Elyria, Ohio
A brief postal history tour

1. Introduction

Elyria, Ohio is the county seat of Lorain County. The present-day city was established by Heman Ely, originally from West Springfield, Massachusetts, when he built the first permanent settlement between the east and west branches of the Black River in 1817 at age 42.

The land that would become Elyria was given to him by his father, Justin, who was among a group of buyers who purchased land in Lorain County in the Western Reserve in 1807. Heman Ely was among the hundreds of people who headed west to settle the region in the early 19th century. By 1830 the population grew to 664 people and three years later Elyria was incorporated by the state of Ohio.

Lured by rich natural resources and the promise of a growing nation, more and more people settled

Heman Ely
Founder of Elyria

in the area so that by 1900, nearly 8,800 residents lived in Elyria. The population peaked at 57,204, according to the 1980 census.

Jack C. Standen writes in his monograph, "Postal History of Elyria, Ohio, 1808-2008," that early mail routes existed in the area in 1808. As the need for postal services grew, Heman Ely was appointed postmaster of Elyria on May 23, 1818, offering services out of his home. He held the position until March 18, 1833.

This exhibit offers a glimpse of the postal history of Elyria from Ely's time as postmaster until the current day. It is not all-encompassing, but it does show some of the mail services and postmarks that were used by those who offered postal service in the village that became a vibrant city over the last two centuries.

Acknowledgement

Much of the credit for the descriptions of postmarks and mail service in this exhibit goes to Elyrian Jack C. Standen, who has collected postal history of Elyria for much of his adult life. The research presented in his 2009 monograph "Postal History of Elyria, Ohio, 1808-2008" offered a comprehensive guide in the development of this exhibit and provides a wealth of information for anyone with an interest in the postal history of his home town.

Exhibit outline

2. The First Postmark

This postmark, a serrated box 21 by 19 millimeters in size, is the first style used by Heman Ely. The earliest known use dates to July 25, 1829. Those first postmarks were in black ink. Subsequent usages, such as this example from November 24, 1831, are known only in red ink. It is unknown if Ely made it himself or purchased it. During the early 19th century postmasters were granted the use of "free" franking to send correspondence anywhere.

3. Stampless Mail

31 millimeter circular date stamp
In use 1841 to 1849

Postmark in red with additional marking "PAID" indicating postage was paid by sender to Bucyrus, Ohio. Also marked with manuscript "25" in upper right and "double" at lower left, indicating twice the normal 12.5-cent rate for items mailed between 80 and 150 miles. This mailed item likely had an enclosure, necessitating the double postage rate.

Postmark in black dated April 20, 1842 (year determined from the correspondence) to Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, with manuscript "10" paying the rate for mail traveling 30 to 80 miles.
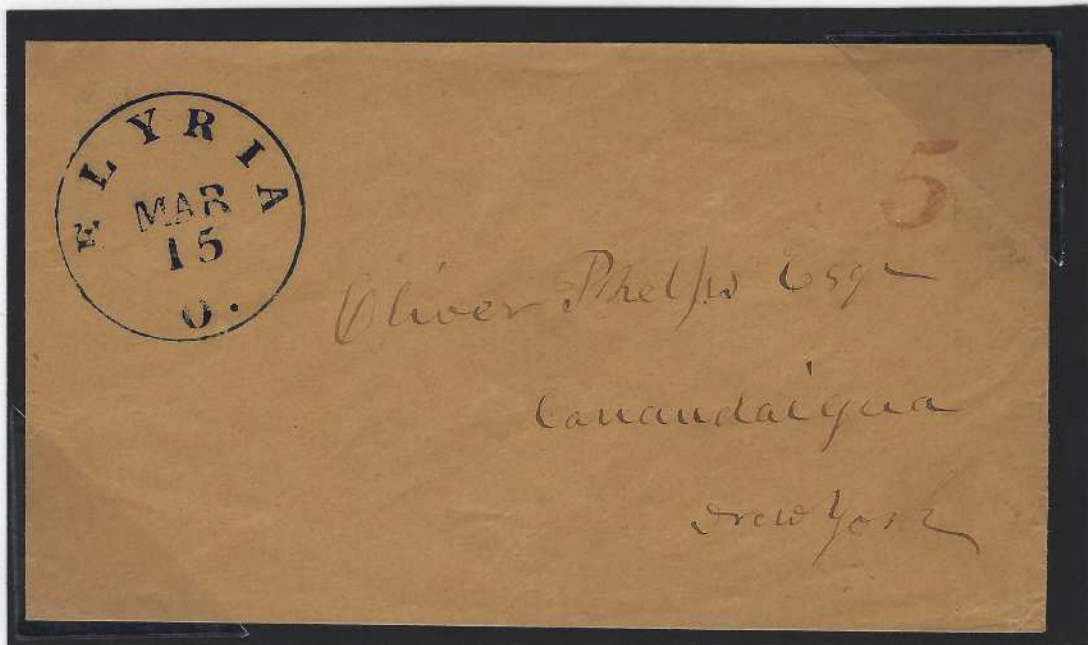

Postmark in blue dated July 25, 1848 (year determined from the correspondence) to Buffalo, New York, with manuscript "5" in red under postage rates established beginning July 1, 1847 for mail traveling less than 300 miles.

32 millimeter circular date stamp
In use 1850 to 1857

Postmark in blue with "PAID," meaning the postage was prepaid, and "3" in red to Danbury, Connecticut. The year is undetermined.
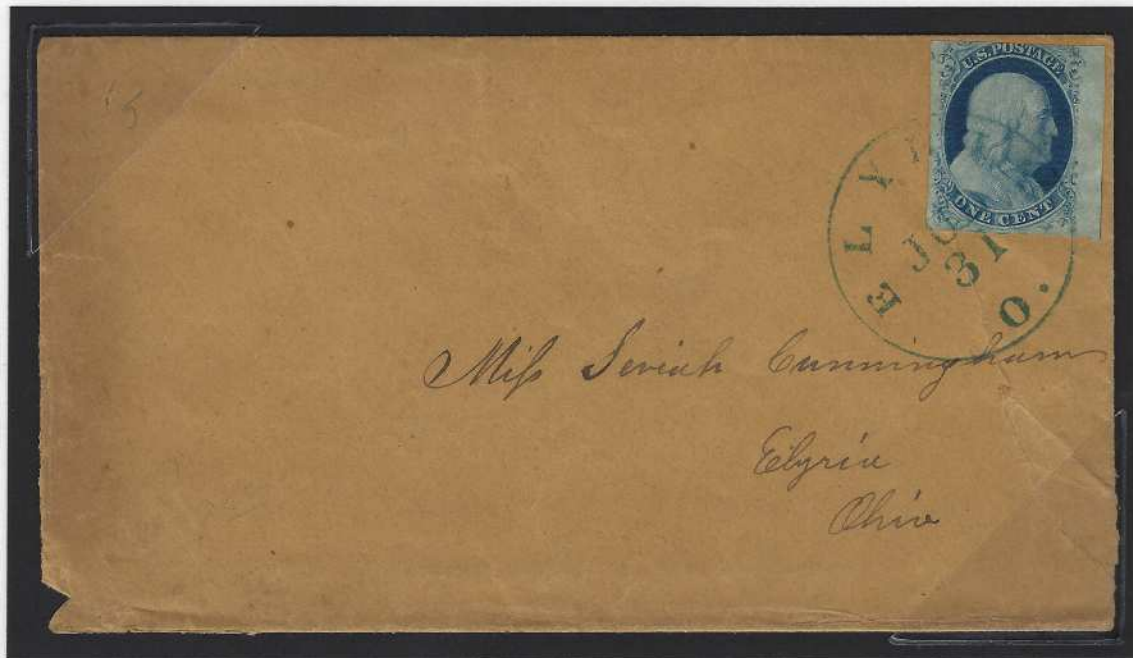

Postmark in blue with "5" in red to Canandaigua, New York. Rate was for postage traveling less than 300 miles. The year is undetermined.

4. 19th-Century Markings
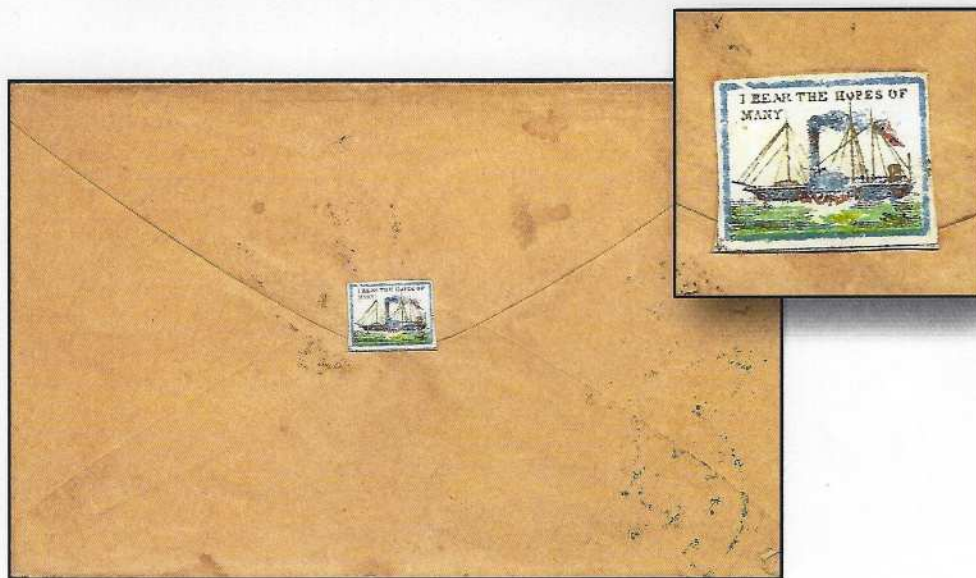
<div align="center">

32 millimeter circular date stamp

Short serifs

In use 1850 to 1857

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Postmark in blue on 1-cent drop rate for local delivery. Franked with Type IV 1-cent Franklin of 1851-1857 with curved lines outside the labels, recut at top and bottom. With wide sheet margin at right.

Postmark in blue on this postal stationery envelope that pays the 10-cent rate to Downieville, California, in the 1850s. The reverse has a tiny Cinderella seal showing a steamboat and slogan: "I BEAR THE HOPES OF MANY."

By the 1860s postmasters began using different types of duplex markings, or killers, in addition to the traditional circular date stamp. Size and style varied.

32 millimeter circular date stamp

In use 1861 to 1863

A similar style of postmark in black ink, but with the "Y" in Elyria looking almost like a "V" and a year date in the dial. It includes an additional circular grid duplex cancel on Scott 65. Mailed to Lyme, New Hampshire.
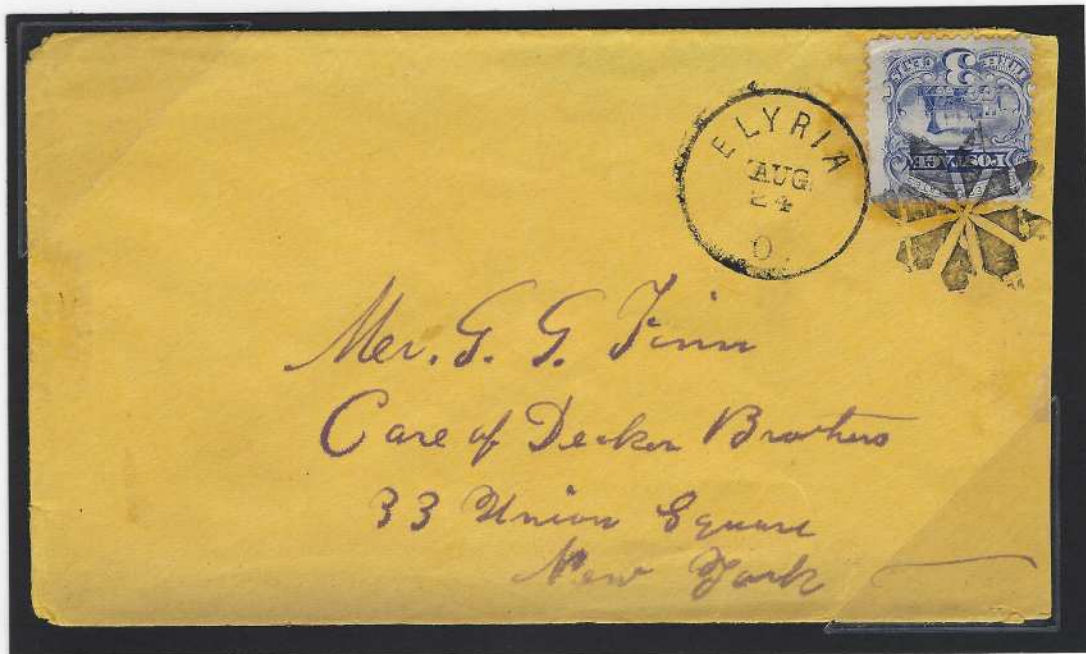
30 millimeter double ring circular date stamp

In use 1864 to 1868

Postmark dated Oct. 29, 1867 to North Dover, Ohio, (today Bay Village). Used with a four-ring duplex cancel.

The circular date stamp has a narrow sans serif font with month and day from 1869, during the year of use of the 1869 pictorial issues.e). Paired with a circle of diamonds duplex cancel on correspondence to New York City.

Same circular date stamp paired with "E" in circle with heavy outline from 1876 (year determined from correspondence on reverse).

Same circular date stamp paired with "POD," for Post Office Department, in circle with heavy outline from 1878 (year determined from correspondence on reverse).