

California Penny Post Co.

The Penny Post Company of California was organized by Henry L. Goodwin and began operations on June 25, 1855. Their advertisements did not appear after October 4, 1855 but the company continued to deliver mail received from the San Francisco post office through July 1856. During their short period of operation the company issued a series of printed envelopes as well as a 5¢ adhesive stamp.

Goodwin's business plan was based on the delivery of mail from several of the primary California post offices by company messengers. The company also offered local mail service within San Francisco and provided collection boxes from which mail could be delivered to the Post Office. In addition, a letter box was placed on the steamers operating from Sacramento and Stockton to San Francisco to accommodate late mails. For inbound mail, letters enclosed in his envelopes imprinted "To The Care Of The Penny Post" could be posted anywhere in the United States and upon reaching their destination post office would be placed into the Penny Post Company's post office box. The letters were then delivered by company messengers to the physical address of recipient. The menu of services available and rates charged is shown in the circular below.

RATES OF PENNY POSTAGE	
IF PRE-PAID BY STAMPS.	
For Conveying a Letter to the Post Office, - - -	2 cts.
“ Delivering a Letter from the Post Office, - - -	5 cts.
“ Conveying a Letter to the P. O. in one city and delivering the same in another, - - -	7 cts.
“ Transmitting by Express letters received after the Mails are closed, - - -	7 cts.
“ City Delivery east of Taylor and Fourth streets,	5 cts.
“ “ “ west of “ “	10 cts.

San Francisco City Delivery commences from the Office, 135 California street,
at 7 A. M., 1 P. M., and half-past 4, P. M.

Goodwin immediately ran afoul of San Francisco postmaster Charles L. Weller. Weller realized that his substantial income from post office box rentals would diminish significantly if the Penny Post customers began having their letters delivered to the single Penny Post box instead of the several individually rented post office boxes. Weller instructed clerks to ignore the "to the care of" style of printed instructions and to place mail directly into the boxes of the final recipient. This, of course, deprived the recipient of the city delivery for which a fee had been paid to the Penny Post and often delayed mail further.

Following a physical altercation at the San Francisco post office on July 20, 1855, Goodwin sued Weller. This was the first in an extended series of legal battles. On August 17, 1855 the Post Office Department published a written statement that they agreed with Weller's interpretation of regulations regarding the delivery of mail. Goodwin's legal case in California was resolved in Weller's favor on July 12, 1856. Goodwin then took his complaint to the U.S. Senate and it was not resolved until 1860.

Goodwin printed the phrase "Care of the Penny Post Co." on his first (type 1) envelopes. After the San Francisco postmaster objected to the text and this style of envelope it was almost immediately replaced. The type 2 frank had "(To) Agent of the Penny-Post Co," prominently placed in address line. Later franks, types 3 to 5, bore the "To The Penny Post Co." prominently placed on the envelope.

During its brief existence the Penny Post Company issued franked envelopes in five major design types. Four of these were imprinted with more than one denomination and all exist with variations in the printed text. All of these envelopes are rare with a total of 120 genuine used examples known.

California Penny Post Co.

Summary of Adhesive and Frank Types

Directive: "Care of the Penny Post Co." - issued June 29, 1855



Type A adhesive stamp

PAID 5 - "From the Post Office" (5 known, 1 inter California)



Type 1 frank

PAID 2 - "To the Post Office" plain envelope (6)
 PAID 5 - "From the Post Office" 3¢ entire (6)
 PAID 7 - "To and from the Post Office" plain envelope (1)
 PAID 5 - "City Delivery" plain envelope (1, unused)

Directive: "Agent of the Penny-Post Co". - issued July 10, 1855



Type 2 frank

PAID 5 plain envelope (3)
 PAID 7 plain envelope (6), 3¢ entire (4)

Directive: "TO THE PENNY POST CO." - issued July 11, 1855



Type 3 frank

PAID 5 plain envelope (7), 3¢ entire (3, 2 altered)
 PAID 7 plain envelope (9), 3¢ entire (16, 3 in blue)
 Collect Penny Postage plain envelope (1)
 Ocean Penny Postage PAID 5 plain envelope (1)



Type 4 frank

PAID 7 3¢ entire (16)
 Collect Penny Postage 10 3¢ entire (1)

Directive: "TO THE PENNY POST CO." - issued after July 11, 1855



Type 5 frank

PAID 7 3¢ entire (11)

California Penny Post Co.

PAID 5 adhesive



5¢ adhesive

The 5¢ adhesive was used primarily on mail carried by ocean steamers. For the fee of five cents, letters would be turned over to special messenger and carried, via Nicaragua, to New York City and placed in the US mails there. In addition, the 5¢ stamp could be used to prepay the fee for carriage by express steamer from San Francisco and Sacramento as shown below.

THE PENNY POST COMPANY

OFFICES :

SAN FRANCISCO—135 California street, one door below Montgomery.

SACRAMENTO—Next door to the Post Office.

STOCKTON—1st Post Office Building.

MARYSVILLE—At Messrs. Force & Co.'s.

THE PENNY POST COMPANY TRANSMIT LETTERS, PAPERS, and other Mailable matter, Daguerreotypes, Small Parcels, etc. between SAN FRANCISCO, SACRAMENTO and MARYSVILLE and between SAN FRANCISCO AND STOCKTON, at the rate of FIVE CENTS, if pre-paid, and TEN CENTS if not prepaid, for each single letter weighing not more than half an ounce.

Letters for Sacramento, if wanted before 9 o'clock should not be deposited in the Post Office, but will be transmitted from our offices outside the mails.

This Penny Post advertisement in July 2, 1855 issue of the *Daily Alta California* lists the rate for letters between San Francisco and Sacramento at five cents if prepaid and states:

Letters for Sacramento, if wanted before 9 o'clock should not be deposited in the Post Office, but will be transmitted from our offices outside the mails.



circa July 1855 San Francisco to Sacramento, 5¢ adhesive for prepaid service with delivery and 3¢ U.S. adhesive "PENNY POST CO. SAN FRANCISCO" handstamp, Company carriage to Sacramento and delivered there

only reported example of their adhesive used on intra-California mail

ex Robson Lowe and Grunin

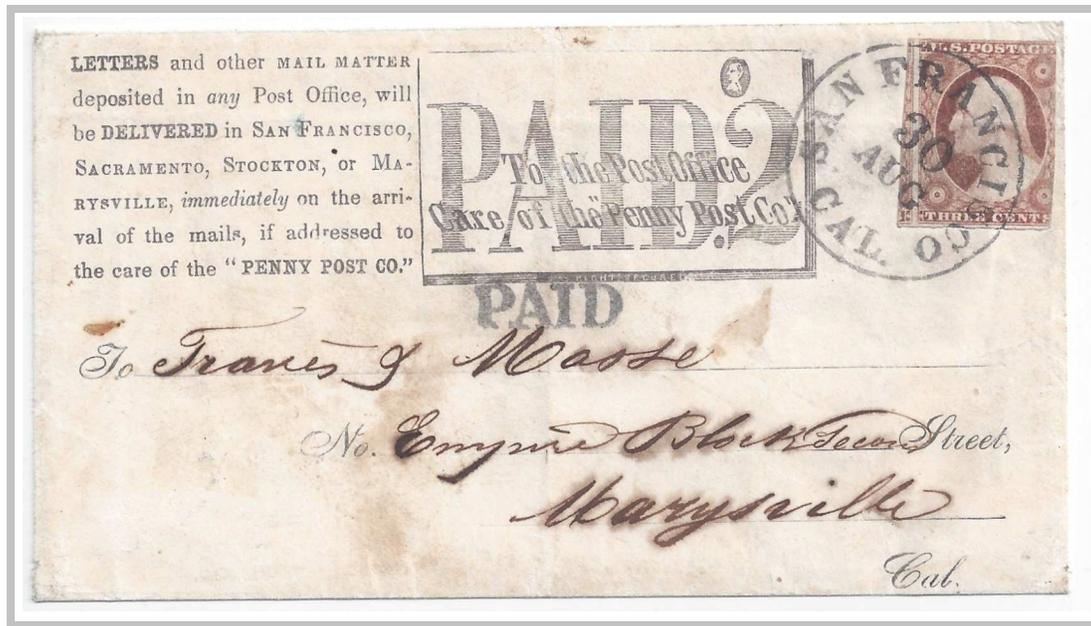
California Penny Post Co.

Type 1 frank, PAID 2



type 1 frank

The type 1 Paid 2¢ franks, inscribed "To The Post Office," were issued June 29, 1855. The two cent frank was intended to be used for mail deposited in one of the Penny Post street boxes in San Francisco. For the two cents fee, the Penny Post Company collected the envelope from the street box and deposited it at the post office for onward transmission by mail. The sender was supposed to add the adhesive stamp for government postage.



30 August 1855 San Francisco to Marysville, Paid 2¢ type 1 printed frank, 3¢ adhesive "DETAINED FOR POSTAGE" backstamp, stamp supplied by Penny Post and cover sent onward by mail **six reported examples of this frank, this the only one used as intended**



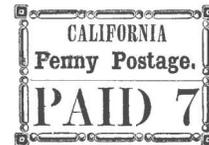
The day following, I think, a letter was detained for want of full postage. It was in one of our envelopes. Three cents more would have paid (full postage.) It was (subsequently) received in Marysville, and I sent to Marysville and obtained the envelope, (and sent it to the Postmaster General.) Have frequently seen the Penny Post Co.'s envelopes advertised. Every letter we mailed (our selves) was with the intention of having it forwarded.

Above excerpt from "Memorial of the Penny Post Company of California, Praying Indemnity for Losses Sustained in Consequence of the Unlawful Detention of Letters at the Post Office of San Francisco" being sworn testimony given by H.L. Goodwin on Dec 15, 1855 regarding this cover. The "Filed Oct 17" on reverse is his court filing endorsement.

Goodwin presented this cover in his case against the San Francisco postmaster for "Unlawful Detention of Letters" as evidence that postmaster Weller detained this letter for postage instead of forwarding the letter as postage due.

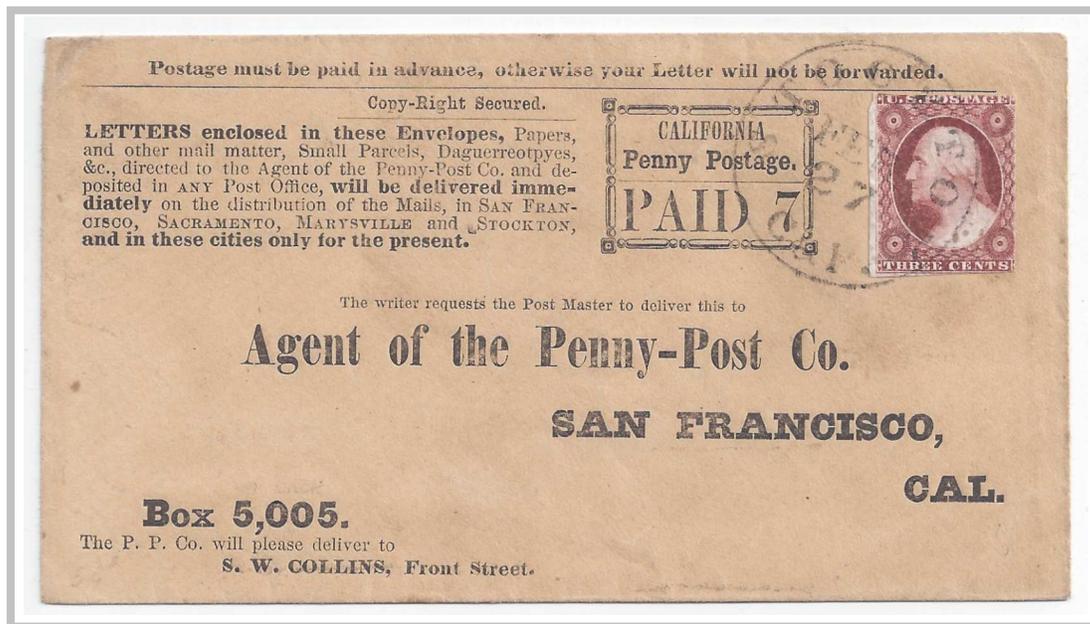
California Penny Post Co.

Type 2 frank, PAID 7



type 2 frank

The type 2 franks were issued July 10, 1855 and include printed text "to the Agent of the Penny-Post."



27 February 1856 Stockton to San Francisco, 7¢ type 2 printed frank, 3¢ adhesive printed "Agent of the Penny Post Co." address as well as Penny Post Company box number by mail from Stockton to San Francisco carried from Penny Post Company box at post office to S.W. Collins on Front Street by Penny Post the only example of this style printed address with custom text for Stockton merchant Collins

Type 2 franks (issued July 10, 1855):

PAID 5 - Envelopes carried from the post office to recipient address

PAID 7 - Envelopes carried from box to post office and delivered from post office to recipient

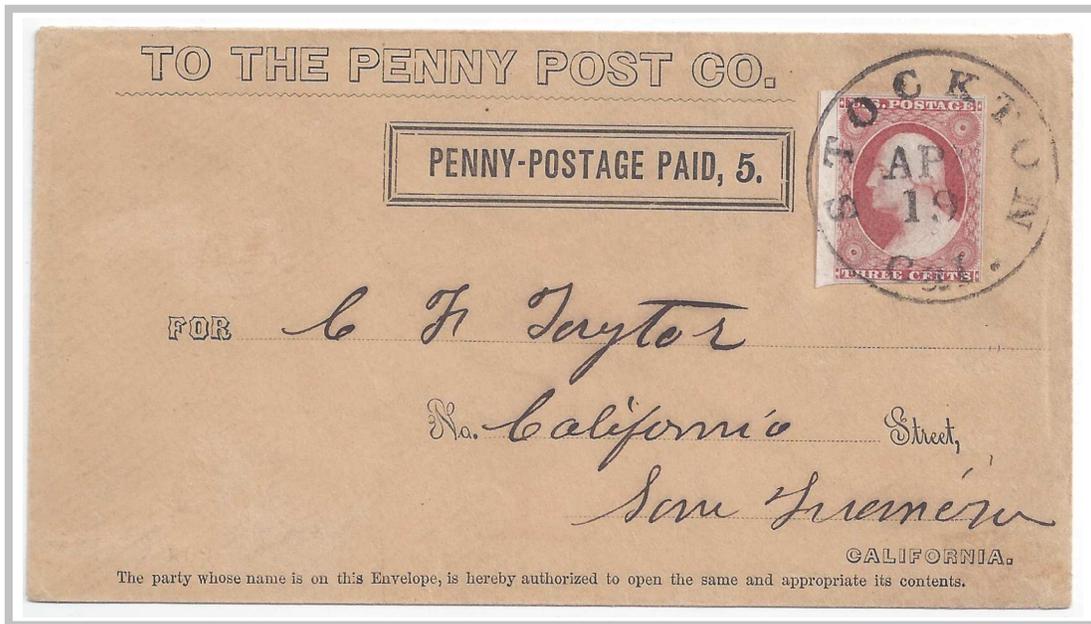
California Penny Post Co.

Type 3 frank, PAID 5

PENNY-POSTAGE PAID, 5.

The type 3 franks were first issued July 11, 1855 and include printed text "to the Penny-Post Co." at top.

type 3 frank



19 April 1856 Stockton to San Francisco, 5¢ type 3 printed frank, 3¢ adhesive
by mail from Stockton to San Francisco
carried from post office box of Penny Post Company to California Street address by Penny Post

Type 3 franks (issued July 11, 1855):

PAID 5 - Envelopes carried from the post office to recipient address

PAID 7 - Envelopes carried from box to post office and delivered from post office to recipient

COLLECT PENNY-POSTAGE

OCEAN PENNY POSTAGE PAID 5

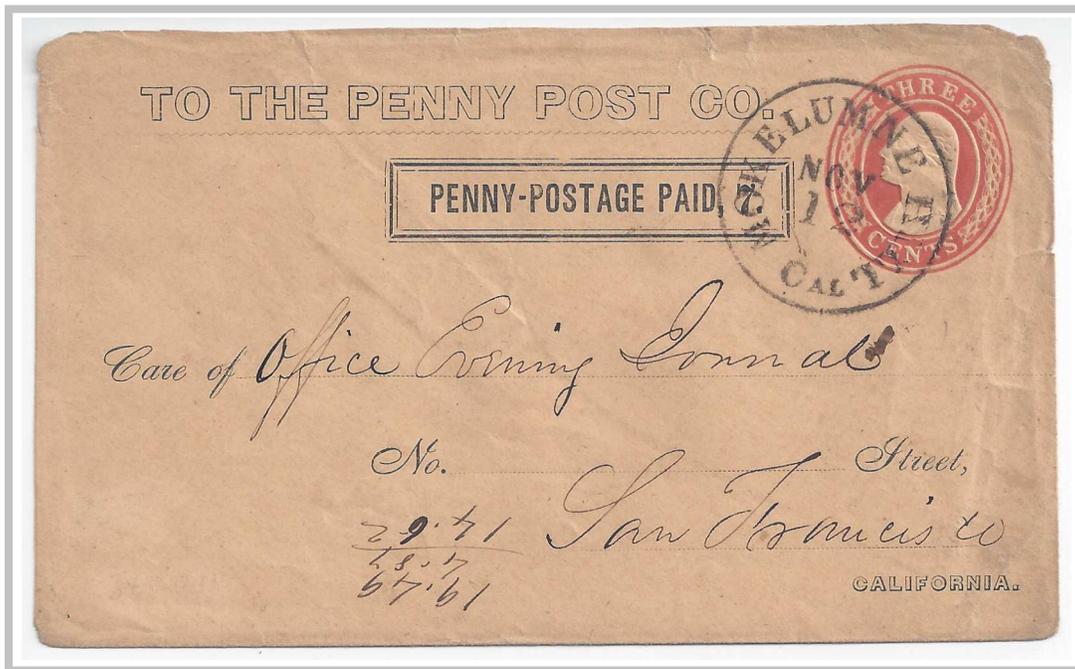
California Penny Post Co.

Type 3 frank, PAID 7

PENNY-POSTAGE PAID, 5.

The type 3 franks were first issued July 11, 1855 and include printed text "TO THE PENNY POST CO." in hollow letters at top.

type 3 frank



12 November 1855 Mokelumne Hill to San Francisco, 7¢ type 3 printed frank on 3¢ postal entire
by mail from Mokelumne Hill to San Francisco
carried from post office box of Penny Post Company to addressee by Penny Post

Type 3 franks (issued July 11, 1855):

PAID 5 - Envelopes carried from the post office to recipient address

PAID 7 - Envelopes carried from box to post office and delivered from post office to recipient

COLLECT PENNY-POSTAGE

OCEAN PENNY POSTAGE PAID 5

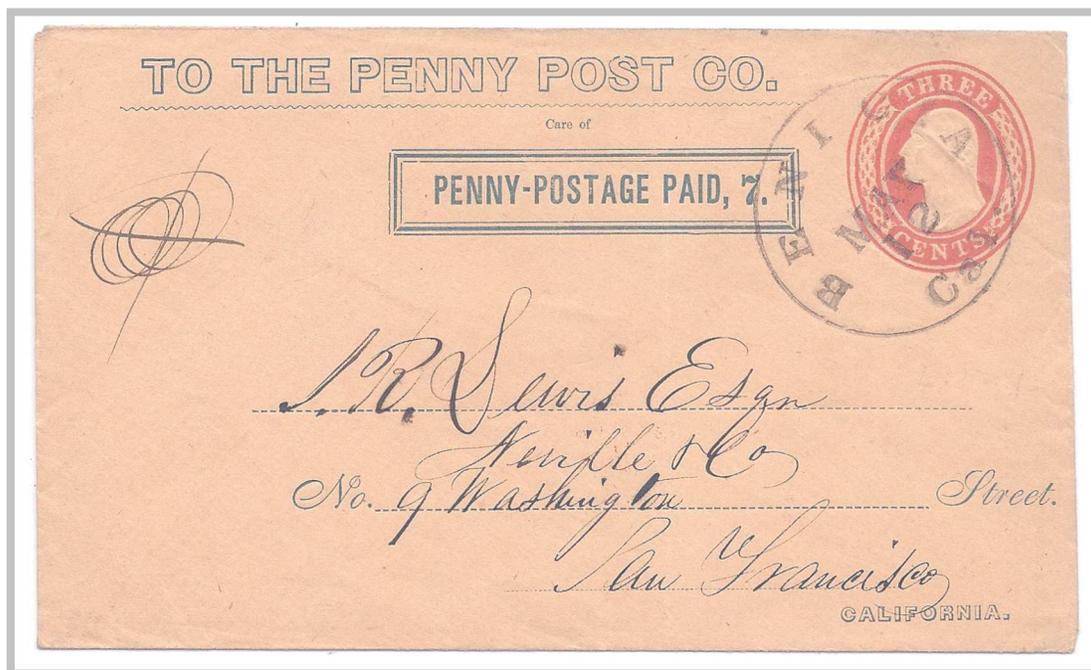
California Penny Post Co.

Type 3 frank, PAID 7

PENNY-POSTAGE PAID, 7.

The type 3 franks were first issued July 11, 1855 and include printed text "TO THE PENNY POST CO." in hollow letters at top.

type 3 frank



12 May 1856 Benicia to San Francisco, 7¢ type 3 printed frank in blue, 3¢ postal entire
by mail from Benicia to San Francisco
carried from post office box of Penny Post Company to addressee by Penny Post

three reported examples of this frank in blue

Was present at interview
between Weller & Goodwin -
Was present at time en-
velope was submitted -
Exhibits A & D were sub-
mitted - Ex. A Mr Weller
asked how many like Ex. A
he had struck off - desired that
no more of like character
should be - think Weller
said that such as Ex. D -
would cause no trouble -
said such would be put
in P.P. Co. box -

Judge Shattuck's notes on Assistant San Francisco
Postmaster Ferguson's testimony in 1856:

Was present at interview between Weller
& Goodwin - Was present at time envelope
was submitted - Exhibits A (type 1) & D
(type 3) were submitted - Mr Weller asked
how many like Ex. A he had struck off -
desired that no more of like character
should be - think Weller said that such as
Ex. D would cause no trouble - Said such
would be put in P. P. Co. box -

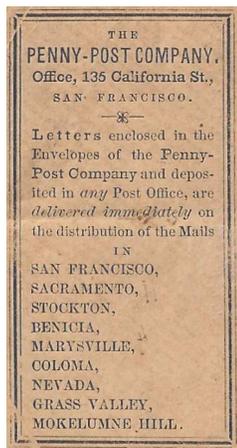
California Penny Post Co.

Type 4 frank, Paid 7

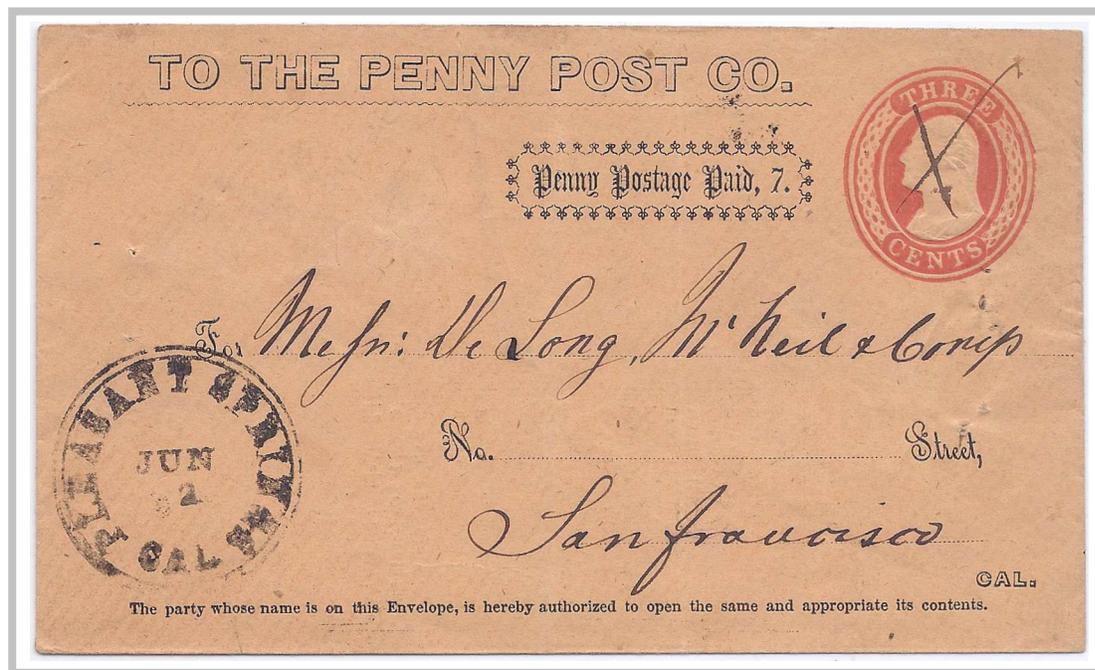


The type 4 franks were first issued July 11, 1855 and include printed text "TO THE PENNYPOST CO." in hollow letters at top. This type exists only on postal entires.

type 4 frank



(reverse)



2 June 1856 Pleasant Springs to San Francisco, 7¢ type 4 printed frank, 3¢ postal entire
by mail from Pleasant Springs to San Francisco
carried from post office box of Penny Post Company to addressee by Penny Post

Type 4 franks (issued after July 11, 1855):

PAID 7 - Envelopes carried from box to post office and delivered from post office to recipient
Collect Penny Postage, 10

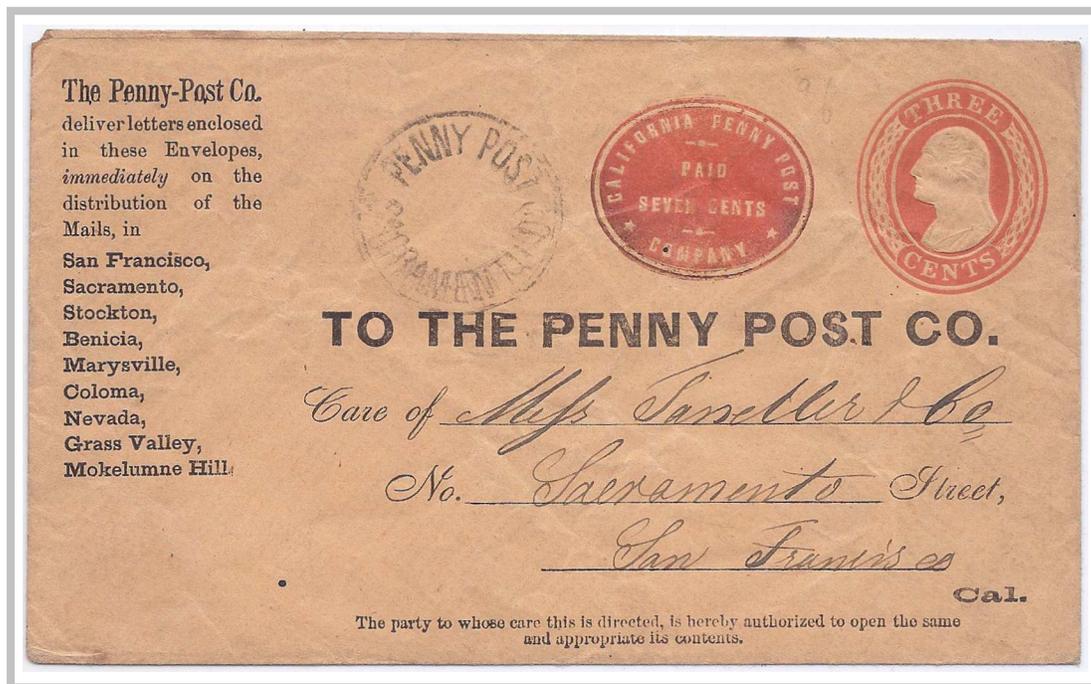
California Penny Post Co.

Type 5 frank, Paid 7



type 5 frank

The type 5 franks were first issued after July 11, 1855 and include printed text "TO THE PENNY POST CO." in solid letters at top. This type exists only on postal entires.



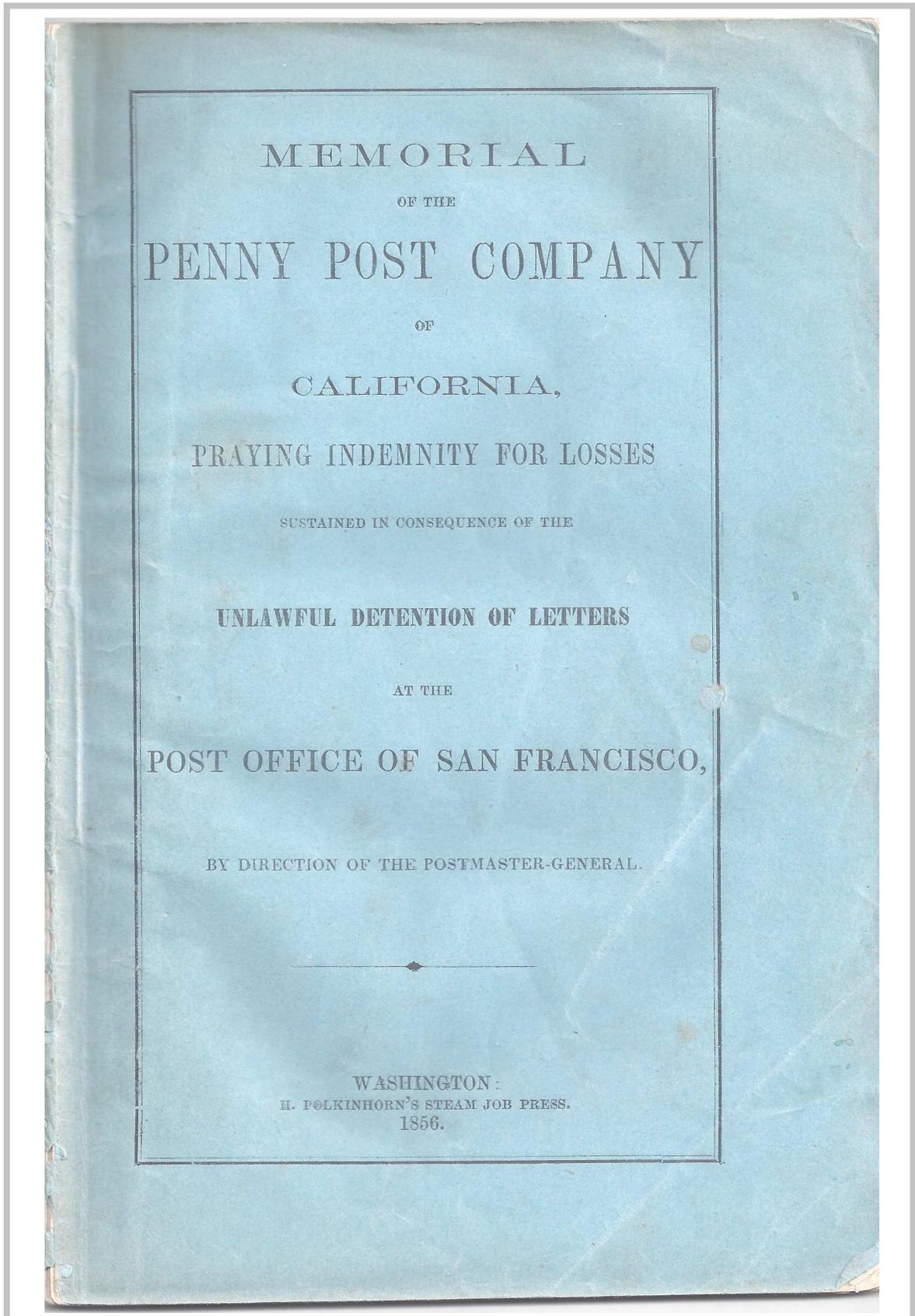
1855 Sacramento to San Francisco by California Penny Post, 7¢ printed type 5 frank on 3¢ entire
"PENNY POST SACRAMENTO CITY" handstamp, placed in company express box in Sacramento
after carriage to San Francisco, delivered to street address

eleven reported examples of frank used, this one of two carried completely outside the mails

Type 5 franks (issued after July 11, 1855):

PAID 7 - Envelopes carried from box to post office and delivered from post office to recipient

**California Penny Post Co.
Memorial of The Penny Post Company**



"Memorial of the Penny Post Company of California, Praying Indemnity for Losses Sustained in Consequence of the Unlawful Detention of Letters at the Post Office of San Francisco," Washington, 1856

(from *San Francisco Bulletin*, July 14, 1856) **The Penny Post Company and the Postmaster**

A very long suit brought by the Penny Post Company against Charles L Weller, Postmaster, in the Superior Court of this city, was close and decided Saturday evening. ... The testimony was voluminous and tedious, and much of it cumulative, but the case when divested of the surplusage and side issues, which spun it out over so long a time, was a very interesting one. Suit was brought by the Penny Post Company, against the postmaster of San Francisco, to recover damages alleged to have been sustained at the hands of the defendant in consequence of his neglect or refusal to deliver to it certain letters sent through the Post Office, and to which the Company claimed to be entitled.

It seemed from the proof that the Company was formed in June , 1855 for the object of receiving and collecting letters from different parties and depositing them in the Post Office, and of receiving letters out of the post office, directed from abroad to the care of the Company and distributing them to the persons for whom they were intended. For the purpose of facilitating their business they had printed envelopes, addressed to, or to the care of, the Penny Post Company, and their profits were to consist of some seven cents out of the charges upon each letter passing through their hands. When the Company started it seems that it rented a Post Office box, for one quarter, in which all letters addressed to the Company were placed, but all the letters clearly intended for persons having separate boxes at the office would be placed in their boxes. The Company remonstrated against this practice , and the Postmaster answered that he would not consent to the Company's taking out letters clearly addressed or intended for third parties. at the end of the first quarter, when the Company applied for a renewal of the box and tendered the rent usually paid by private persons for boxes for their own letters they were refused.

The Postmaster said that they could not have a box. After that time, according to allegations of the Company, their only means of obtaining letters was by getting them at the delivery holes, and they alleged that in various instances, letters were delayed so long, that they were not able to deliver in time to their customers, and therefore lost their business. ...

The postmaster alleged that he had afforded the Penny Post Company the same facilities allowed to other Companies, and denied that any delays had occurred either by intention or neglect. He said that he had refused to deliver certain letters for third parties, asked for by the Company but not addresses to it or its care, unless under a written order from such third parties, because that was one of the regulations of the office, and that the same rule was carried out with the express companies. He said that he had refused to allow the Company a box, because they wanted one on the terms usually paid by private persons, and were unwilling to pay more, although they expected to receive through it letters addressed to a great number of individuals.

Judge Shattuck made a long and able charge to the jury, in which he said that parties to whom letters were addressed by way of care should have them delivered to them, and that no order was necessary or ought to be demanded. That it was the duty of the Postmaster to adhere to all rules laid down by the Post Office Department, and to carry them out for the public benefit; he was expected to facilitate the delivery of letters and papers to the extent of his instructions, and he had an official discretion for the purpose of carrying out those objects. If the jury believed that in any respect he had neglected to use his official discretion, either in withholding the letters pointed out in the first eight counts of the complaint, or in the general management as specified in the last count, why then that would substantiate a case upon the plaintiff could recover.

The Judge said further that the defendant was not to violate the law, or grant privileges, at his own expense or inconvenience ...

The jury retired ... and after an absence of ten minutes returned a verdict in favor of defendant.