

NEW JERSEY'S NEGATIVE LETTERED STAMPLESS POSTMARKS

Robert G. Rose

During the period that domestic stampless mail was permitted ending in 1855, two New Jersey post offices employed negative lettered handstamped postmarks. As a branch of postal history known as “marcophily,” these markings are avidly collected for their eye-catching appearance.



Fig. 1: Haddonfield negative cancel, in use 1840-1853.



Fig. 2: Lambertville negative cancel, in use 1835-1841.

Haddonfield used its negative postmark from 1840 until 1853, including a few covers used with the 3 cent 1851 Issue. William C. Coles, Jr., writing in *The Postal Markings of New Jersey Stampless Covers*,¹ described this postmark as “one of the most sought after circular strikes, not only in New Jersey but of all stampless covers.”²



Fig. 3: Single letter rate 30-80 miles on 1841 cover to Salem, paid by sender.



Fig. 4: Single letter rate 80-150 miles on 1842 cover to Baltimore, sent unpaid.

Lambertville was the second of the New Jersey towns to use a negative lettered postmark, from 1835 to 1841. Although Coles recorded “not over five” covers with this handstamp,³ auction sales in the years following publication of his study record a few additional examples.



Fig. 5: Single letter rate 30-80 miles on 1841 cover to Philadelphia, sent paid.

Lambertville has the further distinction of having used a negative letter handstamped marking for mail sent both “FREE” and “PAID.” Only two covers with each of these markings have been recorded. The use of the franking privilege was often abused as seen in the cover

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below in which Lambertville postmaster John Murray sends a letter with both a manuscript and handstamped negative “FREE” marking to his son Thomas Murray, who was a student attending Brown University. A second cover with the “FREE” negative handstamp is illustrated in the *Coles Book*,⁴ on an 1839 cover to Senator Southard at Jersey City.



Fig. 6: Negative “FREE” handstamp on 1839 cover to Providence, Rhode Island.



Fig. 7: Negative “PAID” handstamp, single letter rate not over 30 miles on 1840 cover to Allentown, New Jersey.

A second cover with the “PAID” negative handstamp is recorded on a March 6, 1840 cover to Flemington.

ENDNOTES:

¹ William C. Coles, Jr., *The Postal Markings of New Jersey Stampless Covers* (The Collectors Club of Chicago 1983).

² *Ibid.* at p.43.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* at p.46, Figure 64.