



## The Hartford Letter Mail, 1844-1845



The Hartford Letter Mail was an Independent Mail company that carried mail between August 1844 and June 30, 1845. The headquarters, located at 139 Main St. in Hartford, served as the office for the primary proprietor, Francis Fuller, while a partner, Edward W. Parsons, operated a print shop and book store nearby.

At this time Fuller also served as the Hartford agent for Phillips & Co. New York Express which carried express matter from Hartford to New York City. In addition, he served as Hartford agent of Thompson's Express which operated between Hartford and Springfield, Massachusetts. Fuller's 139 Main Street address first appears in a Hale & Company newspaper advertisement published October 11, 1844 (the ad is internally dated July 12, 1844) which lists (Hale's) stamps available at the Main Street address but also lists the main Hale's office in Hartford at a different address. This would indicate that prior to commencement of the Hartford Letter Mail service, Fuller was working in conjunction with Hale & Co. handling letter mail.

Although Fuller & Parson's Hartford Letter Mail operated closely with Hale & Company, they issued their own adhesives. A plate of twelve individual engravings, arranged in two rows of six subjects, was likely prepared by local engraver Erastus B. Cunningham and printed at the Brown and Parsons print shop. The stamps were printed from this single plate of 12 in black on yellow glazed paper and in black on pink glazed paper. Although an 1895 account suggests the pink stamps may have been sold for tens cents each this exhibitor's research concludes that both were sold for five cents. The different colors were evidently used to keep the accounting separate. A study of known genuine examples on cover confirms that the stamps on yellow paper were all used on the Phillips Express route to New York City while the very few genuine covers bearing stamps on pink paper were used on the Thompson's Express route to Springfield. The stamps were first correctly plated to their correct positions by F.W. Hunter (his original reconstruction is below).

The majority of Hartford Mail stamps were sold in complete panes of twelve stamps, each stamp bearing a manuscript precancel. The yellow stamps, for use on the route to New York are reported with four different precancels: bearing the word "South" in two different styles, the word "Southern" in one of those two styles, and the word "Hartford" in a third handwriting style. The pink stamps, for use on routes via Springfield, exist with three different precancels: with the word "West," with the word "East" or with the initials "W<sup>c</sup>" (West). Some stamps were sold without precancels and were either left uncanceled, or were canceled upon use.

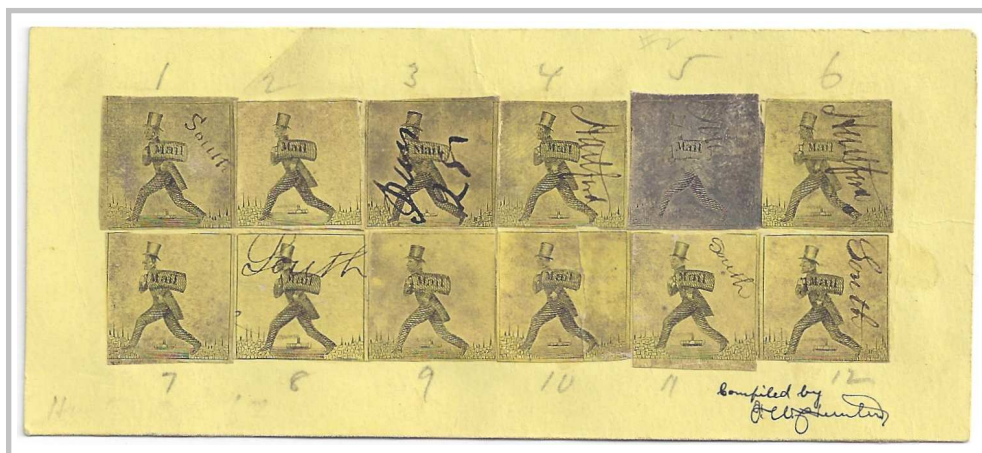


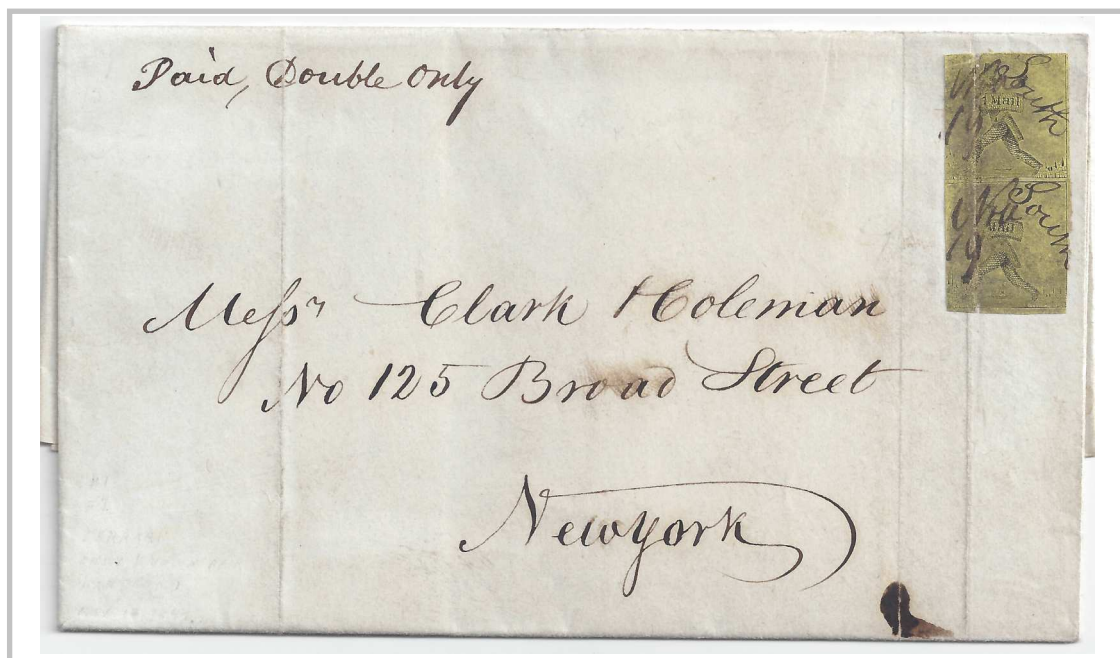
plate reconstruction of black on yellow stamps compiled by F.W. Hunter

## Southern Route Uses (Yellow Stamp)

A "Republican Farmer" newspaper notice of August 6, 1844 reports: "We are told that arrangements are making to establish an Express for conveying letters etc. between this city (Hartford) and New York. The prices are to be half the present post office rates." The southern route was via Phillips New York Express.



22 August 1844 Hartford to New York, position 12 (from Preston pane) used in combination with Hale's stamp  
**earliest reported use of a Hartford Mail stamp, the only reported combination with Hale's adhesive**



19 November 1844 Hartford double rate to New York, vertical pair, positions 1 and 7,  
"South" precancels and "Nov 19" date in manuscript by agent when used, **two reported pairs**

## Northern Route Uses (Pink Stamp)

Hartford Letter Mail service in conjunction with Hale & Co., using the Thompson's Express route to Springfield, Mass. began in late 1844. The stamps on pink paper were used exclusively for this route. From Springfield the Hale's system was available eastward to Boston and westward to Albany.



Spring 1845 Hartford to Boston, position 8, "West" precancel, Hale & Co. Hartford handstamp  
**fewer than five reported genuine uses on cover**



23 June 1845 Hartford to Boston, position 5, "East" precancel, pencil "postage 2¢" for Hale's delivery charge  
**fewer than five reported genuine uses on cover**

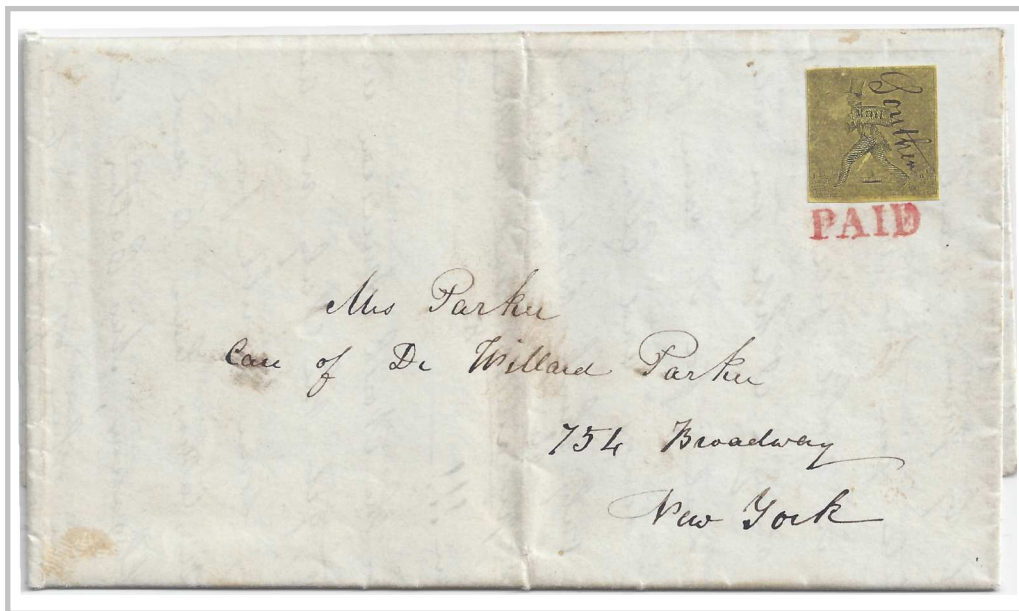
## Uses Outside Hartford

Top letter mentions buying a pane of 12 stamps: "I bought a card of tickets at 5 cents each one of which I stick on every letter which answers your postage."

*I bought a card of tickets at 5 cents each*



12 February 1845 Newington, Connecticut to Philadelphia, position 3, "South" precancel manuscript Newington postmark applied by Hartford agent, "PAID" of Hale's New York office



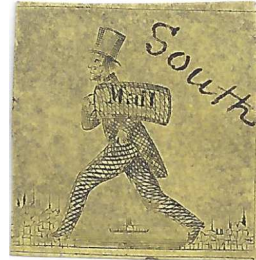
September 27, 1844 Meriden, Connecticut to New York, position 6, "Southern" precancel Hale & Co.'s "PAID" handstamp

## Precancels

Cancels were applied to most Hartford Mail stamps before the stamps were separated from the pane. Only a few examples were sold without these precancels and those remained uncanceled or were pen canceled upon use. The handwriting on all the precancels can be accurately ascribed to one of four different people (agents). These are identified here as agents A to D.



"South" precancel, agent "A" (pos 7)



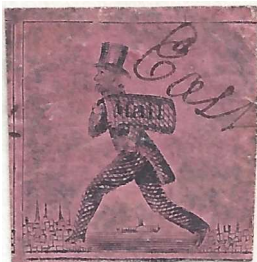
"South" precancel, agent "B" (pos 4)



"Southern" precancel, agent "C" (pos 9)



"Hartford" precancel, agent "C" (pos 3)  
(listing example of the old "buff" color)



"East" precancel, agent "A" (pos 2)



"West" precancel, agent "A" (pos 12)

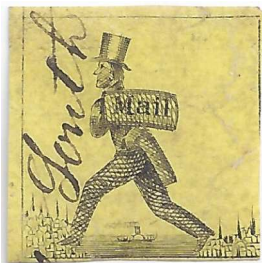


"W<sup>e</sup>(st)" precancel, agent "D" (pos 9)

# Position 1



Strider has large nose.  
Left heel rests on cubes.



"South" precancel, agent "A"



"South" precancel, agent "B"



4 September 1844 Hartford to New York City, "Southern" precancel

## Position 2

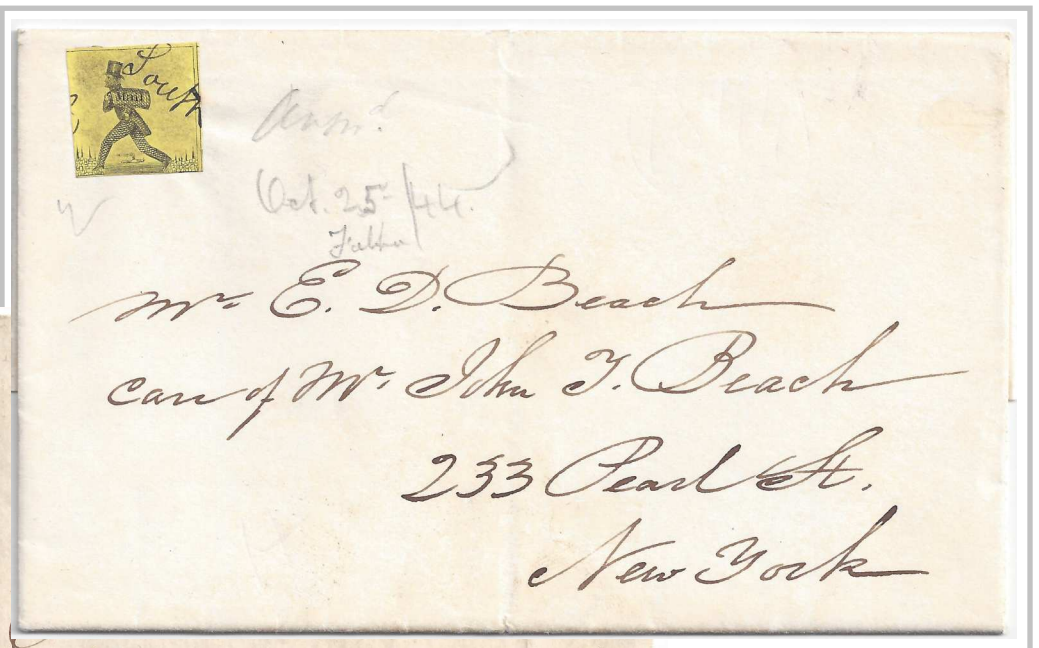


Strider short hat, vertical lines below left heel.



"South" precancel, agent "A"

25 October 1844 Hartford  
to New York City  
"South" precancel

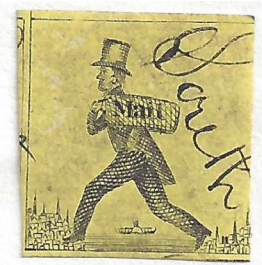


30 June 1845 Hartford to New York City, uncanceled stamp, **last day of service**

**Position 3**



Strider's left hand short and barely visible.

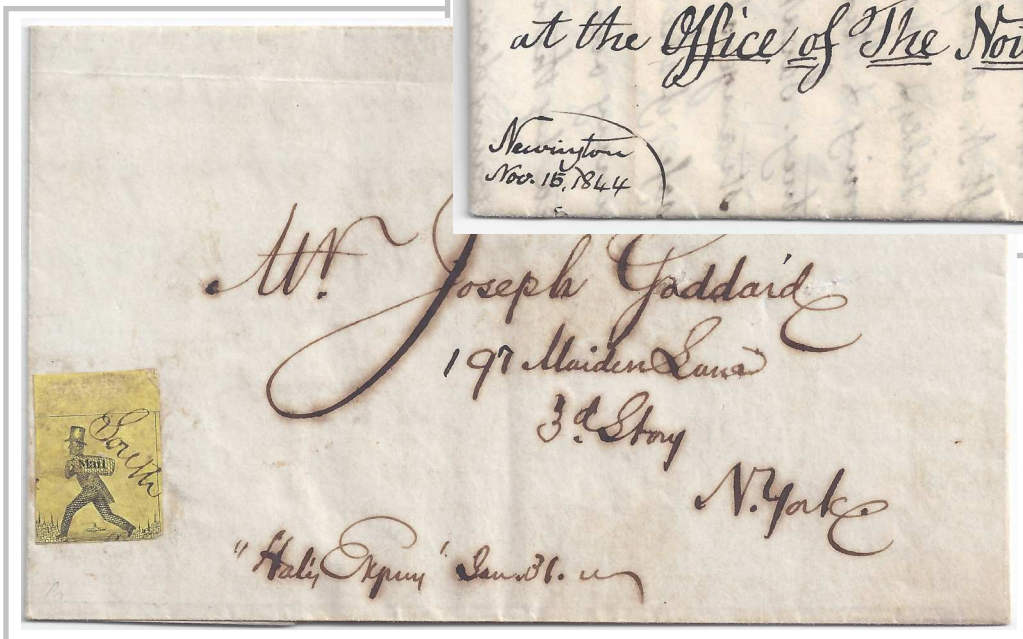


"South" precancel, agent "A"

uncanceled

"Hartford" cancel

15 November 1844  
Newington to Philadelphia  
"South" precancel  
Hale's New York oval



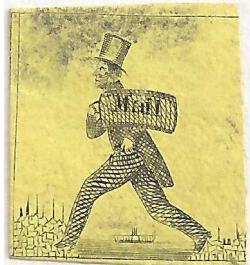
31 January 1845  
Hartford to New York City  
"South" precancel



**Position 5**



Strider's left hand with clearly defined fingers.



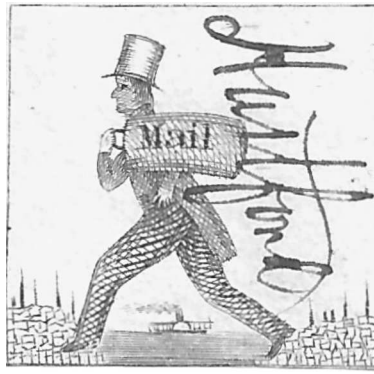
uncanceled

13 December 1844  
Newington to Philadelphia  
"South" precancel  
cancel and "PAID"

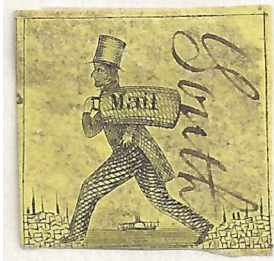


1 November 1844 Hartford  
to New York City  
"Southern" precancel  
from Preston pane

## Position 6



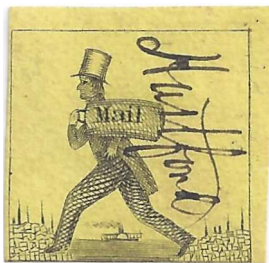
Large mail bag with squarish handle.



"South" precancel, agent "A"



uncanceled



"Hartford" precancel, agent "A"



"West" precancel, agent "A"



15 October 1844 Hartford to New York City, "Southern" precancel from Preston pane  
this stamp forms a pair with the position 5 stamp on cover from same correspondence on previous page

# Position 7



Strider with idiotic face and long head.



uncanceled



"South" precancel, agent "A"



"South" precancel, agent "B"



17 September 1844 Hartford to New York City, "South" precancel

## Position 8



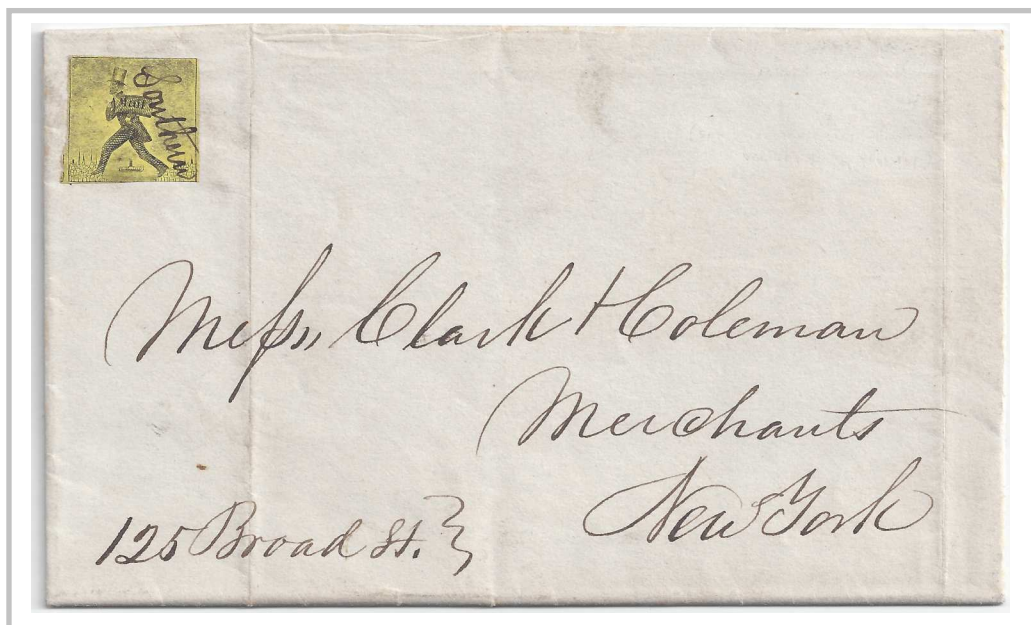
Strider with long fingers. Steamer is taller than normal.



"South" precancel, agent "B"

uncanceled

Preston pane stamp images:  
positions 5-6, 8-10,12.

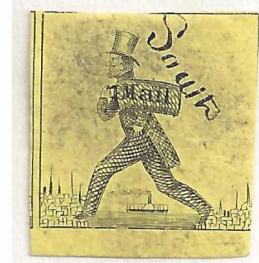
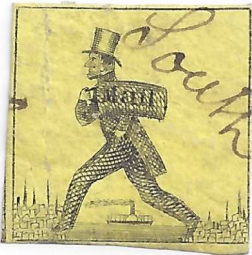


10 October 1844 Hartford to New York City, "Southern" precancel from Preston pane  
this stamp forms a pair with the position 9 stamp on cover from same correspondence on following page

**Position 9**



Strider with out trust chin. Long steamer.



"South" precancel, agent "A"

"Hartford" precancel

"South" precancel, agent "B"

30 January 1845 Hartford  
to New York City  
manuscript date  
and "Paid" cancel



2 October 1844 Hartford to  
New York City  
"Southern" precancel  
from Preston pane

**Position 10**



Strider with pointed nose. Shallow boat.



"South" precancel, agent "A"

"South" precancel, agent "B"

18 November 1844  
Hartford to New York City  
"South" precancel

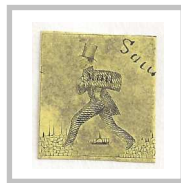
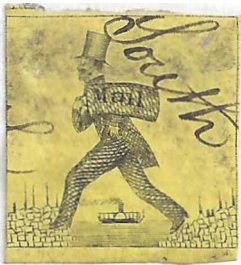


30 September 1844 Hartford to New York City, "Southern" precancel from Preston pane  
this stamp forms a pair with the position 9 stamp on cover from same correspondence on previous

**Position 11**



Both cities slope to left. Steamer with solid hull.

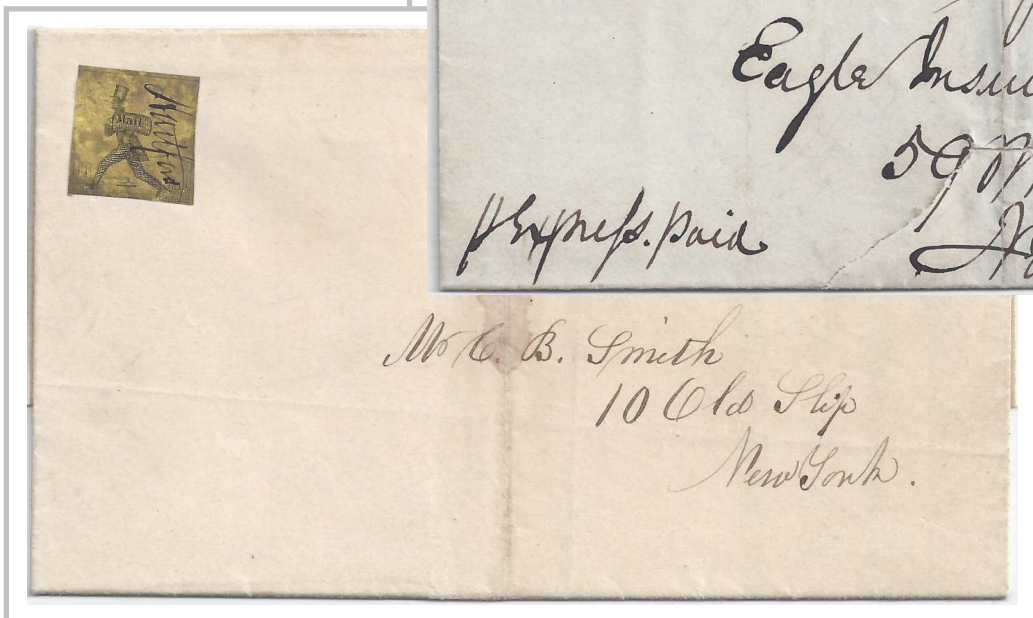


"South" precancel, agent "A"

"South" precancel, agent "B"

"West" precancel

4 January 1845  
Hartford to New York City  
"South" precancel



25 September 1844  
Hartford to New York City  
"Hartford" precancel

## Position 4



Strider short hat, all fingers well defined.



"South" precancel, agent "A"

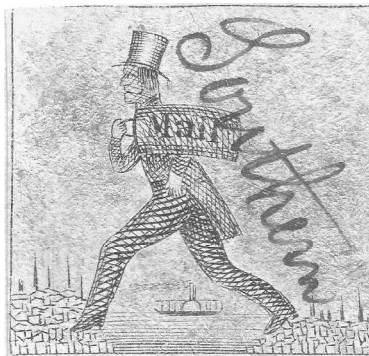


"Jan" cancel



uncanceled

## Position 12



Strider placed higher on towns. Mail bag larger handle.



"South" precancel, agent "B"