

N.J. LOCAL POSTS: Bayonne City Dispatch

By Larry Lyons

This is the third of a series of articles on New Jersey's local stamps. Local Posts were established as early as the 1840's by enterprising private individuals and companies who carried letters within city limits – including to and from Post Offices. They flourished for a number of years until they were finally outlawed by the government. The author, Larry Lyons, is a noted authority on United States local stamps, and is the editor-in-chief of "The Penny Post," the prize winning journal of The Carriers and Locals Society. We appreciate his contributions.

Two fairly modern comprehensive articles have previously been written on this subject in 1989 and 2002. The first was by Robert G. Kaufmann¹ and the second was written by John D. Bowman.² The content of those articles are summarized in this article. This article will expand on the preceding articles with information gathered from a detailed census undertaken by this author.

HISTORY

The Bayonne City Dispatch was a short-lived local post which was allowed to briefly function due to a lack of carrier service at four government post offices located in Bayonne, Van Buskirk, Saltersville and Bergen Point. Bayonne City Dispatch Mail is only recorded from May 9, 1883 to May 19, 1883 and on June 14, 1883. An example of the adhesive stamp is shown in *Figure 1*.



Fig. 1: The adhesive stamp of the Bayonne City Dispatch.

In Kaufmann's article we learn that the delivery of mail from one town to another was often done by sending the mail to New York for sorting and then back again to the town post office. Therefore it often took four or five days for a letter to be delivered even though the distance was less than one mile. You could also add a day or two for carrier delivery since very few carriers were employed. At the Bergen Point Post Office, for instance, a Richard Denver was the only carrier. Local merchants were not pleased with the situation since most of their business was announced by circulars sent through the mails. Local residents in many cases had to wait a week for mail delivery and news from only a mile away. There was undoubtedly some outrage over this condition and it gave rise to the creation of a local post called the Bayonne City Dispatch. Roswald Edward Smith was the proprietor of the post and he visited Boyd's and Hussey, the large local posts in New York, for ideas on his organizing the local post in Bayonne. The short-lived, illegal upstart local posts of the 1880s were as much about providing a service

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and an attempt at some profit as about showing the government post office their shortcomings and the need for better service. Roswald Smith had to know that his activity would be quickly suppressed. The census record indicates operation over a ten-day period in May 1883 and on one day in June. *Figure 2* shows an example of a Bayonne City Dispatch cover.



Fig. 2: A May 13, 1883 cover addressed to Philip LaTourette, Esq. at 16th Street, Bergen Point, the location of the office of the Bayonne City Dispatch. Note the killer concentric circles handstamp.

If no government carrier service was available in Bayonne in 1883, Roswald Smith may have considered his operation to be legal. If no carrier service was available in a town, it appeared that a loophole in the postal laws and regulations existed. Without carrier service from the U.S. Post Office, a city's roads and streets might not be regarded as "postal routes" and therefore private companies might be able to deliver mail to and from the post office.³

BAYONNE CITY DISPATCH

This local post was announced in a company circular dated April 10, 1883 and an announcement in the *Bayonne Times* of April 5, 1883. No recorded covers of this post exist before May 9, 1883, a day on which operation may have commenced. The advertised table of postage rates for letters was as follows:

South of 28 th St.	1 cent.
South of 38 th St.	2 cents.
East of Avenue F	3 cents.
South of Division St.	2 cents.
North of Division St.	3 cents.

There was also a rate card which differed from the above with the following first two lines:

South of Twentieth Street	1 cent.
South of Thirtieth Street	2 cents.

The research indicates there is only one surviving cover with two one-cent stamps. This example is a wrapper to Chas. M. Packard, 28th Street, Hook, dated May 10, 1883. (See *Figure 3.*) The area south of 30th Street was known as Van Buskirk and was nicknamed “Hook.” It would become Constable’s Hook in 1887. It seems the rate card was applied and the rate for this letter was 2 cents. No covers with a three cent rate are recorded. This one cover with more than the one cent rate is a horizontal pair and is the only recorded pair of stamps.



Fig. 3: The only Bayonne City Dispatch cover with more than one adhesive. The double rate was for the distance to “Hook.”

ISSUES OF THE BAYONNE CITY DISPATCH

The stamp was printed in black ink on white paper and was typeset with an image of a horse-drawn stagecoach. An 1885 article states the stamps were printed in a sheet of ten. John Bowman discovered two double transfer varieties. The doubling occurs most prominently in the ornament below the stagecoach and the horizontal line to the left below the stagecoach. Most used stamps are cancelled with a purple three-ring concentric killer in which the thickness of each ring increases with distance from the center. There are two types of three-line typeset handstamps. One reads “Dispatch” at the bottom and the second reads “Dispatch PAID”. (See *Figure 4.*)

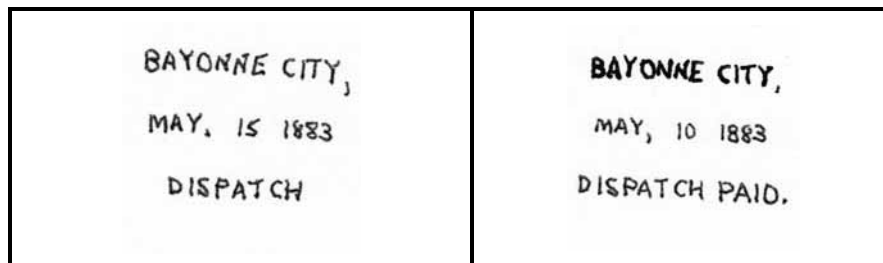


Fig. 4: The two types of Bayonne City Dispatch handstamps.

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There is a stationery item, 9LU1 entire which is handstamped with the stamp image at the upper right in blue. The *Scott Catalogue* calls the ink color purple. (See *Figure 5*.)



Fig. 5: An unused stationery entire, 9LU1, in blue, of the Bayonne City Dispatch.

Two unused examples of the postal stationery are recorded and one used example is recorded addressed to Geo. Thomas, Esq., Avenue D. Bergen Point. (See *Figure 6*.)



Fig. 6. The only recorded used example of the Bayonne City Dispatch stationery entire. Siegel (Schwartz) June 27-29, 2000, Lot 1580. Scan in black and white.

PHILATELICALLY IMPORTANT HISTORICAL FACTS

The Bayonne City Dispatch was organized to send messengers to call at residences and business houses of regular customers three times a day. The main office was on 16th Street near Avenue D with most of the business of the post being done with the Bergen Point Post Office. Mail boxes were placed in the LaTourette Hotel and other hotels. Many recorded covers are addressed to LaTourette at 16th Street which most probably was for his pick-up at the local dispatch office, or were forwarded to him. LaTourette's Hotel was owned by the family of Philip LaTourette and was located on the Kill von Kull at the southern end of Bergen Point. The hotel was a resort for New York and New Jersey society folk. The hotel was heavily damaged by fire in May 1916.

According to Elliot Perry, LaTourette and stamp dealer Dr. William Mitchell were friends. LaTourette authored many articles in Mitchell's journal and also advertised buying and selling of local posts. Two of the recorded covers are addresses to Wm. Mitchell. Harry Craft was also a friend of Dr. Mitchell and four of the Bayonne City Dispatch covers are addressed to him. The covers addressed to Philip LaTourette were written in many different hands and did not stem from the same source. I surmise from this that they were of a business nature. Some covers are addressed to Philip LaTourette, Jr. and some to Philip LaTourette, Esq.

Five of the recorded Bayonne City Dispatch covers were taken to the post office and entered the mails. About 17 different addressees are recorded on Bayonne City Dispatch covers. These observations strongly suggest that the post had a legitimate existence.

THE LYONS CENSUS

Knowing that many covers would be found addressed to the same individual it was necessary to take additional steps beyond the recording of the dates and addresses when taking the census. Over a two-day period of time 275 auction results were reviewed and next to each line I recorded a sketch of the angle of the Bayonne City Dispatch stamp on the cover with the location of the 3-ring handstamp on to the stamp. If the cover was addressed to LaTourette the letters of the addressees name in relation to the stamp was also recorded. In this manner duplication could be weeded out and new sightings could be definitely confirmed. I recorded 43 different covers. I recorded the period of use as follows:

May 9, 1883	4 examples
May 10, 1883	3 examples
May 12, 1883	4 examples
May 13, 1883	5 examples
May 14, 1883	3 examples
May 15, 1883	13 examples
May 16, 1883	4 examples
May 19, 1883	4 examples
June 14, 1883	3 examples

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From the above I concluded the EKU to be May 9, 1883. The covers span a period of about 10 days. We then have a gap of 25 days followed by three covers taken to the post office on June 14, 1883. It seems this was just a clean-up day for Roswald Smith. Undoubtedly the Bayonne City Dispatch was shut down on May 19, 1883 and no local deliveries were made after that date. It is assumed the government took action and hopefully heard the customer dissatisfaction and rectified the situation by hiring more carriers. This would legally make the post roads and streets off limits to the Bayonne City Dispatch and would force their closure.

CONCLUSION

The research and census exercise provided some additional information on the Bayonne City Dispatch. I am in agreement with John Bowman who concluded in his article that the examples of this post are probably legitimate. The covers are highly collectible and the average collector would be fortunate to have an off-cover example of the adhesive and an example on cover. An off-cover used example has a catalogue value of \$275.00 and a locally delivered cover has a value \$750.00. Special examples taken to the post office with U.S. stamps paying the postage are in the \$1,500-\$3,000 range. (See *Figure 7*.) The only recorded pair on cover previously sold in the Dick Schwartz sale of Robert Siegel, in June 2000, and reappeared in a Shreve sale of June 2002, Lot 914 where it realized \$2000. 9LU1 unused is seriously underpriced in the catalogue at \$175. There are only two recorded examples.



Fig. 7: U.S. stamps 1¢ gray blue (183) and 2¢ vermilion (206) paying the postage to New York. Siegel, November 15-16, 2006, Lot 1282.

John Bowman received information, inspiration, and feedback from postal historian Calvet Hahn for his 2002 article. For more information on this subject the reader should read the Bowman article.

ENDNOTES:

- ¹ Kaufman, Robert G., "Bayonne City Dispatch Company," *Postal History Journal*, No. 82, June 1989, page 48.
- ² Bowman, John D., "Bayonne City Dispatch," *The Penny Post*, Vol. 10, No. 4, October 2002, pages 27-36.
- ³ *Ibid*, page 34.

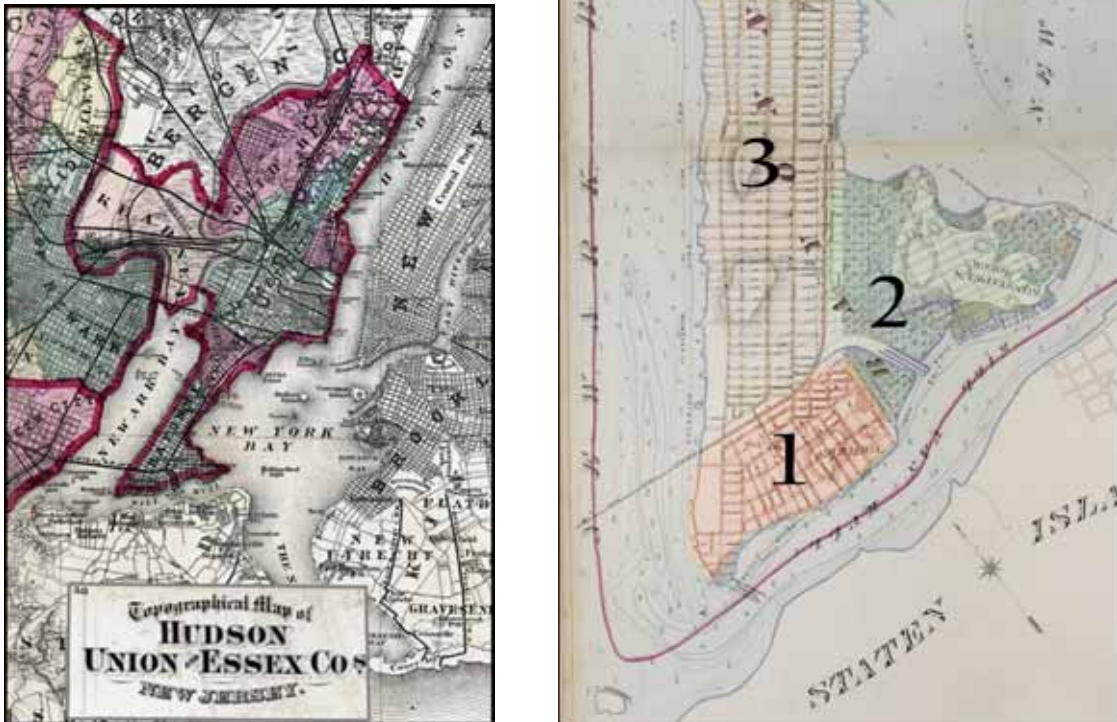


Fig. 3: At left, a map from an 1872 Atlas of Hudson, Union & Essex showing the Bayonne peninsula; at right, an 1880 map showing Bayonne enlarged with the location of the points in question: (1) Bergen Point, (2) Van Buskirk or Constable's Hook, (3) Bayonne City and (4) Saltersville.