

# Two Philadelphia Eagle Carrier Cancellation Discoveries, New LRD, and a New Theory

By  
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Two new discoveries of Philadelphia cancellations of the Eagle carrier stamp have prompted a general review of the Federal carrier stamps. **Several opinions, in bold type**, are offered for the philatelic community to consider, including a new and plausible explanation for the somewhat different carrier postal history of Philadelphia in the early 1850's.

## Background

### 1851 General Issue

The Act of 1851, effective July 1, introduced several postal changes, including the demonetization of the 1847 general issue adhesive stamps, the introduction of new rates with respective denominational stamps for intercity mail, and for the first time adhesives issued specifically for intercity carrier transmittal of letters. In early October 1851 the blue "Franklin Carrier" adhesive inscribed "CARRIERS" at top and "STAMP" at bottom was printed in Philadelphia by Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co, **Figure 1**. On October 11, 1851 a large number, 250,000, was shipped to New York, but somehow not received until April 15, 1852,<sup>1</sup> of which only 3 have survived on cover. On the same day 50,000 were sent to New Orleans, of which only 1 has survived on cover. Ten days later, on October 21, 1851, the nearby Philadelphia Post Office received a small amount, 10,000,<sup>2</sup> 14 of which have survived on cover. Even before this nondenominational issue was released, however, the great similarity and confusion with the recently issued blue 1851 one cent stamp, which also depicted the likeness of Ben Franklin facing the opposite direction, precluded it's viability as astutely observed by John C. Montgomery of Philadelphia.<sup>3</sup>

More than sixty years later in a pamphlet by Joseph Steinmetz of Philadelphia for his exhibit at the 1913 International Stamp Exhibition in New York, entitled *Steinmetz Miscellany*, was available a considerable amount of 1851 correspondence between the Postmaster General and the contract printer including: "21<sup>st</sup> October, 1851. Hon. N.K. Hall, Postmaster General, orders by telegram from Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co., ten thousand of General Montgomery's eagle design."<sup>4</sup> This order, however, was filled with Franklin carrier stamps since the Eagle carrier stamps were not yet available.

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<sup>1</sup> Perry, Elliot, *The Philatelist*, October 1973, page 5.

<sup>2</sup> Perry, Elliot, "The Franklin Carrier," *Collectors Club Philatelist*, Vol. IX, No. 1, January 1930, Pages 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> Perry, Elliot, "The Carrier Stamps of the United States; Philadelphia," *Chronicle* 117, Vol. 35, No. 117, February 1983, pages 28-29.

<sup>4</sup> Perry, Elliot, *The Philatelist*, November 1973, page 37.

A new stamp with the image of an Eagle was being designed from a stock die used by Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. for banknotes before and after October 1851. Surrounding the image was an oval inscribed "U.S.P.O. DESPATCH - PRE-PAID ONE CENT," a face different stamp retaining the blue color selected for the one cent denomination. The designer of the Franklin carrier and probably the Eagle carrier stamp was E. Pitcher.<sup>5</sup> The plate of Eagle carrier stamps was comprised of two panes of 100 each arranged 10 by 10 shown in **Figure 2**. The transfer roll contained four reliefs with entries from left to right in a horizontal row.<sup>6</sup>

One million of the Eagle Carrier stamps were ordered on October 10, 1851,<sup>7</sup> but may not have been printed until mid November 1851. No record exists whether the entire order was indeed printed. Since no varieties of ink or paper have been identified, it is unlikely that additional printings occurred. Since the Franklin and Eagle carrier stamps were part of the Federal 1851 general issue, they could be ordered by a postmaster from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Assistant Postmaster General, who endorsed and forwarded the order to the printer. Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co., however, charged the postmaster, who paid with funds derived from the carrier fees. Since the carrier department paid for the stamps rather than the post office, no numerical records were required. November 17, 1851 is the only recorded delivery date of 20,000 Eagle carrier stamps to the nearby Philadelphia Post Office. Washington DC may have received a shipment in July 1853, as its earliest recorded example was August 16, 1853 and latest in May of 1863.<sup>8</sup> Cincinnati made occasional requests for a small number of stamps which were recorded from 1854 to 1861.<sup>9</sup> One Eagle carrier adhesive is tied by a Cleveland cds on a locally addressed cover. Kensington, Pa. was located in Philadelphia County and may have used as many Eagle carriers as any other city outside of Philadelphia. The Eagle Carrier has surprisingly not been found on any genuine covers internally within or from New York.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Philadelphia Carrier Department**

In 1753 Benjamin Franklin established a penny post in Philadelphia<sup>11</sup> to deliver inbound mail to a street address (one penny equaled two cents). The Act of July 2, 1836 empowered the Postmaster General to establish a system of bonded letter carriers who could charge a fee up to two cents for the delivery of inbound letters. The Act of 1845 greatly reduced intercity postal rates but prohibited the Independent Mails from charging for intercity transportation of letters. Private enterprise subsequently redirected its efforts to intercity delivery of letters.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Sol, Atmann, "U.S. Stamp Designers and Engravers," *Essay Proof Journal*, 29:17, 1947.

<sup>6</sup> Perry, Elliot, *The Philatelist*, December 1973, page 68.

<sup>7</sup> Perry, Elliot, *The Philatelist*, November 1973, page 38.

<sup>8</sup> Johnstone, Donald B., "Franklin and Eagle Carrier Stamps," *Chronicle* 125, Vol. 37, No.1, February 1985, page 24.

<sup>9</sup> Perry, Elliot, *The Philatelist*, November 1973, page 37.

<sup>10</sup> Perry, Elliot, *The Philatelist*, November 1973, page 35.

<sup>11</sup> Roth, Steven M., "Detecting Carrier Serviced Covers In The Fee Paid Period: A Primer," *The Chronicle*, Vol. 47, No. 4, November 1995, page 230.

<sup>12</sup> Morris, Vernon R., Jr., MD., "What is a 'Drop Letter and a 'Drop Dead Letter'?", *Chronicle* 200, Vol. 55, No. 3, November 2003, page 268.



**Figure 1. The blue Franklin carrier adhesive, L01, tied by a red star on a folded letter dated January 26, 1852 locally delivered in Philadelphia.**



**Figure 2. A full pane of 100 of the Eagle carrier stamps, L02, with the imprint of Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. at the bottom.**

Within four years the carrier departments of the largest cities were struggling due to energetic private posts. The greatest disparity was in Philadelphia due to the ambitious D.O.Blood & Co., not to mention numerous other pledging companies.

The Post Office department, however, did not respond until early 1849. Postmaster General Cave Johnson had the audacity to reduce the carrier fees by 50% to one cent for either collection or delivery because “many of the letter carriers in the cities received large sums.”<sup>13</sup> The carrier departments in Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, Boston, St. Louis, Cincinnati and Charleston responded by issuing their own carrier department adhesive stamps. By 1851 the private posts reduced their charges down toward one cent. Postmaster General Hall used his discretionary power to manipulate carrier fees further. To undercut the private posts for the collection of outbound mail, the carrier service was astonishingly declared free. Since delivery of inbound mail to a street address was a Post Office monopoly, the fee was increased back to its historical two cents. City mail remained at one cent. **The Eagle carrier stamp was therefore convenient and competitive for intercity mail, but was not necessary for letters outbound “To the Mails”.**<sup>14</sup> **“From the Mails” was not practical for several reasons.** Two cents was clearly objectionable, especially with intercity rates to 3000 miles for just three cents. Except for Cincinnati no inbound letters exist bearing two Federal carrier stamps for door delivery.<sup>15</sup> <sup>16</sup> **Federal carrier prepayment with stamps for door delivery was a concept ahead of it’s time.** In the early 1850’s ninety percent of intercity mail was still sent collect. At the destination address, the carrier collected the postage in addition to his fee. No additional documentation on the cover was necessary. If the intercity letter was sent prepaid, the carrier collected his own fee. The sender would have been from a different town and generally did not have access to the specific carrier department stamps of the destination city. In concept, a Federal issue might have solved this problem. Unfortunately, the carrier department’s accounting was separate from the Post Office. Federal carrier stamps were available at only a few post offices, and were purchased by the carrier departments for service restricted to that city. Not until the fee system was abolished on June 30, 1863 was “From the Mails” service free.

The Federal carrier stamps were not eligible for intercity mail, unlike the United States Despatch stamps used on some New York City outbound letters between 1843 to 1845,<sup>17</sup> or the one cent 1851 general issue stamp (*Scott Catalogue* #5 through #9), see **Figure 3**. As mentioned previously no Eagle carrier stamps have been identified on New York covers. The New York carriers respected free collection service “To the Mails,” as reported in the New York Herald on August 23, 1851.<sup>18</sup> They understandably may not have been very happy, and apparently did not

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<sup>13</sup> Roth, Steven M., “Why Were Letter Carrier Fees Reduced in 1849?”, *The Penny Post*, Vol. 4, No. 4, October 1994, page 32.

<sup>14</sup> Roth, Steven M. “Tabulation of Carrier Fees in Philadelphia During the Fee Paid Period,” *The Penny Post*, Vol. 4, No. 4, October 1994, page 35.

<sup>15</sup> Siegel Auction Galleries, Sale 791, June 25, 1997, Lot 22, Meyersburg.

<sup>16</sup> Siegel Auction Galleries, Sale 853, December 19, 2002, Lot 2480, Johnstone.

<sup>17</sup> Siegel Auction Galleries, Sale 868, November 14, 2003, Lot 2015, Gordon N. John.

<sup>18</sup> Perry, Elliot, *The Philatelist*, November 1973, page 35.

elect to purchase Federal carrier stamps for city mail either, perhaps as a protest. **A much different and opposite behavior than in Philadelphia.**

Numerous Eagle carrier Philadelphia city mail examples exist. Moreover, many Philadelphia Eagle carrier outbound “To the Mails” examples have survived, begging the question that under a fee system “Did the Philadelphia carriers refuse to transport outbound letters to the Post Office for free? Most certainly, as documented by 1 cent prepayment Eagle carrier stamps on numerous outbound covers. After all, Blood’s Despatch was getting one cent. Did the bonded government carriers disobey a Postmaster General who was not on location? The Philadelphia carrier department had not competed well for many years and may not have yet shared the competitive spirit of the distant leader. Perhaps the carriers in Philadelphia negotiated with the Postmaster General to reverse his position for them. Alternatively, the Postmaster General may have looked the other way, or may not have been aware of a small mutiny of sorts. The **author submits that in 1851 the Philadelphia Carrier Department ignored the Postmaster General’s arbitrary and inconsistent fee schedule and continued to operate under a “uniform 1 cent carrier fee for all services”** which had been in place for several years. Not until the Act of July 1, 1860 was Postmaster General Holt denied discretionary power over carrier fees, officially returning “To the Mails” and “From the Mails” to 1 cent each,<sup>19</sup> identical to city mail for all of the large cities.

Although the 1851 Carrier stamps were a **Federal Government general issue, the author suggests that in many ways it was largely all about Philadelphia.** Philadelphia accounts for approximately 80% of the covers graced with a Franklin carrier stamp. By volume of surviving Eagle carrier covers, Philadelphia easily used more than all other cities combined. In addition, Kensington was in Philadelphia County, and apparently used as many Eagle carrier stamps as any of the other cities. John Montgomery almost single handedly engineered the prompt replacement of Franklin carrier adhesives with Eagle carrier adhesives. The printer, Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. was located in Philadelphia. Montgomery may have personally selected the Eagle design from their stock dies. In October of 1851 John C. Montgomery Esq. was “Chief Letter Carrier and Superintendent of Letter Carriers of the City of Philadelphia.” The Philadelphia directories list him as postmaster from 1842-1844 and assistant postmaster in 1852 and 1853.<sup>20</sup>

### **Philadelphia Cancellations**

#### **Numeral 1 in Double Octagon - New Discovery**

Numerous Philadelphia cancellations have been recorded on the Eagle carrier from 1852 through 1857 as will be reviewed including a new discovery cancellation, the impetus for this article. The cover in **Figure 4** was available in Nutmeg sale 177 on November 14, 2008 as lot 4337. It received 2009 PFC 473120 which states “LO2 1851 one cent blue single, double strike of numeral “1” in double

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<sup>19</sup> Roth, Steven M., “Tabulation of Carrier Fees In Philadelphia During The Fee Paid Period,” *The Penny Post*, Vol. 4, October 1994, page 36.

<sup>20</sup> Perry, Elliot, *The Philatelist*, November 1973, page 36.



**Figure 3. The Eagle carrier stamps could not pay the postage for intercity mail hence the 5 cts due for the postage in the Philadelphia handstamp. This cover to Washington D.C. is dated December 23 (1852).**



**Figure 4. The numeral “1” in a double lined octagon cancelled the Eagle carrier on this local cover dated June 1854. This cancel is a new discovery and was the impetus for this research article.**



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

Figure 5. is an enlargement of the number “1” handstamp on the cover shown in Figure 4. In Figure 6, the numeral is rotated 120° and in Figure 7 we see the “1” numeral used by the Philadelphia Post Office.



Figure 8. The numeral “1” in an octagon on a cover with an Adams Express corner, going through the Philadelphia Post Office. The cover is dated March 22 (1855-1856).



Figure 9. The numeral “1” in the octagon was primarily for drop letters but possibly also for circular charges. This cover dated September 16 (1853) was brought by carrier to the post office where it was dropped for a post office box.

octagon cancel, on locally addressed cover. It is *genuine* usage, the stamp with a small piece out at right.” The **Figure 5** enlargement more readily reveals two strikes of the handstamp. The numeral one in double octagon in **Figure 6** is rotated 120 degrees clockwise to match the strike on the cover. To the author’s best knowledge and research no other such example exists canceling an Eagle carrier stamp, or for that matter in conjunction with and not canceling an Eagle carrier stamp.

The numeral 1 in a double octagon was occasionally used by the Philadelphia Post Office. This handstamp is shown in **Figure 7**, and was primarily for drop letters but possibly also for circular and carrier charges, between 1850 to 1854 according to Phillips,<sup>21</sup> and from July 10, 1850 until December 9, 1853<sup>22</sup> with a curious listing as the latest date of September 5, 1856<sup>23</sup> by Clarke. However, since the drop rate was not reduced to one cent until July 1, 1851, no real purpose existed prior to that date. Some postal historians report this marking was used until 1858.<sup>24</sup> **Figure 8** is a stampless cover showing the marking in black combined with Clarke type 63, together dating this cover between 1854 and 1856. The one cent charge is most likely the drop rate on a letter handed to the Post Office possibly by Adams Express. As a more unlikely alternative, it possibly may have been intended as a city letter, and given to a carrier on route along with one cent cash for delivery to the street address, if the handstamp device was in the possession of the Philadelphia Carrier Department. This marking also appears in connection with Philadelphia Carrier Department adhesives as in **Figure 9** reflecting the additional drop rate, payable to the Federal Government,<sup>25</sup> for a letter held in a post office box.

The new discovery example is an envelope without contents, although a manuscript “June ‘54” docket appears on the front. The addressee of this cover was located within the old city, suggesting this may be a city letter. One cent was the appropriate charge for city mail delivered to a street address, the marking thereby only a cancellation device with no significance should the letter have actually been delivered to the street address. The numeral 1 in octagon, however, more strongly suggests an additional charge of one cent. The recipient probably requested his mail be held at the post office for his retrieval and paid the drop rate of one cent, thereby giving meaning to the marking.

### **Philadelphia Red Star**

**Figure 10** shows an Eagle carrier tied by two strikes of a red star on a cover featuring an attractive metallic brass advertising corner card. The red star cancellation is vintage Philadelphia with a distinctive color because its major

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<sup>21</sup> David G. Phillips, ed., *American Stampless Cover Catalog*, Vol.1 (North Miami, Fla: David G. Phillips Publishing Co., Inc., 1987), page 346.

<sup>22</sup> Clarke, Tom, *A Catalog of Philadelphia Postmarks, 18<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present, Part 3*, pages 18-19, 1991.

<sup>23</sup> Clark, Tom, *A Catalog of Philadelphia Postmarks, 18<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present, Part 1*, page 17, 1991.

<sup>24</sup> Shachat, Norm, Personal communications.

<sup>25</sup> Morris, Vernon R., Jr., MD., “What is a ‘Drop Letter’ and a ‘Drop Dead Letter’?” *The Chronicle* 200, Vol. 55, No. 3, November 2003, page 250.

component was *cinnabar, mercuric sulfate*.<sup>26</sup> The red star in Philadelphia was used exclusively by the carrier department. Introduced at about the same time as the Franklin and Eagle carrier stamps, the red star was also applied on covers indicating payment in cash to the carrier while on his route. The earliest recorded date of a red star handstamp marking is October 16, 1851, Figure 11.

### Red Smudge

Not uncommonly were Eagle carriers stamps cancelled in Philadelphia by a red smudge as in **Figure 12**, which may have evolved as a diminished and untidy version of the red star.

### Precancel

Two precancels have been recorded. **Figure 13** shows the precancel as *two thin parallel penstrokes, ruled horizontally* on a cover with a non-contemporaneous 1857 pencil notation, more easily appreciated on the **Figure 14** enlargement. The **Figure 15** precancel is a *single heavy black inked vertical* line on an undated cover. Both examples are city letters to an address within the old city of Philadelphia.

### Penstroke

Eagle carrier stamps were seldom cancelled by manuscript markings such as the example in **Figure 16**. This cover is very late for an Eagle carrier in Philadelphia with a date of March 17, 1857, previously believed by the author to be the latest documented use.

### “U.S.P.O. DESPATCH”

The handstamped marking in **Figure 17** (*Scott Catalogue* type C-32) of the Philadelphia Carrier Department was used in the early 1850's, much like the red star marking (a) to indicate carrier service paid in cash, and (b) to cancel carrier adhesives. In conjunction with Eagle carrier stamps, four have been recorded in red such as the tied example in **Figure 18** addressed to the Spring Garden district, which was located adjacent to the old city, serviced by the Philadelphia Carrier Department, and classified as city mail. In addition three have been recorded in black, none of which is very legible. Black was not used in Philadelphia until early January 1854. The tied example in **Figure 19** is addressed to Maine and classified as “To the Mails,” which will be addressed later in this article.

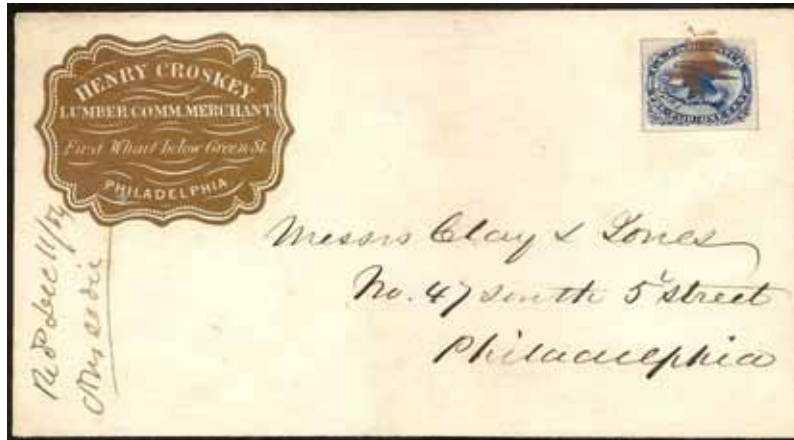
### Grid in Circle

**Figure 20** shows one of the few Eagle carriers tied by a black seven bar grid in circle on a locally addressed cover.<sup>27</sup> **Figure 21** shows an Eagle carrier stamp tied to a piece by a black eleven bar grid in circle, the only known example. Most intriguing is the combination with a Blood's Penny Post acid tied stamp, certainly a unique item. This issue (*Scott Catalogue* 15L14) is known after May of 1854. In all likelihood this was a city letter and for some reason handled by competitors.

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<sup>26</sup> Johnstone, Donald B., “Franklin and Eagle Carrier Stamps,” *Chronicle* 125, Vol. 37, NO. 1, February 1985, page 23.

<sup>27</sup> Siegel Auction Galleries, November 13, 2000, Lot 26 and 30, Hall.



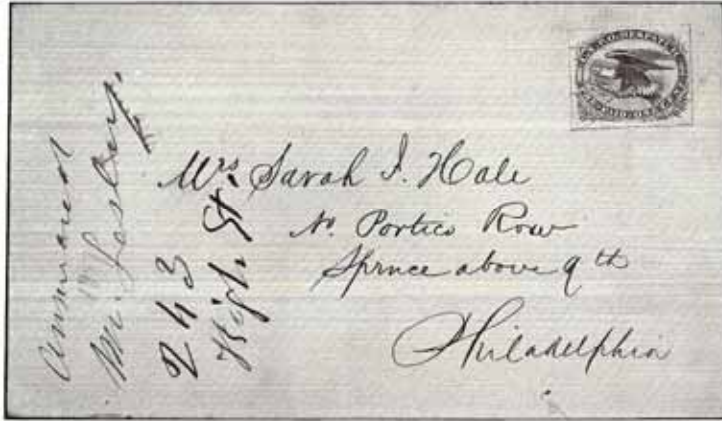
**Figure 10.** The Eagle carrier adhesive on this cover dated December 11, 1854 is cancelled by two strikes of the red star which has a distinctive color due to its major component of cinnabar, mercuric sulfide.



**Figure 11.** The earliest recorded date of a red star handstamp is October 16, 1851 on this cover. The red star indicated payment in cash to the carrier while on his route. The addressee Meredith is a known set of correspondence.



**Figure 12.** An example of the red smudge cancel which may have evolved as a diminished and untidy version of the red star.



**Figure 13. A two bar precancel on an Eagle carrier adhesive. An enlargement is shown in Figure 14.**



**Figure 14. A two horizontal bar precancel on the Eagle carrier adhesive from the cover shown in Figure 13.**



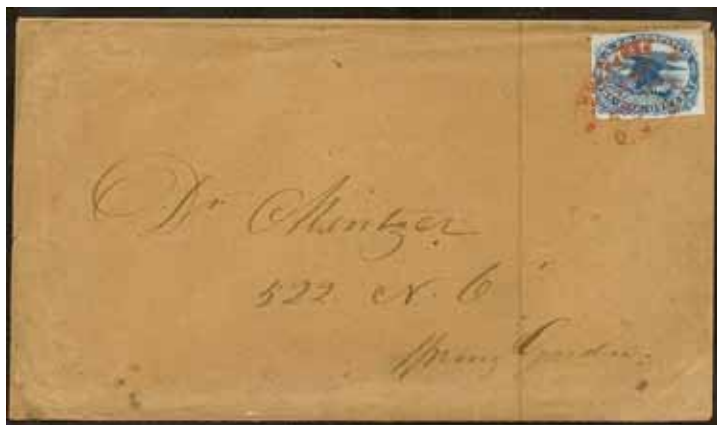
**Figure 15. A heavy black inked vertical line precancelled the Eagle carrier adhesive on this local cover.**



**Figure 16.** Unlike other carrier adhesives, Eagle carrier stamps were seldom cancelled by manuscript markings. This cover is dated March 17, 1857 and was previously believed by the author to be the latest documented use.



**Figure 17.** The U.S.P.O. DESPATCH handstamp was used by the Philadelphia carrier department in the early 1850's to indicate carrier service paid in cash.



**Figure 18.** The author records four red examples of the U.S.P.O. Despatch handstamp cancelling the Eagle carrier adhesive. This cover is dated October 3, 1853.



**Figure 19.** The author records three black examples of the U.S.P.O. DESPATCH handstamp cancelling the Eagle carrier adhesive. The black U.S.P.O. handstamp was not used until early January 1854. This cover is dated December 1, (1854-7).



**Figure 20.** An Eagle carrier tied by a black seven bar grid in a circle on a locally addressed undated cover.



**Figure 21.** An Eagle carrier tied by a black eleven bar grid in a circle, the only recorded example. Blood's carried this either to or from the post office and the carrier took it the other way.

Two explanations are possible. Blood's could have delivered this example to the Philadelphia Carrier Department for city delivery, perhaps to an outlying district, similar to the example shown in **Figure 18**, where private posts were forbidden from intercity mail. Alternatively, the carrier department may have delivered this letter to Blood's for city delivery.<sup>28</sup>

### **Boxed Grid - New Joint Discovery**

The cover shown in **Figure 22** was privately carried from Riverton in Burlington County, New Jersey to Philadelphia. Probably placed into a street collection box with prepaid carrier service "To the Mails" and Cleveland, Ohio. The boxed grid "*killer*" handstamped marking was rarely used in Philadelphia during the late 1850's, this possibly its earliest usage. This example was discovered by Gordon Stimmel and the author during the research for this article. This cover is internally dated **June 29, 1857, the Latest Recorded Date in Philadelphia for an Eagle carrier**, and extends by three months the previously recognized date shown in **Figure 16**. The internal contents reveal the sender to be a Quaker and one of ten prominent Philadelphia families with a summer home in Riverton, and who frequented Philadelphia and undoubtedly had access to Eagle carrier stamps.

### **Kensington CDS**

Kensington, Pa was located in Philadelphia County, adjacent to the old city, although not legally consolidated into the city of Philadelphia until 1862.<sup>29</sup> The Kensington Post Office could have received its supply of Eagle carrier stamps directly from the local printer Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. Alternatively their source may have been the nearby Philadelphia Post Office, either directly or through mutual patrons. Examples of contemporaneous Philadelphia Carrier Department stamps have been recorded used in both directions between the two post offices as shown in **Figures 23** and **24** revealing the close working relationship between the two. **Figure 25** depicts a cover which originated in Kensington, bears an Eagle carrier stamp tied by a red Kensington circular datestamp, and addressed to Delaware. For completeness, a very attractive Eagle carrier tied by red numeral 3 from Kensington exists but which did not receive a good Philatelic Foundation certificate.<sup>30</sup>

### **Philadelphia CDS**

**Figure 26** demonstrates an Eagle carrier tied by a blue Philadelphia circular datestamp classified by Tom Clark as number 62<sup>31</sup> on a locally addressed cover.

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<sup>28</sup> Shachat, Norm, Personal communications.

<sup>29</sup> Flack, Wylie H., *An Introduction To The Postal History of Philadelphia and Philadelphia County*, The Associated Stamp Clubs of Southeastern Penna. & Delaware, Inc., 1978, page 15.

<sup>30</sup> Siegel Auction Galleries, November 13, 2000, Lot 23, Hall, April 24, 2001 PFC 365933 reads "Genuine usage of the 3 cent stamp, but carrier stamp did not originate and the tying cancellation is counterfeit."

<sup>31</sup> Clarke, Tom, *A Catalog of Philadelphia Postmarks, 18<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present, Part 1*, page 16-17, 1991.



**Figure 22. Eagle carrier tied by a “killer” handstamp. The cover is dated June 29, 1857 and is the latest date the author records for an Eagle carrier in Philadelphia.**



**Figure 23. A folded letter from Kensington to Philadelphia with a Philadelphia carrier department adhesive. For a cover traveling in the opposite direction see Figure 24.**



**Figure 24. A cover from Philadelphia to Kensington with a Philadelphia carrier department adhesive. For the opposite direction see Figure 23.**



**Figure 25. Cover bearing an Eagle carrier to Delaware which originated from Kensington. Kensington used Eagle carrier adhesives.**



**Figure 26. Eagle carrier tied on a local cover dated February 28 (1852-3) by a blue Philadelphia circular datestamp. The author surmises the carrier must have had access to this standard circular datestamp because the letter did not go through the post office.**



**Figure 27. An example demonstrating that the Postmaster General's 1851 order of free carrier service "to the mails" was ignored. The Eagle carrier adhesive paid the carrier fee on this June 15 (1852-3) cover to Massachusetts.**

Apparently, the Philadelphia Carrier Department must have had access to the standard circular datestamps of the Philadelphia Post Office. The Eagle carrier stamp did not pay for a conceivable drop rate, as otherwise possibly suggested by this marking (same town postmark as the addressee). Eagle carrier stamps, although Federal issues, were purchased by the carrier department, and not for service at the main post office. Since no specific street address is listed, should the carrier have mistakenly transported this example to the Main Post Office as a “drop letter,” an additional one cent would be due and handstamped with numeral 1 in double octagon for a total cost of two cents. As a postal history exercise, should such a hypothetical letter not be picked up in two days, carrier delivery from the Post Office would cost an additional two cents for a total of four cents. The Carrier Department was designed just for this purpose, to bypass the main Post Office.<sup>32</sup>

## Usage

### “To the Mails”

Since the Postmaster General ordered free carrier service “To the Mails” in 1851, Eagle Carrier stamps were not necessary on outbound letters, don’t exist from New York, and shouldn’t exist from Philadelphia. The following are four Eagle carrier examples, each with a different postal history form of intercity mail. The Eagle carrier stamp in **Figure 27** is combined with a *three cent adhesive* with each tied by a separate blue Philadelphia cds, Clarke type 62, fully prepaying the Carrier Department and the Post Office Department to Massachusetts. **Figure 28** is fully prepaid by a *Nesbit envelope* and Eagle carrier, together tied by Clarke 63a, also to Massachusetts. **Figure 29** documents Eagle carrier prepayment with a typical red star cancel on an envelope to New Jersey which is separately handstamped by a red Clark type 67b handstamp reflecting the “*mail three cent prepaid rate as cash* at the Post Office, in all probability by the carrier on behalf of the sender. **Figure 30** shows an Eagle carrier tied by red star separate from the blue Philadelphia cds, Clarke 73, on envelope to New York; prepayment was made only to the Carrier Department, leaving the “postage” cost to the recipient who was charged the 5 cent *undiscounted collect* rate.

### Trans-continental

Two covers are recorded with Eagle carrier stamps which crossed the North American continent. At that time the intercity rate for over 3000 miles was double, 6 cents prepaid or 10 collect. **Figure 31** demonstrates the fully prepaid “To the Mails” transcontinental charge with an Eagle carrier cancelled by red smudge. The sender in **Figure 32**, however, may not have been aware of the proper rate since he prepaid the carrier and only half of the postage, leaving a single rate collect and undiscounted at “Due 5 cents” from the recipient.

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<sup>32</sup> Perry, Elliot, “The Carrier Stamps of the United States; Philadelphia, “*The Chronicle* 115, Vol. 34, No. 3, August 1982, page 176.



**Figure 28. Another example of the collection of a carrier fee violating the Postmaster General's order. This cover is dated November 25, 1853 and is fully prepaid by the Nesbitt envelope.**



**Figure 29. Another example of the collection of a carrier fee violating the Postmaster General's order. This cover is separately handstamped by a red Philadelphia handstamp which reflects the mail/3cts./PAID" rate as prepaid in cash at the post office probably by the carrier on behalf of the sender.**



**Figure 30. The carrier was paid to take this July 14 (1853) cover to the post office. The postage cost was left to the recipient who was charged the 5 cts undiscounted collect rate.**



**Figure 31. A fully prepaid “to the mails” transcontinental cover dated July 2 (1852) with an Eagle carrier cancelled by a red smudge. Only two transcontinental covers are recorded with Eagle carrier stamps.**



**Figure 32. A “to the mail” transcontinental cover dated November 15 (1851-2) with the rate only half paid leaving a single rate collect and undiscounted at “due 5 cents” from the recipient. Only two transcontinental covers are recorded with Eagle carrier stamps.**



**Figure 33. A transatlantic cover with an Eagle carrier. One of ten recorded but only this one has the postage to England paid with the 12-cent general issue stamps.**

### Transatlantic

Ten covers with an Eagle carrier stamp are addressed to Europe, one of which was privately handled. Of the remaining nine, four originated in Philadelphia and all to the same correspondence in Liverpool. Furthermore, the example shown in **Figure 33** is the only Eagle carrier cover in combination with the 12 cent general issue stamp, which may be the quintessential Philadelphia Eagle carrier cover.

### Earliest Recorded

The earliest recorded Eagle carrier cover has been reported to be January 3, 1852.<sup>33</sup> Although the final six weeks of 1851 may conceivably have been possible, definitive evidence of an 1851 usage is very difficult and has not been proven as most Eagle carrier examples are on envelopes without originally dated contents. Several 1852 examples exist, many determined by deductive analysis, such as **Figure 31** and **Figure 32**. They are tied by a blue Philadelphia circular datestamp classified by Tom Clarke as number 62; with earliest know date of August 5, 1846 and latest know date of June 12, 1853. **Figure 31** is therefore 1852, the only year in which the July 2<sup>nd</sup> datestamp and period of issue overlap. Likewise, **Figure 32** also can only intersect in 1852 since a November 15, 1851 franking would have been two days prior to the arrival of Eagle carrier adhesives at the Philadelphia Carrier Department on November 17, 1851.

### Overlap with Philadelphia Carrier Department Adhesives

For two years the Philadelphia Carrier Department sold typeset adhesive stamps. By March of 1851 they issued a more attractive lithographed series, which was in use through 1853, the latest recorded on September 16, 1853 and shown previously in **Figure 8**. For several years beyond that date Carrier Department handstamps were used. Therefore, **October of 1851 through September of 1853 can be viewed as a transition period of overlap and concurrent use of the Philadelphia lithographed stamps and the Federal Eagle carrier stamps**, with decreasing use of the former and increasing use of the latter. Most Eagle carrier covers can usually be dated by Clarke type to a limited period of time usually a few years and rarely by itself a single year. Since the sample pool of Eagle Carrier stamps on cover is finite, correlation with the concurrent Philadelphia Carrier Department stamped covers for usage and postal history facilitates a more comprehensive retrospective analysis.

### Mysteries

#### Forwarded Philadelphia to New Jersey

**Figure 34** is a letter from Delafield, Wisconsin, with December 14 cds and matching "PAID 3" in arc, manuscript dated 1854, and addressed to a reverend in Philadelphia. The letter was subsequently forwarded to a second address in Burlington, New Jersey, with companion black Clark 76a cds of December 19<sup>th</sup> combined with an Eagle carrier tied by red smudge. The Carrier Department probably discovered relocation of the reverend, perhaps by his representative at the

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<sup>33</sup> Lyons, Larry, Personal communications.



**Figure 34. Cover dated December 14, 1854 from Delafield, Wisconsin to Philadelphia and redirected to Burlington, New Jersey. The postage was “collect” from Philadelphia for the second leg of the journey. The mystery is why did the carrier only get one cent for going back and forth to/from the post office?**



**Figure 35. Another mystery cover. The letter originated in New York on August 10, 1853 and is addressed to Kensington. The carrier stamp is tied by a red smudge cancel but how was the carrier involved in this service?**

door who may have applied the Eagle carrier stamp for its return “To the Mails,” but Postage collect at the undiscounted 5 cents rate for the second leg of this journey. This explanation, however, does not satisfy the carrier service provided on the inbound Philadelphia “From the Mails” to the street location declared two versus the one cent “uniform 1 cent carrier fee for all services” theory, and back to the post office for a total of two cents minimum; or divine providence reduced the total carrier consideration to one cent as if city mail was to and from the post office.

### **New York to Kensington**

**Figure 35** is an example originating in New York, addressed to “Kensington, Philadelphia” with a red New York PAID 3 circular datestamp.<sup>34</sup> The Eagle carrier stamp is just barely tied by a red smudge, a not uncommon Philadelphia cancel. Several conceivable explanations may be considered. City mail at first examination can be disqualified because the city of origin and delivery must be the same. Against the New York “To the Mails” theory is that the service was free, and has never been identified in New York.<sup>35</sup> Also, the red smudge was not a New York carrier department cancel. Philadelphia “From the Mail” to the Kensington address is possible although underpaid. However, the Philadelphia and Kensington carriers were apparently operating under the 1849 and not 1851 discretionary fees of the Postmaster General, with all carrier fees set at one cent. More unlikely, the sender in New York may have possessed some Carrier stamps and was hopeful that the Philadelphia carriers would accept them as payment for “From the Mails”. Even if the New York Carrier Department sold some Eagle carrier stamps the remuneration for service was not transferable to the Philadelphia carriers who would have performed the service. The red smudge was indeed a common Philadelphia cancel. The address is somewhat ambiguous including both Kensington and Philadelphia (not Pennsylvania). Perhaps the letter arrived in Philadelphia to be sent as city mail to Kensington.

### **“From the Mails”**

Carrier delivery of intercity mail was generally never prepaid, but collect at the door in cash. Exceptions are conceivably possible on correspondence by a thoughtful friend or family member, probably in a nearby community, who may have frequented Philadelphia himself and obtained the stamps directly from a friend or the Philadelphia Carrier Department. The Meyersburg collection contained two such examples. An Eagle carrier stamp with red star cancel not tied to an 1856 cover from Doylestown, Pa, approximately 23 miles north of Philadelphia,<sup>36</sup> to a

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<sup>34</sup> United States Postal Service zip code calculations.

<sup>35</sup> No genuine New York use during the period exists. An 1876 reprint LO5 off cover received an opinion on September 11, 2008 PFC 468531 for an used, New York 1880’s double oval cancel “It is a genuine Scott LO5, but the cancel is philatelic, and does not represent a carrier usage.”

<sup>36</sup> Siegel Auction Galleries, November 13, 2000, Sale 830, Lot 23, Hall.

Philadelphia street address, but which did not receive a good PFC.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, an Eagle carrier stamp with black penstroke again not tied on an advertising cover from Wilmington, Delaware, approximately 30 miles south of Philadelphia, to a Philadelphia address exists. Although described in the auction catalog as “To the Mails” Wilmington use, both covers may have been “From the Mails” use in Philadelphia.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, these two Eagle carrier examples are not tied to the cover.

Two other contemporaneous examples, however, each bear a single Philadelphia Carrier Department stamp tied to an inbound letter and are certainly prepaid “From the Mails” New York, 80 miles northeast of Philadelphia, see **Figure 36**,<sup>39</sup> and “From the Mails” Downingtown, 32 miles west of Philadelphia.<sup>40</sup> In these two cases the Philadelphia Carrier Department could rest assured the prepayment was received by them, unlike Eagle carrier stamps which could have been purchased in New York for conceivable service in Philadelphia. These two, nonetheless, **confirm the author’s position that the Philadelphia Carrier Department autonomously continued the 1849 one cent carrier fee for all service, including “From the Mails.”** Perhaps the inbound Eagle carrier letters from Wilmington and Doylestown should be reconsidered as the sender could not have purchased Eagle carrier stamps in the town of origination. The author submits that **Philadelphia Carrier Department stamps and Eagle carrier stamps occasionally found their way by regional business, communication, and travel within a range of 30 to perhaps 80 miles from the old city of Philadelphia, and that prepaid “From the Mails” did exist including Eagle carrier stamps.**

### Conclusion

An important corner of the Philadelphia postal history legacy houses the Eagle carrier covers, a relatively narrow slice of the broad spectrum that shines strong. The Franklin and Eagle carrier adhesive stamps were a novel, short lived, but not insignificant component of the 1851 General Issue of the Federal Government. The vast majority of surviving covers come from the Philadelphia area, without which precious few examples would exist. Philadelphia was a major force in the Eagle carrier stamp creation and deployment, although just a “flash in the pan.”

**The fee system with separate accounting was quite provincial and too restrictive to be compatible with a large scale Federal carrier prepayment plan.** The Eagle carrier stamps were most useful for city mail. The author submits that **in 1851 the Philadelphia Carrier Department ignored the Postmaster General’s discretionary privilege over the carriers and continued with the fee system already in place during the prior few years. This plausible explanation accounts for the many and varied “To the Mails” usages not found in any other city, and which have not been satisfactorily explained but rather avoided in the philatelic**

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<sup>37</sup> Siegel Auction Galleries, June 25, 1997, Sale 791, Lot 57, Meyersburg; August 20, 1997 PFC 317217 reads “Genuine usage of the 3 cent stamp torn in half but the carrier stamp did not originate on this cover.”

<sup>38</sup> Siegel Auction Galleries, June 25, 1997, Sale 791, Lot 72, Meyersburg.

<sup>39</sup> Siegel Auction Galleries, May 13, 2000, Sale 824, Lot 377, Rarities 2000.

<sup>40</sup> Siegel Auction Galleries, November 15, 2006, Sale 925, Lot 1248, Kuphal.



**Figure 36. A “from the mails” carrier service dated February 15, 1852 paid by the blue 7LB12 adhesive. Unlike the Eagle carrier the Philadelphia carrier department could rest assured the prepayment by this adhesive was received by them.**

literature. **“From the Mails” use was not practical** for several reasons. This **Philadelphia “uniform one cent carrier fee for all services” theory gives credence, however, to “From the Mails” Philadelphia Eagle carrier covers, the few of which may have been heretofore considered bogus. The 1851 to 1853 period was a transition for the Philadelphia Carrier Department away from their own stamps in favor of the new Eagle carrier issue, which ran their course in 1857. This article presents two new discovery Eagle carrier cancellations and a new Latest Recorded Date of use of the Eagle carrier stamps in Philadelphia.** The Federal Carrier stamps represent a rewarding collection and research area where new discoveries after 150 years are still possible. Many thanks for assistance from Norm Shachat, Gordon Stimmel, Larry Lyons, and Tom Mazza. Any candidates for “earliest recorded date” and/or additional cancellations should be gratefully sent to Vern Morris, 128 South Huckleberry Lake Drive, Sebring, FL 33875. A condensed and more readable version of this material is being concurrently published in the *Collectors Club Philatelist*, May/June 2009 Volume thanks to the professional cooperation of the respective editors, Larry Lyons and Bob Odenweller of the New York Collectors Club.