1854, this handstamp postmark was used in black, without a year date.¹¹ Below in *Figure 6* is an 1848 folded letter dated March 15 with a black postmark and matching “Free” and the postmaster’s frank “W.C. Little P.M.”



Fig. 6: Black postmark used in 1848 without year date in handstamp and matching “FREE” with postmaster’s frank to Newark.

The most unusual of the Middletown Point/Monmouth County markings, is the only recorded copy of a printed postmark illustrated below in *Figure 7*.¹² The 1846 year date has been altered with a manuscript “7” to indicate its September 29, 1847 usage. The cover is marked with a printed “PAID—2 Cts.” and “PRINTED CIRCULAR.” Because the postal rate was increased on July 1, 1847 from two to three cents for a one-page, prepaid circular, the postal rate was altered with the “2” inked over in manuscript to read “3 Cts.”¹³

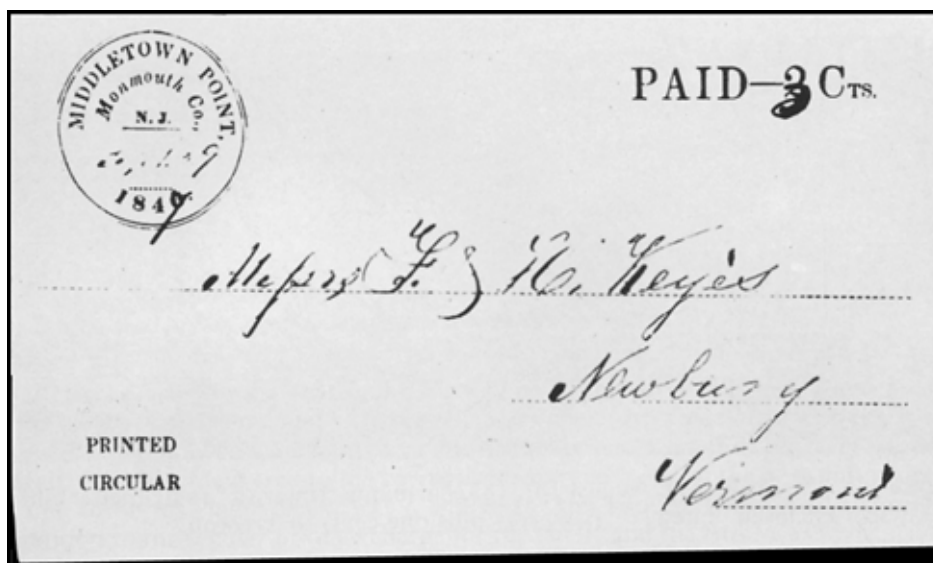


Fig. 7: Printed postmark with 1846 year date altered to reflect 1847 usage and altered rate marking for printed circular mail to indicate one cent increase from two to three cents.

ENDNOTES:

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- ¹ William C. Coles, Jr., *The Postal Markings of New Jersey Stampless Covers* (The Collectors Club of Chicago, 1983) p. 63 (hereinafter "*Coles Book*").
- ² *Coles Book*, Figure 91, Robert G. Kaufmann, The William C. Coles, Jr. Collection, Sale 33, March 8, 1984, lot 771; Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc., Brad Arch Collection, June 27-29, 2000, Sale 825, lot 738.
- ³ Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc., Brad Arch Collection, June 27-29, 2000, Sale 825, lot 739.
- ⁴ *Coles Book*, pp. 7-8 (Greensburg not listed as qualified for government handstamp for the year ending June 30, 1853); Scott R. Trepel, editor, *U.S. Postmarks and Cancellations*, The Philatelic Foundation Seminar Series, Textbook, No. 3, Frank Mandel, "*The Development of Handstamped Markings in the United States to 1900*" (The Philatelic Foundation, 1992) pp. 14, 20-21.
- ⁵ Frank Mandel, *ibid.*, p. 20; James W. Milgram, *E.S. Zevely Makes Postmasters' Handstamps*, *The Chronicle of the U.S Classics Postal Issues*, No. 58, May 2006, pp. 109, 117.
- ⁶ *Coles Book*, p. 63.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ Donald A. Chafetz, *The Postal Marking of New Jersey Stampless Covers: An Update* (New Jersey Postal History Society, 2004) p. 18.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14; William A. Fox Auctions, Inc., December 16, 1980, lot 59; Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc., Brad Arch Collection, June 27-29, 2000, Sale 825, lot 752.
- ¹⁰ *Coles Book*, p. 210.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.* Although frequently described as "scarce," this postmark in black is seen often, many from the Samuel Maris correspondence, New Jersey's state treasurer at the time. The Brad Arch auction sale included over 16 covers with this marking, including a large lot (lot 753) that included a dozen covers.
- ¹² *Coles Book*, Figure 24, p. 89; Samuel Paige Auction, December 7, 1963, lot 63, Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc. Hugh J. Baker Collection, May 5, 1970, Sale 374, lot 15; Robert G. Kaufmann, Sale 42, November 22, 1985, lot 1485.
- ¹³ James W. Milgram, *County and Postmaster Named Postal Devices 1792-1869*, *The Chronicle of the U.S Classics Postal Issues*, No. 43, August 1991, pp. 166, 167.

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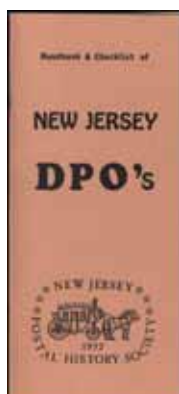
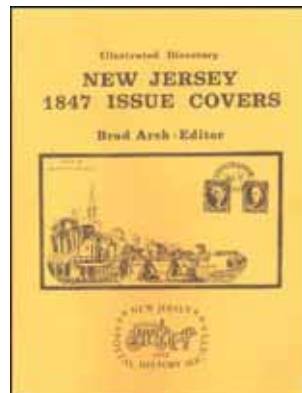
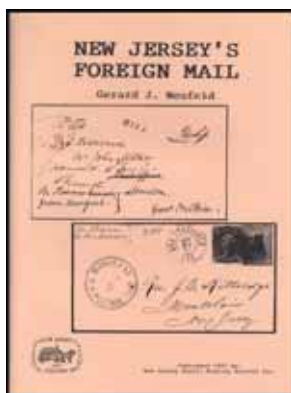
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Includes information of early postal legislation, Revolutionary and Civil War covers, and postmaster lists from the stampless era (1789-57), and for various NJ counties which have been researched, of interest to postal historians and genealogists as well.

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