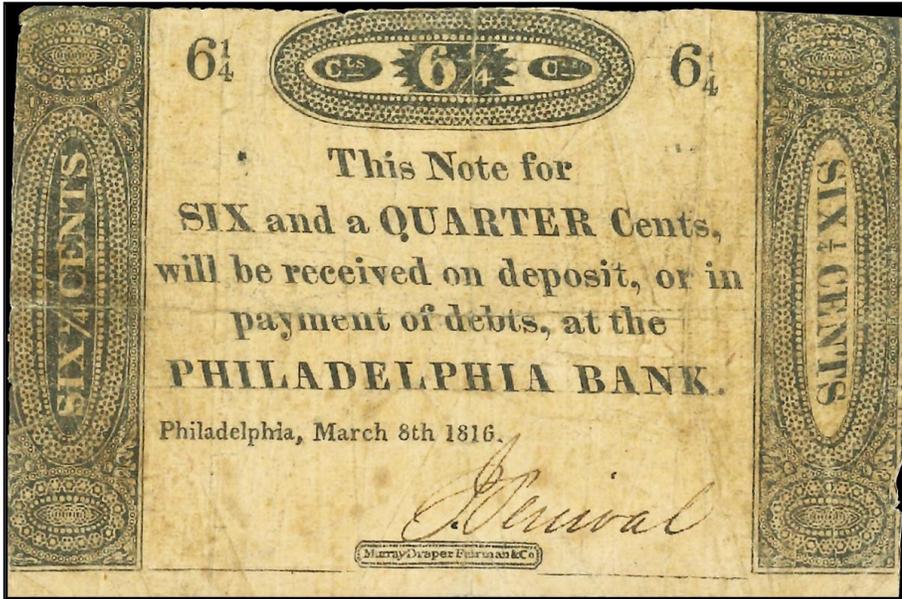


# Bellamy Letter – More Information

by Ed Evan & Francis Ferguson

As a transplant to Florida from New Jersey almost 50 years ago now, I have a more than passing interest in Florida's history, as Florida was a Spanish colony whereas New Jersey was British, and the circumstances of life and law were different.

In the early 1800s all the action in Florida was well north of Orlando! Most correspondence would have been from and to places between New Orleans and Jacksonville, or from other coastal ports.



Phil's Bellamy Letter originated in Charleston, SC, was addressed to Tallahassee, and then forwarded to Monticello. The forwarding from the original address apparently required a 6¼ cents addition to the "due" charges. As Phil says: "This is the earliest recorded 6¼ cent emergency rate from this office."

As it happens I was working as an Estate Settlement Officer for the Bank of Clearwater, FL in the early 1980s, and discovered that we had handled the

settlement of the estate of E. N. Sampson, the famous stampless cover cataloger. I accidentally came across the old file in storage and found a complete inventory of his philatelic estate, including what appears to be an unpublished article he wrote with a list of 6¼ rate covers, which I share with you here.

Some years later I purchased a 6¼ cents piece of currency issued by the Philadelphia Bank to illustrate my collection of fractionally denominated stamps as the Sampson inventory did not have a copy of one.

Sampson claims the rate was 6 cents and goes on to explain that hard small change was difficult to come by in those times, with many foreign coins circulating. He also wonders about that ¼ cent difference!

Who benefited?

Here is the text as written -- of the unpublished article (two covers have been added to illustrate the rate):

## **6 ¼ Cent Rate on Stampless Covers by E. N. Sampson**

The official rate for single letters sent not over 30 miles was 6 cents from May 1, 1816 until July 1, 1845. However, a number of stampless covers were used during this period, for distances not over 30 miles showing a rate of 6 ¼ cents. No such rate is listed in any Postal Act and it's use is somewhat of an enigma.

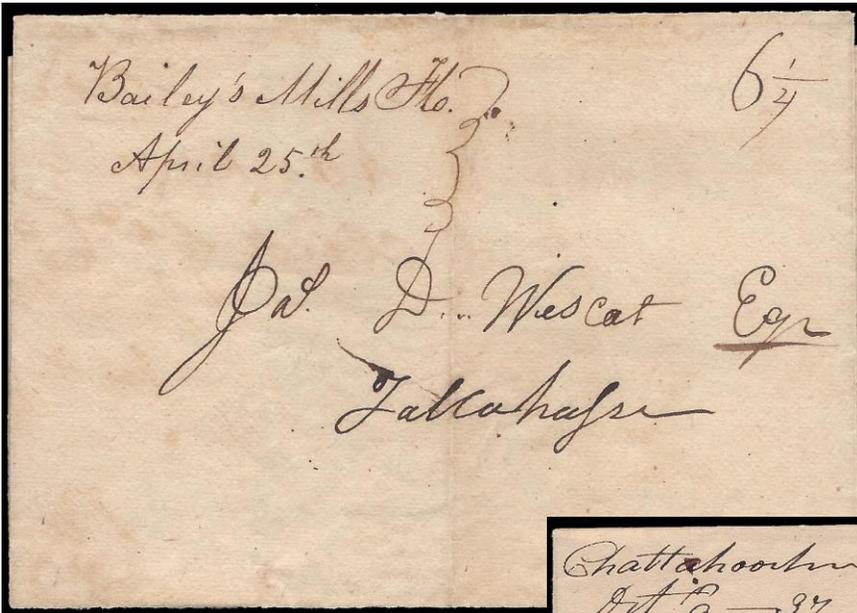
The best explanation I can offer is that during this period U.S. coins were limited in number and some foreign coins circulated freely in this country. The coins closest to 6 cents in value were the Spanish and Mexican half-reales, and the British 3 pence (thruppence) valued at 6 ¼ cents in U. S. money. The value of these coins was also

duplicated in 6 ¼ cents fractional paper money issued privately by banks and other Commercial houses. Examples of these 6 ¼ cent pieces are shown on the opposite page.

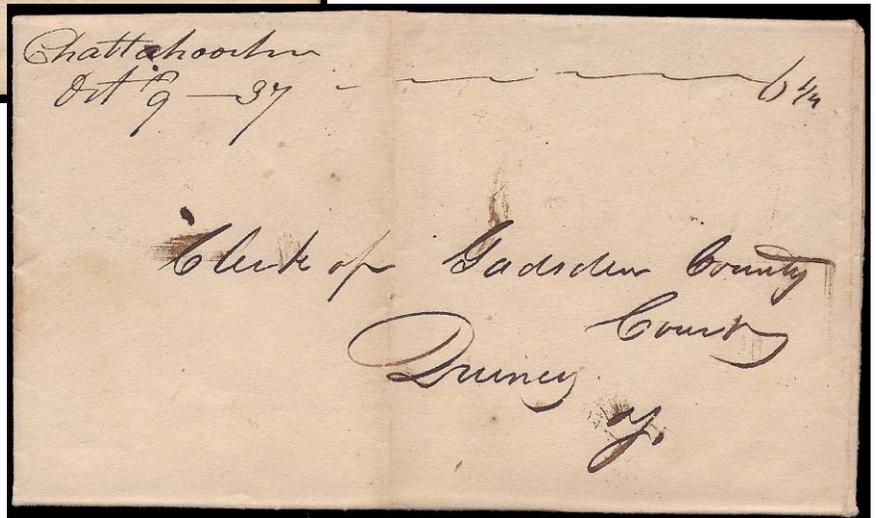
The stampless covers shown in this collection all bear 6 ¼ rates, both paid and unpaid, for distances up to 30 miles. The earliest is dated 1828 and the latest 1842.

It is assumed that the postmaster received 6 ¼ cents for each of these letters, even though the official rate was only 6 cents. Did he report the overcharge in his returns to Washington or pocket the small difference?

Two other uses of a 6 ¼ cent rate occurred (1) in the Republic of Texas and (2) by private express and letter companies. These are described and illustrated with covers following the regular U. S. covers.



Bailey's Mills was located east of Tallahassee in Jefferson County. When the post office reopened in 1858, the county was changed to Leon County. It lay on a postal route 2464 from Tallahassee to Monticello (45 miles, once a week) and on postal route 2463 from Tallahassee to Sharp's Store (70 miles, once a week). When the post office discontinued in 1882, mail was handled at Lloyd.



Chattahoochee (originally spelled Chattahoochie) was established in Gadsden County as a name change from Mount Vernon. It means "carved stone" in the Indian language. It must have been an early settlement as it was located on a 1776 map as Catahocche. It is strategically located at Lake Seminole on the Georgia line where the navigable Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers flow into the Apalachicola River. A U.S. Arsenal was located there, and many letters are datelined Chattahoochee Arsenal. Mail was handled by postal route 3523 on a post road connecting Bainbridge, Ga. with Apalachicola.

**[Editor's note: Reference the October issue of the Philatelic Missive, Insert C for the background information on this article; [www.CentralFloridaStampClub.org](http://www.CentralFloridaStampClub.org). The two cover examples are taken from the Florida Postal History 1763-1861 book pages 81 & 107 that came from the collection of Deane R. Briggs M.D. There remains a single copy for sale at [www.FPHSonline.com](http://www.FPHSonline.com).]**