

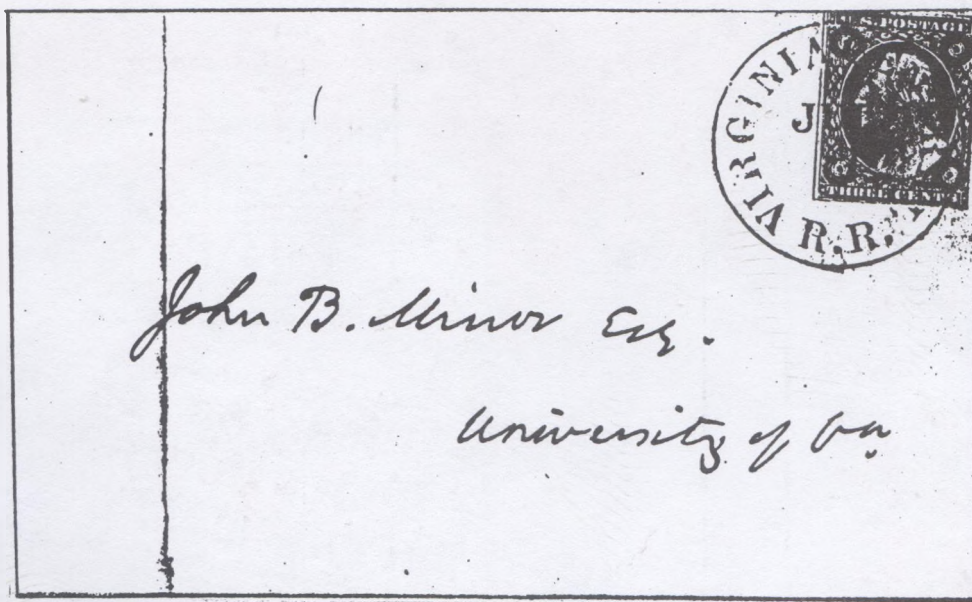


Cancellation Club **NEWS**

Volume 21, Number 3
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Summer 1992

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1852 Virginia Central RR large postmark -- see page 35.

THE U.S. CANCELLATION CLUB NEWS

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From the Editor

In this issue is reproduced my article on the Virginia Central RR, which originally appeared in Way Markings, the journal of the Virginia Postal History Society. The period covered is from 1850 to the commencement of the Civil War.

The New Jersey Postal History Society has announced a 2nd supplement to Brad Arch's Directory of New Jersey 1847 covers. It is available from the society at 144 Hamilton Ave., Clifton, NJ 07011 for \$1.00.

I am sorry to announce that Alyce Evans has submitted her resignation, thereby vacating the position of Back Issues Monitor. She informs that the back issues are housed in 8 boxes of about 1½ cubic feet each. A volunteer is sought for this position. The club is much in debt to Alyce for her services to the society over the years, including the job of editorship.

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VIRGINIA CENTRAL RAILROAD

MAIL SERVICE

In the August 1986 issue of WAY MARKINGS I discussed the affairs of the Louisa Railroad from its charter in February 1836 through the termination of the 1843 to 1847 contract period. In this issue I will continue the tale until its mail service was suspended at the advent of the Civil War in May 1861. This was a period of significant expansion of the road both eastward into Richmond and westward through Charlottesville and Staunton to the Jackson River near Clifton Forge. Mail service along the route underwent substantial changes, particularly in the 1855 through 1857 period when this road in conjunction with the Orange & Alexandria RR carried the great mail from Washington to Richmond.

RAILROAD EXPANSION

The expansion of the Louisa/Virginia Central RR can be considered in three sections. The eastward extension into Richmond and two westward legs,

one across the Blue Ridge Mountains to Staunton in Augusta County and finally through the Alleghany Mountains to the Jackson River Depot (Clifton Forge). The author relied heavily upon the Doctoral dissertation of Elizabeth D. Coleman for the information in this section.

EXTENSION TO RICHMOND

The Louisa RR undertook to provide its own transportation in July 1847, prior to this time the service was performed by the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac (RF&P) RR. For the next two years the Louisa contracted with the RF&P RR to carry its passenger and freight business from Junction to Richmond. This contract expired in mid-1849 and the Louisa entered into an agreement with Heiskell Stage lines for the continuation to Richmond.

Meanwhile in March 1848 the Louisa obtained permission to build



Map of the Virginia Central RR, adapted from a map by W. Vaisz and printed by P. S. Duval & Co.'s steam litho press, Philadelphia, PA, 1852. Scale 1:1,250,000. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

into Richmond. Again the RF&P entered the picture by claiming that their charter granted a 30 year monopoly to carry passengers between Washington and Richmond. The litigation that followed proceeded through the court system to the U.S. Supreme Court and at all levels the injunction against the extension asked by the RF&P RR was denied.

Construction began in early 1849 and continued during the litigation process. The first Virginia Central train entered Richmond in December 1850 and regular service was established in January. The 27 mile route between Junction and Richmond ran by Hanover CH to a depot at Broad and Union Streets in Richmond. For a map of the Richmond facilities refer to my article on the Richmond & Danville RR in the May 1991 issue of WAY MARKINGS.

EXTENSION FROM GORDONSVILLE TO STAUNTON

The extension of the road west of Gordonsville was delayed due to a number of causes, financial being one, but also a debate on the route to be taken. Two routes were considered, one was to Harrisonburg in Rockingham County and the other through Rockfish Gap to Staunton in Augusta County.

Construction on the portion east of the Blue Ridge started in mid-1848 and was completed to Shadwell in May 1849. By the next June trains of the Virginia Central entered Charlottesville and provided a convenient link between the University of Virginia and the State Capitol. By December 1852 the eastern side of the Blue Ridge was attained at Mechum's River.

Here the plan of attack changed, the RR company did not have the wherewithal to construct the road bed over and through the Blue Ridge. The State recognized this in 1849 and chartered the State owned Blue Ridge RR to accomplish the task. The Virginia Central was given exclusive use of the

road in return for a percentage of their receipts until the State's outlay was repaid.

The almost 17 mile RR across the ridge required the boring of four tunnels, the longest of which was over 4000 feet. Grading toward this commenced in 1850, but it was eight years later before the first train passed through the Blue Ridge Tunnel.

To circumvent the difficulties in constructing the tunnels a temporary, but substantial track was built around the obstacles. In the meantime the Virginia Central was building from Waynesboro to Staunton. The first train to cross the Blue Ridge entered that city on March 20, 1854. The improvement in travel was significant for the previous 3-day stage coach journey to Richmond was now reduced to 7 or 8 hours.

BUILDING FROM STAUNTON TO JACKSON RIVER

In the early 1850's the RR company was lobbying the State for the right to build toward Covington in Alleghany County. However, competition for a route to Covington was presented by the Virginia & Tennessee RR and the James River & Kanawha Canal Co. All three envisioned a rail connection to the Ohio River through what is now the southern portion of West Virginia.

The State legislature granted the right to the Virginia Central in 1850 and the work of grading the route began immediately. The visions of this expansion led to the change of the name of the road from the Louisa to the Virginia Central in February 1850.

A route via Buffalo Gap was selected and surveys as far as Millboro were completed by October 1851. Again four tunnels were required and temporary tracks were built to circumvent this construction. In fact the Lick Run Tunnel was not completed until 1872.

Trains began running west of Staunton in the summer of 1855 and reached Goshen, 171 miles west of Richmond in October. The road reached Millboro in July of the next year and finally to Jackson River Depot in August 1857. This became the western terminus until after the Civil War.

The expansion of the road during the decade was impressive and if the Panic of 1857 had not occurred further progress would have been witnessed. The road increased its mileage by about 150 miles, the volume of business increased seven fold from \$90,000 per year to over \$630,000, the number of locomotives was augmented from 8 to 28 and by 1860 four mail cars were in operation.

MAIL ROUTES

On July 1, 1847 the mail route ran from Junction to Gordonsville for which the Louisa RR was paid \$5100 or \$100 per mile per annum for the 51 mile route. From this point, the discussion will be segregated into five parts. First, the expansion to Charlottesville will be delineated, then the extension to Richmond, followed by the continuation to Staunton, the great mail era

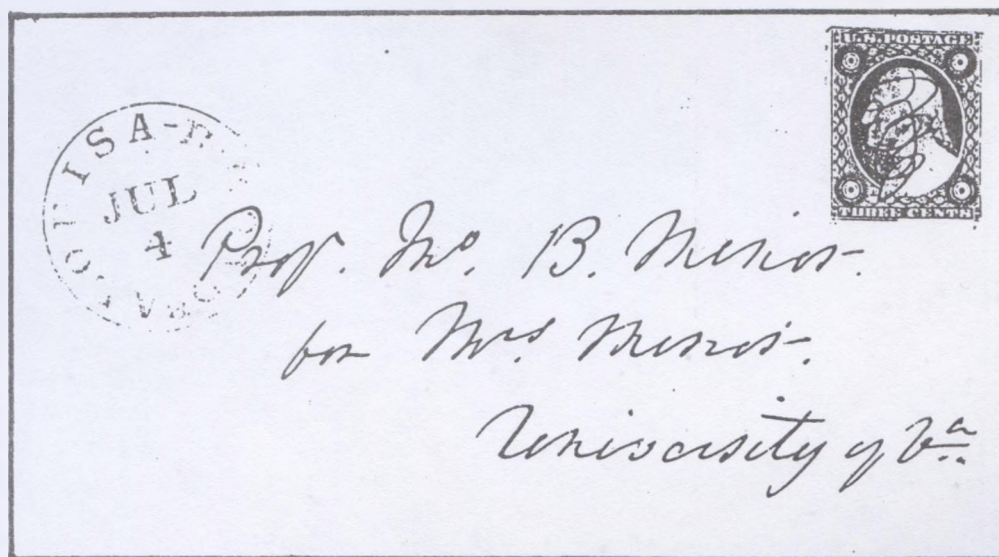
and lastly the elongation to Jackson River Depot. This period prior to the Civil War spans four contract periods, 1847-51, 1851-55, 1855-59 and 1859-61, thus changes occurred in the rate of pay not directly related to the extension of the route.

EXTENSION TO CHARLOTTESVILLE

Once the RR company decided upon the route, that is, toward Harrisonburg or Staunton, construction and mail route lengthening proceeded rapidly. The first augmentation was to Cobham Depot in August 1848. In all four extensions totaling 21½ miles were required to reach Charlottesville and in each case the railroad compensation was increased by \$100 per mile per year. These increments are denoted in the following table:

Aug 14, 1848	to Cobham Depot	7 miles
Feb 1, 1849	" Keswick Depot	7 "
May 7, "	" Shadwell	3½ "
Jun 27, 1850	" Charlott'ville	4 "

Note, at the time Keswick Depot was known as Rogers Turn Out. While this westward expansion was occurring, the company was also looking eastward and building an entrance to Richmond.



Louisa - R Road / Va July 4, 1851 blue postmark on an envelope to the University of Virginia. The stamp is a 3¢ orange brown, position 41R1^a.

EXTENSION TO RICHMOND

At the initiation of the 1847 to 1851 contract period the RF&P RR transported the Louisa RR's mails, as well as passengers and freight into Richmond. However, two years later the contract between the two railroads was dissolved and the Louisa RR provided stagecoach transportation to Richmond. The Post Office Department (POD) responded to this change by extending the route 20 miles into Richmond on July 1, 1849, but this was accomplished without additional compensation to the company.

The status quo remained until August 1850, when the route was curtailed at Junction. This reduction was short lived as the railroad was approaching the State Capitol and reached there in December. On January 1, 1851 the route was again opened into Richmond and for the 27 mile increment the company was allowed an additional \$1000 per year, making the total pay \$8250.

EXTENSION TO STAUNTON

The new contract period commenced on July 1, 1851 and bickering over compensation resulted. The RR wanted \$150 per mile for the entire route, while the POD desired to retain the status quo. Eventually the latter offered \$100 per mile if the RR company would convey the great northern and southern mails as required. This was rejected and the company agreed to the initial offer of \$100 per mile between Junction and Charlottesville and \$1000 per year from Junction to Richmond. Eventually the distance between Junction and Charlottesville was determined to be only 71 miles, thus the annual pay was \$8100.

Within the year extensions across the Blue Ridge Mountains began and similar to the advancements to Charlottesville they took place in four segments:

Apr 21, 1852	to Woodville	7 miles
Dec 1, "	" Mechum's R.	2 "
Mar 7, 1854	" Greenwood	8 "
Apr 1, "	" Staunton	23 "

The distance of the last extension was actually 23.15 miles. The RR company received \$100 per mile for each extension until the last one into Staunton, when according to the contractual agreement they received \$100 per mile for the entire distance from Richmond or an annual stipend of \$13815.

THE GREAT MAIL ERA

The new contract period commenced on July 1, 1855 and witnessed a radical change to the mail contracts on the Virginia Central RR routes. The POD and the RF&P RR had difficulties over a number of years, recall the offer to the Virginia Central in the previous contract period to carry the great mail. The Orange & Alexandria (O&A RR) RR was completed to Gordonsville in the Spring of 1854. This enabled the POD to circumvent the steamboat route from Washington to Aquia Creek and provide an all rail route between Washington and Richmond for the great mail. This was accomplished with the O&A RR carrying the great mail from Washington to Gordonsville and the Virginia Central from the latter point to Richmond. Thus the Virginia Central route was split, one being the above segment and the second for that portion of the road west of Gordonsville. The latter will be discussed in the next section.

Considering the great mail route, the railroad company received \$250 per mile for the 76½ mile route from Gordonsville to Richmond. This amounted to \$19,125 per year for a double daily service except only one trip on Sunday. The situation remained in effect until March 1858 (ordered December 24, 1857), when the RF&P RR resumed the transportation of the great mails for a nine month period of each year, that is, from March 1st to

December 1st. During this nine month period the Virginia Central's remuneration was reduced to \$150 per mile, however, for the other three months they would receive \$250 per mile provided they agreed to carry the great mail when the Potomac River was blocked by ice. Also when the Virginia Central was actually engaged in transporting the great mail the pay was computed at \$300 per mile.

For the contract period starting July 1, 1859 both sections of the route were again combined as it ran from Richmond to Jackson River Depot. The rates of pay varied, but on the segment from Richmond to Gordonsville the company received \$150 per mile per year with the stipulation that they carry the great mail when the Potomac River may be obstructed by ice.

EXTENSION TO JACKSON RIVER

At the time of the initiation of the 1855 contract the rails ran eight miles west of Staunton to Swopes Depot and for this section of the railroad a separate route was established with a compensation of \$100 per mile per year. The route pressed forward another almost 25 miles in the following incre-

ments:

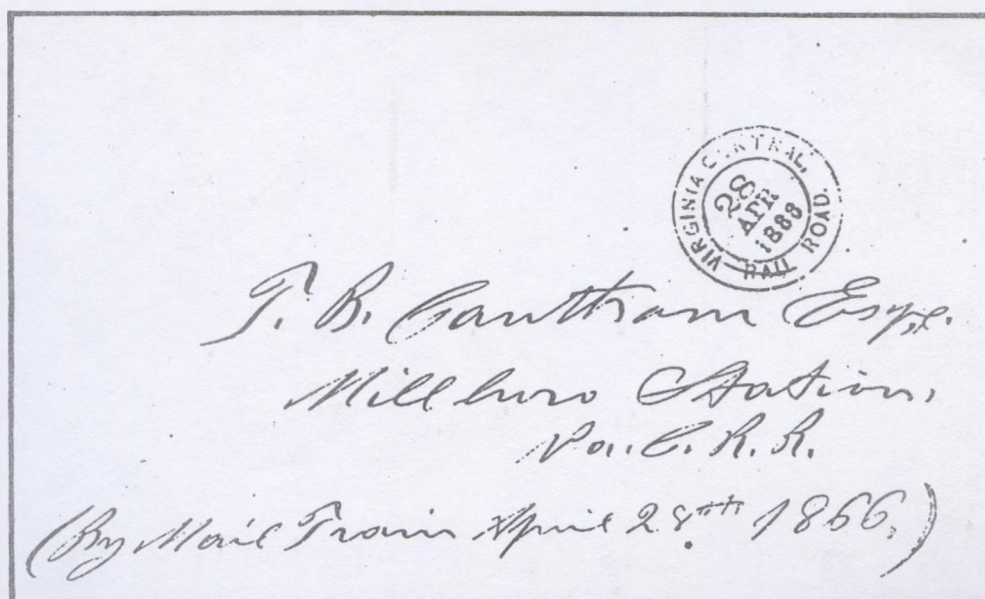
Aug 3, 1855	to Mount Alta	11 miles
Aug 17, "	" Craigsville	4 "
Sep 8, "	" Bells Valley	4½ "
Oct 8, "	" Goshen	5 "

Although the original 1855 contract specified seven trips a week, the POD determined that only three trips a week were necessary during the winter months on the roadway west of Staunton. For this section the pay was reduced to \$50 per mile from October 1st through May 31st of each year.

The road continued to progress, reaching Millboro Springs in July 1856 and finally Jackson River Depot in August of the next year. The chartered goal of Covington was not reached until after the Civil War.

The 1859 contract perpetuated the above provisions with only three trips per week during the winter portion of the year and the compensation remained the same on this section of the route.

The route was discontinued on May 31, 1861 per Montgomery Blair's order of the 27th. Although the Virginia Central performed valuable service for



Post Civil War marking on a April 28, 1866 envelope to Millboro Station, Virginia

the Confederacy, the USPOD could not reinstitute the route until the summer of 1865. At this time the route structure of the great mail era was restored. That is, the Virginia Central shared with the O&A RR the route from Washington to Richmond with the breaking point at Gordonsville. This route commenced service on July 28th with a remuneration of \$100 per mile per year. For the tracks west of Gordonsville a separate route was established. This \$50 per mile per year route went into operation on August 1st.

ROUTE AGENTS

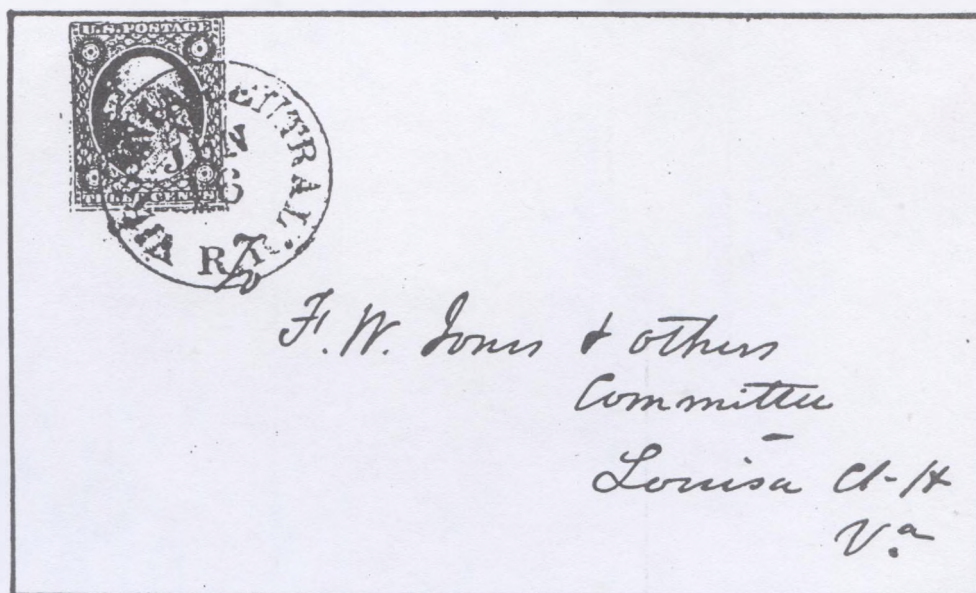
The delineation of route agents on the Virginia Central RR is complicated by the presence of the great mail agents during the 1855 contract period. First, we will consider the regular Virginia Central agents and then the great mail agents.

Route agent service commenced on the Louisa RR in March 1845. Joseph N. Phillips was appointed as the sole agent on the line in May 1846. He replaced the initial agent. The train schedule was so arranged that he could leave the western end of the route in

the early morning (about 5AM) and return by the early afternoon. However by November 1850 the schedule was altered so that trains departed both ends of the route in the morning and reached the other end early in the afternoon. This necessitated the employment of a second agent and Robert B. Moody was appointed. Initially the agent ran between Junction and Gordonsville, but by 1851 they covered the route from Richmond to Charlottesville. Phillips and Moody continued to follow the route as it expanded westward and ran to Staunton in 1854. Their annual salary at this time was \$800.

When the great mail was transferred to the route, these agents were instructed to run between Gordonsville and Staunton. As the line approached the Jackson River a third agent was needed, thus in July 1857 Robert Kyle was appointed.

From here onward the changes are a combination of fact and speculation. In December 1857 E. J. Swift was transferred from the Washington via Gordonsville to Richmond line to this route. Apparently he replaced Joseph N. Phillips, since according to the PMG Annual reports only three route agents



Black 30mm Virginia Central/RR CDS (Towle 303 B-1) on a letter to Louisa CH.

were employed. Also, in May 1859 Phillips was appointed route agent on the Orange & Alexandria RR. Also there is some evidence but no official documentation has been found that from December 1857 the agents covered the entire length of the road from Richmond to Jackson River Depot. The only other change on the route was that G. G. Gooch replaced Robert Moody in December 1858.

On the great mail route there existed two sets of route agents. Two were assigned to the express line at \$800 per year. On the regular line there were four agents at \$1000 per year. On July 1, 1855 the agents on the express line were Thomas Howard and E. J. Swift. Howard was replaced in September by S. S. Gover, who was in turn replaced by Joshua P. Taylor in March of the next year. As stated before Swift was transferred to the Virginia Central route in December 1857.

On the regular line the four agents as of July 1, 1855 were Nicholas M. Iarella, Thomas P. Chisman, William P. Blakeley and James A. Evans. Thomas Howard, from the express line, replaced Evans in September. Iarella's agency

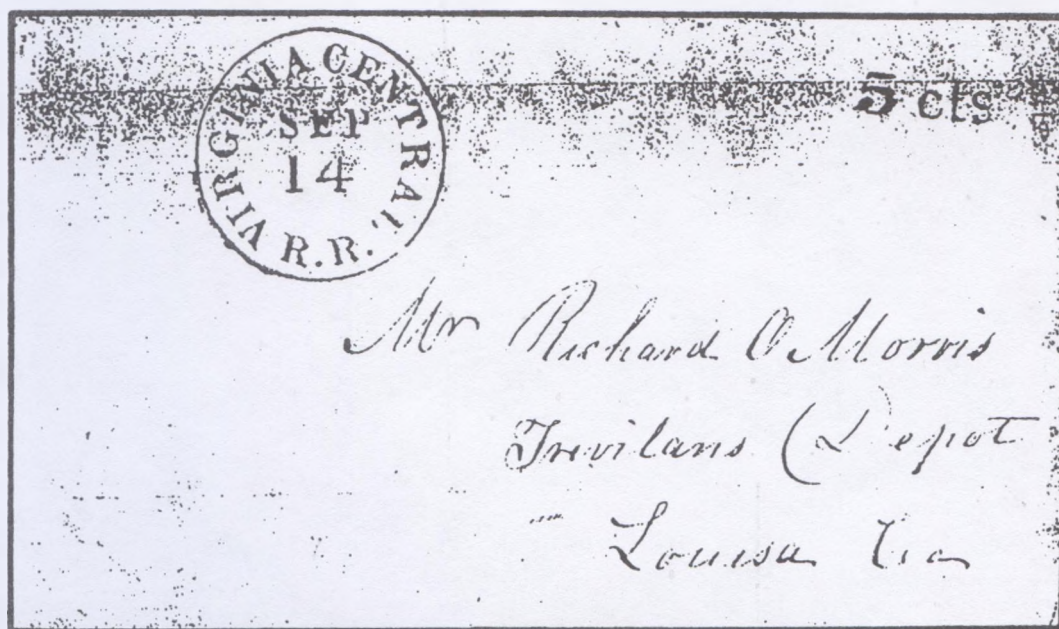
was abolished in September 1857.

As noted above, it appears that these agents ran from Alexandria to Gordonsville from December 1857 onward. However, some if not all must have run on the RF&P RR route during the nine months of the year when that road transported the great mail.

POSTMARKS

Although the name of the road was changed from Louisa RR to Virginia Central RR in February 1850 the postmark did not reflect this situation for approximately two years. The 30mm Louisa R Road/ VA postmark has been recorded in November 1851. In fact five of the nine covers that I have recorded occur during the Virginia Central era. This device, which was used solely by agent Phillips, occurs principally in blue, but with black ink employed in the last recorded month of usage. The earliest recorded is in April 1848.

It is interesting to note that although route agent Phillips received from the POD 500 5-cent and 100 10-cent 1847 stamps in August 1848, none have been recorded on a Louisa RR cover.



Black 33mm Virginia Central/RR CDS (Towle 303 B-2) and matching "5cts" handstamp

December 24. 1857—

Route 4831. V^a Washington to Richmond:

Orange & Alex^a. R. R. Co. -

Authorize the transfer of the Great Northern and Southern mails from this route to No 4801-Washing^g by Fredericksburg to Richmond - for 9 months each year, viz - from 1st March to 1st Dec^r and reduce the pay to the rate of \$24,450 per ann: for the period specified, being at the rate of \$150: per mile per ann: for 163 miles - the distance from Alexandria, by Gordonsville to Richmond - the service to be once daily; to take effect 1st March 1858.

Present rate of pay to continue from 1st Dec^r to 1st March each year. Provided, that when the navigation of the Potomac river is obstructed by ice the great mails shall be conveyed on this route - say from 1st Decemb^r to 1st March - by agreement between the contractors on the two routes, without additional cost to the Post Office Department.

Aaron Brown,

The order of December 24, 1857 transferring the great northern and southern mails back to the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac RR with the provision that the Virginia Central and the Orange & Alexandria RRs transport these great mails during the winter months when the Potomac River may be obstructed by ice. The order was found in the Journals of the Postmaster General, which are housed at the National Archives.

However, Phillips did not retain the stamps for an extended period. In May 1849 he returned 318 5-cent and 99 10-cent stamps to the Department. (Wenk, 1975, p92, p116.)



Towle 303 A-1

The earliest recorded Virginia Central marking is a manuscript postmark on a March 1852 cover. The hand is similar to the Louisa RR manuscript, thus applied by agent Phillips.

*Virginia Central RR
Mar 17th*

Towle 303 AM-1

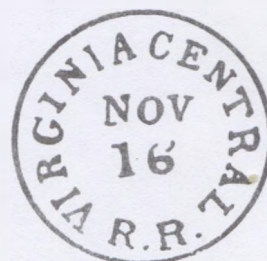
A couple of months later two circular devices were issued, presumably one to each of the route agents. One a 30mm CDS has a recorded usage from May 7, 1852 to December 29, 1854.



Towle 303 B-1

The other a 33mm CDS has been seen from September 3, 1852 until May 14, 1854. These markings are applied in black ink.

No other markings have been re-



Towle 303 B-2

corded and this leaves blank the last half of the decade including the period when the Virginia Central carried the great mail. As noted previously route agents Phillips and Moody were transferred to the western portion of the road in July 1855, that is, they ran west of Gordonsville. The segment between Richmond and Gordonsville was covered by the great mail route agents. What postmarks, if any, were used on these two segments is unknown at the present. (Note, the CDS's in this section were extracted from Towle (1986).)

SUMMARY

Following years of stagnation the Louisa RR began to expand in 1848. They built eastward, despite objections by the RF&P RR, and entered Richmond in December 1850. Westward the line reached Charlottesville in June 1850 and with the assistance of the State owned Blue Ridge RR entered Staunton in April 1854. The pre-Civil War expansion culminated at the Jackson River Depot in August 1857. These expansions precipitated a name change in February 1850 to the Virginia Central RR.

The mail routes followed this expansion and route agent service was provided throughout the period. For a span of over 2½ years beginning in July 1855 the great mail was transported on the segment between Gordonsville and Richmond. Although three different handstamps are known used by the agents, none have been recorded after 1854 leaving somewhat of an enigma. Your assistance is needed.

The USPOD departed the road in mail service. They did not return May 1861, when the CSPOD took over the until the summer of 1865.

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 - 2) Mail Route Registers, Virginia -- 1847 to 1861,
 - 3) Appointment Office Records, Route Agents -- 1855 to 1861,
 - 4) Annual Reports of the Postmaster General -- 1847 to 1861,
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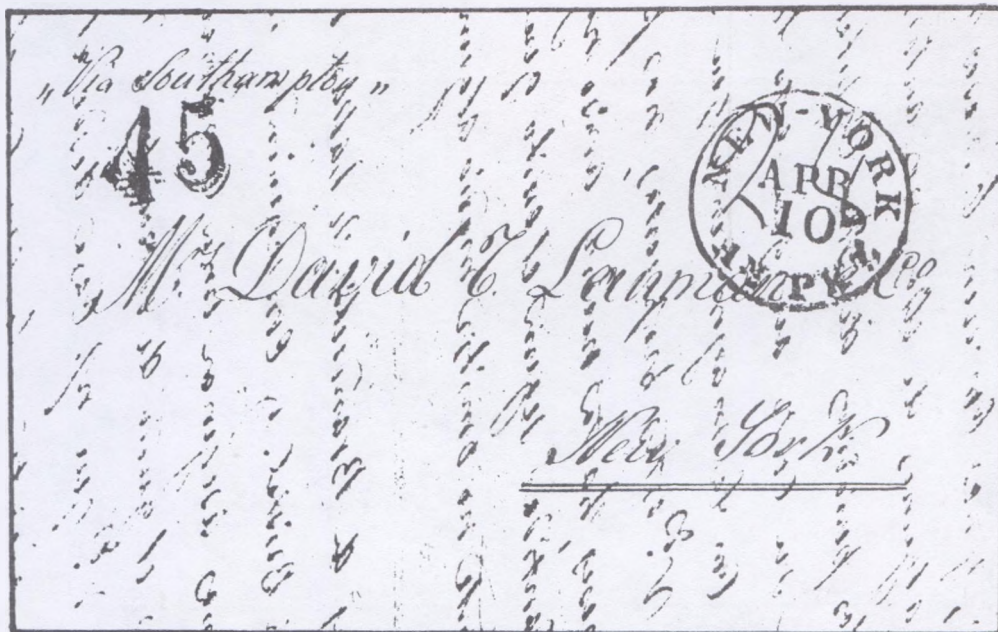
Trans-Atlantic Mails

Buenos Aires to New York via Southampton

The illustrated cover originated in Buenos Aires in February 1857, crossed the Atlantic to Southampton and then recrossed the ocean to New York. This may seem to be a round about route, but at the time it was the only contract route available. The total postage was 45 cents as indicated by the New York numeral hand stamp in the upper left corner. This rate consisted of one shilling (24 cents) for the sea postage from Buenos Aires to Southampton, 16 cents sea postage from Southampton to New York and finally five cents for U.S. inland. The New York post office collected this 45 cents from the recipient. Of this amount the U.S. retained 21 cents and repaid Great Britain 24 cents for the initial Atlantic crossing. Although difficult to see there is a manuscript "24" within the "New York/Am Pkt" postmark, which represents this British debit to the U.S. This 45 cent rate structure existed from March 1852 until April 1859 (Starnes, p4).

On the voyage from Buenos Aires the letter was carried aboard the Royal Mail Steam Packet "Tamar." This 2000 ton, 287 foot paddle steamer was built at Northfleet in 1854. On the pertinent sailing she departed the port of origin on February 4th and after various stops enroute including Rio de Janeiro and Lisbon reached Southampton on March 24th. This represented an elapsed time of 48 days. (Howat, p131,259.)

At Southampton the missive awaited the arrival of the Ocean Line steamer "Washington." This vessel departed Bremen on March 23rd and subsequently left Southampton on the 26th. She arrived at New York on April 9th (Hubbard-Winter, p90). The 1600 ton, 230 foot steamship was the first of only two owned by the Ocean Line. She was launched and made her maiden voyage in 1847 (Bonsor, p189). Postal historians are well aware that this maiden voyage was the impetus for



1857 cover from Buenos Aires to New York via Southampton, carried by the Royal Mail Steam Packet "Tamar" and the Ocean Line "Washington."

discriminatory and eventually retaliatory rates. The "Washington" would make only two voyages after the one mentioned in this article as the Ocean Line suspended operations in mid-1857.

From the sailing dates listed one observes that in 1857 it took over two months to transmit a letter from Buenos Aires to New York.

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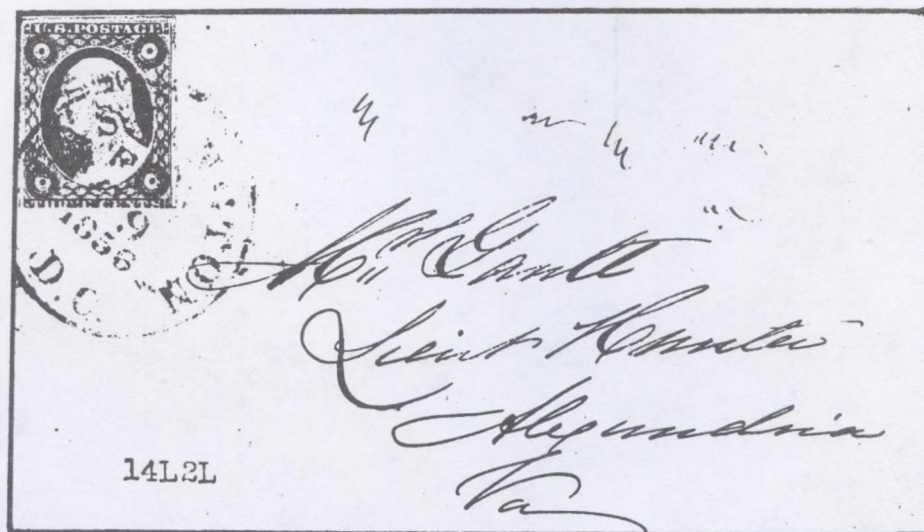
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More February 29th Leap Year Postmarks

by John Shue

The following are selected covers from a collection of February 29th leap year postmarks. A previous selection appeared in the Winter 1992 NEWS.



1856 black Washington, DC postmark on a cover franked with the 1851 3¢ Red, position 14L2L and mailed to Alexandria, Va.

The Postmaster making up Registered Letters, &c., for dispatch, will fill up the other side of this Bill, and write the name of his Post Office, County, and State in the blank address on this side.

The Postmaster receiving this Bill in Registered Package will at once compare entries with letters, &c., inclosed; make entries on record of registered matter received; stamp postmark below; sign this Bill on other side, noting any errors, and return it to the mailing Post Office without cover.

A penalty of \$300 is fixed by law for using this card on matter than official business.

Post Office Department.
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

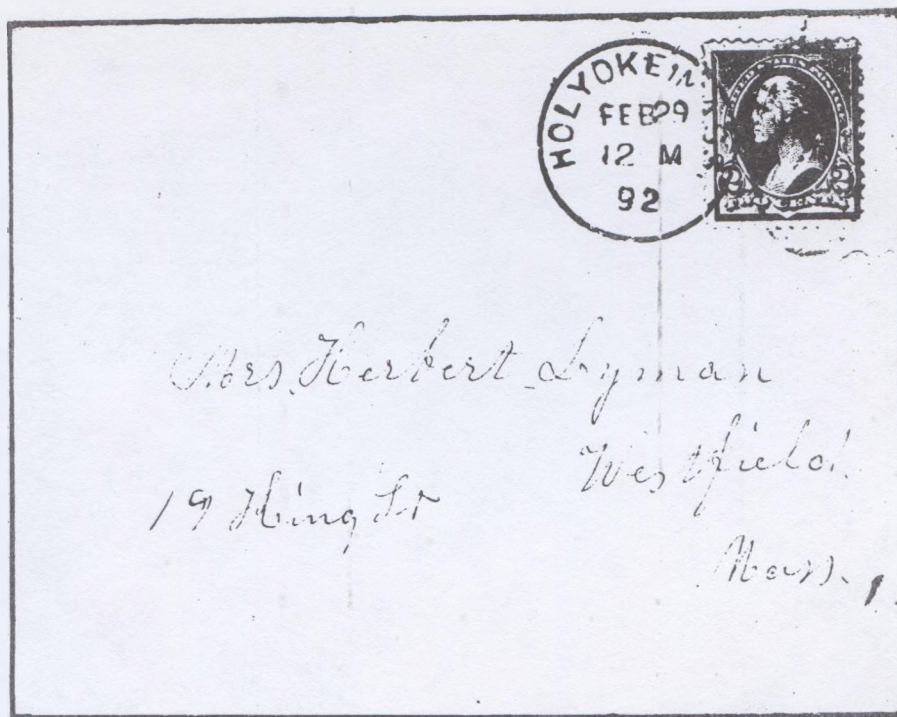
Post Office *North Liberty*
County of *Mercer*
State of *Pa.*

RETURN TO:

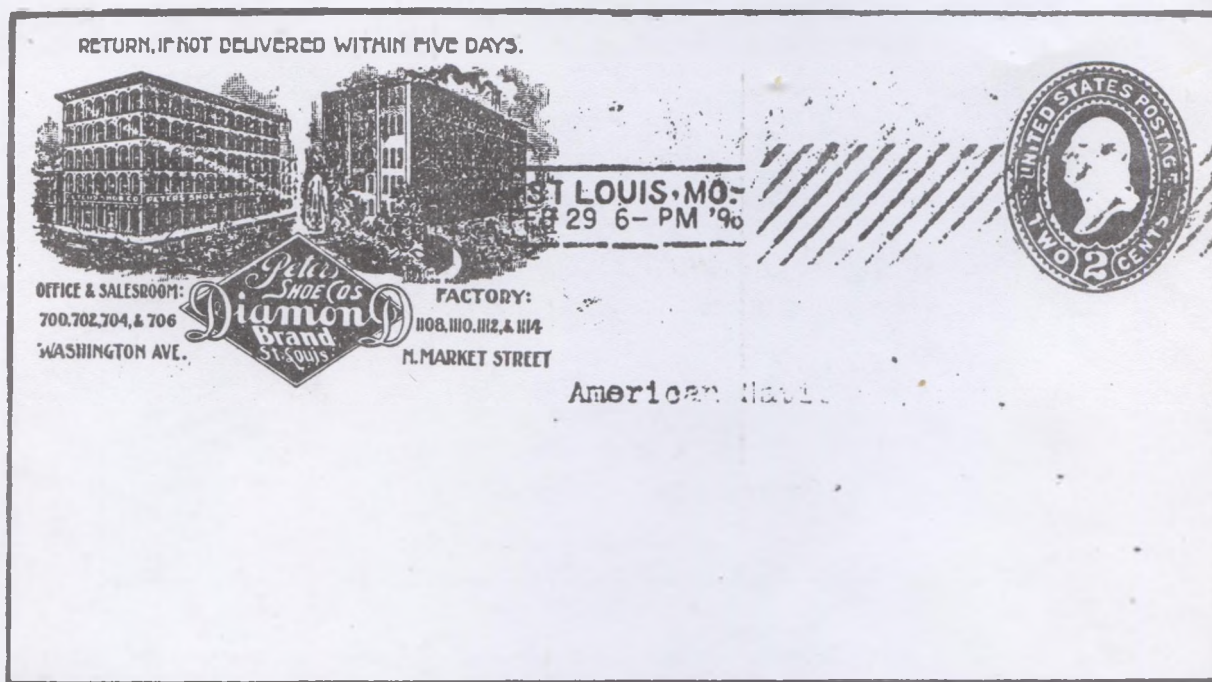
Stamp here name of Post Office *PA*
and date of receipt *FEB 29 84 PM*

8

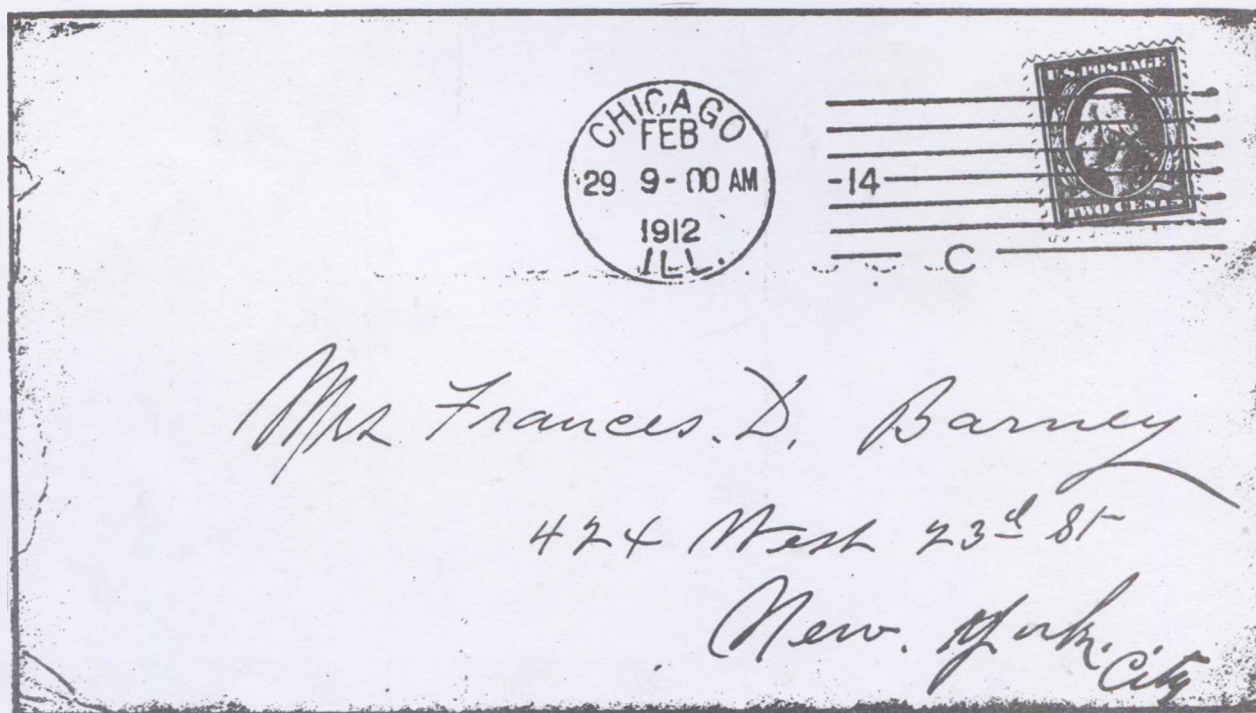
1884 Philadelphia Wesson "Time-on-Bottom" postmark on registry receipt card to North Liberty, Pa.



1892 Holyoke, Mass. duplex postmark tying the 2¢ issue of 1890 on an envelope to Westfield.



1896 St. Louis, Mo. Barry machine cancellation on 2¢ embossed envelope to Fort Smith, Ark.



1912 Chicago, Ill. Time Marking-Cummins machine cancellation ties 2¢ Red on an envelope to New York City.