

# US Postal History 1847 Issue on Cover

The Catharine McKie Correspondence

From

Troy to South Easton NY, 1847-1851

# Collecting Stamps vs. Postal History

	Stamps	Postal History
Design	Y	Y
Colors	Y	Y
Cancel	Y	Y++
Perfs	Y	Y
Watermarks	Y	N
Usages / rates	N	Y++
Recipients	N	Y
History – Events	Y	Y

# 1847 Issue Cover Census

- 14900+ Listings
- 9100+ cover descriptions
- 8600+ illustrations

Available free online at [USPCS.org](http://USPCS.org)

Fully searchable – find individual covers or entire correspondences.

# 1847 Issue Cover Census Challenges

- Complete listings
- Better images
- Year date the covers
- Identify the recipient
- Identify the sender
- Understand their history

# 1847 Issue Cover Census – Types of Letters

- Banking
  - Receipt of drafts from remote cities requesting payment and acknowledging receipt of payment
- Professional
  - Letters to local governments, lawyers, clergy and businesses
- Personal correspondences
  - Traveling spouses, distant relatives, Valentines & Love Letters

# Catharine McKie Correspondence

- 69 Letters in Census mailed between Nov 1848 and May 1850
- Most mailed to Miss Catharine McKie in South Easton, NY
- Covers had docket numbers through end of 1849
- Docket dates precede mailing date
- Docket dates end March 1850
- Last cover, dated July 12, 1850 addressed to Mrs. Catharine McKie Thayer

# Catharine McKie Correspondence

- CDS – Nov 20, 1848      Docket – 52, Nov 19, 1848



# Catharine McKie Correspondence

• CDS Dec 29, 1849

Docket – 142, Dec 28, 1849





# Catharine McKie Correspondence

- CDS – Jan 4, 1850

- Docket – blank, Jan 3, 1850



# Catharine McKie Correspondence

- CDS – March 4, 1850      Docket – None



# Catharine McKie Correspondence

- CDS – Jul 12, 18(50)      Docket – None      Addressed to Mrs.  
Kate McKie Thayer



# Catharine McKie Correspondence

- Conclusions

- Large correspondence – 142 + 19 unnumbered = 161 letters min.
- 1<sup>st</sup> stamped cover was well after Stamps were available in Troy, NY (first stamped letter from Troy dated Sept 10, 1847)
- Thus, something changed in the changed in the correspondents' relationship around Nov 1848
- Any letters missing - 161-51 prior to stamps = 110 covers vs. 69 known
- Interestingly, there are no covers from South Easton addressed to Troy.
- Catharine McKie married someone named Thayer in April – July 1850

# Catharine McKie Correspondence

- Thank You & Good Night

Wait a minute. The story is not complete! Is there any more?

# More to the Story

- The Internet is a wonderful resource.
- A few years ago I did a Yahoo search on “Troy McKie Thayer” and got a hit on

V. 1844–1850 Letters from Cambridge and Troy, Part One  
[thefamilyletters.com/images/Ch%205.pdf](http://thefamilyletters.com/images/Ch%205.pdf)

- This was a pdf of Chapter 5 in a book by John Mudge about some old family letters, diaries, and other papers in his possession
- Letter excerpts told the story of Catharine McKie of Cambridge NY and Francis Thayer of Troy, NY

# Catharine McKie's Story

- Catharine was one of 7 children of George and Sophia McKie
- She was born in 1827.
- She attended school for 9 months (1843-44) at the Troy Conference Academy in Poultney, Vermont, along with her brothers.
- Catharine's family lived in Cambridge NY in Washington County just north of Rensselaer County about 28 miles NE of Troy, NY
- South Easton is 13 miles SW of Cambridge and the closest Post Office to the McKie home.

# Francis Thayer's Story

- Francis Thayer grew up in Hoosick Falls, NY
- He was born in Vermont in 1822
- He went to school in 1842 and attended the Troy Conference Academy in Poultney Vt. where he became friends with Catharine's older brothers.
- In 1844 he moved to Troy and started working at a flour mill.
- In August 1844 he starting writing to Catharine.



# More of Catharine's Story

- Catharine was the youngest child of George and Sophia
- She had 6 older brothers
- She was only 16 in 1844 when Francis started writing to her
- She was probably a typical 16 year old with dreams about romance living with what she considered over-protective parents
- Francis's letters were probably exciting and overwhelming

# Francis Thayer's Letters

- Two of Catharine's brothers worked in Troy and were friends of Francis
- They acted as "postmen" delivering some letters between Catharine and Francis, particularly in the early years of the correspondence.
- Catharine's letters were dropped into Francis' box at the Troy PO, probably requiring a 2 cent drop fee.
- Francis' letters were sent by mail. Catharine may have had the job of picking up the mail every day, and thereby could intercept her letters before her parents could see them
- Catharine kept all of Francis' letters (as girls tend to do)
- Francis also kept a draft of all his letters, carefully entered into a diary that still exists.

# Francis Thayer's Letters

- The first letter from Francis was sent stampless to South Easton



The docketing may have been added later since the dates are all from internal datelines, not when they were received.

Courtesy of John Mudge

# Francis Thayer's Letters

- Catharine's response was sent stampless, as well



Letters to Francis were also docketed the date they were written and were numbered.

Courtesy of  
John Mudge

# Francis Thayer's Letters

The letters started formally

Starting with “Mr. Thayer” on August 15<sup>th</sup>, she wrote “In reference to a non intimate acquaintance with you, I have not even the shadow of an objection for I have forever considered you one of my most worthy acquaintances, but I cannot approve of the cultivation of that acquaintance with regards to any particular subject.” She told Francis of her desire to keep their correspondence a secret from her mother, as she was in bad health and closed the letter with “Your friend, as ever, Kate.”

# Francis Thayer's Letters

But quickly become more friendly, and then after a few anxious missives from Francis, as he tried to take the long distance relationship to “the next level,” the letters become more intimate.

Eventually the two were professing strong feeling for each other, turning into Love.

Finally, in Feb 1848, Francis wrote “The Letter” to Catharine’s parents, expressing his love for their daughter, and expressing his intentions for them to eventually marry. George wrote back in early March, giving his permission.

# Francis Thayer & Catharine McKie

The relationship was not exclusively by mail.

Francis was a frequent visitor to the McKie home since he was a close friend of Catharine's brothers.

While Francis & Catharine probably spent a few "stolen moments" together and thought they were being discrete, George & Sophia probably had a good idea that the two had grown close together.

# Francis Thayer & Catharine McKie

The letters continued to be delivered outside the mail and it wasn't until Nov 1848 that stamped letters appear.

The reason for the delay is not given in either's letters.

Perhaps Catharine's brothers no longer made regular trips to Troy.

Perhaps Francis got a raise and the 5 cent postage was no longer a financial burden



# Other Interesting Letters – philatelically speaking

Sent from the Troy & Whitehall RR – one of 3.



From the collection of Hugh Feldman but recently sold by Schuyler Rumsey

Posted on PhilaMercury.

# Other Interesting Letters – philatelically speaking

By Nov. 1849, the letter count jumped by 89.



Docket number  
131.

# Other Interesting Letters – philatelically speaking

A Christmas rarity?



Sold in Siegel's 2000 Rarities of the World, sale 824, lot 63 realized 12,500.

The letter was written two days earlier.

# Other Interesting Letters – philatelically speaking

A postal clerk's mistake?



Docketed Dec 24, 1848 but dated Dec 23 in the CDS.

Trusting Catharine & Francis, the letter must have been mailed on Dec 25.

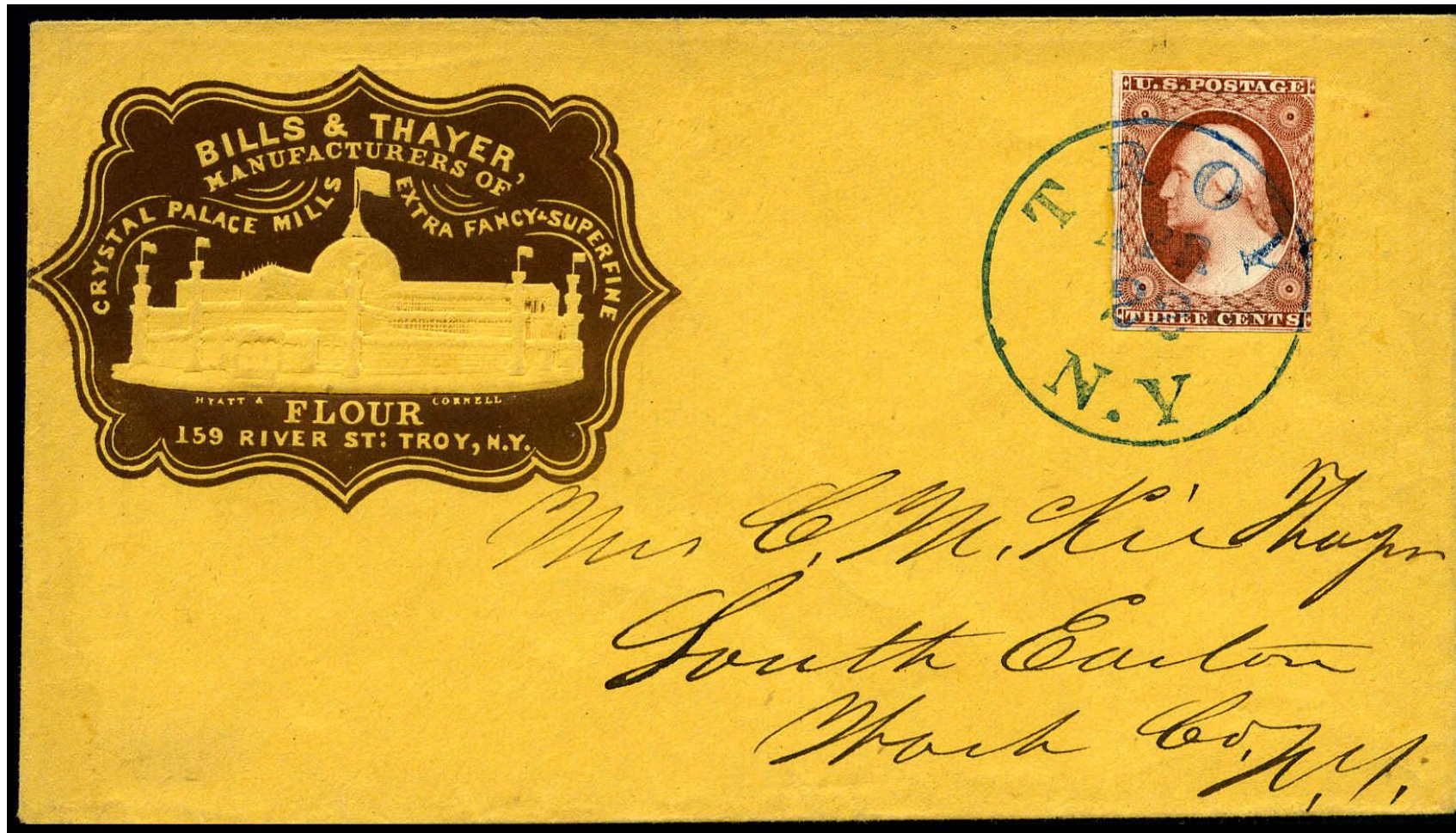
Bennett sale 277 lot 234 realized only 325

# Francis & Catharine Thayer

- Francis & Catharine married on April 30, 1850, allowing us to year date the undocketed letters.
- Francis eventually owned the Crystal Palace Flour Mill in Troy
- The family eventually moved to Colorado, where Francis died in 1880 and Catharine died in 1901
- Francis & Catharine had several children - three died in childhood two lived to become adults; Francis McKie Thayer who married but had no children and Katharine Thayer who married twice, the second time to Henry Wise Hobson, grandson of Henry Alexander Wise, governor of North Carolina during the Civil War.

# The McKie Correspondence

The letters continued after the 1847 period, when Catharine visited her parents.



Corner  
advertising  
cover for Crystal  
Palace Mills.

Covers were also  
printed in red,  
green and blue.

# The McKie Correspondence

- The stamped letters entered the philatelic market sometime around 1941.
- John Mudge believes an uncle of his sold them off.
- John still owns the letters, diaries, and stampless covers of many of his ancestors, including Francis & Catharine.
- John is missing 101 envelopes from the correspondence, all presumably having 1847 issue stamps.
- Sixty nine are currently in the census. Alexander listed 49. Twenty have been found over the past 13 years.
- The writing dates of the other 32 are known, waiting to be rediscovered

# Catharine McKie Correspondence

- Thank You & Good Night
- Yes, this is the REAL end, for now.