

The New Haven Provisional

From Mekeel's Weekly, May 16, 1895

In addition to this article from the May 16, 1895 issue of Mekeel's, we include on the pages that follow the section on the New Haven Provisional from our United States Reference Manual. JFD.

NEW HAVEN.

Although the same catalogue that places the price of \$1.200 on the Millbury only prices the U. S. Postmaster's Provisional envelope issued at New Haven at \$250 it is without doubt ten times as rare as the Millbury.

The New Haven envelope stamp was first discovered by Wm. P. Brown in about the year 1871. It was a cut specimen mounted in a collection of ordinary stamps, which he bought for a few dollars. Mr. Brown in speaking of the stamp some time ago said: "I think the name of E. A. Mitchell, P. M. was in blue ink, but the rest of the stamp was in such faint red that I could not make it out without a great deal of trouble, but finally succeeded." Mr. Brown then communicated with Mr. Mitchell, the former postmaster in New Haven, and from him learned the history of the stamp. The original discovery was

sold to Phillip Von Ferrary for \$40.

The next specimen discovered was a very poor copy of the envelope, in which the red impression was all but illegible, the signature, however, was in blue ink clear and distinct. The attempt was made to bring back the faint red impression with iron that wholly obliterated all trace of the original design. This envelope was found among the papers of the grandfather of Aaron W. Fagin of Middletown, Connecticut, a young collector, who sold it to the C. H. Mekeel Stamp & Publishing Co., On account of the autograph on the original envelope, it passed through the hands of a number of collectors and dealers, and has found a final resting place in the magnificent collection of Mr. H. E. Deats of Flemington, New Jersey.



No. 1.

The third and probably only entire specimen of the New Haven envelope known, was discovered by Mr. E. B. Sterling a few years ago, illustrated as No. 3.

This is undoubtedly the rarest of United States Provisional stamps except, perhaps, that of Alexandria, Virginia, of which only two copies are known. As compared with the price of the Millbury quoted above,

this envelope might well have been priced at \$10,000. We have never seen it valued by the owner, however, to exceed \$2,500. It is probably in one of the large collections of the east, as we understood that Phillip Von Ferrary did not avail himself of the opportunity of purchasing on account of the great amount of advertising it had received.

The fourth and rarest of all cut specimens was the blue variety signed in black ink discovered by our publishers about a year ago illustrated as No. 3. This



No. 3.

stamp was first sold for \$1,500, and afterwards was resold at a higher price, and is now in the hands of a wealthy and enthusiastic specialist of American stamps. It is the only specimen known in this color.

It is reported that Mr. Hunter and Mr. Leavy of New York have cut specimens of the original New Haven envelope in their collection. Another eastern collector had supposed that he had an original specimen but has lately discovered that it is one of

the many reprints that exist. An expert in hand writing would have no difficulty in distinguishing the signature on the reprints from that on the original, as the man was 26 years older when the second was written.

At the time that Wm. P. Brown discovered the first specimen of the New Haven, and called it to the attention of Mr. E. A. Mitchell who hunted up the old steel die from which the stamp had been printed and struck off a good many of the reprints, some of which he signed, others of which exist in an unsigned condition. We do not know what has become of this old die, but understand it is still in existence. The following are illustrations of two of the reprints in red signed in blue ink from Mr. Deats' collection, he has four of this description.



No. 4.



No. 5.

The following are also from Mr. Deats' collection, being reprints in blue signed in red and marked "Copy".



No. 6.



No. 7.

These last two were no doubt of later date than the former.

There are unsigned reprints of the stamp and unfortunately forged signatures have been added to some of these, with a view of increasing their value.

Mr. Mitchell is now dead, so no more signed reprints are possible.



No. 8.

Prof. F. W. H. Wieschahn, is an expert in matters of hand writing, and has been an expert witness in many of the most famous law cases in the country. He was shown the original blue signature on the envelope illustration No. 1, the original photographic negative of the famous Sterling discovery, illustration No. 2, and the original rare blue stamp with

signature in black, illustration No. 3, together with reprints, illustrations Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, and two others not here reproduced.

His observations will be read with interest.

"The signatures on specimens here illustrated as Nos. 1, 2 and 3 are unmistakably the work of the same man-at or about the same time."

"The signatures on the reprints here illustrated, Nos. 4 and 5, were evidently written by the same man as the above but when much older, and if the period were 26 years later as I am informed a remarkable nerve and muscular force characterized the man."

"In my opinion the prints illustrated as Nos. 6 and 7 were not written at the same time as Nos. 4 and 5, but probably at a later date."

The general characteristics of the signatures on the reprints indicate the increased age of the man with his nerve power wonderfully preserved, and the muscular force but slightly weakened."

"It would be very easy for me to determine whether a signature was written by Mr. Mitchell in 1845-47 or in 1871 or later."

We are sure these expressions from so high an authority and the illustrations of these great rarities will be appreciated by our readers.

THE UNITED STATES REFERENCE MANUAL

The New Haven Provisional



(Editor's Note: It has long been our contention that some of the finest philatelic research and writing is being conducted in America's auction houses. In a previous issue we reproduced articles on the New Haven Provisional from the June 29 and August 10, 1892 editions of Mekeel's.

The October 12, 1989 auction of the Weill Brothers stock of Postmasters' Provisionals by Christie's in New York featured the cover that was discussed in the 1892 articles. The auctioneer's research is reproduced here.)

5¢ Red on light bluish entire, brownish-black signature (8XU2), full clear impression of provisional marking, red New Haven Oct. 21 (1845) datestamp on fresh entire addressed by Professor Benjamin Silliman to Francis Markoe, Jr., Esq., Washington D.C., manuscript 'Due' and blue '5' handstamp...in excellent condition.

The Scott Catalogue identifies this entire as 'the finest known example' of all New Haven provisionals, a statement confirmed by the census in this sale catalogue. It was discovered by a collector, E. B. Sterling, in a packet of autographs purchased for 10¢ in June, 1892. At the time of discovery, the envelope contained a letter dated October 20, 1845. It then passed into the Ferrary collection through R. R. Bogert and was sold in the April 7, 1922 auction for \$5,358 to Arthur Hind. At the Hind sale of November 20, 1933, the New Haven entire was sold for \$2,250 to Alfred H. Caspary. It realized

\$7,250 at the November 15, 1955 Caspary auction and later passed to Josiah K. Lilly. When the Lilly postmasters' provisionals were sold on February 2, 1967, the New Haven fetched \$23,000, a price comparable to that paid for the Annapolis entire. It became part of the Weill collection after the Lilly sale.

The postmaster at New Haven from 1844 to 1849, Mr. Edward A. Mitchell, used a brass handstamp to make prepaid envelopes for local patrons. Very few examples of this New Haven provisional are known, and postmaster Mitchell's recollections in a May 15, 1871 letter to Dr. Petrie (a philatelist) provide little reliable information. The known history of the New Haven provisionals is recorded in the 1932 booklet, *The New Haven Provisional Envelope*, by Carroll Alton Means.

The handstamp was produced in July, 1845, and the dated examples show use in the months of July (Red), October (Red), and April (one Red, two in Blue), which would seem to indicate 1845-46 year dates. The envelopes were made by impressing the brass die at the upper right corner. The design, engraved by Augustus E. Lines, is a truncated double-line frame, surrounding the words 'Post Office / New Haven, Ct. / 5 / Paid / P.M.' In the space provided, Mitchell signed his name, 'E. A. Mitchell' in various color inks. According to Mitchell's statements, many customers would bring envelopes to his office for stamping.

The following list of known

examples corresponds to the current (1989) Scott Catalogue, supplemented with certain information and corrections. Over the years, various discrepancies have resulted from incorrect descriptions of the envelope paper, ink color and signature color of the ten confirmed entires and cut squares (see footnote*)....

8XU1 5¢ Red On White (Blue Or Magenta Signature)

Entires Known:

July 23 (1845), magenta signature, ex Ferrary (sale three, lot 567)

April 1 (1846), blue signature, found 1886 by Fagan, discolored from treatment by Mekeel, ex Ferrary (sale three, lot 564)

A possible third entire, with the imprint cut out and replaced, is listed in the third Ferrary sale (lot 568), but has not been confirmed

Cut Square:

Two known, both magenta signature, one discovered in 1871 by Wm. P. Brown (first New Haven found), other ex Hunter, Dr. Bowers, Caspary

Cut to Shape:

One known, magenta signature, ex Worthington and Green

8XU2 5¢ Red On Bluish White (Black Signature)

One Entire Known (Christie's lot #634, purchased by John Boker for \$104,500):

October 21 (1845) entire, brown-black signature, addressed to Washington, D.C., manuscript 'Due' and black handstamped '5' presumably applied at New Haven, ex Ferrary (sale three, lot 566), illustrated in the Means booklet (p. 36) (Note: See Manual Page 9.08XU2.1.110.100 for further information on this entire.)

8XU3 5¢ Dull Blue On Buff (Blue Signature) [Also known with black signature]

One Entire Known:

April 6 (1846?), blue signature, ex Ferrary (sale three, lot 565, misdescribed as Red on buff in catalogue, see footnote*), ex Caspary, Isleham

(Continued on next page)

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In tracing the evolution of the Scott Catalogue's New Haven listings, a pattern emerges which seems to explain the current state of confusion. In the early editions, there were three entries: Red on white, Blue on buff, and Dull Blue on white. After 1938 the listing was expanded to five entries: Red on white, Red on bluish, Blue on buff, Dull Blue on white, and Dull Blue on orange buff. It remained the same through the numbering changes, in which the provisionals were designated with 'X' numbers.

Then, after 1971, the Scott editors added signature colors to the entries and changed the description of no. 8XU3 from 'Dull blue on buff' to 'Dull Blue on buff (Bl.) [blue signature]', and no. 8XU5 from 'Dull Blue on orange buff' to 'Dull Blue on buff (R) [red signature].' It is not unreasonable to assume that the editor's pen was put to paper without carefully untangling the Means booklet listings. Therefore, to

simplify the distinction between nos. 8XU3 and 8XU5, which were basically the same thing—the Dull Blue on buff entire—the editors identified 8XU3 as having a blue signature, not realizing it comes with black signature, and created a mythical beast, the Dull Blue on buff entire with red signature.

Unless positive proof of no. 8XU5's existence can be offered, it should be dropped from the Scott Catalogue. In addition, no. 8XU3 should be amended to include the cut to shape example with black signature, and no. 8XU4 should be amended to indicate blue signature instead of black. *(As a result of this research, these changes were made by the Scott catalogue editors in the 1991 Catalogue. JFD.)*

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THE UNITED STATES REFERENCE MANUAL

The New Haven Provisional

(From Mekeel's, June 29, 1892

and August 10, 1892)

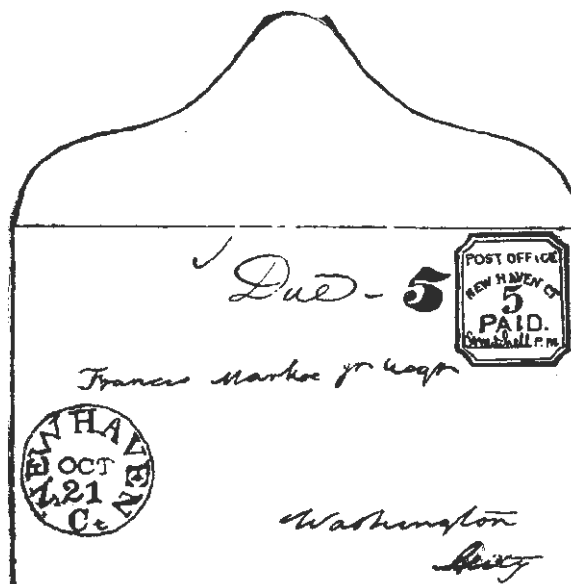
A Treasure Found

Perhaps one of the most fortunate discoveries that has yet been made occurred at an auction sale of old autographs in Philadelphia. Almost every collector is familiar with the...New Haven stamp, which claims a place among postmaster's stamps in our catalogues. While some do not mention its approximate value, others value the reprints at \$30 each.

Mr. E.B Sterling of Trenton, N.J., was the hero of the affair we are about to relate....Aside from philately, Mr. Sterling...attended this sale in view of buying some valuable autographs...he was about to leave, when lot No. 1435 was in the auctioneer's hands. This lot consisted of eight letters, written by Prof. Benj. Silleman, of Yale College, New Haven, Ct., and dated between January 11, 1822, and February 15, 1846. There was nothing of interest in them to Mr. Sterling, having simply examined the exterior of the envelopes, however, one of his opponents who had been buying heavily, bid 5 cents on the lot, and so he thought he could go five better, and consequently the lot was struck off to him at 10 cents....He states that a few weeks after, while looking over some of his autographs for the purpose of sending a few to a friend, among other things he ran across these eight letters...and upon coming to the next to the last one...dated New Haven, October 21, 1845, enclosed in the larger envelope and between the letter he found the New Haven stamp on original cover, as illustrated herewith. Of course, he at once realized the value, as there was no question as to its authenticity. Mr. Sterling describes it as follows:

"My New Haven stamp is perfect and clean, not having a spot or blemish, and the envelope with flap and wax, well preserved. The check at the upper portion of the envelope is in blue, evidently being placed there by the New York postmaster when going through his office. The word 'due' is written in black and the numeral '5' a slightly faded blue or a muddled black, the color

*Original illustration
from Mekeel's,
June 29, 1892*



being hard to distinguish; it is addressed to Francis Markoe, Jr., Washington City. The signature, E.A. Mitchell, is clear and perfect. Although the color of the ink was intended for black, I suppose it has faded to a brown; it would be difficult to state with certainty, but I feel sure that it was never a blue or red. The stamp and postmark are in a dull red color, the same shade as the New Haven postmark of that year, or 1840 and 1844."

Although it is a matter of discussion as to the exact number of these stamps that are known to exist, it is refuted by none that the one described is the only perfect specimen that is at present known.

In the year, 1889, Mr. C.H. Mekeel came in possession of an envelope bearing one of these stamps, which was a very faint copy, although the postmark in the lower corner of the envelope was plain, and also the signature of E.A. Mitchell on the stamp itself. The letter was addressed to Horace Clark, Esq., Middleton, Conn., and was marked "Paid." With this stamp an experiment was made by the use of chemicals to restore the color; however, the professional advice was not of a character to improve the appearance of the stamp or increase its value. On the contrary, the specimen was almost ruined, although a reasonable price was received and no little experience thrown in as a bonus.

Another specimen of which we have heard, is one that has been in the possession of Wm. Brown, but it is not on the original envelope, and is badly

mutilated. Its value is something in the neighborhood of \$500. Mr. Sterling regards his as being worth at least \$2,500 and has refused offers of \$1,500, \$1,850 and \$2,000....

...Again referring to the illustration, Mr. Sterling says: "The fact of it's being marked 'due 5' by the Washington Post Office was because the stamp was only good for postage in New Haven, the rate being 10 cents at that time, so 5 cents must have been credited to the New Haven office, and 5 cents charged at the other point.

"It may have been that the Postmaster, E.A. Mitchell, had induced Prof. Silleman to try and see if it would be recognized for postage in Washington; as he had already written Mr. Markoe's name on the back of the letter before mailing in the envelope, it would show that he thought of sending it in that way first."...

...we believe that our account of the affair is about as correct as any, having received our information direct from the owner.

"The Week"

August 10, 1892

The much-talked of New Haven Stamp, which was found by our lucky Mr. Sterling... The report which has been circulated to the effect that this envelope was sold to Mr. Bogert for \$1,000 has been denied.

*File Page: 9.08XU2.1.110.100
07/31/92*

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