

The First Nesbitt 3c Stamped Envelope

“Workhorse of the Texas Mails”



The first embossed stamped envelopes valid for postage in the United States were formally introduced in 1853. They were manufactured by the George F. Nesbitt & Co. of New York, NY. Commercial production of stationery envelopes in the U.S. had just begun and the Nesbitt Co. was given a non-competitive contract by the U.S. Post Office Department to produce an envelope to satisfy the 3¢ per half ounce 3000 mile letter rate. The envelopes were delivered to post offices and were in use as early as July 1853.

By the beginning of 1853, the State of Texas had approximately 410 operating post offices. Together with the 3¢ adhesive issues of 1851 and 1857, which prepaid the same half ounce rate, the 3¢ Nesbitt issue became the workhorse of the Texas mails. A personal survey of approximately 500 surviving Texas covers from 1853-1861 evidenced 60% Nesbitt uses vs. 40% prepaid by adhesives... thus demonstrating that the embossed envelopes seemed to be a favorite among post offices and postal customers.

This exhibit presents six different categories and displays the many ways these first stamped envelopes were used, marked and handled by Texas post offices, postmasters and patrons alike.

First Issue reaches Texas – shown is the first issue of the envelope with integral Nesbitt Co. seal and a production “albino”, both postally used.

Town Markings – shown are a variety of town markings found on Nesbitt entires including endorsed, circular date stamps (c ds) in a variety of sizes, straight-line markings and town markings in colors.

Advent of “Killers” – shown are examples of separate and “distinct cancelers” or killers used to cancel the indicia required after July 23, 1860.

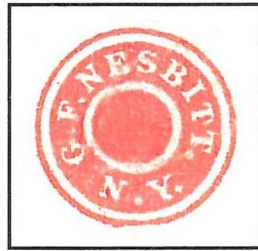
Advertising with the 3¢ Nesbitt - shown are examples of printed and embossed local Texas advertising applied to entires by postal patrons.

Missent and Forwarded – shown are examples and how they were handled by the Texas postmasters.

Overland & Overseas – shown is an example of the 3¢ Nesbitt carried on the Butterfield Mail Route and an example used for registered mail to a foreign destination.

Confederate Texas – shown are legal Texas uses of the envelope after secession and an example of a demonetized Nesbitt as an “adversity cover”, not paying postage, during the paper shortages of the Civil War.

*First Printing Issue with integral Nesbitt Company Seal
Domestic Use*

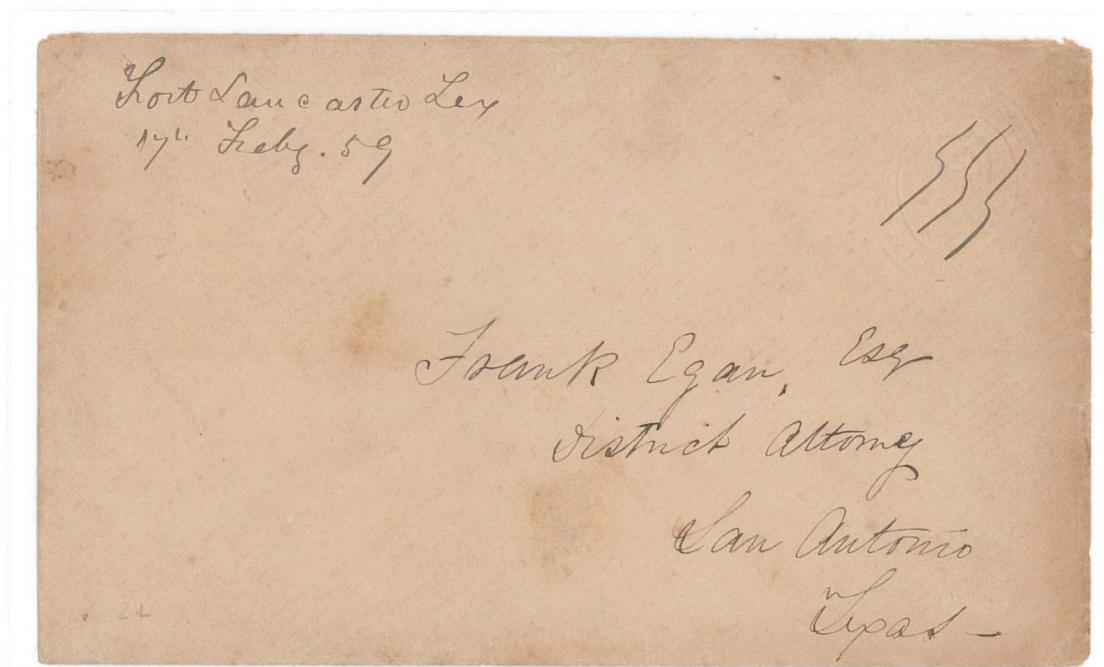


"SAN AUGUSTINE Tex., DEC 26 cds at upper left cancels buff first printing issue Nesbitt entire to New Orleans, LA.
Embossed "G.F. NESBITT. N.Y." company seal or crest on reverse flap.

Issued in 1853, the first printing displayed the Nesbitt seal on the tip of the top sealing flap. The seal was officially ordered discontinued on July 7, 1853. Texas usages of first printing entires with seals have been documented from Corpus Christi (3+), Galveston, Houston, Huntsville and San Augustine (2).

*Production Albino
Domestic Use from a Texas Frontier Fort*

When stamped envelopes are produced, the embossing and inking of the indicium occur simultaneously. "Albino" or non-inked impressions are usually a result of two or more envelope blanks being fed into the printing press at once. The envelope nearest the printing die is inked and embossed while the others are embossed only. Additionally, albinos presumably could be created by feeding an envelope through a printing press that had run out of ink. Albinos of the 1853-1855 Nesbitt issue, canceled while current, are scarce.



"Fort Lancaster Tex, 17 Feb (18)59" endorsed postmark at upper left on production 'albino' Nesbitt entire to San Antonio, Texas. This is the only recorded albino Nesbitt, postally used while current, from a Texas post office.

Fort Lancaster, one in a series of forts erected along the western Texas frontier, was established in the Pecos River Valley by Captain Stephen Decatur Carpenter on August 20, 1855 to guard the supplies and immigrants moving along the San Antonio-El Paso Road.

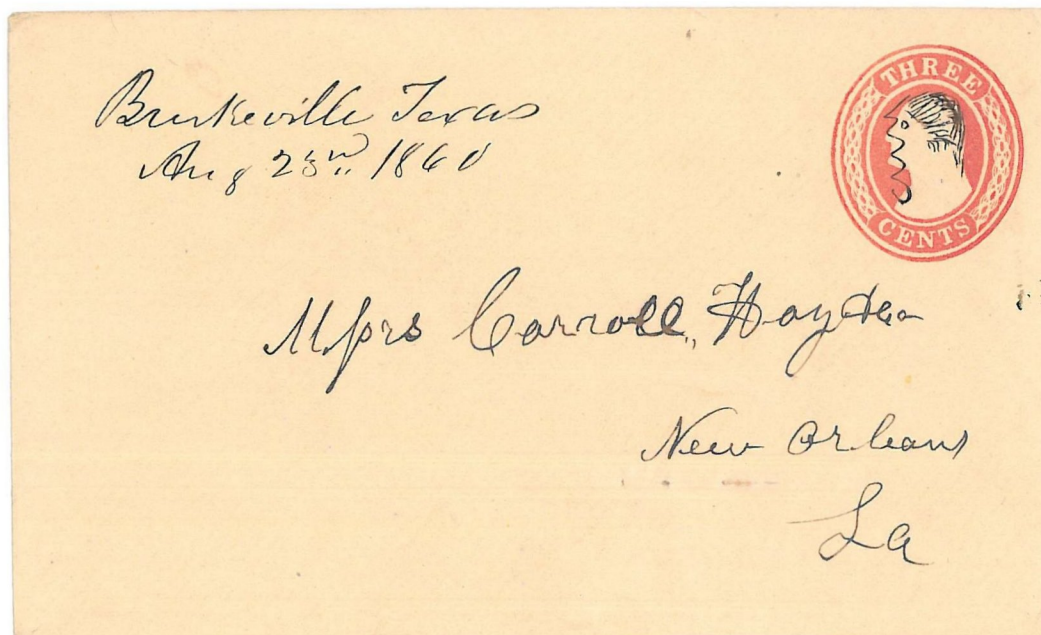
When it was initially constructed in August 1855 as Camp Lancaster, the buildings were just portable shelters covered with canvas. Camp Lancaster became Fort Lancaster on August 21, 1856, and by 1858 housed approximately 150 men and 3 officers of companies H and K of the First United States Infantry. Company H left Fort Lancaster on April 12, 1859 to take post at Fort Stockton. By 1860, most of the buildings were made of stone or adobe. In June of 1860, the U.S. Camel Corps stopped at the fort. The fort was abandoned March 19, 1861, after Texas seceded from the Union.

*Endorsed Town Markings
Domestic Uses*

Between the years 1853-1861, two-thirds (270+) of the postmasters at operating Texas post offices were endorsing mail with manuscript town markings.



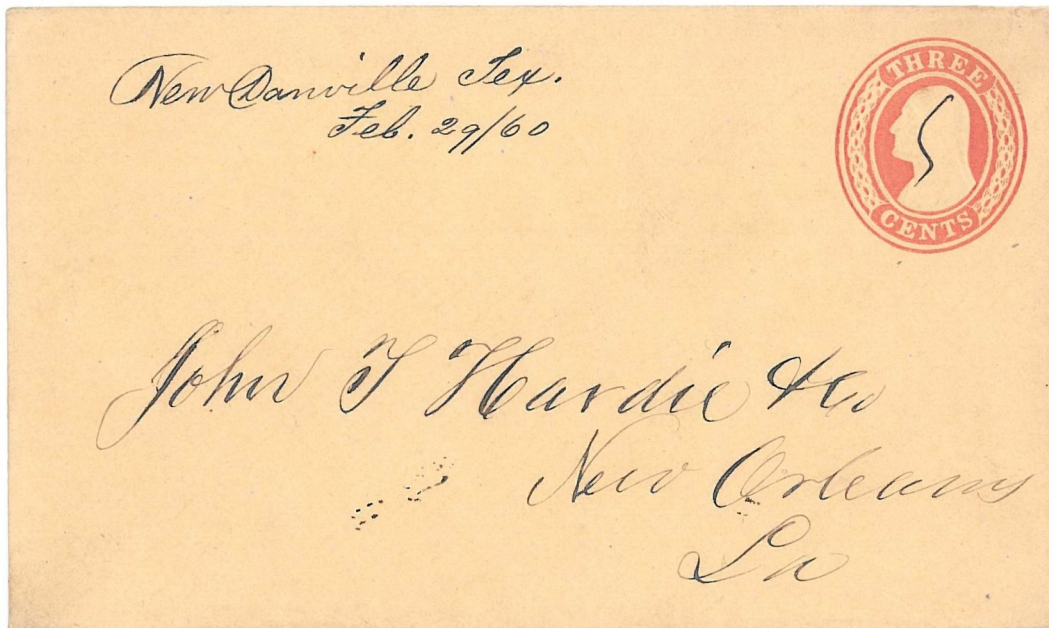
"Melrose Tex, March 2nd (18)60" endorsed town marking at upper left on white Nesbitt entire mailed to Illinois Grove, Marshall Co. Iowa.



"Burkeville Texas, Aug 23rd 1860" endorsed town marking at upper left with matching pen "doodling" to Washington's indicium portrait on buff entire to New Orleans, LA.

*Transitioning Town Markings
Domestic Uses*

Several communities began to utilize dated townstamps between the years 1853-1861. Twenty of these post offices are recorded to have utilized **both** endorsed and handstamped town markings on Nesbitt entires.



"New Danville Tex., Feb. 29/(18)60" endorsed town marking at upper left on buff Nesbitt entire to New Orleans, LA.



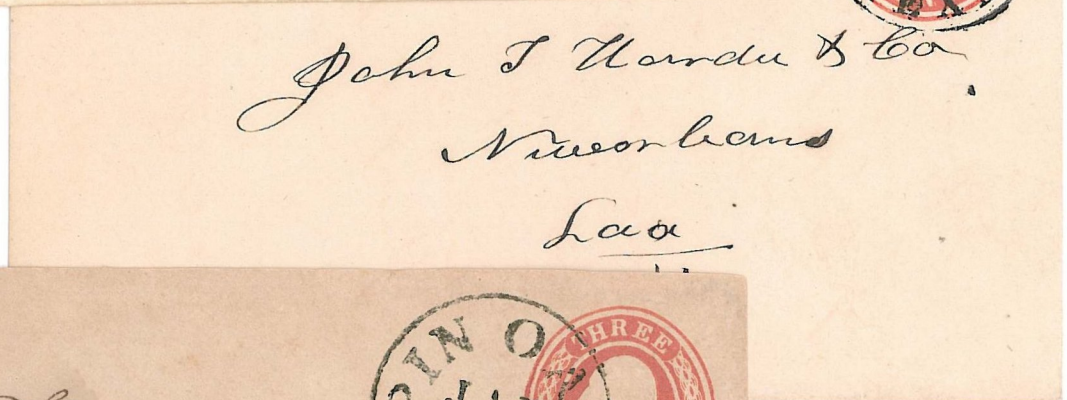
25mm "NEW DANVILLE TEX, FEB 20" cds at left on buff entire to New Orleans, LA.

25-34mm Circular Datestamps (cdis)
Domestic Uses

By 1853 approximately one-third (~137) of operating Texas post offices were using dated townstamps. Most of these devices were circular in nature, included the town name and a changeable date and inked in black. These circular datestamps varied in diameter from 25mm to 37mm. The 25-34mm diameter sizes were most common among Texas post offices during the period.



25mm "WEATHERFORD TEX, FEB 26" canceling indicium on white entire to Canton, Texas



30mm "BONHAM TEXAS., NOV 8" canceling indicium on buff entire to New Orleans, LA



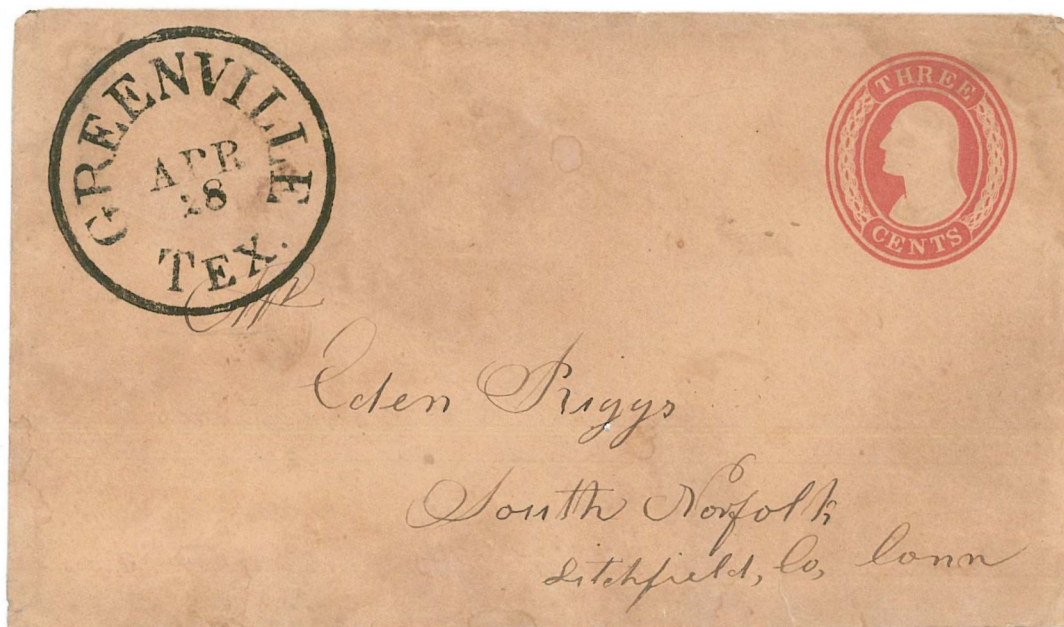
33mm "PIN OAK TEX., JAN 20" canceling indicium on buff entire to Washington, D.C.

35mm+ 'Balloon' Cancels
Domestic Uses

Of the town datestamps, the most stunning and spectacular were strikes from the 35mm+ 'balloon' cancels that have been recorded used by fewer than ten (10) Texas towns.



37mm "PRAIRIE LEA Tex., MAY 12" cds of buff entire to New Orleans, LA.



36mm "GREENVILLE TEX., APR 28" cds at upper left on buff entire to South Norfolk, Litchfield Co., Conn.

*Double-Circle Datestamp
Domestic Uses*

By mid-1860 nine (9) Texas post offices began to utilize a double-circle datestamp device. The town name was placed between the outer and inner circles with the adjustable date at center. Examples of the double-circle device are recorded from Austin, Columbia, Columbus, Galveston, Hopkinsville, Indianola and Marshall.



25x14mm "GONZALES TEX., JUL 16 (1860)" double-circle datestamp cancels indicium on buff entire to Washington City, DC. "PENSION OFFICE (Washington, DC), JUL 27 1860." double-ring receiving handstamp is struck at center.



25x14mm "GALVESTON TEX., JUL 16 (1860)" double-circle datestamp cancels (obliterates) indicium on buff entire to Hempstead, Austin Co., Tex.

*Straight-line and Rimless Markings
Domestic Uses*

The use of straight-line and rimless town markings during the Texas statehood period was rare. By the time stamped envelopes were used in Texas, only six (6) post offices were potentially using straight-line devices and only five (5) a rimless circular datestamp.



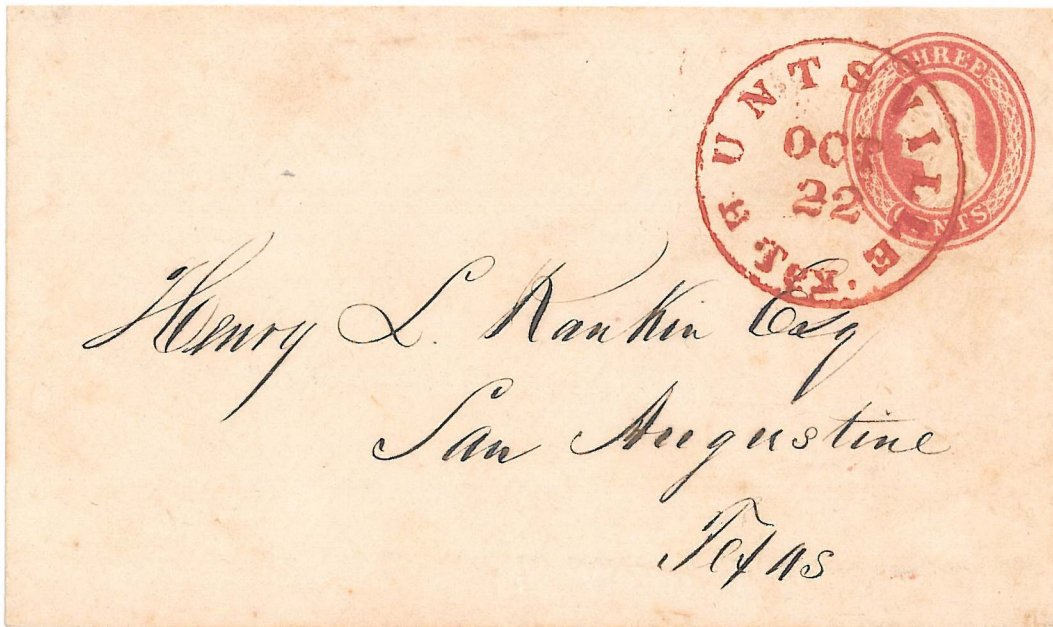
Straight-line "UVALDE TEX., JAN 1" dated town mark on white entire to San Antonio, Texas. The Uvalde marking is the only straight-line cancel recorded on a Nesbitt entire used from Texas.



"JACKSONVILLE TX., June 16" **rimless** datestamp at upper left on buff entire to Cleaveland [sic], Tennessee. The Jacksonville cds is the only Texas rimless town mark recorded used on a Nesbitt entire.

*Town Markings in Color
Domestic Uses*

Besides the generally used black ink, red and blue canceling inks have also been recorded on Nesbitt entires from the period. Of the approximate 137 post offices with datestamps, 35 can be recorded as using red and 16 blue. Of those totals, nine (9) post offices used a combination of black, red and blue. Green ink was used in San Antonio but no examples have been noted on a stamped envelope.



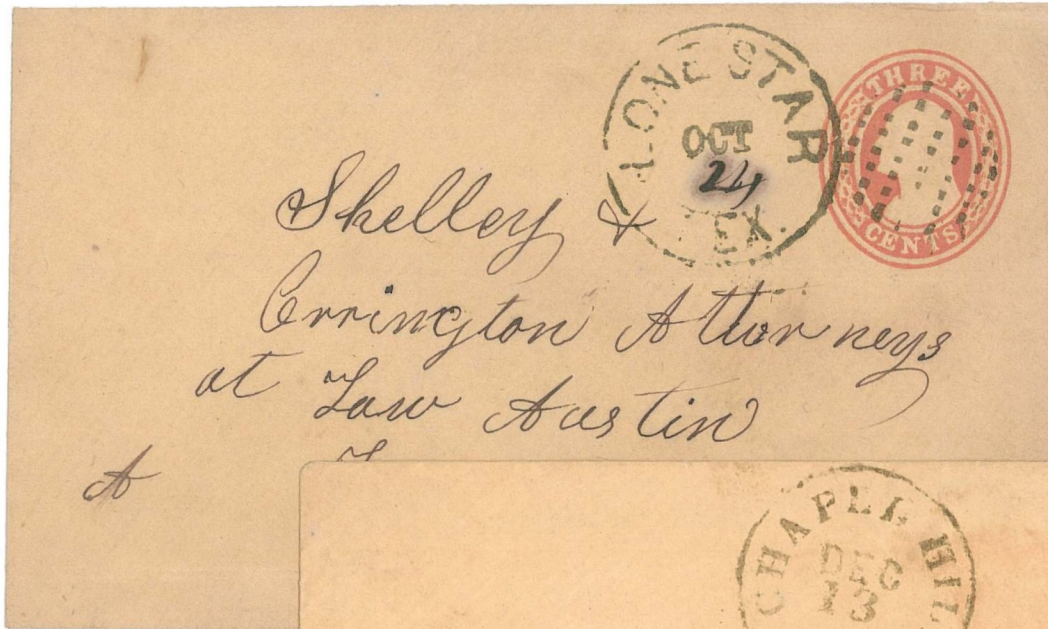
"HUNTSVILLE Tex., OCT 22" cds in **red** on white entire to San Augustine, Texas.



"CALDWELL TEX., MAY 26" cds in **blue** on buff entire to Arkadelphia, Clark County, Arkansaw [sic]

Separate and "Distinct Cancelers"
Domestic Uses

On July 23, 1860, U.S. Postmaster General Holt banned the use of town datestamps to cancel stamps (indicia for stamped envelopes), requiring instead that a 'distinct canceler' or killer be used. This required Texas post offices to use two different devices and separate motions or strokes to postmark letters and cancel the indicia on entires.



31mm "LONE STAR TEX., OCT 24" with matching circular grid of dots killer canceling indicium on buff entire to Cameron, Texas



31mm "CHAPEL HILL TEX., DEC 13" cds with matching 5-pointed star killer canceling indicium on buff entire to Cameron, Texas



32mm "GOLIAD TEX, MAY 20" cds with matching 6-point carets killer canceling indicium on buff entire to Williamsport, Lycoming Co., PA

Advertising Uses



"HEMPSTEAD TEX., DEC 29" cds on buff Nesbitt entire with blue printed "G.W. WILLIAMS & CO." **commission merchant advertising corner card** at upper left to New Orleans, LA. Merchants could pre-purchase entires and have ads applied by local printers.



"GALVESTON TEX., OCT 27 1860" double-circle datestamp cancels buff entire with embossed "MATHER, HUGHES & SAUNDERS" **commission merchant advertising corner card** at upper left mailed to New Orleans, LA. This type of advertisement could be simply applied by a merchant owned embossing device.

Missent and Forwarded Uses

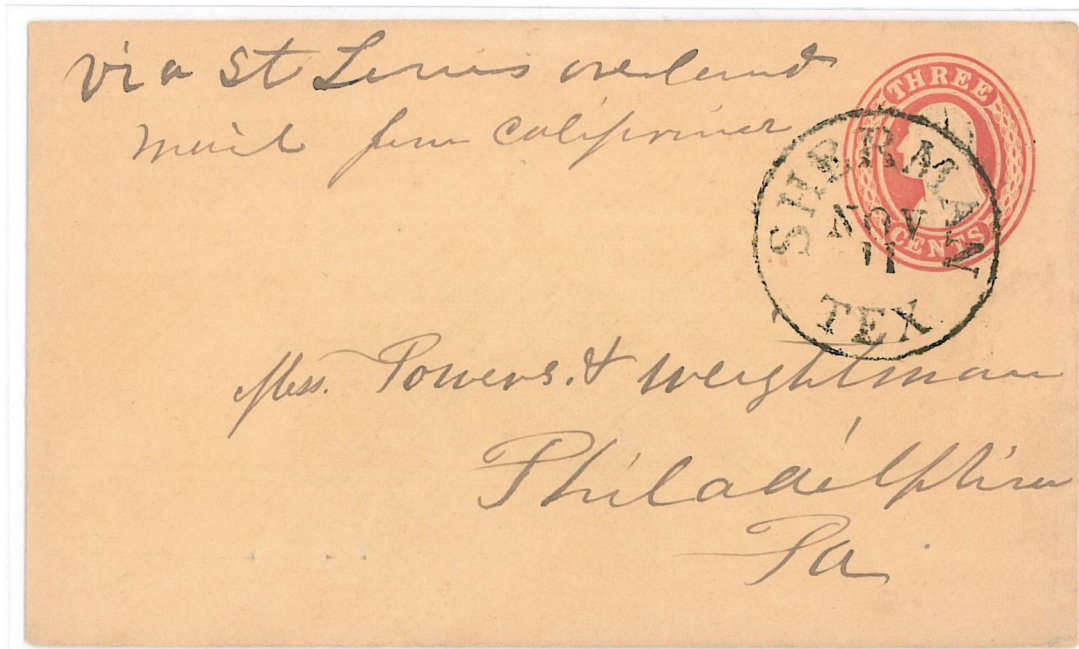


"TEXANA TEX., OCT 16 (1860)" cds on buff Nesbitt entire mailed to Goliad and **missent** to Austin, Texas. Manuscript "Missent" endorsement at upper left with "AUSTIN TEX., OCT __ 1860" double-circle datestamp applied by the Austin P.O. to redirect letter to original destination.



"GALVESTON TEX., OCT 14" cds originally cancels buff Nesbitt entire to Houston, Texas. Letter then re-mailed to Richmond Texas by Houston "PAID III" circular rate stamp in red where it was then forwarded at Richmond by "Frwd" endorsement and unpaid 5¢ rate. Final destination is not specified.

Overland – Via the Butterfield Stage



Via St. Louis Overland Mail from California, manuscript directive on buff Nesbitt canceled by "SHERMAN TEX, NOV 11 (1859)" cds carried by Butterfield Overland Mail stage on the southern route to Philadelphia, PA. This contract mail service which operated from 1858-1861 crossed the Red River at Colbert's Ferry near Sherman.

Overseas - Registered Use to Germany



"INDUSTRY TEXAS., July 22 (1857)" cds on buff Nesbitt to Beerfelden, Hessen, Germany by Prussian Closed Mail, paid 30 cents postage per manuscript endorsement at lower left as well as 5¢ registry fee paid in cash. Only three (3) recorded Texas registered covers from the era which prepay the 5¢ fee have been recorded.



Boxed "Recommandirt." handstamp applied at Aachen in accordance with revised U.S. – Prussia treaty approved August 1855 which provided for this class of mail. The treaty stipulated that all registered mail had to be fully prepaid, including fee, at origin.

Confederate Texas Uses

Independent Statehood use of U.S. postage

Hempstead Feb 4th 1861
Rev J G Smart D.D.
Dear Sir

Having reached the age of "Twenty One" which brings with it a termination of the relation hitherto existing between us as guardian and ward I suppose you will wish to know what disposition I intend to make of the property still to me I turn about if any go Please of m

The events surrounding the secession of Texas and admission into the CSA are more complex than many of the southern states. The process began when a convention in Austin approved an Ordinance of Secession on Feb. 1, 1861, calling for a statewide vote on the question on Feb. 23, 1861. That same Ordinance stipulated that if ratified by popular vote, secession would... "take effect and be in force on and after the 2nd day of March 1861".

On that same date, March 2, 1861, Texas was formally admitted to the Confederacy by the Congress of the CSA. On March 5th, the Texas Secession Convention in Austin voted to accept admission to the Confederacy. U.S. postage was valid in Texas until through May 31, 1861.

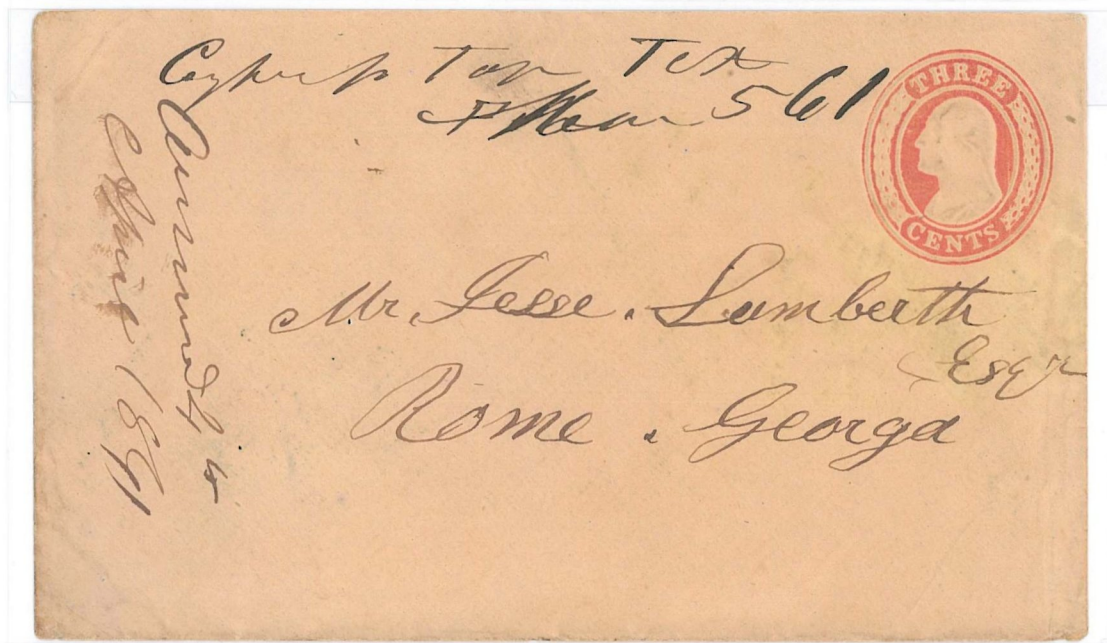


"HEMPSTEAD TEX, FEB 5 (1861)" cds and matching hollow-star killer cancel indicium on white Nesbitt entire to Coila, Washington Co., N.Y.

Accompanying enclosure penned three (3) days after the Texas Secession Convention voted to secede...
"I suppose you have seen by the papers eve this that Texas has seceded from the Union and is once more an 'Independent Republic'."

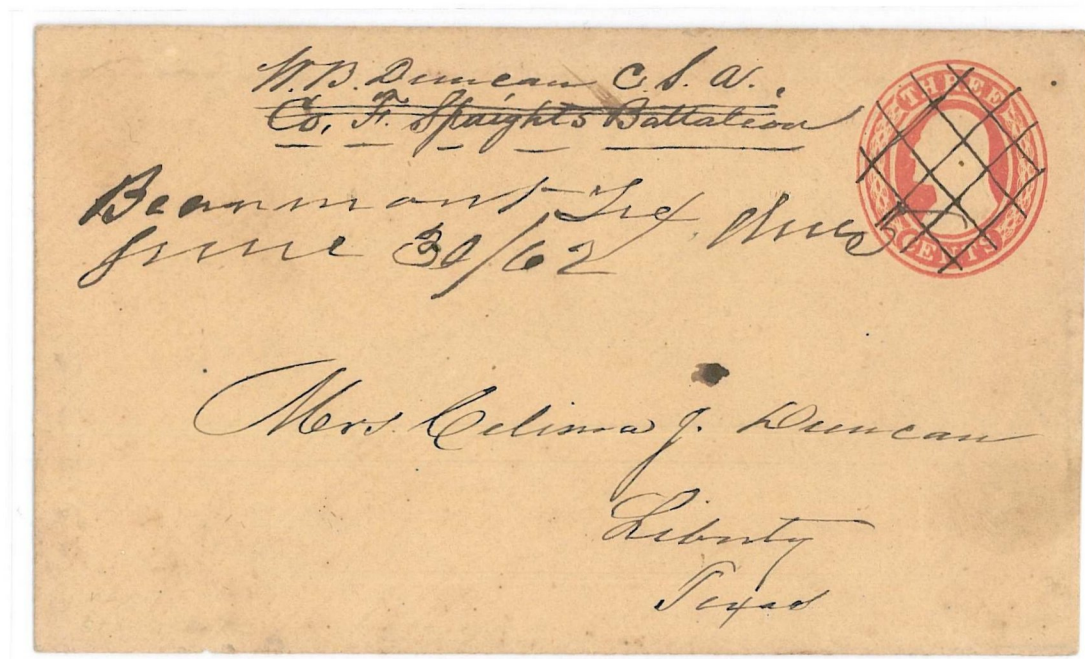
Confederate Texas Uses

First day use of U.S. postage in Confederate Texas



"Cyprus Top Tex, Mar 5 (18)61" endorsed town mark at top left on buff Nesbitt entire to Rome, Georgia. On March 5, 1861 the State of Texas joined the Confederate States of America by state ordinance.

On June 1, 1861, the U.S. Postal Service ceased all operations in the seceded states. The Confederate Postal Service took over the existing post offices within the State of Texas. The Nesbitt stamped envelope was no longer valid for postage in the state it had served so well... however quantities remained. As the war dragged on, paper became scarce and the Nesbitt envelope once again served the postal patrons of Texas. This time not to prepay the postage... but to merely envelop and protect the most precious cargo of the written word in a war-torn state.



"Beaumont Tex., June 30/(18)62" endorsed town mark on demonetized Nesbitt Soldiers Due **adversity cover** used as stationery to Liberty, Texas. Manuscript "due 5" cents CSA postage and soldier's endorsement at top.