

# Leominster, Mass. Provisional Postage Due and Instructional Labels

Postmasters worldwide applied manuscript or handstamped rate and instructional markings to mailed items to inform transit and destination postmasters and recipients of services rendered or fees required. In the United States, any rate markings applied to mail designated postage due from the recipient unless specifically marked "Paid" to designate prepayment.

One postmaster, Charles H. Colson of Leominster, Massachusetts, created small labels with postage due rates and instructional markings and applied them to letters requiring further actions or explanations. The use of such postmaster provisional postage due labels pre-dated the issuance of official U.S. Government postage due stamps in 1879 by almost 25 years. As most of his labels are formatted differently, they were apparently created either singly or in small batches.

This exhibit shows examples from the 1850s and 1860s, including the earliest recorded, of the Leominster postmaster's provisional postage due labels, of which approximately 40 examples have been recorded.

## Background on the Creator of the Provisional Labels:

Charles H. Colson, the Postmaster for Leominster, Mass., served in this role from 1833 until his retirement in 1874 but for an 8-day interruption due to politics. He was meticulous in his duties and his aide and successor described how he would heat his handstamps prior to use to ensure a clear and precise strike. As Postmaster, Colson served in a city with a population ranging from 3,121 in 1850, to 3,522 in 1870.

## Postmaster Provisional Postage Due Label



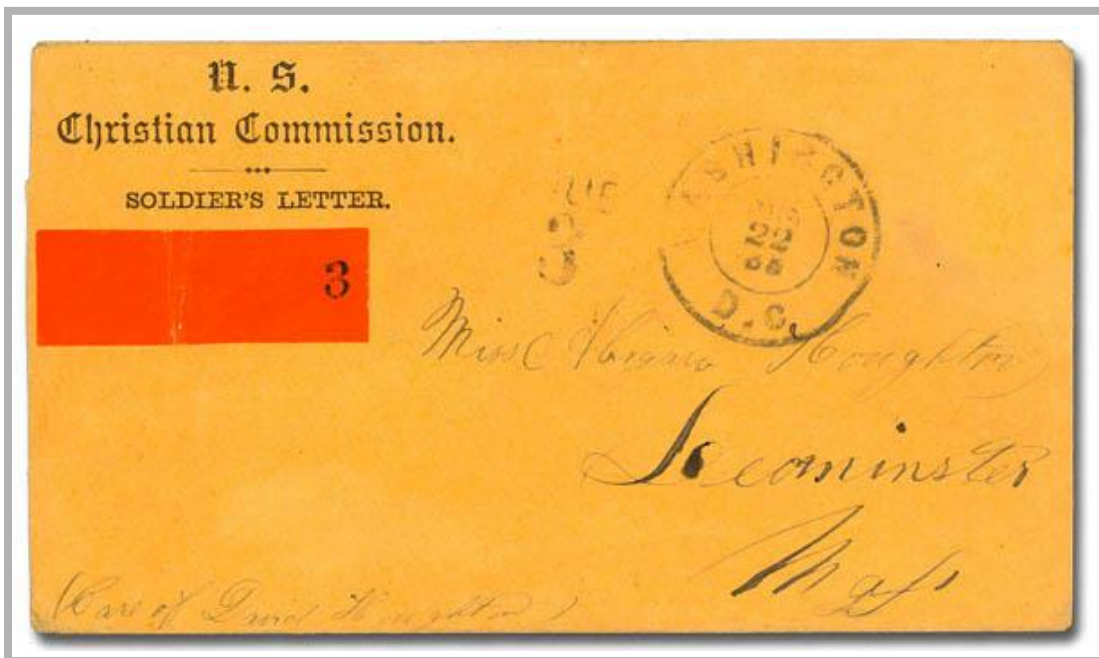
PFC

"1" on yellow, square label affixed on blue January 8, 1855 folded drop letter, "Leominster Ms. Jan 9" datestamp.

*Earliest recorded dated Leominster Postmaster label of the approximately 40 known examples*



**“3” on pink.** Square label affixed on circa 1859 envelope from North Cambridge, Mass. to South Lancaster, Mass. Forwarded to Leominster, Mass. with manuscript “3 cents Due.” Leominster postmaster applied postage due label over this notation on receipt.



PFC

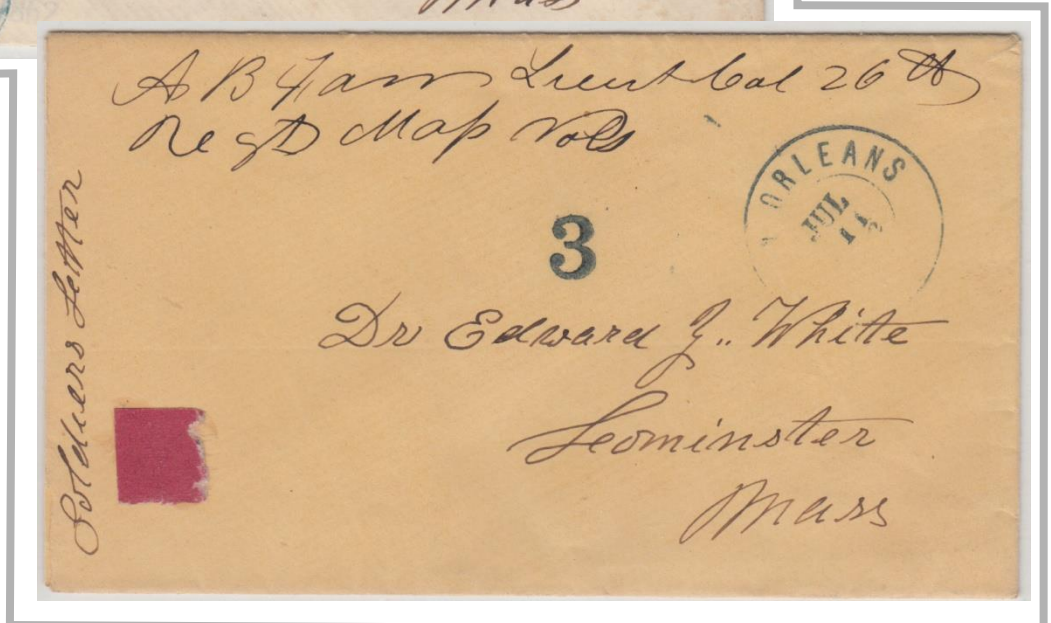
**“3” on orange.** Label affixed to orange U.S. Christian Commission Soldier's Letter envelope to Leominster, Mass. “Washington D.C. Jun 22 '65” datestamp and matching “Due 3” handstamp, Prepayment rules were suspended for soldiers when properly endorsed, though payment was required from the recipient on Soldier’s Letters.



**"3" on red.** "USShip 3cts" handstamp. 3 (cents) due at Leominster for collect postage on soldier's letter.



**"Due 3 cents" on red.** Baltimore, April 17, 1861. Baltimore "Due. 3" handstamp and Leominster "Due 3 cents" label.

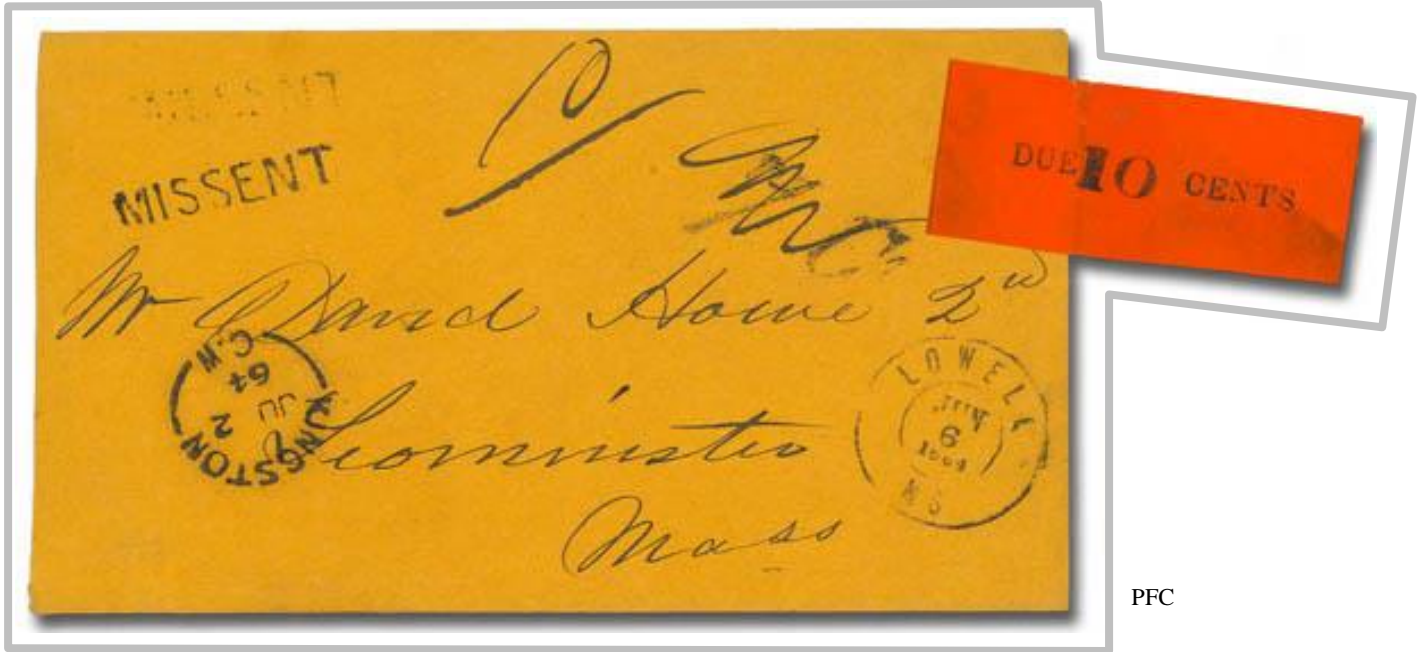


**Remnant of red label.** New Orleans, July 11, 1862. Remnant of label, possibly torn to indicate collection of the 3¢ due charge.

**Soldier's Letters**

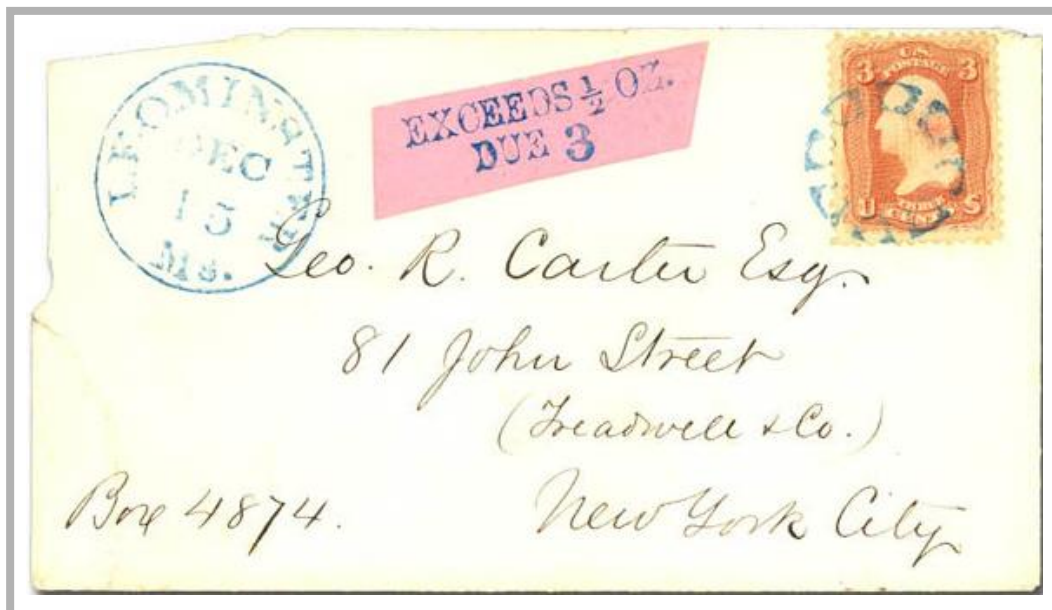
Three covers from the correspondence of John H. P. White of Acton, Mass.

On the April 17, the regiment entrained from Boston to Washington, passing through Baltimore on April 19 (center cover). Later after being reformed in Boston, they were sent to Ship Island, MS, and later to occupy and defend New Orleans. White died of disease in New Orleans on July 10, 1863.



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**“Due 10 Cents” on orange.** Label pasted over edge at right on 1864 buff cover to Leominster, Mass., “Kingston C.W. JU 2 '64” datestamp and “7 Ct.” Canadian due handstamp crossed out and manuscript “10” U.S. cents due, “Missent” to Lowell, Mass and forwarded at no charge to Leominster. Label advises 10¢ due from recipient for unpaid postage from Canada.



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**“Exceeds ½ Oz. Due 3” blue on pink** label affixed on cover to New York City bearing 3¢ grilled adhesive. **Blue Stovepipe cancel** and matching blue “Leominster Ms. Dec 15” datestamp. Circa 1868.

## Demonetized Stamp



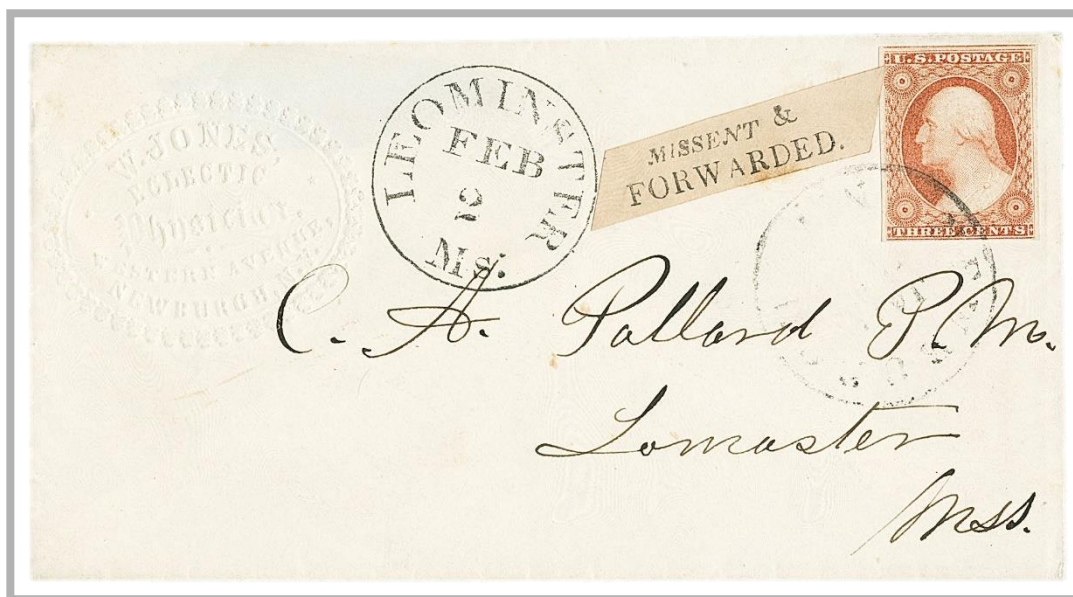
PFC

**“Held for Postage” on red**, affixed on orange cover to Rock Bottom, Mass. “Feb. 7” datestamps indicates 1862 (or later) attempted use of demonetized 3¢ 1857 issue . Cancelled with manuscript “No Go.” and mailer notified. 3¢ 1861 issue later added for proper postage. Cancelled with “3” handstamp and dispatched to destination.



PFC

**“Forwarded, 1855. Due 3 Cents”** on blue, rhomboid-shaped affixed on cover to Leominster, Mass., “Buffalo N.Y. '3 Paid' Aug 4” datestamp/ Forwarded to Boston Mass. “Leominster Ms. Aug 7” datestamp and additional pencil “3 Due” at upper right. Original enclosure begins, “I know not where to direct my letters, but that is of course no excuse for neglecting to write.”



PFC

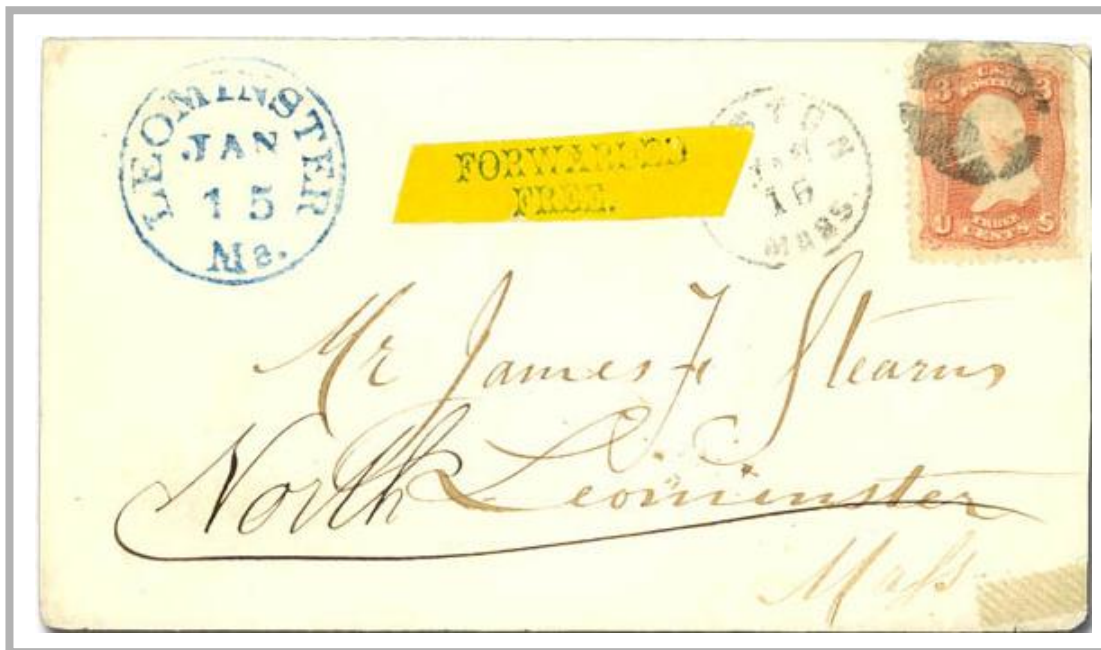
**“Missent & Forwarded”** on tan, affixed to cover from Newburgh, NY with embossed physician’s corner card. Newburgh and Leominster datestamps.



PFC

“Missent & Forwarded” on red, affixed to patriotic cover from Key West, Fla. Key West, January 6 and Leominster, January 21 datestamps. Enclosed letter datelined “Jan. 5, 1862.”

Although Florida seceded and joined the Confederacy, Key West always remained in Union hands because of the naval base there. This base was critical in the naval blockade of the South.



PFC

“Forwarded Free.” blue on yellow label on cover to Leominster Mass. Grilled adhesive tied by “Boston Mass. Jan 15” duplexed datestamp, forwarded to North Leominster. Blue “Leominster Ms. Jan 15” datestamp. Grilled stamp indicates circa 1869 use.