

**MAIL SENT ABROAD FROM MORRIS COUNTY:  
Part 1**

**By Don Chafetz**

In my collection of Morris County material, I have a number of covers sent abroad. These covers present an expanded and most challenging area of study.

Before 1874, rates between the United States and European countries were set by a variety of different postal conventions.<sup>1</sup> The covers in *Figure 1* and *Figure 2* were subject to the United States – North German Union Postal Convention of October 1867.

**The United States – North German Union Postal Convention**

Mail between the United States and other countries went through exchange offices in each country. Exchange offices in the United States were established at New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago; and in the North German Union at Bremen and Hamburg. The exchange Traveling Post-Office No. 10, between Cologne and Verniers was to correspond only with New York, via England and Belgium. Bremen and Hamburg were to correspond with all of the United States offices. The international rates for single letters of 15 grams were:

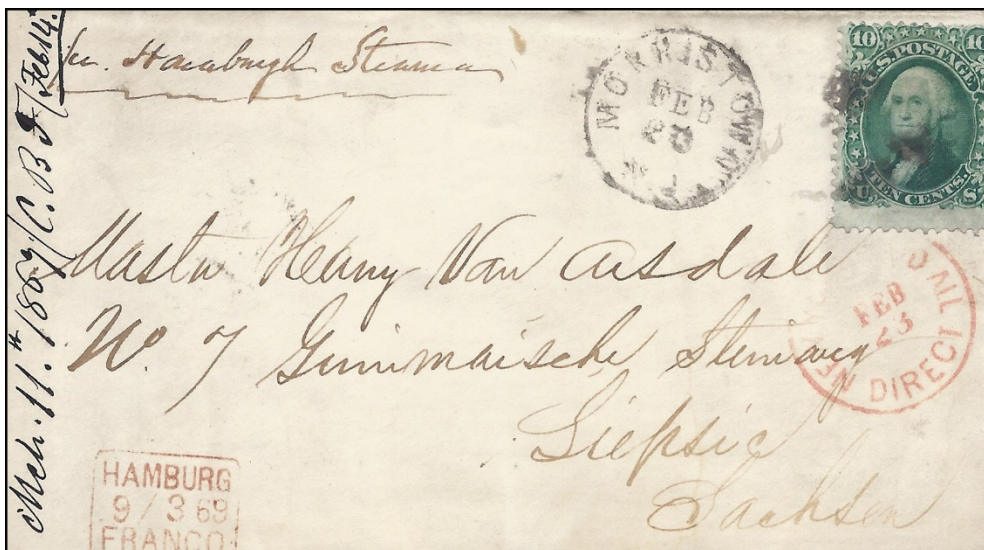
**Direct mail, between Bremen or Hamburg and the United States:** (See *Figure 1*)

- On letters from the United States, 10 cents
- On letters from Germany, 4 silbergroschen

**Closed mail, via England:** (See *Figure 2*)

- On letters from the United States, 15 cents
- On letters from Germany, 6 silbergroschen

All of the conventions, except that with the British, provided the same procedure for setting the rates on open-mail letters.



*Fig. 1: A 10¢ cover from Morrissetown, NJ to Liepsic, Saxony (Leipzig, Saxony) February 20, 1869 inscribed in the top left of the envelope: via Hamburg Steamer.*



Fig. 1a: Hamburg Exchange Office marking indicating mail went directly to Hamburg, postage paid. March 9, 1869.

Fig. 1b: Letters sent from the New York and Boston offices and sent to the offices of Bremen or Hamburg bear circular markings showing the United States exchange office, the date, PAID ALL and inscribed DIRECT.



**Prepaid Letters - New York Office to the Traveling Office, Verviers to Cologne**

Prepaid letters dispatched by the New York office to the traveling office, Verviers to Cologne, a circular marking inscribed NEW YORK PAID ALL/[ date ]/BR. TRANSIT was applied in red.



Fig. 2: A 15¢ cover from Morristown, NJ to Gottingen, North Germany, with a star cancellation. Morristown October 20, 1869 - New York October 21, 1869, British packet - Verviers Coeln Franco November 11, 1869.

Exchange Office Accounting	
Traveling PO #10 Between Verviers & Cologne	
Verviers Coeln Franco	
Closed mail via England to France	
U.S. inland	.03¢
Sea	.06
Transit	.03
French Internal	<u>.03</u>
Single rate	.15¢ <sup>2</sup>



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*Fig. 2a. Morrictown Oct. 20 cancel over red New York Paid All Oct. 21 Br. Transit, and red Verviers //Coeln/ Franco cancel Nov. 11, 1869.*

The cover in *Figure 3* to France falls under the US-France Postal Convention of 1857, in effect until 1870.



**Fig. 3: Morrictown, NJ to Paris France, star cancellation**  
 Morrictown July 29, 1869 - New York July 31, 1869 - Calais, France August 4, 1869.



**Fig. 3a**

Exchange Office Accounting  
 American Packet via England

U.S inland	.03¢
Sea	.06
Transit	.02
French Inland	.04
Single rate	.15¢

1. PD - Postage was prepaid for some part of the distance beyond the territory of the dispatching office.
2. ET-UNIS, SERV. AM. CALAIS, August 11, 1869.
3. Red New York 6 cents - prepaid letter posted in the United States, credit to France.<sup>3</sup>

The following letter to Great Britain is covered under the US-United Kingdom Postal Convention of November 1868:

*The new postal convention concluded with the United Kingdom, which goes into operation January 1, 1869, establishes the following rates of international postage, viz:*

*1. Letters—Twelve cents per single rate of 15 grammes (half ounce) in the United States, and sixpence (12 cents) in the United Kingdom, prepayment optional. A fine of five cents in the United States, and twopence (4 cents) in the United Kingdom will, however, be levied and collected in addition to the deficient postage on each unpaid or insufficiently prepaid letter received by one country from the other.*<sup>4</sup>



**Fig. 4: Morristown December 3, 1869 to London, England New York (illegible) - backstamped London December 13, 1869 – London B.F. Stevens, United States Dispatch Agent handstamp, December 13, 1869.**

Addressed to Mrs. Radford or Admiral Radford  
Care of B. F. Stevens, U.S. Dispatch Agent, London\*  
Marked Postage Paid  
Postage as of January 1869 - 12¢

\*B. F. Stevens was US dispatch agent at London and had charge of the mail intended for the vessels of the United States navy serving in Atlantic or European stations.<sup>5</sup>

The cover above was written to the Radford family when Rear Admiral William Radford had been assigned the command of the European Squadron.



**Fig. 5: Rear Admiral William Radford (1808-1890). The portrait at left was done when he was in command of the European Squadron (c. 1870).**

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Rear Admiral William Radford (1808-1890), appointed as midshipman in 1825, distinguished himself as a lieutenant in 1847, when he and a band of volunteers captured the Mexican vessel *Malek Adel* in Mazatlan, Mexico during the Mexican-American War. He rose steadily through the ranks, becoming a commander in 1855, and was given command of the ironclad frigate USS *New Ironsides* in July of 1864 as a commodore of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. Radford again distinguished himself during the bombardment of Fort Fisher on Dec. 24, 1864. Admiral David D. Porter wrote of him: "... His vessel did more execution than any other in the fleet, and I had so much confidence in the accuracy of his fire that even when our troops were on the parapet he was directed to clear the traverses of the enemy in advance of them. This he did most effectually, and but for this the victory might not have been ours." He was promoted to rear admiral in 1866 and commanded the European Squadron from 1869 to 1870.

Radford married Mary "Minnie" Elizabeth Lovell [April 12, 1829 – October 27, 1903 (aged 74)] in St. Peter's Church, Morristown, New Jersey November 3, 1848. The ceremony was overcast by the death of brother-in-law Stephen Kearny a few days before. The Radfords resided on Mount Kemble Avenue for almost twenty years in a house previously owned by John Doughty.<sup>6</sup> All but one of their 7 children were born in Morristown.



*Fig. 6: Morristown home of the Radfords.*<sup>7</sup>

It was not until the establishment of the General Postal Union in 1874 (which became the Universal Postal Union in 1878) that simplified regulations were established between the various countries of Europe and elsewhere with the US.

### ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> U.S. postal conventions are available on the USPS side at <http://www.usps.com/stamps-covers/the-foreign-mails/the-postal-conventions/>

<sup>2</sup> Hargest pp. 69 – 77, 150 - 151

<sup>3</sup> Hargest pp. 69 - 77

<sup>4</sup> Camp, David N., Ed, *American Year-Book & National Register for 1869*, Hartford, O.D. Case & Company, 1869.

<sup>5</sup> ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin\\_Franklin\\_Stevens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Franklin_Stevens))

<sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Radford](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Radford)

<sup>7</sup> A post card view in the collection of The Morristown & Morris Township Public Library, The North Jersey History & Genealogy Center, <http://cdm15387.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15387coll9/id/126>.