

The 30 Cent Nesbitt Envelopes of 1865

The United States first issued high denomination stamped envelopes in 1861, in 12¢, 20¢, 24¢, & 40¢ values. In 1865, 9¢, 18¢, & 30¢ values were added. All were Official size envelopes. The apparent purpose was for multiple use. It is generally accepted that these envelopes were issued at the request of the express companies who were required to use stamped envelopes, and often carried large items. Indeed, an estimated 80% of surviving used examples are express uses.

The 1861 high denomination, Bi-Color envelopes were the first US multicolor postal issue, and the only US stamped envelopes (along with the 1861 30¢ of the same design) to use colored lettering on a colorless field.

The redesigned envelopes issued in December of 1865, commonly referred to as the "Pumpkin Heads", were made by the George F. Nesbitt Co of New York, who had held the contract since 1853. The new series reverted to single color printing with conventional lettering, but retained the same basic design of the Bi-Colors. The concessions were most likely cost saving measures as a result of the Civil War economy. This series remained in production until late 1869 when the contract was canceled, ending the Nesbitt era.

This exhibit will examine all aspects of the 1865, 30¢ denomination.

Outline:
Part 1: The Envelopes
 • Design
 • Production
 • Color Varieties
 • Offsets
 • Forgeries
 • Paper, Watermark, Knife, Orientation, and Gum
 • Specimens

Right Column: Rates and Use Notes
 Part 2: Usages
 • Domestic Rate
 • Steamship Rate
 • Postal
 • Wells Fargo Express
 • Commercial Envelopes
 The 1870 Contract

The Exhibit:
 A Traditional Treatment was chosen to illustrate a wide variety of postal stationery topics, and associated postal history.
 Scope: Pre-Production through Normal Use Period: 1865 - 1875.

Key Points and Features:
 Of the Exhibit Content:
 • **Rarity:** The rarity of the material in this exhibit can not be overemphasized. The majority of the items are 1 of 10 or less. Some unique envelopes. Refer to red rarity statements throughout. All rarity statements apply only to 30¢ 1865 entries, and are "As currently known by author".

Of the Exhibit Construction:
 • Large format pages are used to allow greater flexibility of arrangement.
 • Split Frame: The single frame is divided into two columns to allow better placement of key used material.

A word about conditions: Given the rarity, a conscience decision was made to include some covers that may not otherwise be considered "Show Quality". In many cases, top condition items do not exist. Ugly covers have stones to tell too!

Legend:
Important: This frame is divided into two columns.
Cross-referencing: (1) references (1) elsewhere in the frame.
Frame Line Color indicates the primary rate (see Rates, next column).
Star
 A Tag may be included in the frame line with additional information.
 Supplementary information is shown in gray text (to lessen the visual impact).

Rates:
Domestic Rate: The 10¢ "California" Rate ended July 1, 1863. The Domestic 1st Class Rate, from then until 1883, was 3¢ per 1/2 oz, regardless of distance.
Steamship Rate: The 10¢ Steamship Rate applied to mail carried to or from foreign ports over established postal routes on contract mail steamers, but only in cases where no postal treaty or convention existed. On July 1, 1864 this rate became a flat 10¢ per 1/2 oz, regardless of distance.

Use Notes:
 • (14) Postal uses; (10) Wells Fargo uses, including (7) franked & (3) unfranked
 • (6) Addressed; (8) Unaddressed Paste-up's
 • (3) Domestic; (2) Trans-Atlantic (1 is likely philatelic); (9) Steamship, including (2) Postal and (7) WF to or From Mexico; (2) Undetermined.
 Most uses were likely commercial, with low survival rates (See Printed Address Commercial Envelope below).
Express Company Mail: Prior to 1895, private companies could legally carry mail. During the westward expansion, a host of express companies carried mail and freight to and from remote areas, sometimes in conjunction with the Post Office, other times in competition.
Unused Examples: Unused Printed Address and Unused Express Frank envelopes are shown here, with the used items. The philosophy being that they were printing not supplied by the USPS.

Part 2: Usages

10x 3¢ Domestic Rate:

• Wells Fargo California and Atlantic domestic frank.
 • Wells Fargo New York hand stamp.
 The pen marks (bottom edge) could match the addressing on Benwin correspondence envelopes, which include express uses of 9¢, 12¢, & 18¢ envelopes, from their New York hat business to their San Francisco store. Unfortunately, one of our shortighted predecessors cut this one up, destroying a rare use (and decreasing its value 50-100%).

From New York:



No 30¢ entries are known used from New York, or used with a WF Domestic frank.



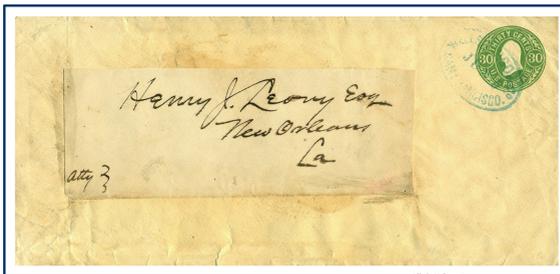
Express Company Franks:
 The express companies were required by law to use US stamped envelopes for all mail they carried. The Post Office got paid even if they never touched the letter. The express companies printed their Paid Franks on the envelopes to signify that the express fee had been paid, just as the Government stamp paid the postage.



Wells Fargo & Co. was by far the largest of the express companies, offering express services throughout the West, to the East Coast, and to foreign destinations. The true San Francisco oval seen here is perhaps the most common company marking of the 1860's.

Henry J. Leovy was a prominent attorney in New Orleans. From 1868-1869 he was City Attorney for New Orleans.

San Francisco to New Orleans:



• Used as part of a paste-up (see Paste-up's below), likely carrying legal papers.
 • Carried outside of the mails. If pre-1869, may have traveled by steamers via Panama and Havana, or, if 1869 or later, by Transcontinental RR. Likely delivered by Adams or Southern Express under co-operative agreements.
 • Scarce Wells Fargo use of non-franked envelope.
 • Very unusual pasted on label, possibly cut from the wrapped parcel to which the envelope was pasted.

Only 10x Domestic rate entry; 1 of 6 Addressed; 1 of 3 Unfranked; Wells Fargo use.

3x 10¢ Steamship Rate: Postal:



Steam Panama Marking:
 Like most inbound steamship markings, the Steam Panama marking was applied upon arrival, in this case at San Francisco. Unlike most Steamship markings, Steam Panama indicates the origin of the ship. Similar markings are known for Acapulco, Manzanillo, and Mazatlan. These are always accompanied by a San Francisco town marking. Uses range from Feb 7, 1863 to Apr 4, 1875.

Steam Panama Postal Use:



• Inbound Steamship use with Steam Panama marking, applied upon arrival, along with San Francisco duplex.
 • Most likely arrived Feb 16, 1868 on PMSS Nevada from Panama.
 • Like most Steamship covers, the exact origin is unknown since it never entered the mails in the country of origin.

1 of 4 Postal uses; 1 of 6 Addressed; Only with scarce Steam Panama marking.

Wells Fargo Express:

Incoming Wells Fargo Paste-up's from Mexico:



A open at bottom, Large "PAID" "ATLANTIC EXPRESS"
 4th Series, Wells Fargo California and Atlantic Frank Always Black. Limited use 1864-1874, mostly westbound from New York
 A closed at bottom, Small "PAID" "COAST ROUTES"
 3rd Series, Wells Fargo California and Coast Routes Frank. Common, 1857-1882.

Mexican Coast And California Surcharges:

Upper: Missing decimal point surcharge variety (\$1.05) below California and Atlantic frank from LaPaz.
 (2) Lower: Surcharged California and Coast Routes frank from Guaymas. Illustrated on left page: Strong offset impression inside. Unfolded image.
 Both Above:
 • Used as part of paste-up's.
 • Carried from Mexico by Wells Fargo, most likely to San Francisco, and delivered without entering the mails.
 • Represented are 2 of the 3 Wells Fargo Mexican offices of the era. No 30¢ uses are known from Mazatlan.
 2 of 8 confirmed 30¢ Unaddressed Paste-up's

Wells Fargo in Mexico:

As mining activity increased in northwestern Mexico, Wells Fargo filled the need for express services. Initially, the only practical mode of transportation was water. WF's first Mexican office opened in the port city of Guaymas in 1859, followed in 1863 by offices in LaPaz and Mazatlan.

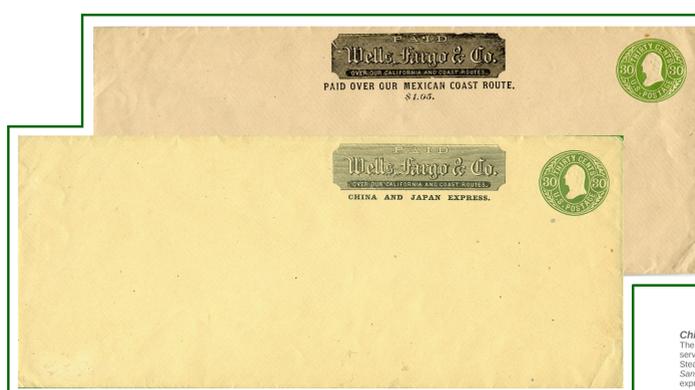
Paste-up's:

Since the express companies were required to use stamped envelopes, not stamps, if a customer brought in a plain envelope, or parcel, one or more franked, stamped envelope would be pasted on to pay the postage and express fee. Unaddressed paste-ups occurred where the address was elsewhere on the item.

Wells Fargo Mexican Franks:

For Steamship rate mail to and from Mexico, Wells Fargo charged 35¢ per 1/2 oz. Initially, franked envelopes for Mexican service were made by adding a surcharge below domestic franks. For 30¢ envelopes (3x rate), the charge was \$1.05. Several varieties exist. The surcharge above was added to both "Coast" and "Atlantic" franked envelopes. The one below is only found with "Coast" franks.

Printed but Unused:



Upper: Mexican Coast Route surcharge:

Shortened inscription and italicized rate.
 5 recorded:
 3 with frank top center unused,
 2 with frank top right used.

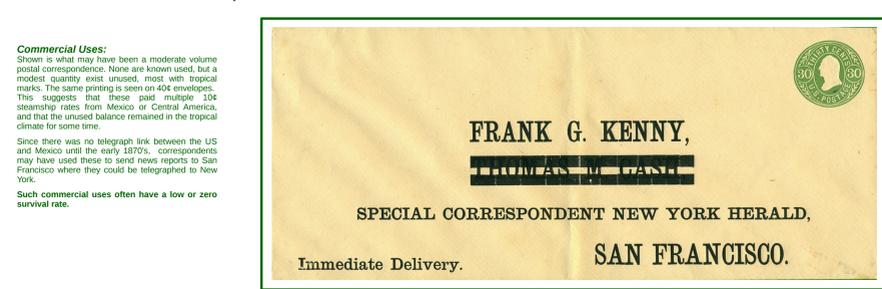
Wells Fargo & Co's EXPRESS NOTICE.
 OUR PIONEER EXPRESS
 YOKOHAMA AND HONKONG,
 WILL BE REOPENED BY
 W.F. & CO. ON
 THURSDAY, JANUARY 1, 1867,
 AT 10 O'CLOCK, A.M.
 For full particulars apply to
 W.F. & CO. at
 107 N. MARKET ST. S.F.
 W.F. & CO. EXPRESS

China and Japan Express:

The Pacific Mail Steamship Co began contract mail service to China and Japan on Jan 1, 1867 at the 10¢ Steamship rate. Wells Fargo placed the above ad in the San Francisco Bulletin on Dec 13, 1866, announcing express service. No additional ads are found, suggesting that the service ended after the first trip, if it ever began. Special "surcharges" were printed on 10¢, 30¢ & 40¢ 1865 envelopes. No used examples of any denomination are known.

Lower: Wells Fargo "CHINA AND JAPAN" Frank.
 4 Recorded on 30¢. Unknown used.

Printed Address Commercial Envelopes:



Commercial Uses:
 Shown is what may have been a moderate volume postal correspondence. None are known used, but a modest quantity exist unused, most with tropical marks. The same printing is seen on 40¢ envelopes. This suggests that these paid multiple 10¢ steamship rates from Mexico or Central America, and that the unused balance remained in the tropical climate for some time.
 Since there was no telegraph link between the US and Mexico until the early 1870's, correspondents may have used these to send news reports to San Francisco where they could be telegraphed to New York.
 Such commercial uses often have a low or zero survival rate.

The 1870 Contract:

Beginning as a result of Civil War economic conditions, PMG Blair and PMG Randall negotiated a series of contract extensions with George Nesbitt. On Dec 23, 1869, PMG John Creswell canceled the Nesbitt contract effective April 1, 1870. After considerable controversy, the new 4 year contract was finally awarded to George H Reay of New York. The subjects and colors of the 1870 issue matched the new 1870 adhesive stamps. The Nesbitt Co never again won the US Stamped Envelope contract, although some speculate that they produced most of the envelopes for Reay.



Reay 30¢ Die, 1870

Part 1: The Envelopes:

Design:

The design of the new 30¢ envelopes derives from the 1860 Star Dies, the basis for the 1861 12¢ - 40¢ Bi-Color envelopes.

Colorless areas (the head and lettering) are engraved into the die blank. The 1861 10¢-40¢s, are the only US envelopes to use colorless text fields, requiring an extra step in making the die.

When the new 9¢, 18¢, and 30¢ denominations were planned, Bi-Color Essay envelopes were produced.



Design Progression: The Long Way Around

(1) Production Star Die 3¢ & 10¢ (official reprint), 1860
 (2) 12¢ Model: Head & Inner oval from production 3¢, pasted to surface printed design. Late 1860, 26.5 x 23.5 mm die, on 140 x 98 mm thin, laid paper.
 (3) 12¢ Surface Printed Essay, Late 1860, 26.5 x 23.5 mm die
 (4) Bi-Color Production 12¢, Aug 1861, 27.5 x 25 mm die
 (5) 30¢ Bi-Color Essay, 1865
 (6) Final Design, Dec 1865.



(5) Black on Red Bi-Color Essay for 30¢ 1865 envelope. 27.5 x 25 mm die on 98 x 225 mm Envelope. Also known with Specimen Form 6 as seen below.

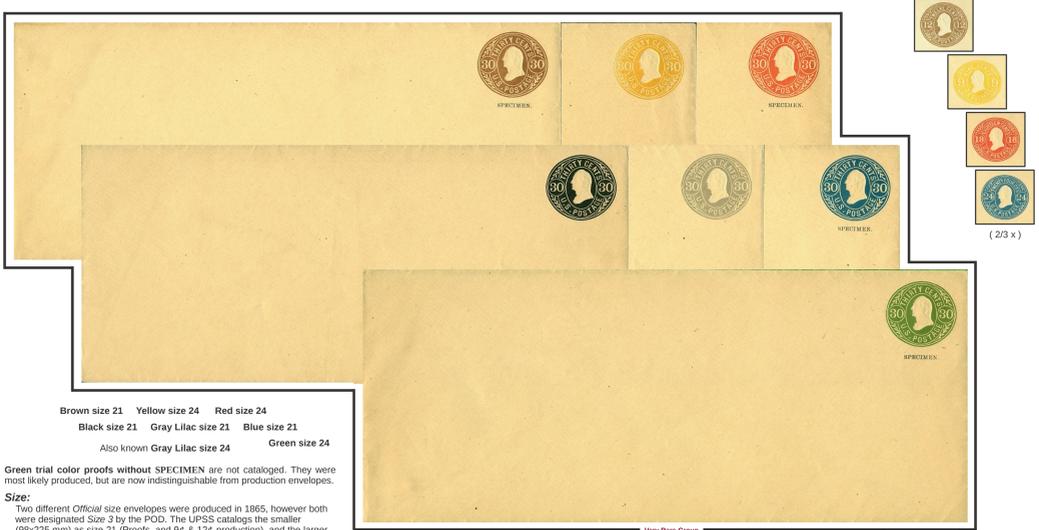
Likely no more than 3 exist.

Final Design:

The final die retained the same geometric design as the 1861 Bi-Color series, but reverted to the conventional text fields and single color printing of the Star Dies. Both were likely cost saving measures. The size of the die increased to 29 x 27 mm. Cut square shown.

Trial Color Proofs:

The production colors for the new 9¢, 12¢, 18¢, 24¢, and 30¢ envelopes were selected from the 30¢ trial color proofs. 40¢ envelopes were issued in rose, but no 30¢ rose proofs are known.



Production Dies & Colors

(2/3 x)

Brown size 21 Yellow size 24 Red size 24
 Black size 21 Gray Lilac size 21 Blue size 21
 Also known Gray Lilac size 24 Green size 24

Green trial color proofs without SPECIMEN are not cataloged. They were most likely produced, but are now indistinguishable from production envelopes.

Sizes:

Two different Official size envelopes were produced in 1865, however both were designated Size 3 by the POD. The USPS catalogs the smaller (89x225 mm) as size 21 (Proofs, and 9¢ & 12¢ production), and the larger (104x249 mm) as size 24 (Proofs, and 18¢ - 40¢ production).

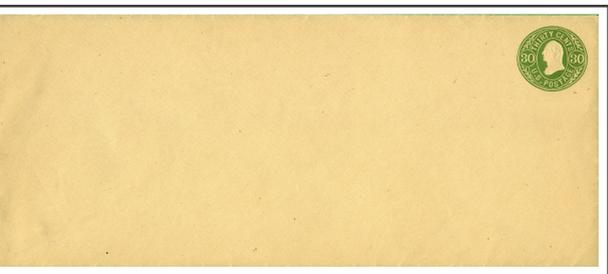
Pre-Production vs Trial Color Proofs:

9¢, 18¢, 24¢, and 40¢ envelopes in production colors are also found with SF-6, though rare. These are likely pre-production proofs. The 30¢ Green fits into both categories.

30¢ Trial Color Proofs: All are known with and without 14mm x 1.5mm SPECIMEN marking (cataloged as SF-6). Likely no more than 6 sets exist. Possibly a few more in Green as Production Proofs.

Production:

First issued in December 1865. All are size 24 (104x249 mm) on buff laid paper, typically .0245 thick. Most are diagonally laid, but approximately 25% of the size 24 1865 envelopes are horizontally laid. Several shades of green are known, likely from different printings. A total of 26,250 30¢s were delivered between Q4 1865 and Q3 1868, in quantities up to 15,300 per quarter.



(1) Green Production Envelope. (Size 24 only)

Green

Color Varieties:

Green and Yellow Green are cataloged, however all examples studied are to the yellow side of green in varying degrees. To avoid confusion, the most common shade is labeled "Green" here, and treated as the reference. Other shades are described relative to "Green". The Mint and Specimen envelopes seen here illustrate a variety of colors. See Color Tags

Bluish
 Green (Ref)
 Yellow Green
 Olive Green

Offsets:

If the embossing press is cycled without paper, ink is printed onto the backing plate. Subsequent envelope blanks are thus printed on both sides until the ink on the backing plate is depleted.



Forgeries:

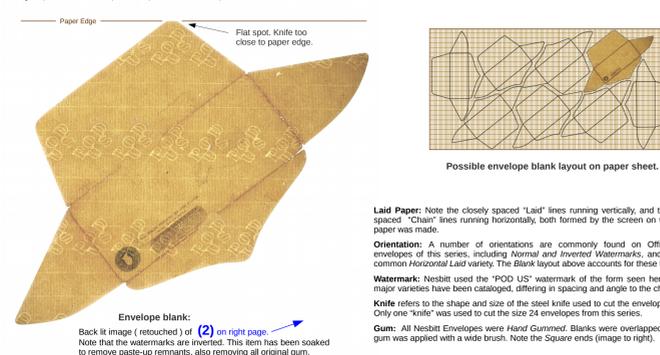
Forgeries are found from several sources. All are of poor quality and easily recognized. All exist only as cut squares.



Narrow, poorly shaped head. Narrow numerals. Coarse, dark, wove paper.

Heavy line work. Poorly formed text. Outer oval flattened at top and bulging at right. Always with cork cancels.

Paper, Watermark, Knife, Orientation, and Gum:



Possible envelope blank layout on paper sheet.

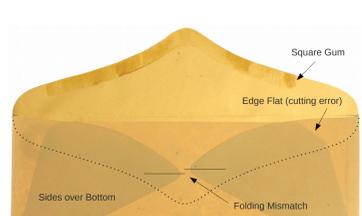
Laid Paper: Note the closely spaced "Laid" lines running vertically, and the widely spaced "Chain" lines running horizontally, both formed by the screen on which the paper was made.

Orientation: A number of orientations are commonly found on Official Size envelopes of this series, including Normal and Inverted Watermarks, and the less common HORIZONTAL Laid variety. The Blank layout above accounts for these three.

Watermark: Nesbitt used the "POD US" watermark of the form seen here. Seven major varieties have been cataloged, differing in spacing and angle to the chain lines.

Knife refers to the shape and size of the steel knife used to cut the envelope blanks. Only one "knife" was used to cut the size 24 envelopes from this series.

Gum: All Nesbitt Envelopes were Hand Gummed. Blanks were overlapped, and the gum was applied with a wide brush. Note the Square ends (image to right).



Hybrid front / back kit image of mint envelope (1) above left showing folded shape.
 • Square Gum
 • Folded Sides over Bottom.
 • Top flap seals to side and bottom flaps.
 • Mismatch of side flap ends (hand folding irregularity).
 • Paper edge flat on bottom flap (knife placement error).

Specimens:

Specimen markings were applied to demonetize envelopes for use as:

Samples:

48.5mm x 4mm Specimen (SF3) bottom. Used for promotion, and for official purposes.

Advertising:

Size, Paper, and Pricing (A19) right, vertical. Similar markings are found on 2¢ - 40¢ envelopes from 1864 - 1870 with adjustments to prices.

Special Request Advertisement (A4) far right, vertical.

Starting in 1865, free printing of return addresses was offered if 500 envelopes were ordered. None were ever ordered on 1865 30¢ envelopes.



No. 3 Official size, Buff:
 \$308 60 per 1,000.
 30 66 = 100.
 7 72 = 25.



Right: Special Return Request Advertising Specimen (A4).
 Left: Size & Paper w Pricing Advertising Specimen (A19).
 Note gum transfer streaks from back of next envelope on stack.

Top: 14mm x 2mm Specimen (SF5). Likely a production proof.
 Bottom: 48.5mm x 4mm Specimen (SF3). Promotional Sample.