

Exhibit Synopsis

NEW JERSEY STAMPLESS COVERS: HANDSTAMP MARCOPHILY 1775-1855

The assembly of a collection of New Jersey's postal markings during the stampless period has been a challenge. This exhibit represents a 30-year effort collecting and studying the State's handstamped town postal markings applied to the mails during the pre-stamp and stampless period beginning with New Jersey's first handstamp in 1775 until the end of the stampless era in 1855. The classification and organization of the markings is based on William C. Coles, Jr.'s monograph, *The Postal Marking of New Jersey Stampless Covers*, published by the Collectors Club of Chicago in 1983. It is apparent from my personal collecting efforts and research that handstamped town markings from New Jersey, apart from a handful of larger towns, are difficult to acquire. The stampless covers included in this exhibit are the result of an intensive search of auction sales, dealers' stocks, and most recently e-bay and the internet for material. The great majority of the "highlighted" covers in this exhibit and which are outlined below are illustrated and described in the *Coles Book* and many are the "listing" copies in the *American Stampless Cover Catalog*. Nearly two dozen research articles, authored by this exhibitor, have been published in *NJPH*, the quarterly Journal of The New Jersey Postal History Society, and are included in the attached bibliography.

Frame 1. Straight Line Handstamps were the earliest style of postmarks applied to the mails. With the coming of the American Revolution, the Congressional Post was established on July 26, 1775. This exhibit begins with a showing of two **Revolutionary War** covers from Princeton, the **only reported handstamps** outside of archival collections used in New Jersey prior to the coming of peace in 1783. **The exhibit continues with the only handstamped marking from the Confederation Period** – The "Bordenton & New York Stage," the **earliest** of the independent mail handstamps with only six reported examples. Straight line handstamp usage continued to predominate through the first two decades of the nineteenth century, although such markings continued to be used infrequently throughout the stampless period. During the **Statehood period**, the census in the *Coles Book* indicates that the majority of the few straight lines used in New Jersey are outright rarities or at least very few in number. Notable markings shown include: Belleville – the only reported example; Burlington two-line – the only reported example; Salem – one of two on record; Union – one of three on record; and Woodbridge – the only reported example from a recent find.

Frames 2-3. Fancy and Oval Handstamps were applied to the mails from about 1810 until the end of the stampless period, although after 1825, circular postmarks predominate. Notable fancy handstamps include the New Providence in ornate mortised frame – one of the two on record; Peapack oval with fancy flourons – three examples shown; and the negative letter postmarks from Haddonfield and Lambertville. Notable oval markings include Bordentown in a single oval with "W.N.J." *not* in italics, previously unrecorded; Flemington – all five different colored oval markings including the difficult bright red; and Newark – all four different colored markings including the green handstamp used only in July, 1823.

Frames 4-10. Circular Handstamps were applied to the mails beginning in 1799, at 140 post offices located in New Jersey, far fewer in number than New York, Pennsylvania and several of the New England States. Contrary to its image today, in the pre-Civil War years, New Jersey was largely agrarian outside its few cities and larger towns. The Post Office Department's policy of restricting government-supplied handstamps to busier offices further limited the use of these markings. Moreover, from a collector's perspective, virtually none of the correspondence from this era was saved in business archives. Were it not for the availability of letters from the papers of Samuel Southard, a former United States Senator and Governor of New Jersey, and a few other state officials, many of which are included in this exhibit, the variety of these markings would be largely unavailable to today's collectors. This exhibit contains a representative selection intended to show the variety of colors, designs and rate markings used on mails in the State that predominate from the 1820's through the end of the stampless era in 1855. More notable postmarks in this section include the following: only reported usages from Branchville, Dennis Creek, Everittstown, Middletown Point, Monmouth County – the only reported example of this scarce county marking *in red without year date*; Morristown – two examples of a previously unrecorded circle used in 1814, Mount Holly – the only reported example of the 1829 small "Mount Holly" circle; only reported usages from Port Mercer, Shiloh and Tinton Falls; the scarce Greensburg, Mercer County marking, the West Bloomfield rimless postmark and a variety of markings from New Jersey's largest cities: Newark, New Brunswick, Paterson and Trenton.

Bibliographical References

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(all authored by the exhibitor and available from the APS Library)

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“*An ‘Elisabethport’ Misspelled Postmark*,” *NJPH*, Vol. 38, Whole Number 178, May 2010.

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Monographs

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Major Auction Sales

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Robert G. Kaufmann, *The William C. Coles, Jr. Collection*, *Sale No. 33*, March 8, 1984.

Weiss Philatelics, *Sale No. 127*, January 27, 1996 (Norman Brassler Collection).

Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc., *Sale No. 825*, June 27-29, 2000 (Brad Arch Collection).