Integral Rate Postmarks of Cincinnati, Ohio

This exhibit shows 15 of the 16 reported “integral rate” postmarks of Cincinnati utilized during the 1845-51 and 1851-55 rate periods, organized by rate period, marking, and rate. Varieties in use and color are shown, as is use in combination with adhesive postage stamps, notably including the 1-cent eagle carrier stamp, the 1-cent 1851 issue, and the Browne's local post. Several markings are known in quantities fewer than ten. Items of particular philatelic significance are identified with red dots.

Cincinnati first used “integral rate” markings in June 1847, and continued to utilize them until prepayment of letter postage with stamps became mandatory on January 1, 1856. Markings were primarily on letter mail (3 cents, 5 cents, 10 cents), but also on circulars (1 cent, 2 cents, 3 cents), locally mailed items (1 cent), and crossborder and transatlantic mail (5 cents and 10 cents to pay domestic portion of postage; 10 cents to Canada; 24 cents to pay treaty rate to Great Britain).

The “integral rate” markings of Cincinnati represent one city’s advance in postal efficiency. By including the rate as part of the postmark, a postal clerk complied with the mandates of Section 23 of the Instructions to Postmasters to postmark, date, and rate mail, all in a single step. Some markings additionally included a “paid” designation, further reducing clerk workload. Ironically, the first integral rate marking was introduced only two days before the introduction of adhesive postage stamps, the widespread (and eventually mandatory) use of which would eventually render the markings obsolete.

### 1845 Rate Period

**3 Cents**

**Circular Rate**

(Act of March 3, 1847)

No date was required for circulars.

Reported November 1849-June 1851

*Fewer than 10 examples recorded on circulars*

**5 Cents**

**Letter Rate**

(under 300 miles)

June 29, 1847

*Earliest recorded Cincinnati integral rate marking*

One of two reported examples of this marking in 1845 rate period
1845 Rate Period
5 Cents
Letter Rate
(under 300 miles)

July 30, 1849

The “5cts” marking is reported in red from June 1847 through the end of the 1845 rate period and appears both with and without a horizontal line. This line is the edge of the slug and does not represent the existence of multiple devices.

March 22, 1850
Letter rate mail could be sent paid or unpaid; prepaid mail was required to be marked as such

May 21, 1850
5 cent 1847 adhesive; stamp cancelled with obliterator

April 19, 1851
5 cent 1847 adhesive; integral rate obliterated to indicate prepayment where stamp was located elsewhere on cover

The marking was also used on mail bearing adhesive stamps. The Cincinnati post office took care to match the rate to the postmark, even though the presence of stamps rendered the integral rate duplicative and unnecessary.
1845 Rate Period
5 Cents
Letter Rate
(under 300 miles)

December 8, 1850
Prepaid
Charged to account of
member of Ohio
Constitutional Convention of
1850

December 21, 1847
Manuscript integral 5
"mimic"

Only recorded example of
this marking

April 28, circa 1850
Likely arrived at Cincinnati
by steamer and privately
forwarded to the mails
by Milward & Oldershaw

Attempted prepayment by
charge account obliterated at
Chillicothe

The manuscript date and "5" in this marking suggest that the rate slug in the 5cts marking may have been removable.
1845 Rate Period
10 Cents
Letter Rate
(over 300 miles)

June 27, 1849
Prepaid single rate

June 30, 1851
Unpaid single rate.
Last day of the 1845 rate period; Latest reported use of this marking

July 12, 1850
Unpaid double rate under 300 miles

February 28, 1848
Originated at New Orleans Feb. 14, 1848; carried by non-contract steamboat to Cincinnati; entered mails there and charged at 10 cents for over 300 miles letter rate
Fewer than 10 reported of this marking in conjunction with STEAM handstamp

The "10" marking is reported in red from August 1847 through the end of the 1845 rate period. While primarily intended for use with mail sent at the single letter rate over 300 miles, it was also used to mark double-rate letters (over 1/2 ounce) under 300 miles.
1845 Rate Period
10 Cents
Letter Rate
(over 300 miles)

October 1, 1850
to Haverhill, MA
145 reported 10-cent 1847 covers from Cincinnati

December 2, 1847
26 reported covers using two 5-cent 1847 issue stamps from Cincinnati to pay 10-cent rate

August 16, 1848
Originated at Louisville and entered mails at Cincinnati after carriage by steamboat up Ohio River
One of two reported "STEAM" covers with 2 5-cent 1847 issue stamps (of 5 "STEAM" covers with 5-cent 1847 issue)
June 5, 1849

Cincinnati to Wurttemberg, via New York, England and France

Postage prepaid to British mail system (5 cents); via Cunard line vessel *Niagara*, departing NY June 13 and arriving Liverpool June 25; entered the French mails at Boulogne

May 1848

Prepaid domestic postage, intended 24 cent debit to Bremen under Bremen Convention mails applied at New York

No Ocean line vessel to Bremen departed in May 1848; debit struck out and letter sent unpaid via Cunard line vessel to Liverpool, entering French mails at Le Havre

In certain circumstances portions of postage to destinations abroad could be prepaid. Foreign postal systems added additional charges.
1851 Rate Period
Circular Rates
1851-1852

September 5, 1851
Integral “paid 1”
5 examples recorded

August 20, 1852
Integral “paid”
Fewer than 10 examples recorded

August 14, 1851
(per collector docketing)
Integral “paid 2”
Sent less than 500 miles; 2 cent rate indicative of overweight contents
Only recorded example

Printed circulars could be sent for one cent (up to 500 miles) per ounce if prepaid under the Act of March 3, 1851. A single marking was used with an “integral paid” that appears without a rate slug, as well as with a “1” or “2” rate indicated.
In October 1852, the rate structure for circulars and other printed matter was simplified to a uniform one cent per three ounces anywhere in the United States. A new marking was introduced.
1851 Rate Period
Drop Rate

Circa 1853
Integral “1 paid”

Only recorded example of this marking on a drop rate cover

Only recorded example of this marking with additional “PAID” handstamp

Local, or “drop,” mail for delivery at the post office of origin cost one cent; prepayment was not required. Cincinnati typically utilized red ink on prepaid mail during the 1851 rate period.

Circa 1855
Integral “1 unpd”

Fewer than 10 examples recorded

Cincinnati used an unusual marking for unpaid drop rate mail, which is believed to be the only United States stampless postal marking to utilize the word “unpaid.”

Circa 1855

Integral “1 unpd”

Sender paid for “to the mails” carriage by government carrier (likely by depositing in a letter box) but did not pay for drop fee

One of two reported examples used in conjunction with adhesive carrier stamp
Effective July 1, 1851, prepaid letter rate mail for distances under 3,000 miles cost three cents. Cincinnati utilized the handstamp previously used for circulars, with the addition of date slugs.

1851 Rate Period
Letter Rate
3 Cents—Prepaid

July 3, 1851
Integral “3 cts” and use of circular grid obliterator

Approximately ten reported examples with adhesive stamps; this marking used on adhesives for approximately one week

Third day of use of 3 cent 1851 adhesive

November 12, 1851
Charge box notation showing postage charged to account rather than paid in cash

February 12, 1853
Only recorded example in blue

Red “paid” handstamp applied at postal counter; postmark likely subsequently applied
1851 Rate Period
Letter Rate
3 Cents—Prepaid

Circa 1854
Cameo corner card

A smaller postmark appeared in January 1853 and was used through 1855.

An additional “3 paid” marking was utilized from July through September of 1854, concurrently with the smaller marking.
1851 Rate Period
Letter Rate
3 Cents—Prepaid

December 7, 1855
One of two recorded examples lacking a second "PAID" handstamp

An unrated "paid" marking was used for letter mail between February 1852 and August 1855 for letter mail. It does not precisely match either the "1 paid" or "3 paid" markings and represents a distinct device.

Circa 1854
Free frank of Salmon P. Chase as United States Senator (served 1849-55)

Circa 1855
Sent free to Commissioner of Pensions; franking privilege allowed privilege holder to send and receive mail without cost

A "free" integral rate marking was used for letter mail sent under a franking privilege between March 1853 and October 1857.
Effective July 1, 1851, unpaid letter mail was charged 5 cents. The existing “5 cts” marking continued in use, with black ink instead of red ink. The 5 was either partially cut away or wore down.

August 13, 1853
Forwarding use
(originated at Philadelphia on August 2; total of 10 cents due to recipient
Red “FORWARDED” applied at Cincinnati

June 6, 1853
Written on board the Steamboat Tweed, on the Ohio River below Louisville
Entered mails at Cincinnati

A new marking was put into use with an integral 5 in mid-1852; blue ink was placed into general use for unpaid mail.
1851 Rate Period
Letter Rate
5 Cents—Unpaid

January 11, 1853
Advertised at New Orleans, 1 cent due

June 14, circa 1853
1 cent printed matter rate—incorrectly postmarked with “5” integral rate marking intended for letter mail

Circa 1853
1 cent Browne & Co. adhesive pays “to the mails” carriage
5 cents domestic letter postage unpaid

A second variety of this marking exists with an upright, rather than italic, figure “5.” It is reported used from December 1852 to August 1854.

March 18, 1855
Only recorded example of this marking

By 1855, unpaid mail was uncommon. This marking appears to have been locally assembled.
1851 Rate Period
Foreign Mail

December 11, 1852
10-cent fully prepaid rate to Canada; exchanged to Canadian mail system at Buffalo NY

_ONLY recorded example of this marking_

May 29, 1852
5 cents represents prepaid British open mail rate; carried by Cunard line steamer Africa, departed New York June 2 via Liverpool (June 12), to Paris and then to Wurttemberg

_Three recorded examples in red on transatlantic mail_

Additional means of prepaying mail to foreign destinations evolved in the early 1850s. Integral rate markings were used infrequently on such mail.
The End of Integral Rate Markings

September 27, 1852

Adhesive (applied to back flap) overlooked; letter incorrectly marked as unpaid

Manuscript “Overch’d 5” subsequently added to prevent collection of postage upon receipt

February 17, circa 1853

Double rate letter; single rate prepaid (3 cents) and second rate unpaid

Only reported cover with two Cincinnati integral rate markings in different colors

March 29, circa 1855

to Columbus, OH

“1 unpaid” marking applied in error to unpaid letter rate mail; corrected in manuscript

May 6, circa 1854

Erroneously marked as unpaid domestic mail despite prepayment of 20 cents at post office counter

Only recorded example of this marking with integral rate obliterated

The use of postmarks with integral markings could lead to confusion and rating errors, undermining postal efficiency. Mandatory prepayment by adhesive stamp ultimately eliminated the need to rate mail items, and rendered integral rate markings obsolete.