

Postmaster General Wickliffe states in his letter of 8/11/1842 to W. C. Morgan the function of the Express Mail service as follows:

"The complaints at New York, Philadelphia, Boston, &c. were, that as the reception of letters at these offices to be sent by the mail each day, ceased about one hour before the mail left the place of departure, they were deprived of the opportunity, always desirable, of communicating through the mail the latest intelligence; consequently, they were compelled to use these private expresses by which they sent their letters. To satisfy myself of the truth of these complaints, and also of the extent of the inroads which these "private letter expresses" were making upon the Department, I travelled over these lines and made my own personal observations. I saw the evil, and recognized in a great degree the difficulties which gave rise to and succored it.

It occurred to me that I could, in part, furnish a remedy with but little additional expense, by adding to the duties of the agents already in service, and thereby furnish to the business community the facility of sending, by the agents of the Department, at the legal postage, their letters, if delivered to them at any time before the mail left.

I therefore directed them to receive all letters, paid and unpaid, at any time before starting to rate the postage, keep an account, pay the money over the postmasters at the end of their respective routes, take their receipts and make to the Department weekly reports. This is the "Express Mail." These are the duties which the agents are required to discharge for the Department. The whole of these agents are supervised generally by the special agents and postmasters on the routes, and by a principal charged with a personal daily supervision."

In other words: Express Mail would travel outside the regular postoffice mail after this mail had been closed. Route agents would postmark and process such mail. There was no speedier transportation of "Express Mail" than of regular mail, nor was there a special fee involved.

Announcement of this new Express Mail service between New York, Albany and Buffalo was made in advertisements by the postmasters of New York and Albany and Agent Eaton. "Pat Paragraphs" printed in #24 the one by John Lorimer Graham, Postmaster of New York:

"UNITED STATES EXPRESS MAIL between NEW YORK, ALBANY & BUFFALO. --The Postmaster General, with a view to the accommodation of the public, and to increased despatch and security, has established an Express Mail, to expedite which Messengers will be employed under the immediate superintendence of Mr. E. Jerome Humphrey, for carrying the Mails between this city, Albany and Buffalo, and the intermediate places, (including Troy) with directions to cause the delivery at the earliest possible time.

Letters will be received on board the 5 o'clock steamboats, which carry the Mails to Albany, Troy, and intermediate places from 4 1/2 o'clock P.M. until the time of departure, during which time postage can be paid.

Letters will also be received on board the boat carrying the Mail direct to Albany, which leaves at 7 o'clock P.M. from 6 1/2 o'clock P.M. until the time of departure, a letter box being placed on board said boat, under the lock of the Department.

The Messengers will go through to Buffalo and are instructed to exert the greatest diligence in the performance of this duty. The arrangement will commence on the 20th inst.

After the 20th instant, letters by the 5 o'clock steamboat will be received at this office up to 4 o'clock P.M., and letters for the 7 o'clock boat until 6 o'clock P.M. Post Office, N. Y. July 15, 1842."

John Lorimer Graham

U. S. Express Mail service on the New York-Albany-Buffalo Route was advertised to begin July 20, 1842. A copy of Special Agent Eaton's advertisement appeared in the Rochester Daily Democrat from August 1 to November 5, 1842 and was also printed in the Buffalo Commercial Advertiser from July 30 to September 23, 1842. Until October 28, 1842 there was an uncompleted section of railroad west of Batavia by stage coach. The "NEW LINE" Advertisement of the Attica & Buffalo Railroad last appeared on October 27th and the TIME IS MONEY advertisement first appeared the next day. Probably there never was a "Buffalo, Albany and Boston Railroad" company. In this case and in many others the name used in railroad advertisements may be a descriptive or common term, (such as "Monon" or "Big Four"), rather than the proper corporate title of the railroad.

*until early 1843 P.*

*no*

The seven railroads over which the U. S. Express Mail operated between Albany and Buffalo, (about 300 miles), began operation in the years stated. In 1853 they were consolidated and became the New York Central Railroad.

ALBANY\*BUFFALO ROUTE

*Chartered*

	Mohawk & Hudson	Albany to Schenectady	1836	<i>1831</i>
	Utica & Schenectady	Schenectady to Utica	1839	
	Syracuse & Utica	Utica to Syracuse	1839	
	Syracuse & Auburn	Syracuse to Auburn	1839	
<i>1836</i>	Auburn & Rochester	Auburn to Rochester	1840	<i>to Tonawanda</i>
<i>1832</i>	Tonawanda Railroad Co.	Rochester to <del>Utica</del> <i>Attica</i>	1836	<i>? reached S. Byron 1834 Batavia 1837 Attica 1842</i>
<i>Aug. 1836</i>	Attica & Buffalo	Attica to Buffalo	1842	

*completed but not used until May 1843.*

*Government backed*

*River Express by:*

*Enoch J. Humphrey*

*9/4. 1842*

*Connecting with Gardner Co. Eastern and Foreign Exp. and Howley's Western Express*

*USA*

*On Express Mail see other previous answers*

Buffalo Rochester R.R. was formed by consolidation of {Tonawanda R. Co. (Rochester Attica)  
Buffalo Attica R. Co.  
built new line from  
Buffalo to Batavia and sold Buffalo Attica

U. S. EXPRESS MAIL

Ward Hinman

U. S. EXPRESS MAIL covers are mementos of the struggle between the Postoffice Department and the private mail carriers which flourished during the early 1840's.

With the rapid extension of railroad lines in the late 1830's many express companies were formed to engage in the transportation of small packages, particularly those containing money or other valuables. These express companies employed messengers who traveled back and forth on the principal railroad and steamboat routes. These messengers, in addition to conveying express packages, executed orders for merchandise and performed most any function of a business nature for customers. There was no affiliation between these express companies and the railroads. Express company messengers paid their fares and rode the trains and steamboats the same as other passengers, carrying their express packages as other passengers carried their personal baggage. These express companies performed a much needed service in the rapidly expanding economy of the country at that period.

Postage rates prior to 1845 were very high. For example, it cost 18-3/4¢ to send a letter from Albany to New York. Congress had delegated to the Postoffice Department the exclusive right to carry letters. However, the express companies did engage in the illegal carrying of letters. Their rates were less than those of the postoffice department and their service was superior because of the greater speed and security afforded by the express messengers. Whereas it was the practice at postoffices to close the mails one hour prior to the departure of the trains or steamboats, the express messenger would accept letters up to the departure of the trains or steamboats. Also, letters sent by the express companies were not subject to the delays at transfer points as frequently happened with the government mails. At the terminals of their routes the express messengers with greater promptness deposited in the postoffice the letters which had been entrusted to them or turned them over to a local post to deliver.

The letter mail service of the express companies became so popular that it seriously affected the revenues of the Postoffice Department. The government attempted by legal actions to stop the express companies from carrying letters, but without much success. So in 1841 Postmaster General Wickliffe directed First Assistant Postmaster General S. R. Hobbie to investigate the illegal carrying of letters by the express companies. In his report, dated November 30, 1841, Mr. Hobbie reported that large quantities of letters were being carried between New York and Boston and between New York and Philadelphia by Harnden & Co., and between New York and Albany and west from Albany toward Buffalo by Pomeroy and Co., and he recommended that arrangements be made with these two express companies to take charge of the regular government mails over their respective routes.

Pursuant to this recommendation Postmaster General Wickliffe made such an arrangement with Harnden & Co. covering the New York-Boston route. Transportation over this route was by steam boat from New York to Stonington, Co., thence by railroad to Boston.

However, the arrangement with Pomeroy & Co. recommended by Mr. Hobbie covering the New York-Albany-Buffalo routes was not consummated although Pomeroy & Co. offered to take charge of the government mails without compensation. Instead E. Jerome Humphrey was engaged at an annual salary of \$3,000 as superintendent of the Express Mails over these routes. As with Harnden & Co., the arrangement with Humphrey & Co. provided that Humphrey could engage in the express business on his own account in conjunction with his duties of looking after the government mails. Route agents were appointed to travel on the Hudson River steamboats and trains between Albany and Buffalo. The service started on July 20, 1842. The following announcement appeared in the Albany Advertiser of July 29, 1842.

UNITED STATES EXPRESS MAIL.--In order to give to the community the longest possible time for the trans- action of the business of each day, and enable them to avail themselves of the legitimate channel of communication, the Postmaster General has organized the mail agents from Boston to New York from New York to Buffalo, and from New York South, into a species of Express Mail, who will receive letters, whether to be delivered into the post-office or the person addressed, and receive postage when prepaid and collect when not prepaid, but delivered by them.

The mail agents, between Boston and New York are under the the immediate supervision and direction of Harnden & Co., and from New York to Buffalo they are under the immediate supervision and direction of E. Jerome Humphrey, general mail agents, and they are authorized, so far as the department can give licence, to carry on their own account, money, packages, specie and other matter not mailable by law. The Post Office Department have no other interest in this arrangement than the accommodation of the public, by which it is intended to furnish all of the necessary facilities to the correspondence of the community, afford every convenience for the transmission of unmailable matter at the lowest possible expense, and secure to the Department its legitimate revenue.

To secure greater despatch and an earlier delivery of the news, an Editors's Express Mail will be made up in a separate pouch at the cities of New York, Boston, Albany, &c. and be delivered on the arrival of Mail Steamboats and Railroad Cars.

LEWIS EATON  
Special Agent P. O. Dep't.

Letters which received the U. S. EXPRESS MAIL postmarks were only those deposited in letter boxes at railroad stations and at steamboat landings or handed to the route agents aboard the trains or steamboats. These letters were carried "outside the mails" as distinguished from letters regularly deposited in postoffices and transported in locked mail pouches. In this respect U. S. EXPRESS MAIL covers are the same as earlier covers bearing RAILROAD and STEAMBOAT postmarks, with the exception, I believe, that whereas U. S. EXPRESS MAIL postmarks were applied to letters by the route agents acting in the capacity of government employees, the earlier RAILROAD and STEAMBOAT postmarks were applied at postoffices terminal to the routes or at postoffices along the routes on letters addressed to such post-offices.

The U. S. EXPRESS MAIL service terminated, it appears about the end of 1848. By that time the reduction in postage rates to 5¢ for distances up to 300 miles and 10¢ for distances over 300 miles, effective July 1, 1845, had about licked the letter carrying competition of the express companies. The earliest U. S. EXPRESS MAIL cover carried on the Albany-Buffalo route of which I have record was dated October 23, 1842 and the latest November 18, 1848. From July 20, 1842 when the U. S. EXPRESS MAIL service started to late in 1844, the straight-line and circular RAILROAD postmarks continued to be used. I believe that this is accounted for by the fact that the route agents under Humphrey's supervision did not travel on all trains and steamboats and that the former custom of entrusting letters to steamboat captains and train conductors continued on trains and steamboats not provided with route agents. My records of covers bearing railroad postmark on the Albany-Buffalo route indicate that U. S. EXPRESS MAIL was the only marking used during the period between November 13, 1844 and August 20, 1847 when the circular ALBy & BUFFALO R. R. marking appeared.

Of my records of U. S. EXPRESS MAIL covers carried on the New York-Albany route the earliest is September 30, 1842 and the latest November 25, 1847. During all of this period the single and double-line STEAMBOAT postmark continued to be used, but, I believe, was applied to letters collected by the captains of steamboats not provided with route agents.

Some of our best philatelic writers unfamiliar with the story behind U. S. EXPRESS MAIL covers have, in their ignorance, characterized them as "nothing more than railroad markings" stating that "the wording 'U. S. Express Mail' has no special significance" (Ashbrook, The United States One Cent Stamp of 1851-1857, Volume II, page 239). As Winchell would say, "Huh!".

Periods of Usage

RAILROAD POSTMARKS

Albany - Buffalo Route

	<u>Earliest</u>	<u>Latest</u>
RR or R Road (mns)	Sept. 9 1837	Jan. 16 1841
RAIL ROAD (old English)	Nov. 2 1837	
RAILROAD (arc)	May 5 1838	Aug. 6 1841
RAILROAD (straight line)	Feb. 23 1839	Nov. 13 1844
RAIL ROAD (circle)	Aug. 8 1840	Dec 1 1843
R.R. (Little Falls)	Feb. 23 1842	
U.S. EXPRESS MAIL (red)	Oct. 23 1842	Sept. 14 1846
U.S. EXPRESS MAIL (blue)	Dec. 22 1845	Nov. 18 1848
ALBy & BUFFALO R R (circle)	Aug. 20 1847	June 15 1852

