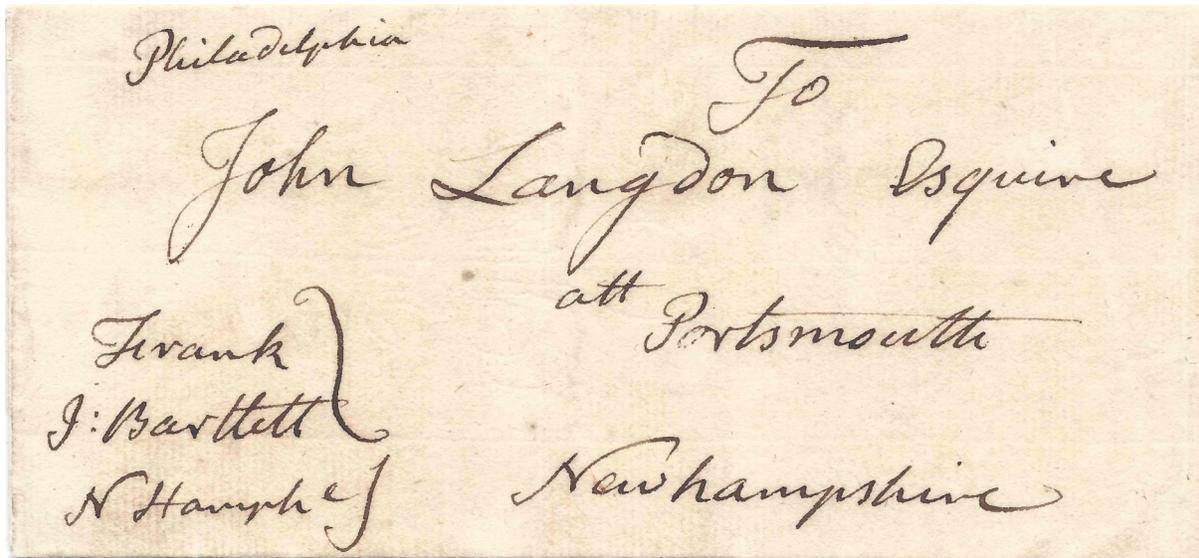




The right to send mail free of postage is commonly referred to as a “free franking” privilege, with the frank being a signature denoting such right. In the United States, the franking privilege predates the establishment of the republic itself, as the Continental Congress bestowed it on its members in 1775. The first Continental Congress was formed on 5 September 1774 and included delegates from 12 of the 13 colonies that were later to form the United States of America. On 8 November 1775, the Continental Congress passed a resolution granting the free franking privilege to delegates in order to send and receive mail, free of postage, for both personal matters and issues related to the formation of the government.

“All letters to and from the delegates of the united colonies, during the sessions of Congress, to pass and be carried free of postage, the delegates not to frank or enclose any letters but their own.”



Frank of **Josiah Bartlett**, Signer of the Declaration of Independence, addressed and signed in his hand as a New Hampshire delegate to the Continental Congress to John Langdon on 1776 folded cover to Portsmouth, NH. This cover was franked shortly after the privilege was approved by The Continental Congress on 8 November 1775.

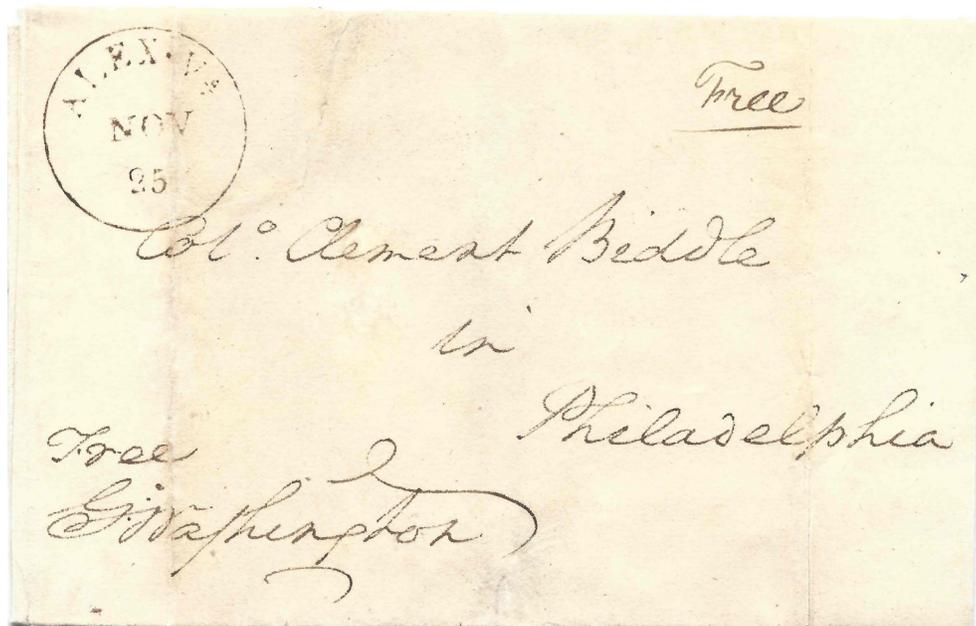
The purpose of this exhibit is to illustrate the key government posts and other important categories of individuals that were given the free franking privilege during the formative years of American history and to explain the law or Postal Regulations under which such right was granted. It is presented in the following sections:

- Franks of the U.S. Presidents and their Widows, Washington through Quincy Adams
- Franks of Signers of the Declaration of Independence
- Franks of the Framers of the U.S. Constitution
- Franks of Key Congressman and Senators
- Franks of Key Military Leaders
- Franks of the Postmasters General

Boldface statements describe important items, including the degree of rarity, supported by census data if available or based on the exhibitor’s experience. The captions describe each item as well as important elements of the postal history. **Every cover has at least one certificate from the Philatelic Foundation.**

UNITED STATES PRESIDENTS

Presidents Washington through Grant were provided the free franking privilege while serving in office. The right was abolished by an act of Congress effective 1 July 1873 and no President since Grant has enjoyed the privilege while serving in office, although many have been bestowed franking rights at another time, such as while serving as Senator or while ex-President.

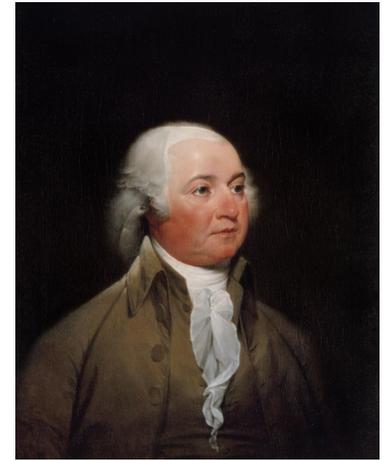
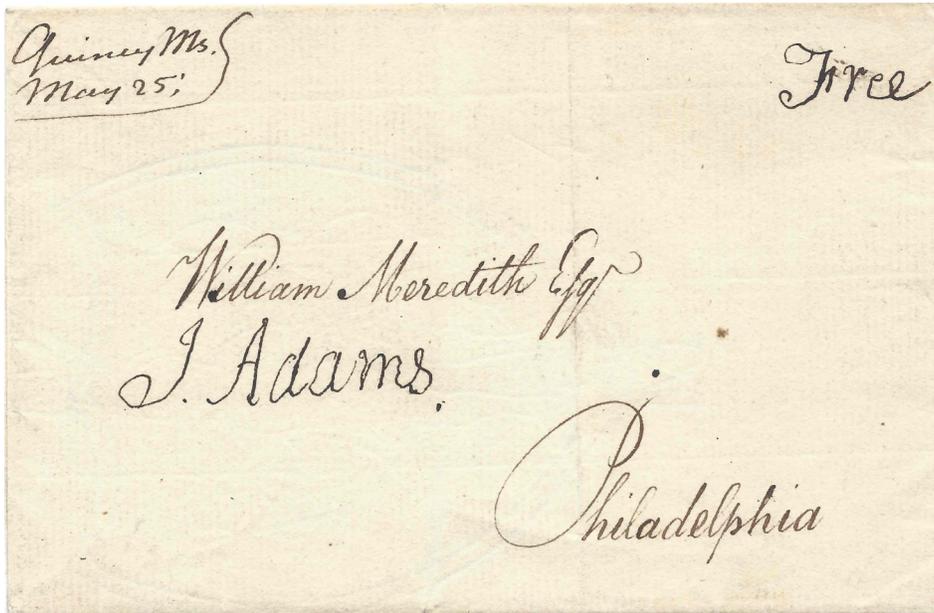


Free frank of **George Washington** – first President, Framers of the US Constitution and President of the Constitutional Convention, Commanding General of the Continental Army, and the Father of his Country – addressed and signed in his hand to Col. Biddle in Philadelphia, PA., with “Alex. Va./Nov 25” circular datestamp, sent weeks before his death on 14 December 1799.

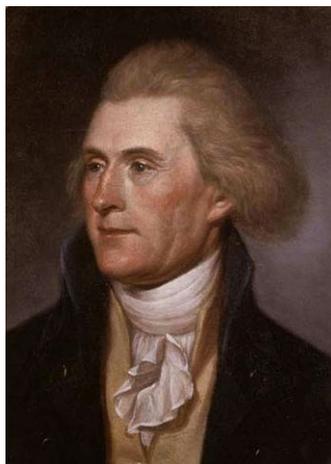


Free frank of **Martha Washington** – America’s First Lady and First Widow – signed in her hand as widow of President George Washington on folded letter datelined “Mount Vernon, November 6th, 1801” and addressed to Robert Lewis at Fredericksburg, with “Alex. Va.” circular datestamp and red manuscript “FREE.” **One of four reported free franks of the First Lady**, who was granted the privilege in April 1800 following the ex-President’s death on 14 December 1799. She used it for only 16 months prior to her own death in May 1802.

UNITED STATES PRESIDENTS

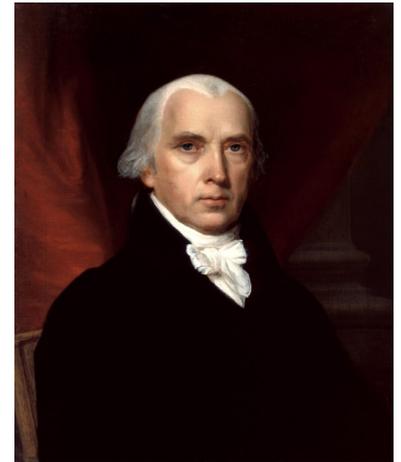
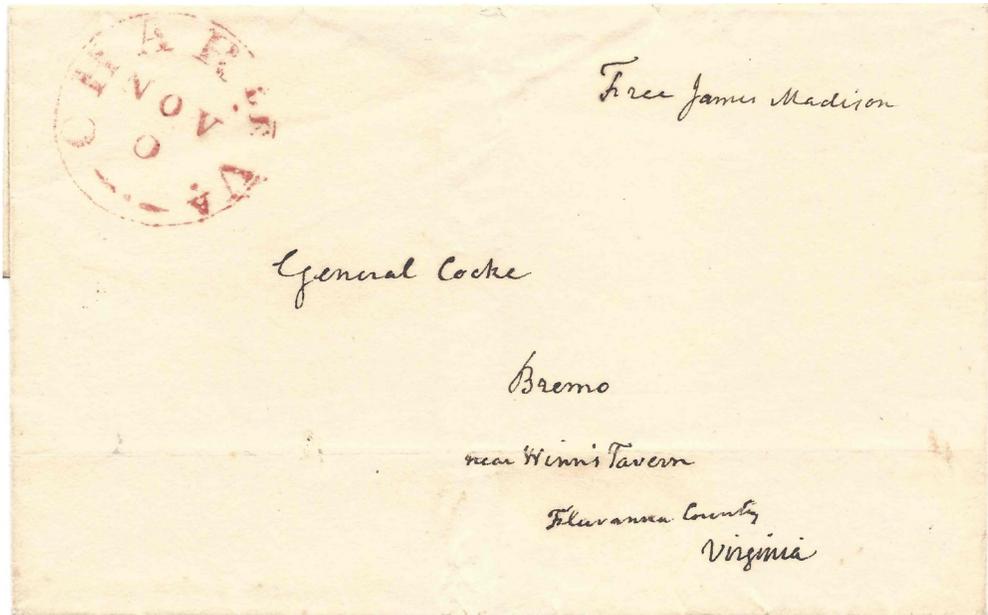


Free frank of **John Adams** – second President, Signer of the Declaration of Independence – signed in his hand on folded letter sheet to Philadelphia, PA, with manuscript “Quincy MS, May 25” town marking.



Free frank of **Thomas Jefferson** – third President, Signer and Author of the Declaration of Independence – signed in his hand “Th. Jefferson Pr. US” as President on folded address sheet to Philadelphia, PA with “Washington City, Dec 22” circular date stamp.

UNITED STATES PRESIDENTS

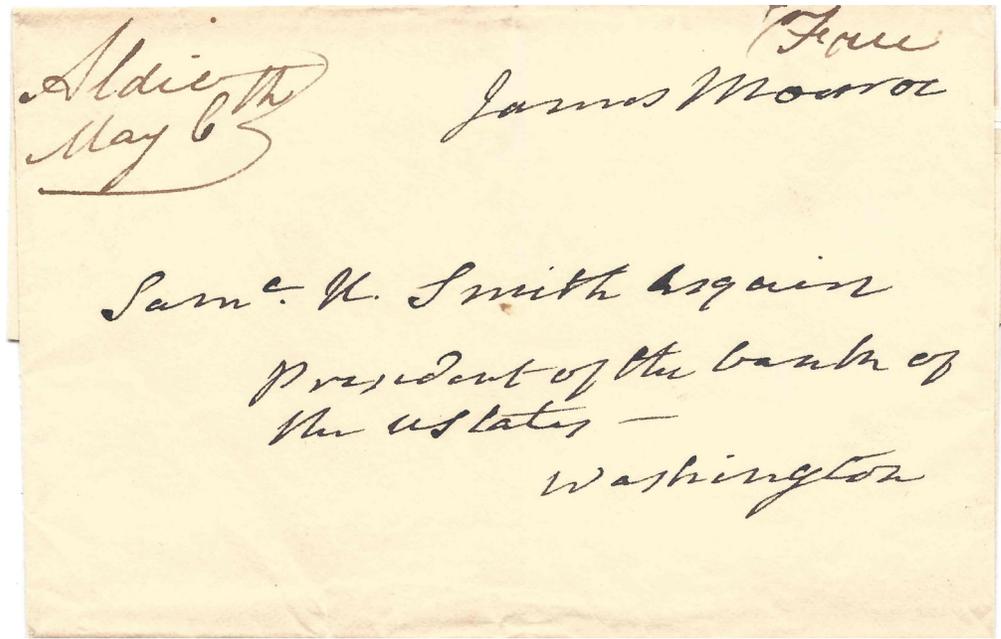


Free frank of **James Madison** – fourth President, Framers, and “Father of the Constitution” – addressed and signed in his hand as President on folded address sheet to General Coker, near Winn’s Tavern, Fluvanna County, VA, with red “Charle VA/Nov 6” circular date stamp. Coker was a brigadier general in command of the Virginia militia during the War of 1812 and led the defense of Richmond along the Chickahominy River against British forces.

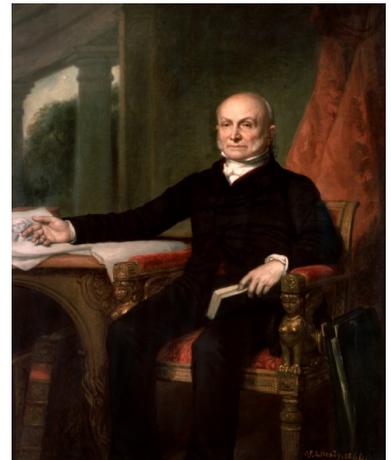
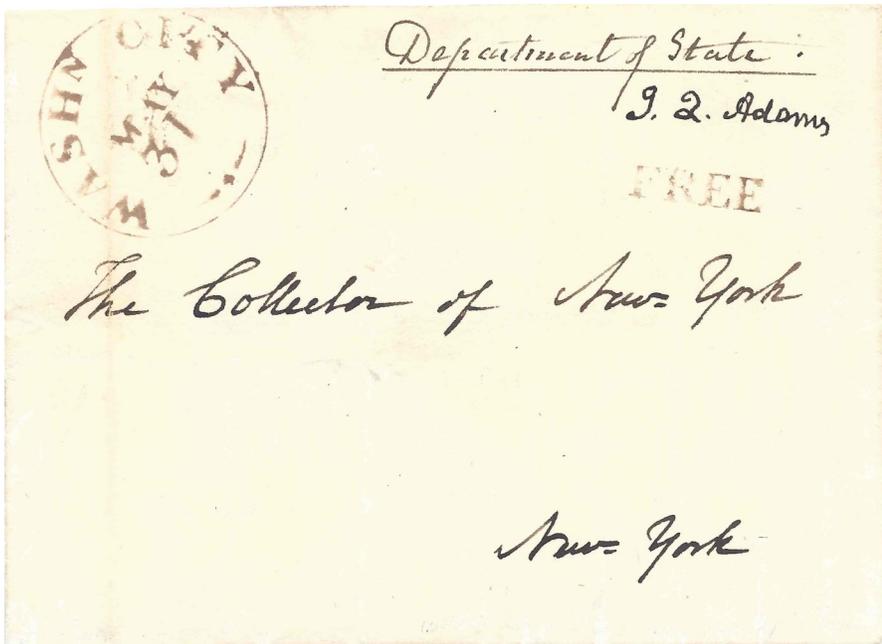


Free frank of **Dolley Madison** – First Lady of the US– signed in her hand, “Free/D.P. Madison” on cover to Philadelphia, PA, with red “Richmond, VA/Dec 26” cds. Dolley Madison was the second Presidential Widow to be granted the franking privilege via a special act of Congress on 2 July 1836 following her husband’s death.

UNITED STATES PRESIDENTS



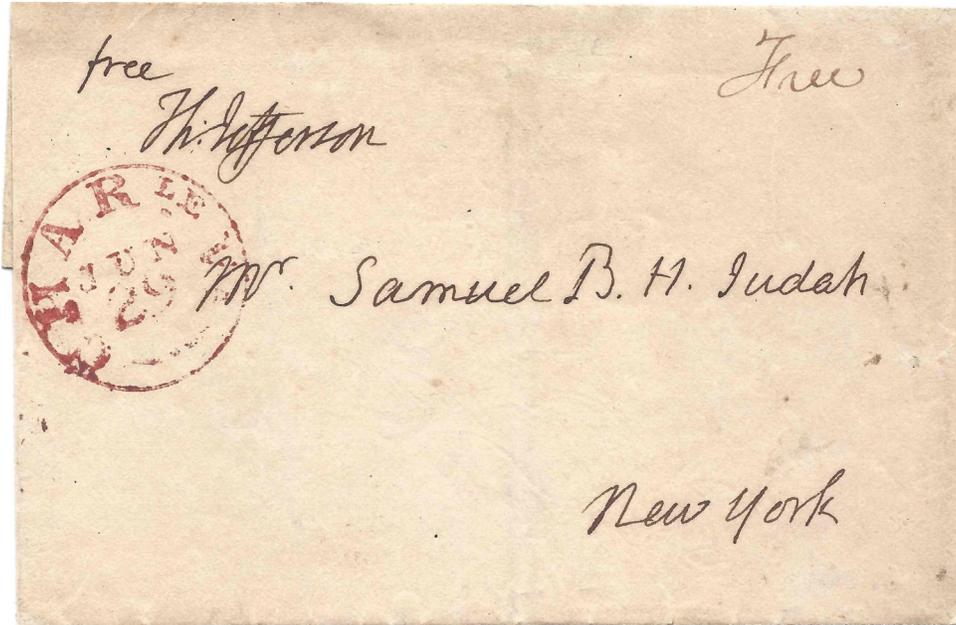
Free Frank of **James Monroe** – addressed and signed in his hand as ex-President to Samuel Smith, president of the Bank of the United States, with manuscript “Aldie (VA)/May 6” postmark and matching “Free.”



Free Frank of **John Quincy Adams** – sixth President – signed in his hand as Secretary of State under James Monroe on folded address sheet to New York City with “Washn City/May 31” (1819) circular date stamp and matching straightline “FREE” handstamp. Accompanied by the original letter written by Thomas Parker, District Attorney, datelined Charleston 23 May 1819 that addresses the intended prosecution of pirates from the ship Louisa, which was captured by George Clarke (alias Almeida), who were later tried and found guilty in 1820.

SIGNERS OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The Second Continental Congress convened on 10 May 1775, at Philadelphia's State House, and unanimously passed the Declaration of Independence the following year on 2 July 1776, publicly announcing the decision two days later. There were 56 signers, including Thomas Jefferson of Virginia who drafted the declaration.

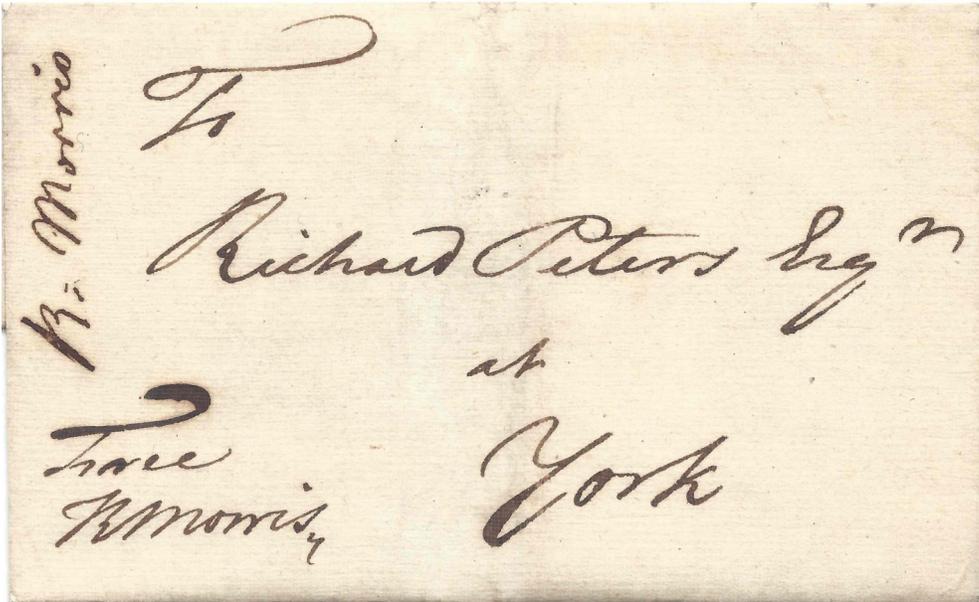


Free frank of **Thomson Jefferson** – third President, Signer and Author of the Declaration – addressed to Samuel B.H. Judah, playwright and lawyer, in New York and signed in his hand on folded address sheet, with “Charle, VA/Jun 29” circular date stamp.

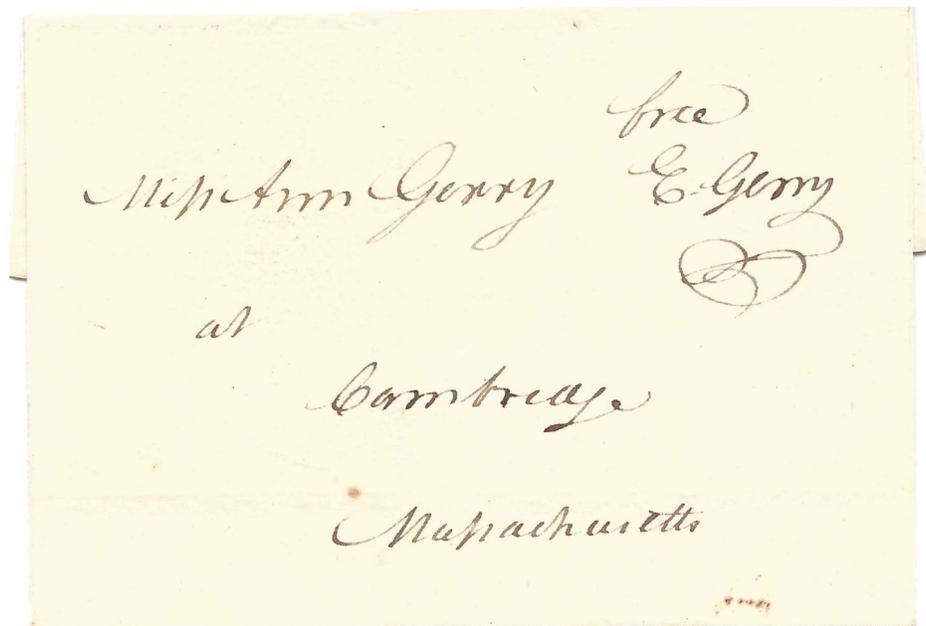


John Trumbell's 1819 painting, *The Declaration of Independence*, which depicts the committee that drafted the Declaration – John Adams, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, Thomas Jefferson (presenting the document), and Benjamin Franklin – standing before John Hancock, the President of the Continental Congress. The painting includes portraits of 42 of the 56 signers and 5 other patriots.

SIGNERS OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

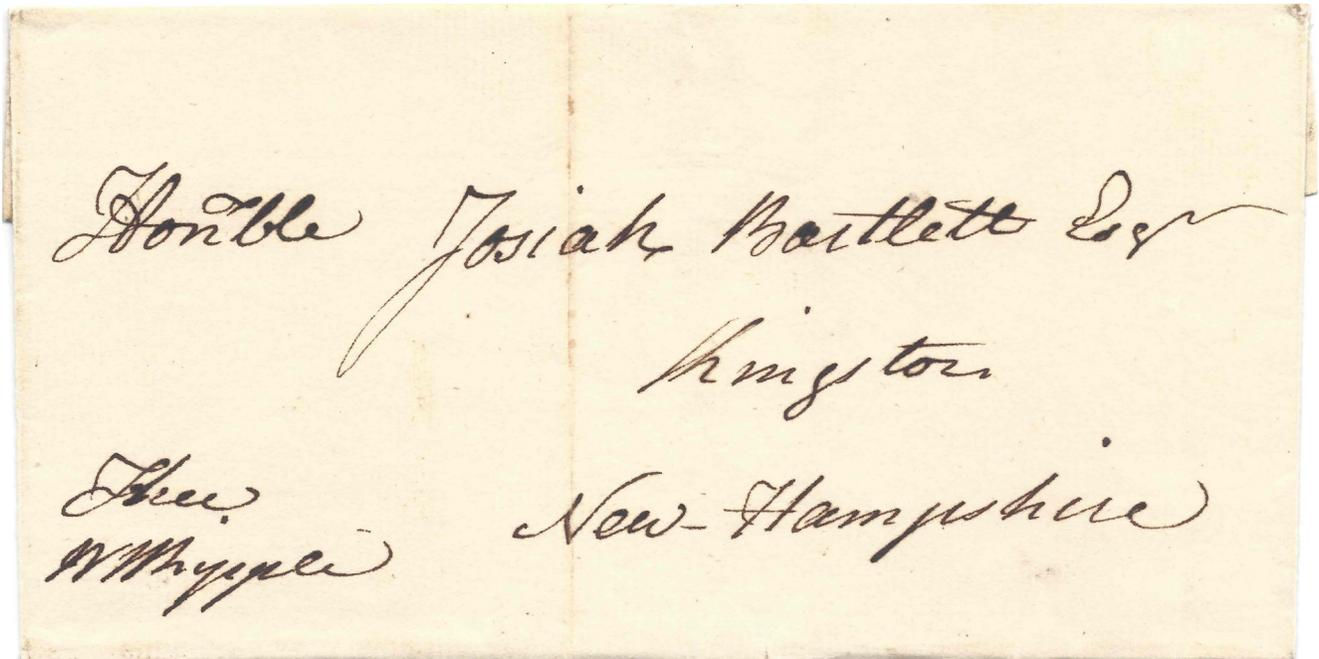


Free frank of **Robert Morris** – Signer of the Declaration – addressed and signed in his hand as delegate to the Continental Congress on 1777 folded address sheet to Richard Peters in NY, who was Secretary to the Board of War at this time during the Revolution.

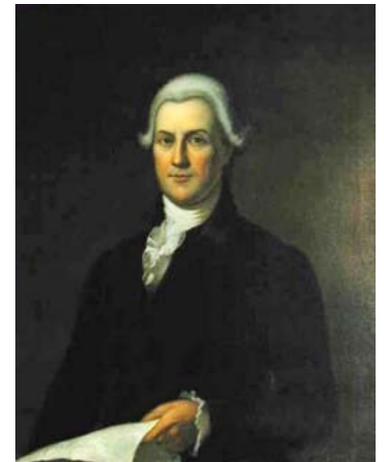
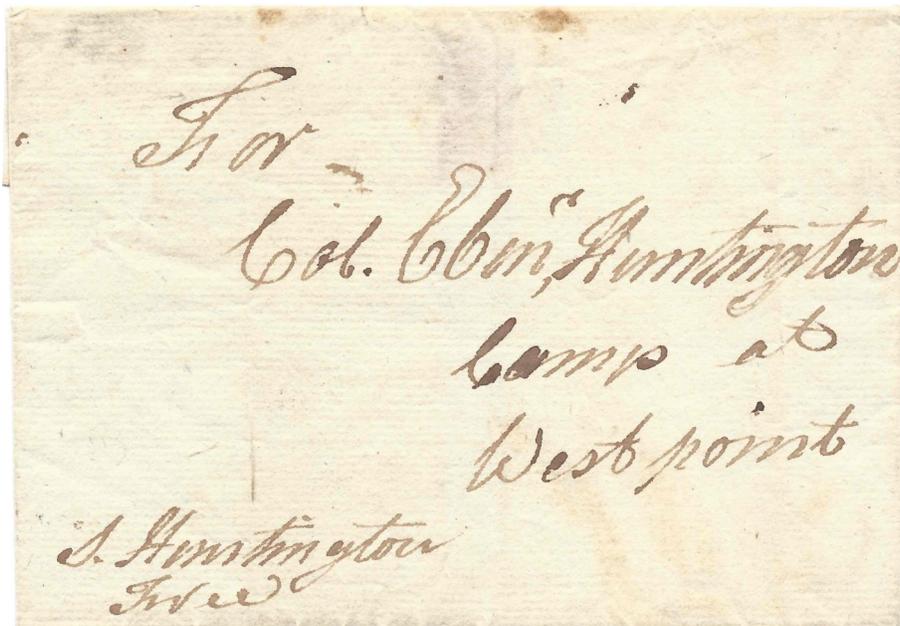


Free frank of **Elbridge Gerry** – Signer of the Declaration and Framers of the US Constitution – addressed and signed in his hand as US Vice-President on 1814 (docketed) folded address sheet to Cambridge, MA.

SIGNERS OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE



Free frank of **William Whipple** – Signer of the Declaration – addressed and signed in his hand as delegate to the Continental Congress on 1779 folded address sheet to fellow delegate and signer, Josiah Bartlett, in New Hampshire.

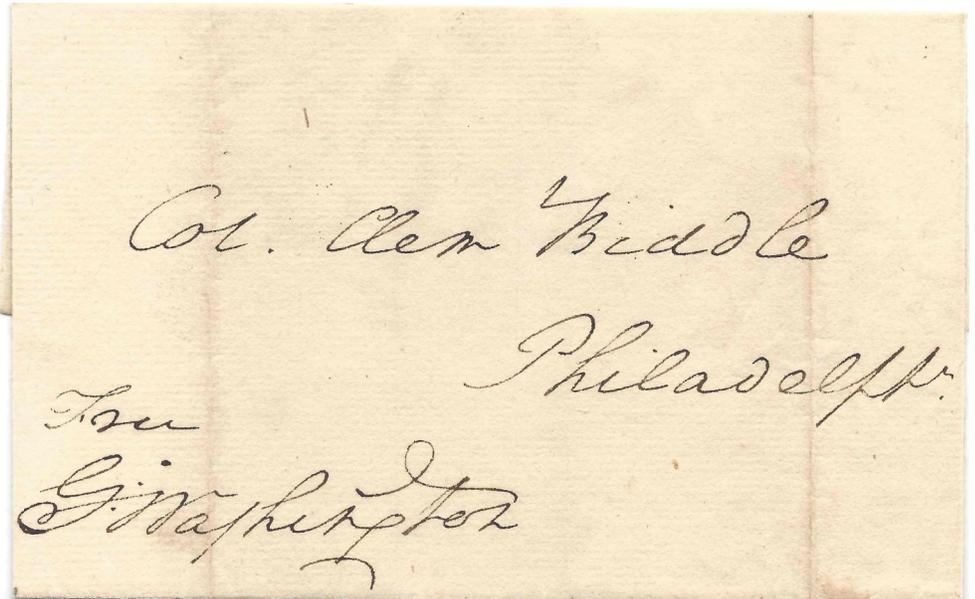


Free frank of **Samuel Huntington** – Signer of the Declaration and 18th Governor of Connecticut – addressed and signed in his hand while serving as seventh President of the Continental Congress (28 Sep 1779 to 10 Jul 1781), on folded address sheet to Col. Ebenezer Huntington, who was with the Third Connecticut Regiment at West Point in January of 1781

FRAMERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

By 1786, the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation had become an ineffective governing body. In recognition that the newly formed federation was at risk of disunification, a convention of delegates from the 13 states was called by the Congress in a resolution of 21 February "for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation." The Constitutional Convention was held in Philadelphia in what is now known as Independence Hall, and it elected George Washington of Virginia as its President. The revisions turned out to be so substantive that the Articles of Confederation were replaced with the Federal Constitution. All but three of the 42 "Framers" then present signed the final draft of the Constitution on 17 September 1787.

Free frank of **George Washington**
– Framers of the US Constitution
and President of the Constitutional
Convention. This free frank is
addressed and signed in his hand
to Col. Biddle in Philadelphia, PA.
Sent following his service in the
Revolutionary War and prior to
election as President in 1789 as
indicated by receipt docketing
"General Washington, Mount
Vernon, June 21st, 1786."



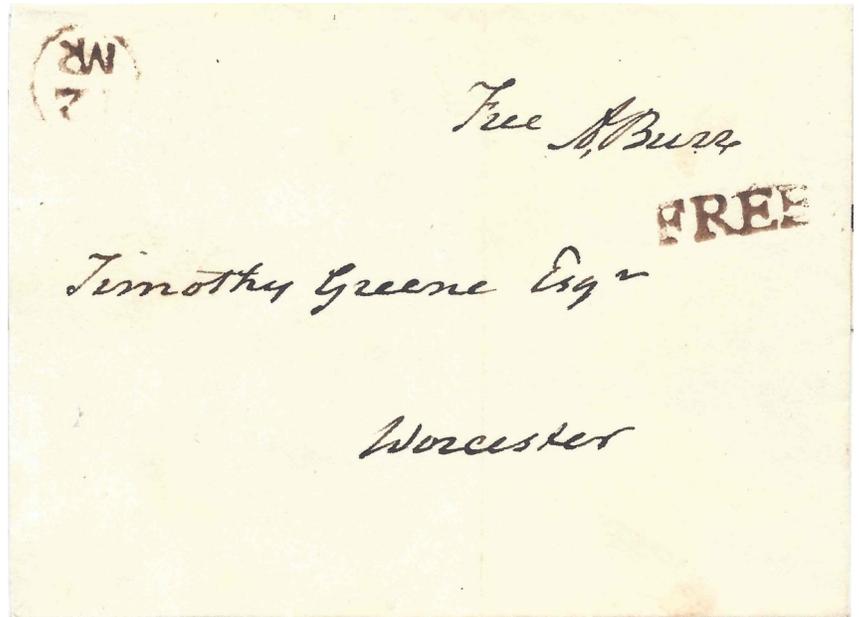
The Mount Vernon Convention, held at Washington's home in 1785, introduced the concept of regular meetings between the states to discuss issues of mutual concern. This led to the Constitutional Convention, held in Philadelphia from May 14 to September 17, 1787. Colonel Clement Biddle, to whom this cover is addressed, was a close associate of Washington's and a Revolutionary War hero who served under his command in numerous important battles. They were in close contact between the two Conventions and Biddle attended to Washington's affairs in Philadelphia. The letter carried in this cover possibly contained communications related to Washington's eventual participation and leadership of the Constitutional Convention.

The Signing of the Constitution of the United States, painting
by Howard Chandler Christy.

FRAMERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION



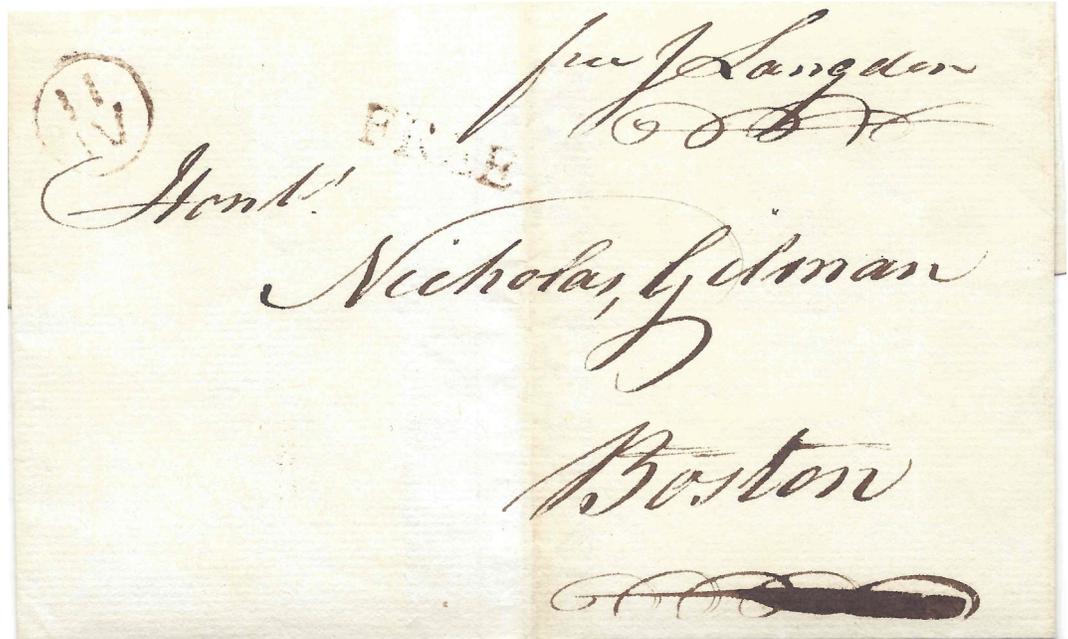
Free frank of **Alexander Hamilton** – Framers of the US Constitution, First Treasury Secretary, and Founder of the US financial system – addressed and signed in his hand, as Secretary of the Treasury, on 1790 folded letter to Boston, MA, with “15/NO” Franklin mark and straightline “FREE” handstamp, accompanied by original letter.



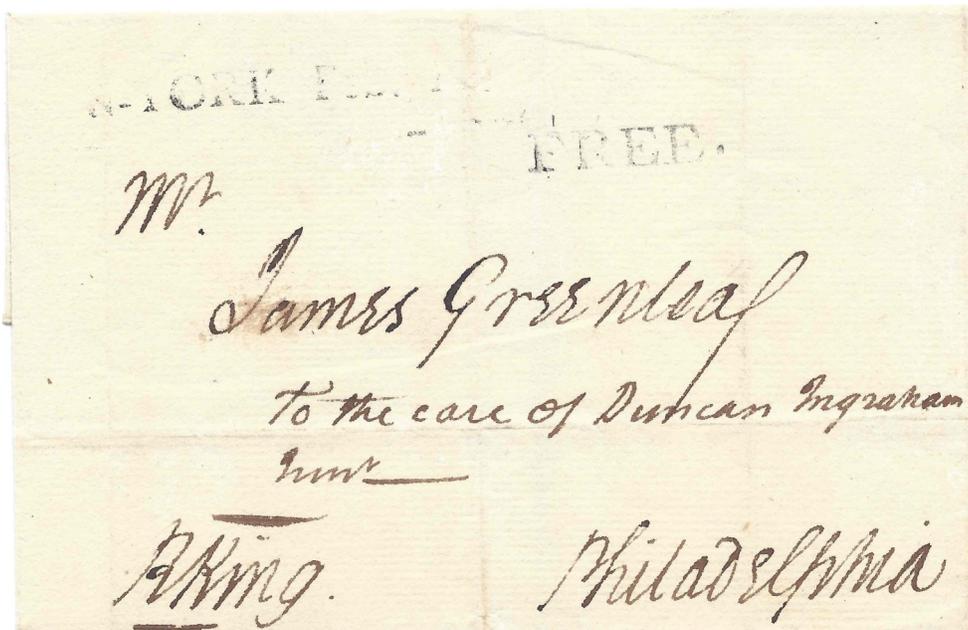
Free frank of **Aaron Burr** – Vice-President under Jefferson – addressed and signed in his hand, as Senator, on (docketed) 1796 folded address sheet to Worcester, MA, with “12/MR” Franklin mark and straightline “FREE” handstamp.

While Burr was not a Framers of the Constitution, he played a key role in the politics of the Founding Fathers and was the political rival of Hamilton, killing him in perhaps the world’s most famous duel in 1804, the last full year of his single term as Vice President.

FRAMERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION



Free frank of **John Langdon** – Framers of the US Constitution – addressed and signed in his hand as Senator on 1795 folded address sheet to fellow framer, Nicholas Gilman, in Boston, with “II/IV” Franklin mark and straightline “FREE” handstamp.

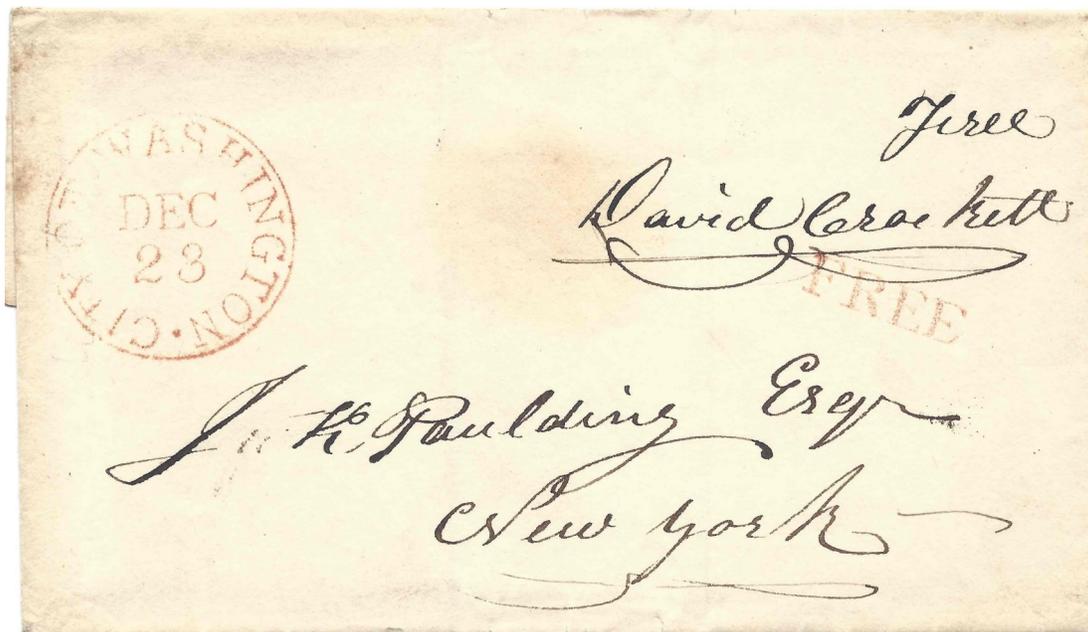


Free frank of **Rufus King** – Framers of the US Constitution – addressed and signed in his hand on folded letter to James Greenleaf in Philadelphia, PA, with “N-York Feb 11” (1787) straightline postmark and matching “FREE” handstamp, accompanied by the original 2-sided letter written and signed by King.

UNITED STATES

CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS

There are numerous Congressmen and Senators who have played critical roles in American history but never served as President or were part of the group of “Founding Fathers” who signed the Declaration or the US Constitution.



Free frank of **David “Davy” Crockett** – Congressman from Tennessee, frontiersman, and American folk hero – addressed and signed in his hand to J.K. Paulding in New York with “Washington City/Dec 23” (1830) circular datestamp.



The *Lion of the West*, a play written by Paulding, featured the character Col. Nimrod Wildfire, an unschooled but wise Kentucky Congressman. Prior to its 1831 production, news of the character leaked to the public and contemporary opinion quickly developed that Wildfire was a spoof of Davy Crockett, who at the time served as a Tennessee Congressman. Paulding denied linkage to Crockett and wrote to him to disclaim the public view. This letter sheet contained Crockett’s response to Paulding of 22 December 1830 in which he states “the newspaper publications to which you refer I have never seen... and I thank you... in assuring me that you had no reference to my peculiarities... (and that it) was not necessary to convince me that you were incapable of wounding the feelings... of an unlettered man who had never injured you...”

The *Lion of the West* and subsequent plays featuring Wildfire contributed to the legend of Davy Crockett, who following his lost bid for a fourth term in Congress left for Texas where he died on 6 March 1836 at the Alamo.

The signature of Davy Crockett is scarce in any form and of the greatest rarity as a free frank.

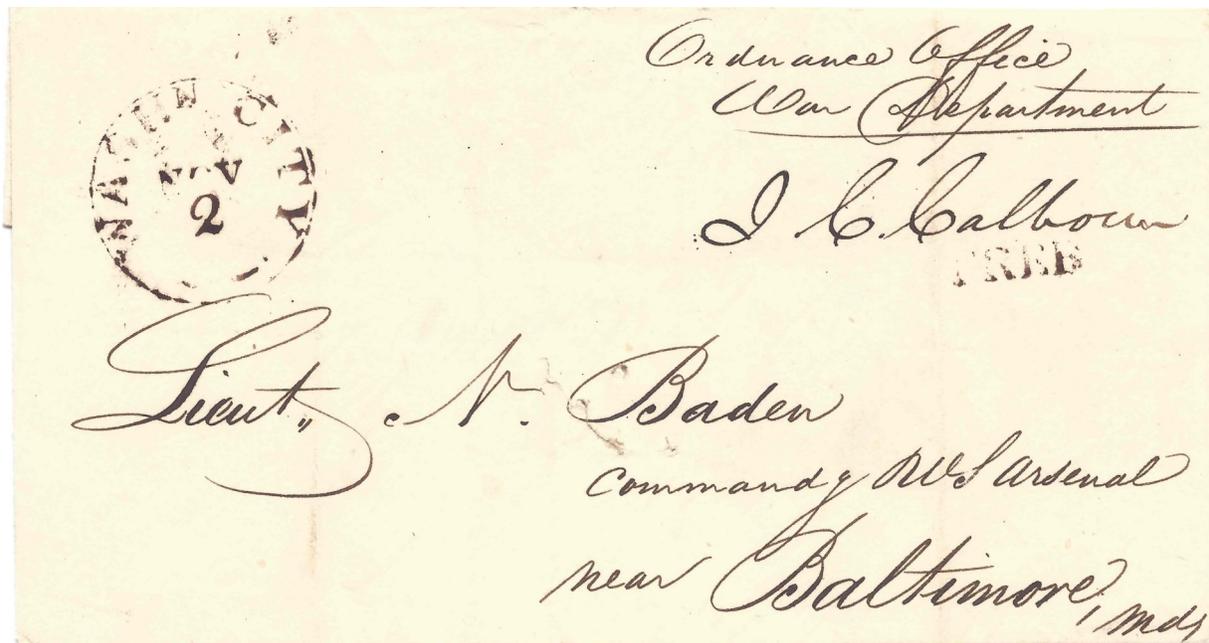
UNITED STATES

CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS

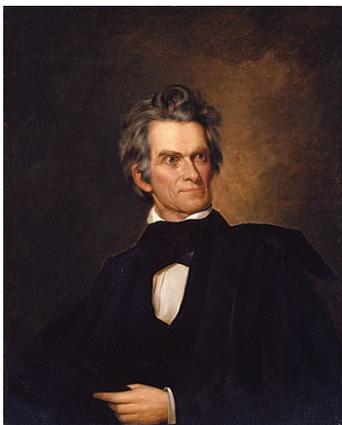
The Great Triumvirate

The Great Triumvirate, or Immortal Trio, refers to the three statesmen John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, Henry Clay of Kentucky, and Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, each of whom played an important role in the Second Party System (1828 to 1854) in American politics during the Antebellum Period leading to the American Civil War.

Each served as Secretary of State and as both a Congressman and Senator, and they individually represented the three major sections of the US during the time leading up to the Civil War. Their individual views on slavery led to the “Compromise of 1850,” which was intended to quiet the controversy between the North and South over the expansion of slavery and other sectional disputes. It arguably postponed secession and the Civil War for a decade.



Free frank of **John C. Calhoun**, “The Cast-Iron Man” – Vice President under John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson, Secretary of State, Secretary of War, Congressman, Senator – addressed and signed in his hand as Secretary of War under James Monroe on 1821 folded address sheet to Baltimore, MD, with “Washn. City/Nov 2” circular date stamp and matching straightline “FREE” handstamp.

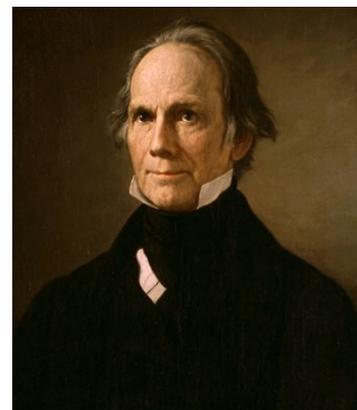
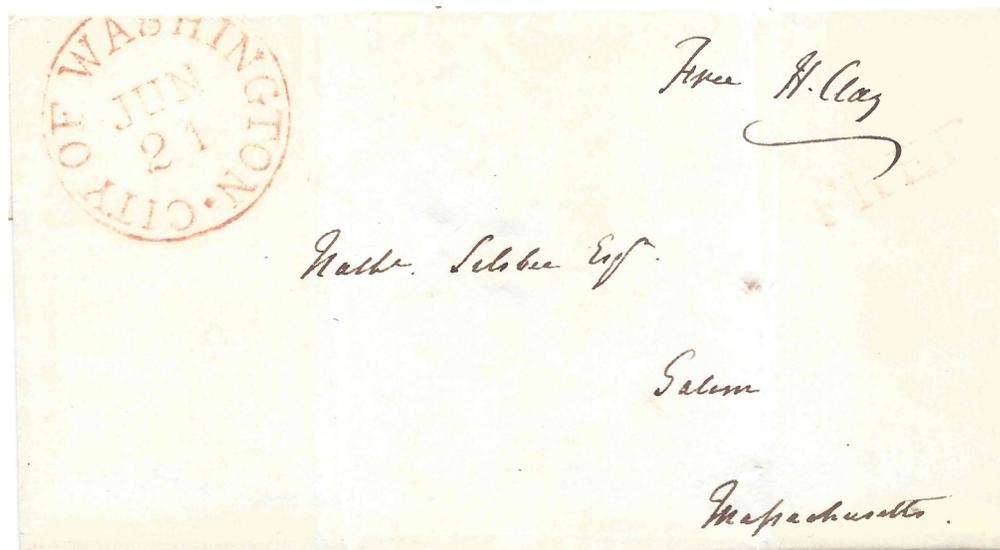


Calhoun was the primary representative of Southern interests in the Immortal Trio and led the pro-slavery faction in the Senate.

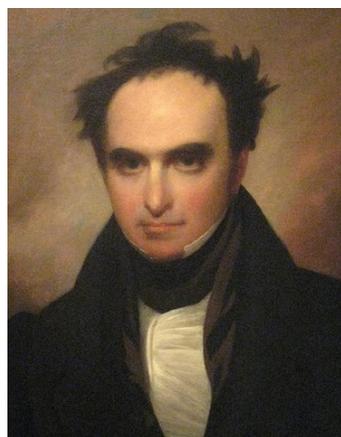
While he died 11 years before the commencement of the Civil War, his impassioned defense of slavery lived on in the minds of Southerners and contributed to the growing threat of secession.

UNITED STATES CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS

The Great Triumvirate, cont'd



Free frank of **Henry Clay**, “The Great Compromiser” – Secretary of State, Congressman, Senator – addressed and signed in his hand as Senator on folded address sheet to Salem, MA, with “City of Washington/Jun 21” circular date stamp and matching straightline “FREE” handstamp. Clay was the primary representative of Western interests in the Immortal Trio.

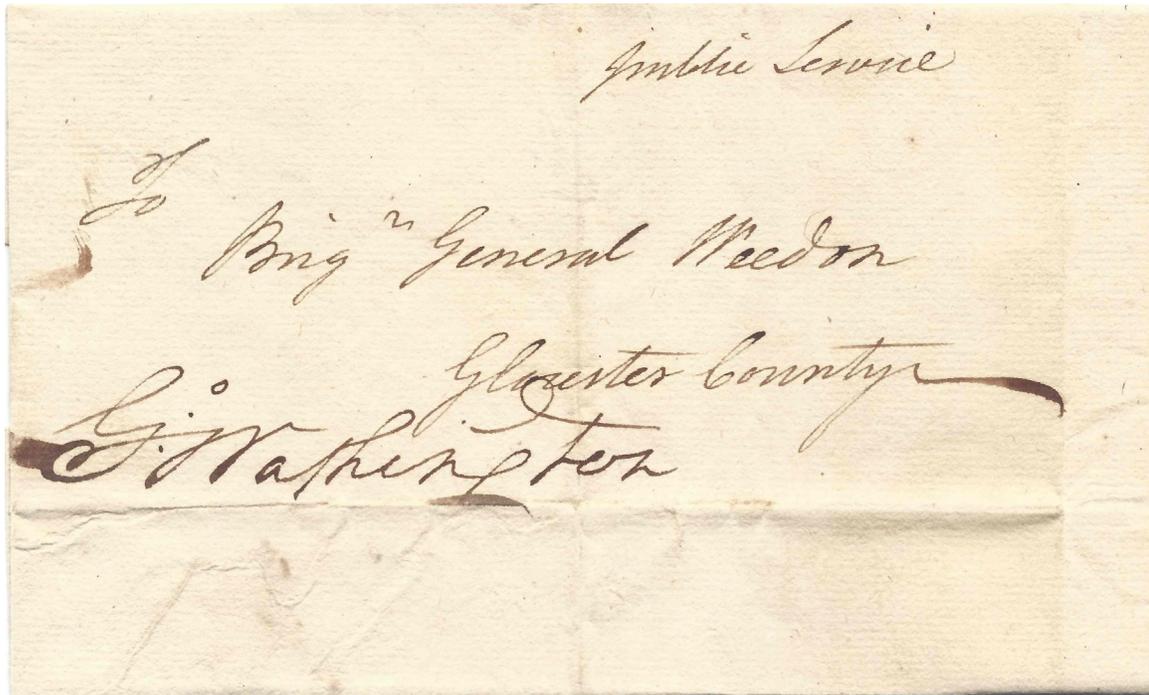


Free frank of **Daniel Webster**, “The Great Orator” – Secretary of State, Congressman, Senator – addressed and signed in his hand as Senator on folded address sheet to Lowell, MA, with “Boston, MS/Oct 24” (1831) circular date stamp and large matching straightline “FREE” handstamp.

Webster was the primary representative of the Northern interests and worked to develop compromises to avert war and preserve the Union. Webster introduced legislation to produce pre-paid adhesive postage stamps, the first of which were issued in the US in 1847.

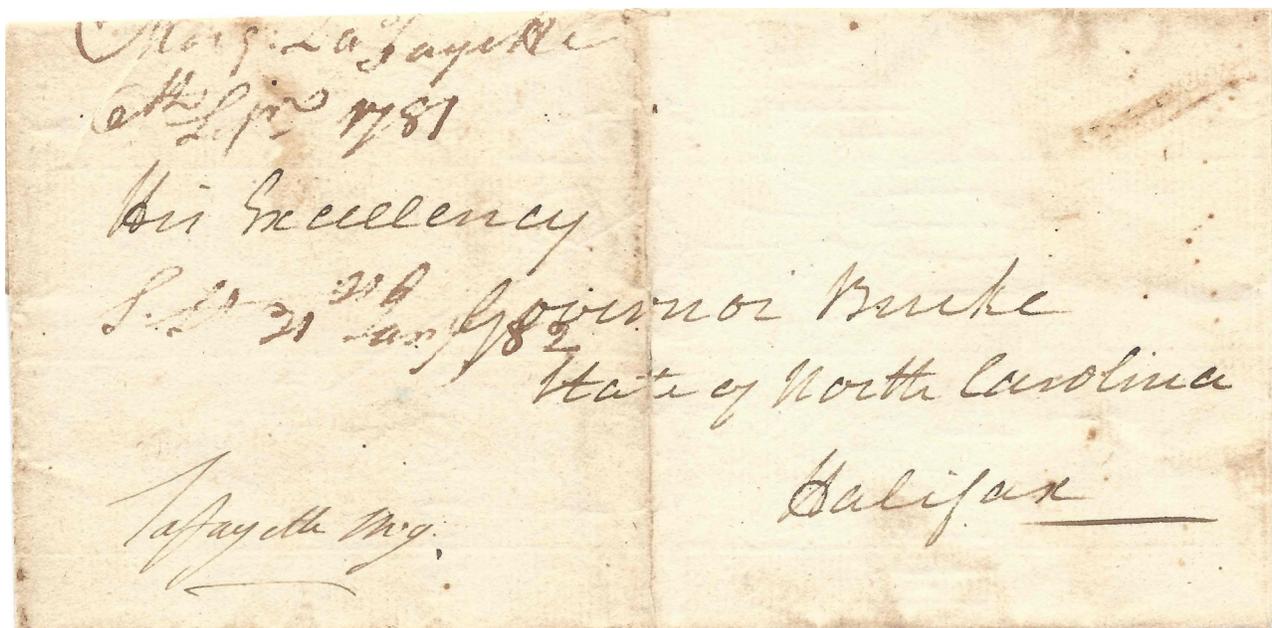
FRANKS OF KEY MILITARY LEADERS

Shortly after the Continental Congress bestowed the right to frank mail on its Delegates, it passed resolutions granting the franking privilege to the Commander of the Continental Army and other army personnel, as well as to the Departments of War, Finance, and Foreign Affairs under the Congress.



Washington firing the first gun at Yorktown

Free frank of **George Washington** – first President, Framer of the US Constitution and President of the Constitutional Convention, Commanding General of the Continental Army, and the Father of his Country – addressed by John Trumball, Aide-de-Camp, and signed by Washington as **Commanding General** on folded address sheet to Brigadier General George Weedon at Gloucester Point, VA. With docketing dated 29 September 1781.



Free frank of **The Marquis de Lafayette** – Revolutionary War hero from France and Major General in the American Continental Army – signed in his hand and addressed to “His Excellency, Governor Burke, State of North Carolina, Halifax,” with receipt docketing “6th Sept. 1781, __ 31st Jany 1782.”

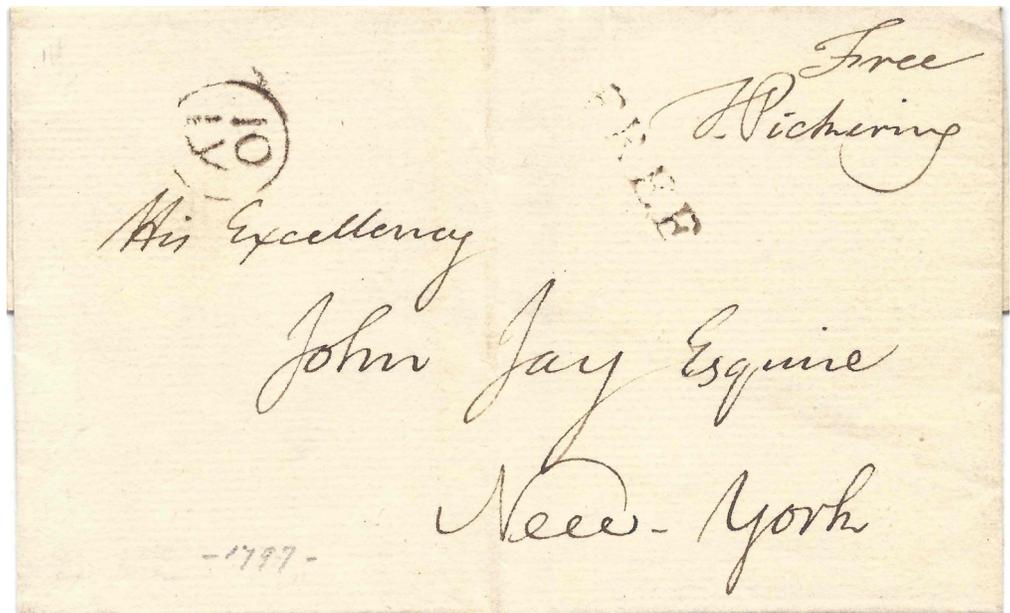
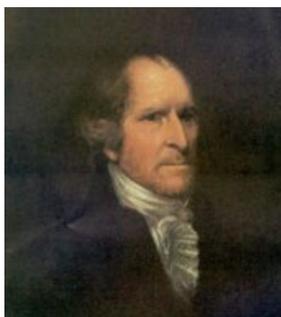
FRANKS OF POSTMASTERS

The US Post Office Department is the oldest agency of the Federal government and dates from the early colonial days when it was an extension of the British post office. The General Post Office under the Continental Congress was established almost a year before the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Benjamin Franklin was appointed the first Postmaster General. Despite the immense importance of this agency, the Post Office Department did not attain full department status, with the Postmaster general as a Presidential cabinet member, until 1829.



Free frank of **Ebenezer Hazard** – Third Postmaster General (1782-1789) under the Continental Congress – addressed and signed in his hand, "Free/Ebenezer Hazard" with flourishes, signed the day after leaving office as postmaster general 27 September 1789 on folded autographed letter written in his hand to Jedidiah Morse in Charlestown, Ma., with "N-York Sep. 27" and "FREE" straightline handstamps.

In addition to serving as Postmaster General, Pickering also served as Secretary of War under President Washington, Secretary of State under Presidents Washington and Adams, and Senator and Congressman from Massachusetts.



Free frank of **Timothy Pickering** – Second Postmaster General of the US Post Office Department under Washington (1791-1795) – addressed and signed in his hand, "Free/T. Pickering" as Secretary of State on folded cover with July 10, 1797 docketing to John Jay in New York, with "10/IY" Franklin Mark and matching "FREE" straightline handstamp