

NJPH

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NEW JERSEY POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

New Jersey State Government Ornate Envelopes!



Beginning around 1862, The State of New Jersey began printing stationery for itself, using several interesting overall designs. See story below.

THE NEW JERSEY GOVERNMENT'S ORNATE ENVELOPES

By Ed & Jean Siskin

In the late 1830s, chromolithography was developed in Germany. It provided a very inexpensive way to print ornate scenes in multiple colors. Within twenty years, the use of this technique had become widespread throughout the United States. Thus by the start of the Civil War it became economically feasible to produce inexpensive but attractive ornate envelopes. The most prominent examples of chromolithography were the millions of patriotic envelopes of widely varying designs produced during the war.

Also produced were many ornate advertising and general purpose envelopes. Sometime during this period, the government of the State of New Jersey began to use an attractive overall design for envelopes used in general correspondence. As is to be expected, these envelopes were used from Trenton. Determining when their use began is turning out to be problematical. The Trenton Post Office apparently didn't clean their postmarking devices very well and tended to use dating type that was quite worn. Determining the date a cover was postmarked can be challenging, as you will soon see. We did make high resolution scans of each postmark to aid in date evaluations.

It is probable that the New Jersey government's use of these ornate envelopes started in 1863. More conventional envelopes, such as shown in *Figure 1*, are known used in early 1863.

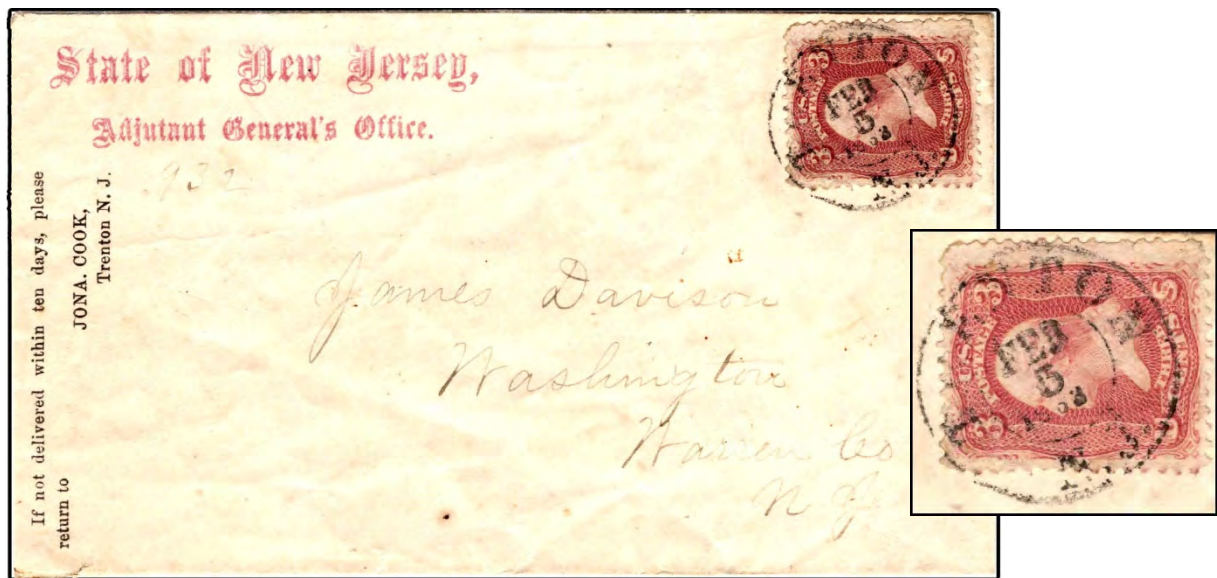


Fig 1: State of New Jersey, for the Adjutant General's Office, Official Business –Conventional style envelope dated Feb. 3? 5? 1863. (See inset Fig. 1a.) Used to Washington, Warren County, N.J.

Figure 2 shows a cover we believe was postmarked December 30, 1863. Take a look at *Figure 2a* to see what you think.



Fig. 2a.

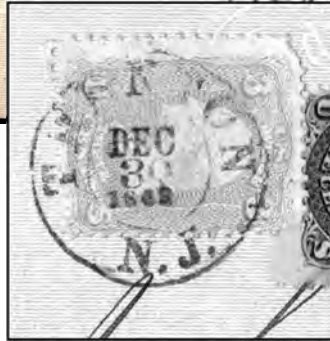


Fig. 2: State of New Jersey, for the Adjutant General's Office, Official Business – Appears to be dated Dec 30, 1863. See Fig. 2a, grayscale inset of example on the red stamp above.

Figures 3 through 7 show additional examples used during the following five years. Figures 8 through 10 show later designs, still ornate but not overall designs.



Fig. 3a.

Fig. 3: For the State of New Jersey, depicting a representation of the State seal. Appears to be dated Jun 1864 (see Fig. 3a, insert). At right in Fig. 3b is the printer's byline, from the lower left corner of the envelope, which reads J.W. Orr, Manuf. N.Y.



Fig. 3b.

Fig. 4a.



Fig. 4b:



Fig. 4: State seal envelope used April 8, 1864. Printer byline partially obliterated. See Figs. 4a (showing the cancel) and 4b (showing the printer's byline, probably Murphy & Bechtel, Trenton, NJ).



Fig. 5, 5a, & 5b.



Fig. 5: State of New Jersey, for the Adjutant General's Office, Official Business. Straight text replaced curved text. Date indistinct; may be Dec 18, 1864. See insets 5a (cancel date) and 5b: the printer's byline, J.W. Orr Manuf.[urers]. N.Y.



Fig. 6: State of New Jersey, prepared for the Executive Department. Indecipherable date. Franked with Scott No. 73 which was predominantly in use from 1863 to 1868



Fig. 7a.

Fig. 7: State of New Jersey, prepared for the Department of Public Instruction, cancelled November 11, 1868. Year confirmed by docketing. Franked with Scott No. 94 which was issued in 1868. Envelope printed in Trenton, NJ. See byline in fig. 7a, of Murphy & Bechtel, Trenton, N.J.



Fig. 8: Created for the State of New Jersey Department of State, dated Feb. 6, 1874. Year confirmed by dated enclosure. See Fig. 8a. Franked with Scott No. 163 which was issued in 1873.

Fig 8a.

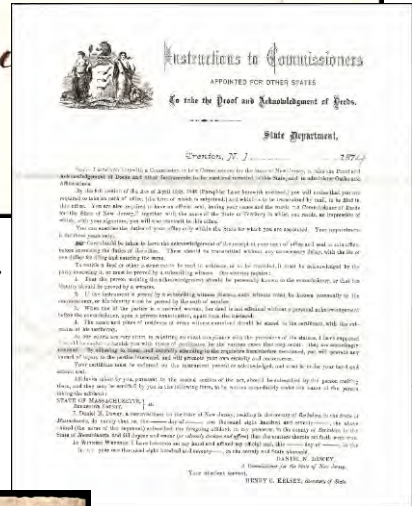


Fig. 9.

Fig. 9a: Backstamp, showing 1884 date.



Fig. 9: State of New Jersey, prepared for the Office of Clerk of Mercer County, used Mar. 22, 1884. Year confirmed by backstamp (Fig. 9a, shown at right.)



Fig. 10: Issued for the State of New Jersey Assembly Chamber. Appears to be dated April 7, 1901. See Fig. 10a. Probably franked with Scott No.267, which was predominantly in use from 1896 to 1902. Has RPO postmark, which may be the New Hope & Phila. R.P.O.

Fig. 10a.

Finally, we come to the question of who printed these ornate envelopes. Several envelopes have what appear to be imprints but they are illegible to the untrained eye. Jean Walton reached out to member Joseph Felcone who is an expert in early New Jersey printing. His very informative response follows:

By the mid-19th Century, large printing jobs had largely moved from local hand presses to big-city printing houses. By the 1870s New Jersey would get some bigger commercial printing firms, in Trenton, Newark and Jersey City, but in the 1860s New Jersey couldn't quite compete with the big printing houses in New York, Philadelphia and Boston, for very large quantities and low prices. Large advertising campaigns such as patent medicine promotions were largely handled by the big commercial printing plants. Patriotic envelopes, pictorial lettersheets, songsheets and similar material undoubtedly fell into the same category.

One of the biggest commercial engraving plants in New York at this time was J. W. Orr & Co. (John William Orr, 1815–1887). Orr started life as a wood engraver and his firm would ultimately become one of the country's leading book and magazine illustrators. If you look at the imprint beneath the illustrations in thousands of publications of the period you'll see "J. W. Orr & Co." or some variation thereof. The imprint on the Johnson envelope, *Figure 5*, reads "J. W. Orr Manuf. N. Y."

The imprint on the McDonald envelope, *Figure 7*, reads "Murphy & Bechtel Trenton N.J." Murphy and Bechtel (John L. Murphy, 1828–1900, and Charles Bechtel, 1827–1908). They were the printers of the State Gazette and the leading printing house in Trenton at the time. By 1870 they were advertising as "steam book and job printers," and they became (particularly under John L.

Murphy after Charles Bechtel retired about 1875) Trenton's first large commercial printing house. Murphy & Bechtel, and later John L. Murphy, did much of the state's printing. For example they printed the State's Legislative Manual for many years.

Interestingly, we have seen very few examples of such ornate covers from other Governmental agencies. The United States Congress and the US State Department used some as did the Pennsylvania Legislature. Other than these, we are unaware of other Governmental examples and would be eager to learn what exist.

Insofar as we can determine, the scope of the usage of these envelopes has never been studied, and we would be very interested in hearing what additional examples members of the society may have.

Please contact us at jeananded@comcast.net if you can share further information on these interesting envelopes.

[Thanks to Joseph Felcone, mentioned above, for his help, and Frank Scheer and Nancy Clark, for their help on the R.P.O. cancel.]

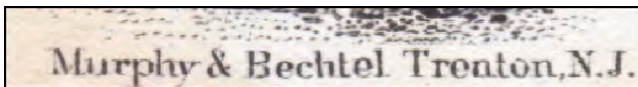


Fig. 11: Bank draft for First National Bank, Trenton in 1875 (with 2¢ imprinted revenue stamp) clearly showing the Murphy & Bechtel, Trenton, N.J. printer's imprint at lower left.