COMMERCE AND THE MAILS IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY
1800-1860: Growth and Change

- Population sextupled
- Number of states doubled
- Significant increase in literacy
- Transportation: Coach to rail, sail to steam
- New businesses springing up, growing fast
- Growing demand for communication
- Postal operations determine how companies communicate
- Business needs drive evolution of postal operations
Evolution of Postal Operations

• Domestic rate changes
• Rise and fall of local posts
• Trans-Atlantic rate changes
• Establishment of registered mail
Nathan Trotter & Co.

• Buyer/importer of bulk metals – lead, zinc, tin, copper et al.
• Maker of metal products such as kettles, faucets, wire, rivets, shot, pigs
• Seller to small manufacturing firms in the region
• Sales volume quadrupled by 1850
• Family owned and operated – still going
• One of the oldest companies in the US
Front Street Facade

Under historic preservation
# Domestic Single Sheet Letter Rates

**Act of March 2, 1799**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not over 40 miles</td>
<td>8 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 90 miles</td>
<td>10 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 to 150 miles</td>
<td>12-1/2 cents</td>
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<tr>
<td>150 to 300 miles</td>
<td>17 cents</td>
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<tr>
<td>300 to 500 miles</td>
<td>20 cents</td>
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<tr>
<td>over 500 miles</td>
<td>25 cents</td>
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### Domestic Single Sheet Letter Rates

**Act of March 2, 1799**  
(In 2002 dollars)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>300 to 500 miles</td>
<td>$4.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>over 500 miles</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1803 New York – 12-1/2 cents for 90-150 miles
1816 Maysville, KY, war rate – 37-1/2 cents for over 500 miles
1844 Bellefonte, PA - 18-3/4 cents for 150-400 miles
1845 Bellefonte, PA - 5 cents reform rate for up to 300 miles

Messrs. Nathan Trottes & Co.
Merchant
Front Street
Philadelphia
Penn.
1851-55 Camden, Del. – 3 cents prepaid

Miss Nathan Trotter & Co
No 30 North Front St
Philad PA
1852-53 Blood’s Despatch, Reading to Philadelphia – one cent
Trans-Atlantic Rates

• Private Ship Letters
• Postal Reform Rates
• Treaty Rates
1819 American Packet Ship Letter – 27 cents for two sheets plus ship fee
1843 Ship Letter from Liverpool –
British reform rate 16 cents (8 pence) plus
12-1/2 cents NY-Phil. = 28-1/2 cents
1853 American Packet from Liverpool—British treaty
Rate 24 cents not prepaid, 3 cents credited to Britain
1854 British Packet from Swansea, Wales – Treaty rate one shilling (24 cents) prepaid, 5 cents credited to US
1870 Pontypridd, Wales – British Treaty Rate 3 pence (6 cents)
Registered Mail

• Security for valuable mail
• Special handling but no indemnity
• Ad hoc markings by post offices
• Departmental regulation
1845 Lewistown, PA “Rec”(ordered) – Phila. large blue “R”, double strike
1848 Hollidaysburg, PA “secret” registry mark – large blue “R”
1850 Stroudsburgh, PA registry number 25 – small blue “R”
1851 Lancaster, PA “R”, “No 39” – small red “R”
Commerce and the Mails in the Early 19th Century - Conclusion

• Growing need for communication
• Dramatically reduced cost of mailing, both domestic and Trans-Atlantic
• Private carriers come and go
• Registry established for valuable mail
• Well-preserved correspondence sheds light on both business practices and postal operations