

Using the Official Registers: Local Sources of Postal Revenue

by Diane DeBlois & Robert Dalton Harris

Winton M. Blount Symposium on Postal History, November 4, 2006
Smithsonian National Postal Museum, Washington, D.C.

The (design, measure and performance of the) postal system as a network.

For the first part of this project, delivered at the Business History Conference 2004, we reported that the postal contracts serving New York State 1837-1841 were designed systematically and behaved with the signature distribution of a scale free network: that the number of post offices varied inversely with the square of the number of daily mails.¹

We also reported the correlation of local gross postal revenues, obtained from the Official Registers, with the square of the number of daily mails, but which offered scant basis for prediction. We also noted that three elements were reported as measures of the postal network: the number of post offices, the miles of mail transportation, and the postal revenues, and that the ratio of gross postal revenue to total miles of mail transportation was a constant of the system before the Civil War.² Given the pace of the system in miles per hour, this translated into a national scale for the industrial wage.

The global performance (exponential growth and scaling relations) of the postal system.

For the second part of this project, delivered at the International Economic History Conference 2006, we described the global revenue, transportation miles, and number of post offices as a manifold of three independent parameters whose ratios were constants of the postal system – the signature of its design.³ And we noted the change in the signature after the Civil War.⁴ Signature ratios aside, the independent parameters themselves grew exponentially, at constant rates which were merely shifted by the Civil War, rate of growth being conserved like the angular momentum of a gyroscope.

All this would change with Rural Free Delivery, a rapid extinction followed by a more gradual decline in the number of post offices, the corresponding transportation services internalized to cost ascertainment and rate making. And still gross postal revenues continued to increase at 7% per annum for 135 years. The population could show a smoother profile but not such constant growth. Moreover, when the rate of population growth declined around the turn from the 19th to the 20th century, the postal revenues continued their 7% growth rate, continued it unabated until the market crash of 1929, but, even then, quickly regained momentum and in eight years had driven the absolute value through the former limit.⁵ The systematic generation of postal revenues were not per capita. Neither, evidently, were they dependent upon the value of the dollar.⁶

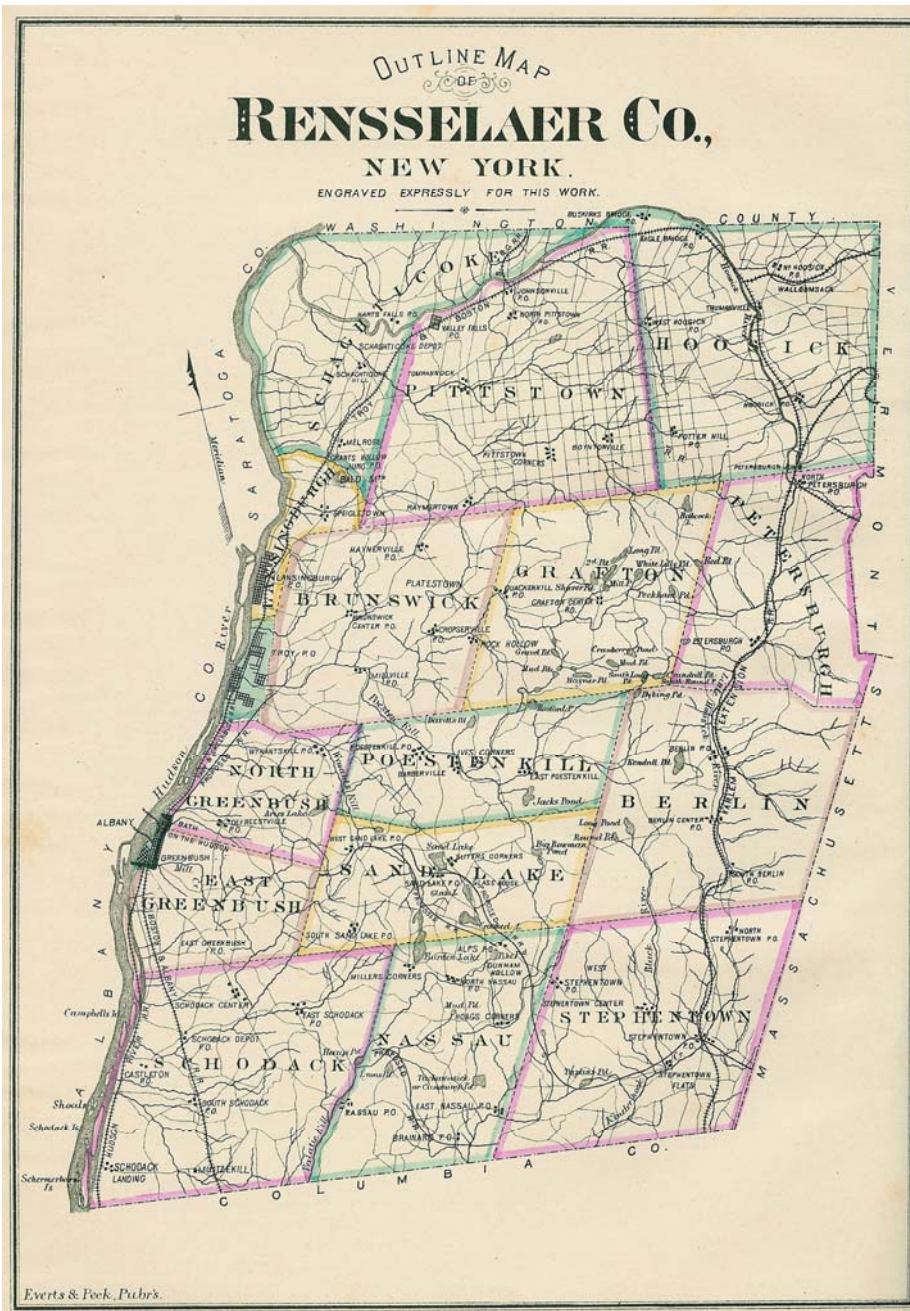
How did such global regularity and national scale result from such an accumulation of disparate geographies, technologies of transportation, and cultures of communication as have sustained themselves during that 135 years? In proposing an answer with this third part of the project, we celebrate the postal system for providing a precision index to local economic activity as well as the premier basis for understanding the national economy, and as a model for systematic behavior altogether.

The postal system as a sum of its parts.

Postal historians, at least the geographers among them, have by now determined and published the dates of operations of the several post offices in the United States. For Rensselaer County, our chosen location for this investigation into the local sources of revenue, and the place where we live in upstate New York on the east bank of the Hudson River facing Albany and 'Empire' to the West, there have been eighty post offices.⁷ Thirty-three are currently in existence, 85% of which were founded before the Civil War. The earlier of these were located in the political units of the townships.⁸ Rarely were these township post offices surpassed in growth by subsequent offices, except when new offices were founded upon the railroad.⁹ The discontinuation of some twenty offices in the nineteen oughts marks the advent of rural free delivery.

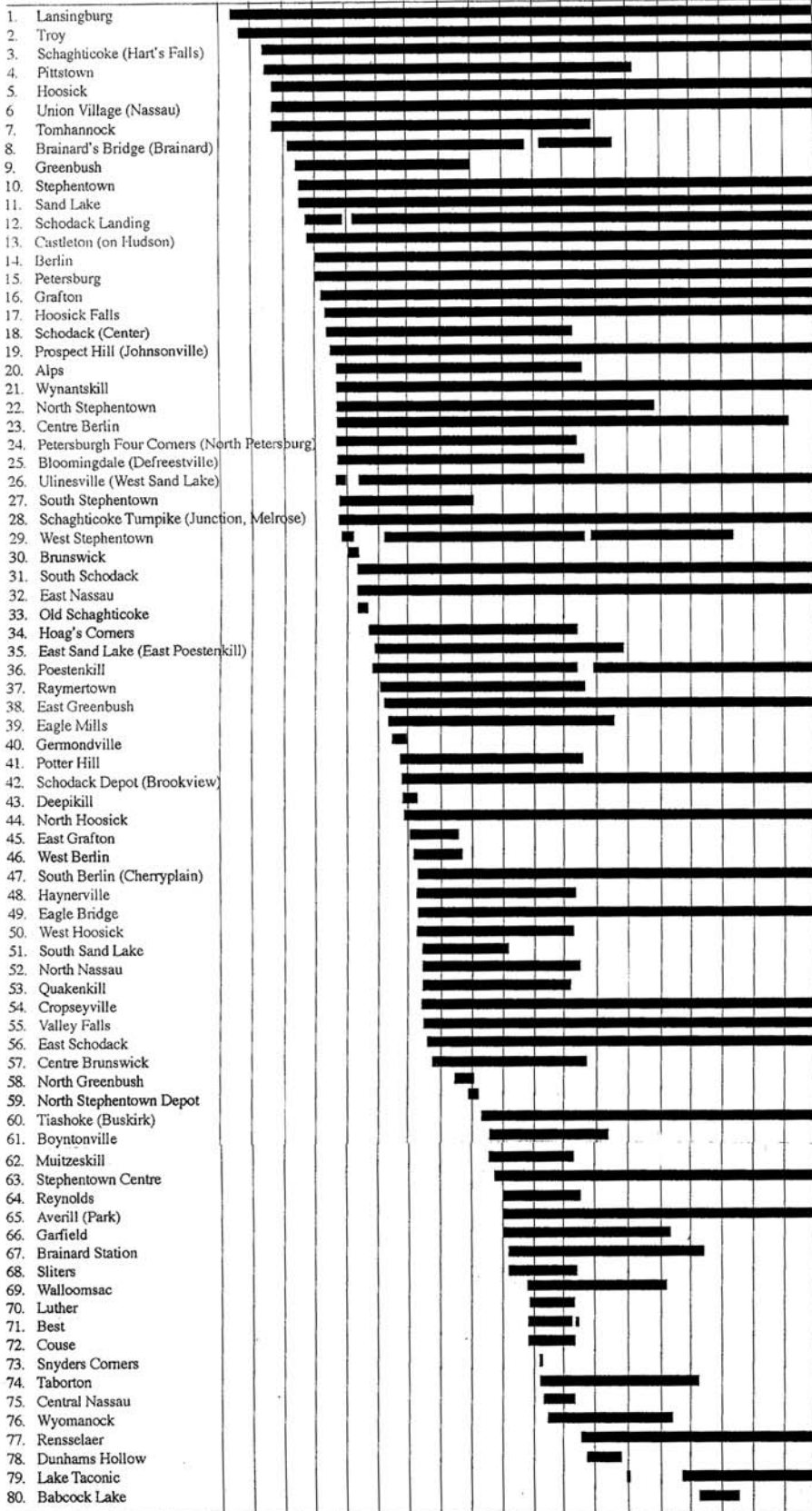
Postal revenue as a local product.

The antebellum framework that still dominates the geography of our material economy may be examined in more detail thanks to the Official Registers.¹⁰ Postal receipts were watched closely, many offices being discontinued which failed to pay one third of their cost of supply from the net postages (gross revenue less postmaster emoluments);¹¹ net postages were at first independently reported (1823-1835) and then published in the Official Registers, in conjunction with the postmaster compensation, from 1841 until 1869. So, with the exception of 1837 and 1839, we may examine gross postal receipts at every post office and at every level of organization from 1822 through 1869.¹²

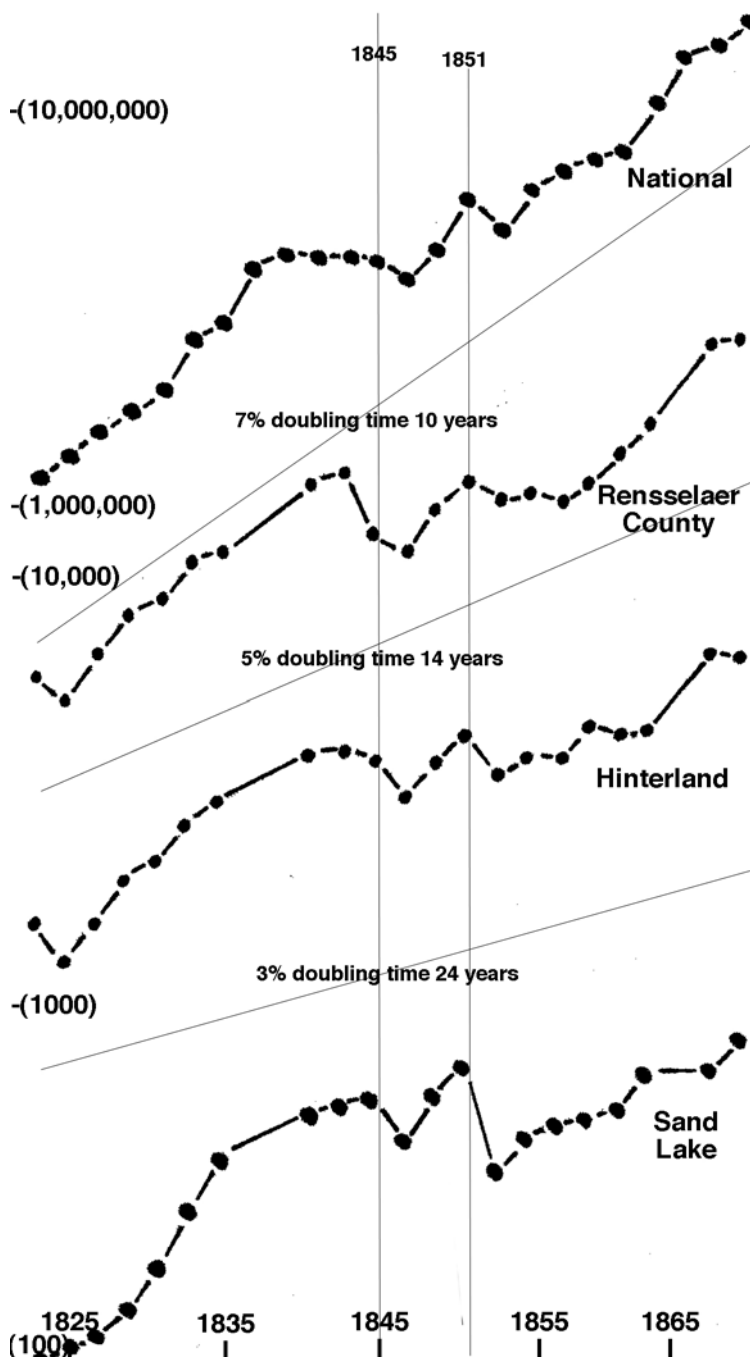


[Illustration 1: Map, pub. By Everts & Peck, from Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, *History of Rensselaer Co., New York*, 1880]

1790 1800 1810 1820 1830 1840 1850 1860 1870 1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970



[Illustration 2: Dates of Operation Rensselaer County Post Offices 1792-1980]

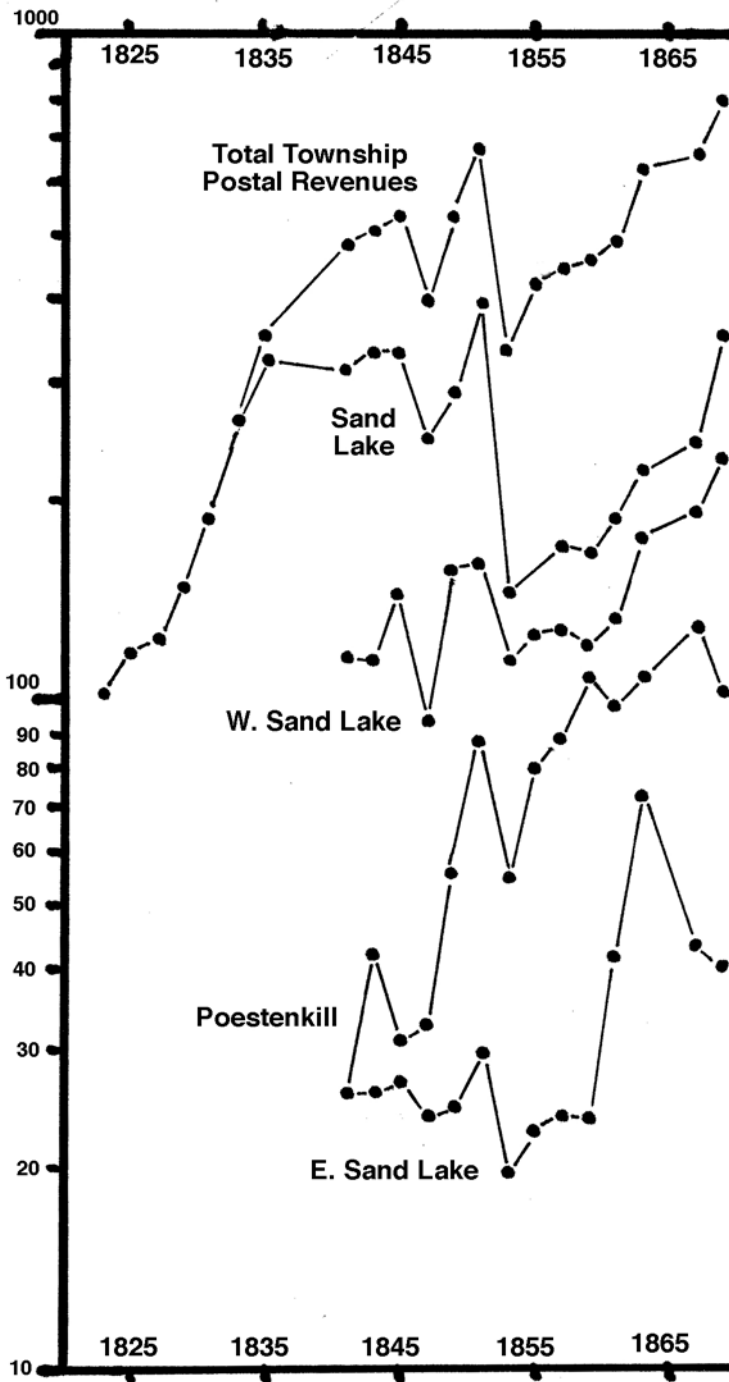


[Illustration 4: Gross Postal Revenues 1823-1869]

We are struck how the decline of postal revenues as a consequence of postal rate reform 1 July 1845 is **unanticipated** only in Sand Lake. The most precipitate decline is at the county level, where Troy's revenues had plunged 35% before reform: Congress was at the time investigating the degree to which the eastern expressmen were siphoning potential postal revenues from the post offices at the principal centers.¹³

We are struck by how the decline of postal revenues subsequent to the reduction in the rate of postage for prepayment, 1 July 1851, is most marked in Sand Lake – a reminder that small places may have received more mail than they sent. Not only are these transformations modulated for each level of aggregation but also the underlying rate of growth is distributed hegemonically: a minimum of 3% in a town of the hinterland, to 5% at the county center, to 7% on the national scale.

Local features.



[Illustration 5: Town of Sand Lake 1823-1869 Postal Revenues at each office & Total Postal Revenue for the Township]

The gross postal revenues of the Town of Sand Lake were contributed principally by Sand Lake until joined by West Sand Lake.¹⁴ We see between 1827 and 1833 a rate of growth exceeding the national average, more than a doubling of its revenues in seven years: 10% per annum, cooling to 3% by the addition of new post offices. With respect to the disproportionate decline in revenues from 1851 to 1853 in the Sand Lake post office, from \$399 to \$145, the burning down on Christmas day 1852 of the glass works, which had been the principal industry in the

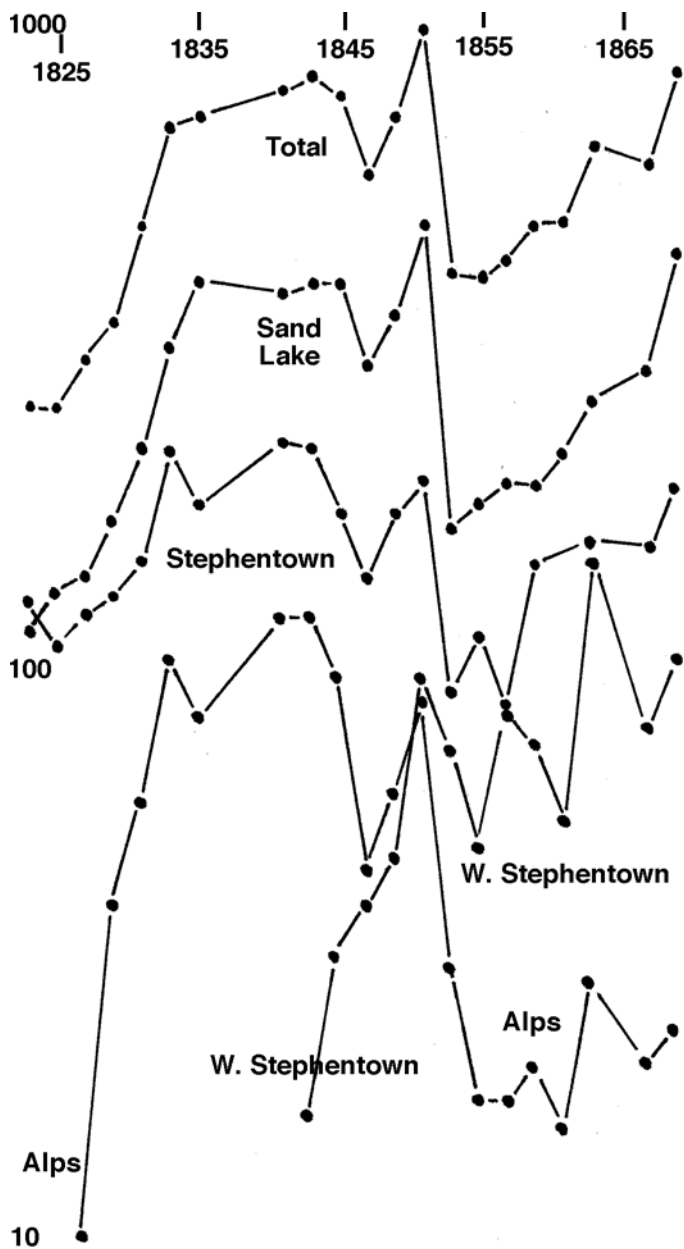
town from its beginning, offers an alternative to the hypothesis that a relative shortage of original mail might account for the unusual decline in revenues at Sand Lake post office in its 1853.¹⁵

The correlation of the subsequent growth in Sand Lake and West Sand Lake (and the unrelated meanderings of the revenues at East Sand Lake and Poestenkill) derive from the geography of the watershed and is a special case in this regard: a postal portrait of the local industrial revolution. The Wynants Kill was the reason for landmark legislation stipulating the sharing of responsibility for a common resource: where the Patroon lavished his energies upon founding an institute for the development of his counties; encouraging the building of the State's canals for the development of commerce to the West and North; and hiring a Scottish engineer, Henry Burden, who, among other things, built the largest water wheel in the world on the Wynants Kill.¹⁶

Mill owners via their own association developed and managed the resources of the watershed. They also integrated their industrial activities for a common line of production. Sand Lake post office by the late 1820s serviced an area where five water privileges were completing their transition from saw mill and grist mill to textiles. The loss of the glass factory uncovered the contribution of these other activities. In addition, two water privileges in West Sand Lake converted from subsistence to commercial milling ca1850.¹⁷

At the level of the Sand Lake township, where the population was practically unchanging throughout the 19th century, postal revenue nonetheless grew at a certain rate. This growth despite the stable local population reflects the systematic investment of exponential growth as well as the two-fold nature of postal communication: message and reply.

Pay of the Way.



[Illustration 6: Postal Revenues of the Road between Sand Lake & Stephentown 1823-1865]

Not until 1815 when a turnpike connected Sand Lake to Stephentown¹⁸ (named for the Patroon and still the only Stephentown on earth) were post offices established at those two places. Subsequently, Alps and West Stephentown were established along the way, the trip from Sand Lake to Stephentown passing through the tangled geology of several watersheds before descending into Stephentown valley where the Patroon kept some mills. Alps was the community centered upon the charcoal burners charring their way through the six thousand acre woodlot with which the glass factory was endowed (the dating of the drop in postal activity at Alps shows that the wood had practically been exhausted by the time of the Christmas fire in 1852). The West Stephentown post office was kept by one master, Isaiah Bangs Coleman, from 1851 to 1881, in his store next to his house between the store and the Free Will Baptist Church. Rev. Coleman preached for free; he also sent and received mail free under his postmaster frank. Meanwhile, the Stephentown post office was passed often among several sites which, by their relative proximity to West Stephentown, modulated the rewards for the Rev. Coleman's unstinting exertions.

In distinction to the aggregation of postal revenues by geographic domain to a constant growth, the integration of postal revenues on this segment of a postal road quickly attains a limit to growth. This is in accord with the role of the frequency of the mails in the distribution of post offices according to their revenues. Indeed, this road was

traversed daily with the mails in 1837. By 1851, the mails were thrice weekly, the route having lost its importance to the Western Railroad which had reached the Hudson River from Boston.

Fragments of the mail: local communications.

To present a more intimate local picture of the post in Sand Lake, we present evidence of communications from the post offices on the Sand Lake to Stephentown turnpike, 1827 to 1849. According to an 1825 trade card, the stages stopped in Sand Lake at Spencer's (a public house kept by Richard Spencer at Glass House, by the shore of Glass Lake where there was a glass factory 1806-1852). According to an 1828 almanac the stages by then were stopping in Sand Lake at "Averil" (a store kept by Franklin Averill at the Sliter's Corners crossroads). At "Stephentown," the stages stopped at "Babcock" which was the store and, apparently,¹⁹ an unofficial post office kept by Sally Ann Babcock in West Stephentown (before the official opening of an office in 1829). Sally Ann was probably related to the O. Babcock, agent of the Union Line of Stages at the City Hotel, Troy.

BOSTON
UNION LINE STAGES,
FROM ALBANY AND TROY,
Through in Two and One Half Days.
FARE \$7 50.

LEAVES Albany every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, at 7, A. M. and Troy at 8. For seats in Albany, apply at the corner of Church and South-Market-streets, and to I. Rhines, No. 10, Beaver-street; in Troy, to O. Babcock, City Hotel.

This Line is run in as good style as any other, with the first rate Carriages, good Horses, and careful Drivers.

This Line passes through Sand Lake, Stephentown, Hancock, Lanesborough, Cheshire, Savoy, Plainfield, Ashfield, Conway, Bloody Brook, Sunderland, Leveritt, four miles North of Amherst, Shutesbury, New-Salem, Petersham, Barre, Hubbardston, Princeton, Sterling, Lancaster, Bolton, Stow, Sudbury, Concord, Lincoln, Weston, Waltham, Watertown, Cambridge, to Boston.

Baggage at the owner's risk.
JAMES FISK, Agent, Albany.
O. BABCOCK, " Troy.

JULY, 1825.
Tuttle & Richards, Printers, Troy.

TABLE OF ROADS,
From Albany and Troy to Boston.

	Distance.	Fare.
Sand Lake, Averil,	10	\$ 50
Hancock, Gardner,	13 23	1 25
Cheshire, Wolcott,	13 36	1 75
Plainfield, Tony,	14 50	2 25
Bloody Brook,	20 70	3 25
Shutesbury, Dickinson,	12 82	3 87
Barre, Black,	18 100	4 62
Princeton,	11 111	5 25
Bolton, Holman,	15 126	6 00
Weston, Daggett,	16 142	6 75
Boston, Bayden,	14 156	7 50

The above is the distance and fare from place to place. Passengers who go through, will pay in Albany or Troy to Plainfield; then at Bloody Brook, Barre, and Bolton, according to the above table.

	Distance.	Fare.
By this Line,	156	\$7 50
By the way of Greenfield,	166	8 50
“ Brattleborough,	170	8 50
“ Northampton,	164	8 75
“ Springfield,	168	8 75

The above are the only regular lines to Boston. Any information wanted as to Stages leaving Albany, will be given by application to
JAMES FISK, Agent.

JULY, 1825.
C190 ODT

[Illustration 7 & 8: Trade Card, July 1825, letterpress printed by Tuttle & Richards, Troy. James Fisk, Albany's agent for the Boston Union Line Stages, emphasizes the advantage both in miles and in cost to this stage line going from Albany to Troy and by way of Sand Lake, Stephentown, and Hancock (rather than New Lebanon) etc. to Boston.]

TABLE OF ROADS.

EASTWARD—from the City of Troy to Boston—by the way of Sandlake, Hancock, Deerfield, &c.

Sandlake, Spencer,	10	Deerfield, Russell,	7	61	
Stephentown, Babcock,	6	16	Sunderland,	2	79
Hancock, Gardner,	6	22	Shutesbury, Beman,	10	89
Lanesboro', Tour,	8	30	Barre, Block,	18	91
Cheshire, Wolcott,	5	35	Princeton Jones,	11	110
Savoy, Bates,	7	42	Bolton, Holman,	15	125
Plainfield, Torry,	7	49	Weston, Daggett,	16	141
Ashfield, Williams,	7	56	Boston, Boyden,	14	155
Conway, Newhall,	6	62			

From Troy to Boston—by the way of Northampton, Brookfield &c.

Sandlake	10	Peru	7	Belchertown	9	Worcester	6, 124
Stephentown	5	Worthington	8	Western	7	Framingham	20
New-Lebanon	12	Chesterfield	9	Brookfield	7	Weston	5
Pittsfield	7, 84	Northampton	13	Spencer	7	Watertown	8
Dalton	6	Hadley	12	Leicester	5	Boston	7, 164

[Illustration 9: "Table of Roads" from Andrew Beers' *The Columbian Calendar, or New-York and Vermont Almanack*, 1828, printed and sold in Troy by Francis Adancourt "at the Columbian Book Store, River Street, opposite the Post-Office."]

Sand Lake Postmasters' Reports in the Official Registers

Uriah M. Gregory	1816-1827
Benjamin W. Harvey	1829-1835
B. Wilkason	1835-June 21, 1841
Gideon Butts	1841-1843
Calvin Sliter	1845-1849
Nathan Upham	1851-July 15 1853*
William C. Tourtellot	July 15-December 31 1853
W.H. Wicks	1854-May 28
Calvin Sliter	May 28 1854-1861
W.H. Wicks	1863
D.E. Barnes	1865-1867
David Horton	1869

* the scramble for the post office in this period was probably linked to the 1852 Christmas fire destroying the Glass Factory



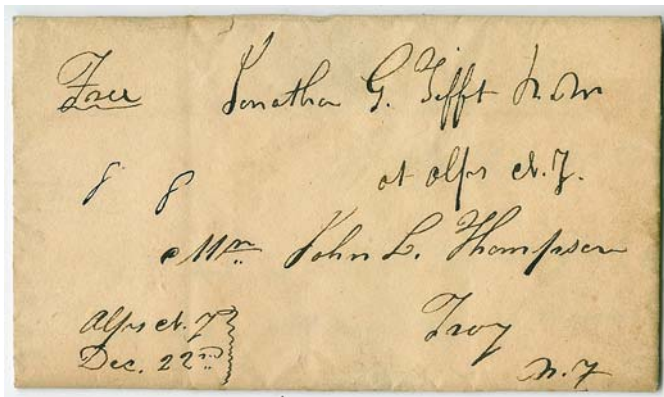
[Illustration 10]

1. From Sand Lake 1827. Ms postmark: "Sand Lake Sept 3" rate "12 1/2" Addressed to: "The Hon. Jona Harvey Esq, Sutton, N. Hamshire." Docket: "Benjamin Harvey" Contents: "Sand Lake Sep 2 1827. Dear Brother, I received yours of last Feb and have intended to answer it once or twice – my health has bin so poor that I could not write any length. I began to run down in March and was confined to the house most of April & May after that I have bin more comfortable. My cough has bin beter so as to enable me to be in the shop most of the time. I find myself yet weak. I was in hopes of seeing you e'er this but it seems as though what little time I have to remain here on earth I am to spend out of the circle of my friends. Perhaps you may think me low spirited but I am not I have bin afflicted but not comfortless bin lonsom but not dejected. I am fixed on this thot if it is my lot to stay hear it's the Lords will and he wil sustain me his apointed time. If I am to be removed his will be done. I think I can testify to the reality of the religion of Jesus Christ it will do to live by & di by – at the our of death he that has it wants nothing & he that is without it has nothing. I received a line from John stating that Mother was very sick and proverbly would not get well as it has bin some little time I think she must be beter or not living. I feel considerable anxiety to hear from her. I have had a wish to come and se her this fall but it is not very proverble that I shall be able to come. I wish you to make it a point to come this way this fall. I also wish you to write on the receipt of this. Remember my respects to Mrs. H and the rest of the family. Sincerely yours B.W. Harvey." **Benjamin Harvey's shop was at Sliter's Corners and, when he became postmaster, the office moved there from the Glass Lake area where Dr. Uriah M. Gregory had had his physician's and post offices (since 1816). Harvey's comments here about being confined to his house for months reveal how often the actual work of the store and even the post office could be handled by other family members.**

2. From Sand Lake 1832. Ms postmark: "Sand Lake Oct 10" rate "6" Addressed to "Mr. Abel P. West Jun., Pittsfield Mass." Contents: "Sand Lake Oct 11th 1832. Dear Father, I recd. yours a few days since & was glad to hear you were well. I am well & have been so most of the time since I left home. I write at this time wishing you to see Mr. Dillinham. I understand he wants a teacher. Willis told me yesterday he saw Mr. D. a short time ago who inquired about me & wished to know how long I was engaged at Sand Lake. Should you see him you may ask him if he wants a teacher & if so tell him to state his terms, the duties of a teacher, the number of hours per day &c &c. If he will offer me a fair salary I will teach for him. Tell him to write me or if he gives you any encouragement I will ride out & see him. I am not pleased with my situation here. I have to devote my whole time to the school Sundays not excepted. Soon I shall be obliged to spend the evening as well as the day in school. I had rather teach a district school for \$15 per month than stay here. You had better see Mr. D. as soon as you receive this for he will be looking out for some one. Tell me what John's doing, where he is living, & if you see him tell him to write me immediately. Give my best respects to the family & all my friends. Answer this as soon as you can for I am anxious to hear from Mr. D. Yours with much esteem, Charles E. West." **Charles West's claim that he'd rather teach in a district (that is, a public) school implies that he was teaching at a private academy. At this time there was a "select school" kept by Dr. Elmore and Dr. Jaynes at Sliter's Corners.**

Alps Postmasters' Reports from the Official Registers

Jonathan G. Tiftt	1827-1833
Alanson Woodward	part 1835
W. Griggs	1835
Thomas Ten Eyck	1837-May 6 1841
O.H.P. Griffis	May 6 1841-January 28 1843
Thomas Ten Eyck	January 28 1843-1869



[Illustration 11]

3. From Alps 1829. Ms postmark: "Alps N.Y. Dec. 22nd" rate: "Free Jonathan G. Tiff P.M. at Alps N.Y." Addressed to Mr. John L. Thompson, Troy, N.Y. Contents: "Alps, Dec 22nd 1829. Dear Sir, If you will have the goodness to offer the within note and get it done you will much oblige your friend and may receive \$100 on my act. And the note shall be attended to without fail in due season. Truly yours, Jonathan G. Tiff. P.S. please endorse and offer the within the first opportunity and you shall not be the loser." **Jonathan G. Tiff ran a general store in Alps, was postmaster from 1826-35 and, from 1831-32, was Clerk of the Town of Nassau. This letter reveals that, under the postmaster's free frank, he conducted considerable business with Troy.**

4. From Alps 1833. Ms postmark: "Alps N.Y. Feb. 18th" rate "10" addressed to: "Mr. Lahor Parker, Hudson, Columbia Co. NY." Docket: "A.D. Quimby Feb 1833" Contents: "Alps Nasau. February the 18, 1833. Dear Sir, I take this opportunity to inform you that there is some business here about those teamsters that I think you had better come and se about in suply of that note you hold against Bakr for he may make you trouble in case thought you had better come next week by the middle if you can, from your friend A.D. Quimby." **Elnathan Quimby was one of the first settlers of the Alps area in the 1790s; this is probably his son. In this period Alps was the principal supplier of charcoal to the glass factory, in the 1830s owned by a consortium that quite likely included Parker of Hudson.**

5. From Alps 1838. Ms postmark: "Alps NY Aug 30" rate "25" addressed to: "Mr. Ira R. Hunt, Goochland P.O., Goochland Co. Va." Contents: "Aug 30 th 1838, Alps Rensselaer Co. NY. Dear Brother, I hope this time to write a few lines to let you no that whe are all well as can be expected. Father & Mother as well as could be expected for such old folks & we should like to have you come & see us as soon as you can. There was a letter at Sand Lake P.O. last winter that we did not get it was sent to Washington & we expected that it was from you. When you write again direct your letter to Alps. It is 7 or 8 years since we have heard from you & we should like to hear from you as soon as possible. We have rote several letters but have never received any. The old folks live with me. Your Brother, Alva Hunt." **The writer assumes that a letter directed to him at the Sand Lake P.O., and lost to the Dead Letter Office in Washington, had been from his brother. Since communication between the brothers had lapsed for 7 or 8 years, the Virginia brother probably hadn't even realized that Alps had had a post office since 1826. At 25 cents, farmers could not afford much epistolary contact.**

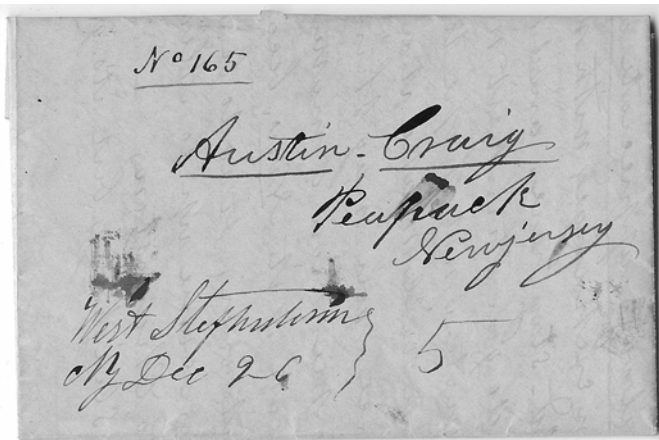


[Illustration 12]

6. To Alps 1849. April 26 Durhamville NY postmark, docket: "K.M. Crandell Apr. 28, 1849" Rate "5" to Mr. Edwin R. Ball, Alps P.O., Rensselaer Co., NY. With enclosure: "Durhamville April 25/49. Mr. E.R. Ball, Albert R. Fox is up here and he intends to take up the Mr. Lord's note the first of May and pay the interest on Dr. McClaren's note. He sais he believes your name is not on the McClaren note as for that I do not know if it is. Fox does not remember it and from present appearances he will see to them. What made me write to you before was because he was so anxious to get your name on first or before his – all well. Elmore wants to see his cozens and get his colt. I have just received a paper from James with some of the town tickets for which I am much obliged. Yours truly, K.M. Crandell." **The writer, K.M. Crandell, is probably related to Nathan R. Crandell who had operated the glass factory at Glass Lake from 1816 until his death in 1825. Albert R. Fox and his brother Samuel H. Fox had taken over the glass factory in 1839 and would operate it until the fire of 1852. By 1849, Fox was actively involved in other glass factories in Massachusetts and Oneida County NY (Durhamville is in Oneida Co.) – the forests of Alps were denuded and he had to follow the charcoal. The recipient of the letter, Edwin R. Ball, was a solid citizen of Alps – having acted as Clerk of the Town of Nassau in 1836 and 1839-41. Apparently he is involved in the Durhamville glass factory with Fox and together they have borrowed money to do so.**

West Stephentown Postmasters' Reports from the Official Registers

Robert Tifft	1829-1831
(office discontinued 1832 and reopened 1841)	
Daniel Allen	October 1 1841-1845
Ira Tifft	1847-1849
Isaiah B. Coleman	1851-1869



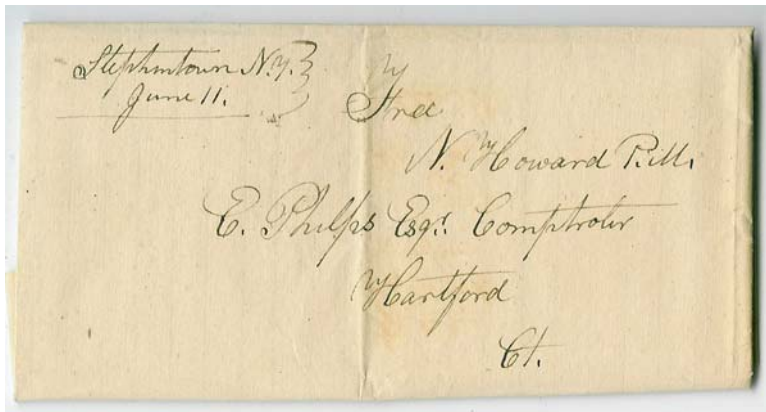
[Illustration 13]

7. From West Stephentown 1848. Ms postmark: "West Stephentown NY Dec 26" rate "5" Addressed to: "Austin Craig, Peapack, New Jersey. No. 165" Contents: "Stephentown N.Y. Dec 25 1848. Friend Austin.

Yours of the 19th came to hand today. It found us all well. We had just returned from a visit, when we received your welcome letter. I suppose the reason that you did not get a letter from Hamlin was this. Bart had a lame back and could not go. I was there when he got your letter. It was advertised in one of the City papers. You did not put on the number. And for that reason he did not get it sooner. You wish to know what fault was found with your sermon. Well they thought it was rather speculative and visionary than otherwise. There was a Methodist from Newark to meeting that day – he made quite a fuss over it. He is a brother-in-law to Dayton Meeker. Dayton and his wife “felt bad” they did not know what had “got into your self” in their opinion “it was foolish stuff.” But my brother they said it out of no ill will to you and it was said in confidence to me. Harry Blake’s folks were the next persons who spoke to me on the subject. They seemed to have about the same opinion that the persons I have mentioned expressed and a few others in the place. I had no conversation with Goff on the subject, I did not have an opportunity to see but very few your friends while I was there. How far the grumbling extends I cant say – not having much of a chance to know. I hope it wont disturb your mind. Perhaps I ought not to have made mention of it. The best way is (in my opinion) not to notice it. And the next time you preach there give them more of the same kind. I did not blow the Campdowners but it was on the end of my tongue to give them a regular built one, when they were grumbling about your sermon. And had you not requested me not to they would have got it. What do you think of the reply of the “crookeds” to Miller? You ask what “I am doing now” I am trying to preach heavens truth to the people on the Sabbath. And spend my time in reading and visiting through the week. My brother, I fear you are not in the way of your duty. O! remember, the error & sin that is in the world and your voice is not raised (as often as it should be) against it. I hope the good spirit will move upon your soul until you will be willing to “go out” and labor for the good of your race. Dear brother you have a great work to do and time is very short. God help us to be up and doing. Hazen wants me to send him some short articles for his paper. Will you be good enough to send one on, some that will please him, write some on practical subjects. And you shall have the gratitude of one who can always appreciate a favor. Goff has proposed an exchange with me next spring, if I should stay here and I have promised to do so. How do you think it will do? And if I should might I not hope to see you there, I hope you will make it a point to attend our Conference, you may think that I am in haste to mention a matter that is months off yet, I speak of it now because I want you to think it over. It is to be held in Charleston. You can come up to Albany and I will take you to Charleston. We have had some sleighing but it’s going now for it rains. Your friends often inquire after you and you have many of them here. The next time you write be particular to send your respects to Dr. Graves & his family. I was to have visited with C.P. Carpenter, tomorrow, but it is rather doubtful now, he is very attentive to greetings. Remember those articles, as every your friend C.W. Havens” **Both C.W. Havens and Calvin P. Carpenter were members of the Seventh Day Baptists Society of Stephentown. One wonders if he argued religion with Isaiah B. Coleman who was, at this time, both elder of the Free Baptist Church of Stephentown, and pastor of the Free-Will Baptist Church of West Stephentown, as well as keeper of the general store in West Stephentown (since 1836). In 1850, Coleman resigned from the Stephentown church and added the duties of postmaster at West Stephentown. He held that position until 1881, and died in 1883.**

Stephentown Postmasters’ Reports from the Official Registers

Nathan Howard	1816-1841
Nicholas Gardiner	1843
Nathan Howard	1845-1849
Theodore D. Platt	1851-1853
James J. Brown	1855
Randall A. Brown	half 1857
Lansing Sheldon	half 1857
John L. Sheldon	1859-1861
Lewis Brown	1863-1867
R.A. Brown	1869



[Illustration 14]

8. From Stephentown 1833. Ms postmark: "Stephentown N.Y. June 11" rate "Free / N. Howard P.M." addressed to: "E. Phelps Esq. Comptroller, Hartford, Ct." Docket: "Nathan Howard ansd. Jun 13th 1833" Contents: "Stephentown June 11th 1833. Dear Sir, In compliance with yours of 30th May past I will briefly state what Mr. John Doty has stated in his Declaration for a pension. He enlisted in Capt. James Smith's Company of the Regt. Commd. By Col. Mead in the fall of 1789 for 9 mo. & served his time out. Resided at Saybrook Ct. Stationed at Horseneck Ct. in 1780 he enlisted in Capt Abrram Smith's Company commanded by Col. Beebe served 6 mo. Stationed at Horseneck aforesaid resided at Saybrook aforesaid in the same year 1780 enlisted in Capt Stars Company Col Samuel Canfield went from Saybrook Ct. to West Point N.Y. where he served three months as a Corporal. The above is the substance of fact contained in Mr. Dotys declaration. He was born in Saybrook Ct in 1761. If there is no Documentary evidence in point respecting his service have the goodness to say so. His papers are approved at the Pension office in every respect except should there be documentary evidence. It is required to be certified & returned with his papers which are now in my possession. We wish an answer as soon as convenient, Very respectfully am sir your humble servant Nathan Howard." **As postmaster (Stephentown's first, since 1816), Nathan Howard not only could send such official inquiries for free but also commanded the social 'weight' to have them listened to. A subsequent letter reveals that E. Phelps smoothed the way for John Doty's pension.**

Endnotes

- ¹ Robert Dalton Harris, "The Three Postal Networks of the United States in the 1830s," Business and Economic History On-Line, 2004 (<http://www.thebhc.org/publications/BEHonline/2004/Harris.pdf>)
- ² Since postal policy in the United States was to operate the system upon its own revenues, and inasmuch as the postmasters were compensated with a percentage of the revenues, the remainder, a percentage of the revenues, was left to cover the expenses of transportation. Of course, since total miles of mail transportation was integrated over several modes of transportation each at a different rate, this constant value was as much due to the pattern of deployment of the several modes as it was to the several rates for postal transportation.
- ³ Diane DeBlois & Robert Dalton Harris, "The Pre-Victorian Internet: Economic, and Physical Measures & Principles of the United States Postal System in the 19th Century," IEHC 2006 Conference, Helsinki, Session 107.
- ⁴ The industrialization that was based upon the strategic relationship between waterpower and horsepower before the Civil War thereafter was supplanted by steam for both power and transportation.
- ⁵ IEHC 2006 op cit., page 9 Graph Six
- ⁶ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957*, Washington, D.C., 1960. GNP is a roller coaster by comparison. The expenditures by the postal system, though by policy related to the revenues, were nonetheless considerably more than or less than the revenues during some periods of time. Before the Reorganization of the Post Office Department in 1836, revenues generally and considerably exceeded expenditures. Between World War II and the Reorganization of the POD into the USPS in 1971 postal revenues generally fell considerably below expenditures. In the first case, during the Postmaster Generalship of William T. Barry the department discovered its active role in the growth of the system by increasing the miles of transportation by 50%, mostly given to more frequent service by stage coaches, to precipitate a series of developments culminating in postal reform. Subsequently if expenditure exceeded revenues for a particular year the revenues, by the inexorable 7% growth rate, would usually make up the difference in the ensuing year. In the

latter case, postal unions blocked the technological mutability which had grown to be the sine qua non of the postal architecture for constant growth.

⁷ John L. Kay and Chester M. Smith, Jr., *New York Postal History: The Post Offices and First Postmasters from 1775 to 1980*, State College PA, 1982.

⁸ the townships of New York State were established pursuant to a law of 1788.

⁹ Rensselaer County was comprised of seventeen townships. Ultimately, their first post offices in all but three cases remained the principal office, in terms of postal revenues, in the township.

¹⁰ For our earlier work with Official Register Data, see Diane DeBlois & Robert Dalton Harris: "The Official Register: Parts 1-6" (Accounting and postmaster compensation) P.S. No. 2 [1977]; (Net & gross postage) P.S. No. 3 [1977]; (Postmaster compensation) P.S. No. 4 [1977]; (Towards a postal activity index) P.S. No. 5 [1980]; (Schaghticoke NY) P.S. No. 7 [1980]; (Nashua, NH, Accounts Current 1819-41) P.S. No. 14 [1982], *P.S. a quarterly journal of postal history*. Also: Robert Dalton Harris, "The Geography of a Postal History," *Postal History Journal* No. 102, Oct. 1995 & "Kentucky: The Mail Runs Through It," *PHJ* No. 111, Oct 1998.

¹¹ see Robert Dalton Harris, "Postal Documents in the Serial Set," *P.S. a quarterly journal of postal history*, IX (33), Unproductive post routes, pages 21 & 22.

¹² The regular publication of postmaster emoluments in the Official Register may be used themselves with information regulating the calculation of those emoluments, to infer gross postal revenues for the entire course of their publication 1816-1911. We limit our attention to that period for which the gross local revenues may be directly calculated, for greater precision on behalf both of the local to global transformation and for the best presentation of the post office as a model system. But in terms of correlations to local economy, more relative measures of the postmaster compensations can still be themselves crucial for the timing and direction, if not the absolute value, of local change.

¹³ After the Postmaster General indicated his concern for the degree to which private expressmen were finessing the postal revenues of the principal centers in his 1843 annual report, the House Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads became interested even as there were an increasing flow of petitions for the reduction from the high rates of postage which incited the cupidity of the expressmen. Shortly before the reduction in rates, the Postmaster General submitted for publication two tables for more than forty post offices, mostly in the northeast, whose total revenues began declining in 1843 and 1844. The decline in Troy's gross revenues began in 1843 and are charted quarterly through the end of 1844. Hdoc162(28-2) 3 Mar 1845 4pp.

¹⁴ West Sand Lake was sited upon the Wynants Kill where it was crossed by a road leading from Albany to Deerfield on the Connecticut River in Massachusetts. There is some evidence that a post office had been established there in the 1820s as Ulinesville, but continuous operation and reporting waited for the West Sand Lake post office when it was supplied as a special office from the post office of Wynantskill, from downstream nearer the Town of Troy. Perhaps Ulinesville had been discontinued for lack of productivity, or insufficient revenues to pay for the requisite labor: the provision for the establishment of special post offices called for the payment of the postmaster in the usual way, but limited the pay of the special contractor for the supply of the office to the net revenues of the special office, up to a specified limit.

¹⁵ The Official Registers report upon the fiscal year ending 30 June. Thus, by the Christmas fire we might infer the loss of half of whatever postal revenues might correlate with the manufactory of glass, in addition to whatever loss might be traced to the induction for the prepayment of a reduced postage.

¹⁶ Diane DeBlois & Robert Dalton Harris, "Geographic Integration of Industry on the Wynants Kill 1816-1911," *Business and Economic History On-Line* Vol. 3 2005 (<http://www.thebhc.org/publications/BEHonline/2005/DeBlois.pdf>)

¹⁷ Robert J. Lilly, *The Wynants Kill: a small stream, but mighty*, ed. Diane DeBlois & Robert Dalton Harris, West Sand Lake 2005.

¹⁸ Horatio Gates Spafford, *A Gazetteer of the State of New-York*, Albany NY, 1813. Describing Rensselaer Village which was the name then given to the community later called Glass House, developed around the glass factory in Sand Lake: "These various works employ about 100 hands, and consume about 20,000 cords of wood annually. A turnpike road, now opening, from this Village to Stephentown Hollow, and the opulent farming Towns on the E., will probably prove highly beneficial to its interest."

²⁰ Information on individual people comes either from A.J. Weise, *History of The Seventeen Towns of Rensselaer County*, Troy 1880, or Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, *History of Rensselaer Co., New York*, Philadelphia 1880.