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Very few dues have been collected over the past year, certainly not enough to cover the costs of all the *Spies* that were copied and mailed, many of them to obsolete addresses. Starting with 2026, however, it will be necessary to cough up the whopping $10.00 annual dues. Please send your checks, made out to Massachusetts Postal Research Society, to the Treasurer, Hugh J. W. Daugherty, P. O. Box 1146, North Eastham, MA 02642.

IF YOU DON'T PAY YOUR DUES, YOU MIGHT NOT GET THE NEXT *SPY*!
Both you and we would be saddened if that were to happen, so please don't let it. Remit your 2026 dues today!!

Also, please let the Temporary Editor know if you would prefer black and white hard copy by mail or the full color electronic version in your email as soon as it is available.

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MPRS MEETING

About a half dozen of us had a very informal gathering at Walpex, at a table in the hotel cafeteria. Because of Boston 2026 in May, there won't be a Philatelic Show in April, but let's have another informal gathering at Boston.

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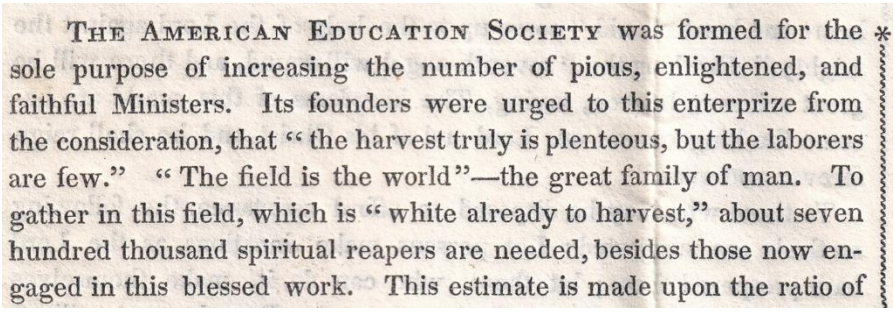
American Education Society Early 19th Century Stampless Mail

Daryl Kibble

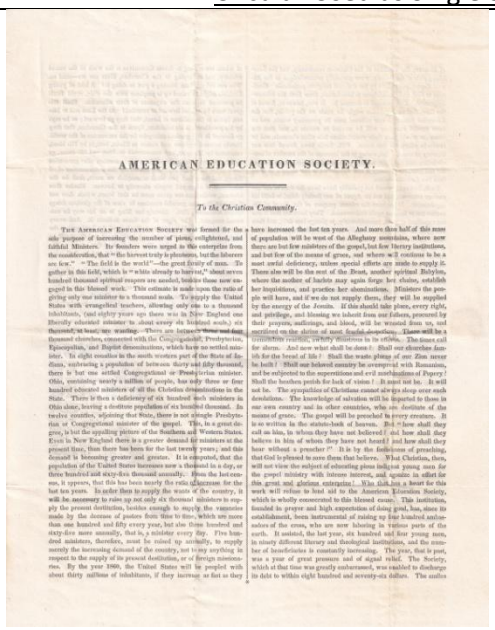
"The American Education Society was formed for the sole purpose of increasing the number of pious, enlightened, and faithful Ministers."[1] It was founded in 1815 and originally known as the American Society for the Education of Pious Youth for the Gospel Ministry. Its purpose was to raise funds to pay for the college expenses of young Protestant ministers. The Society was co-founded by Eliphalet Pearson, former professor at Harvard College, who in his 1815 foundation speech stated that "an immediate and universal effort must be made to provide religious instruction" and that "schools are to be multiplied, Bibles distributed; and, above all, thousands of pious young men must be educated for the ministry."[2] The founders based their calling to establish the Society on the scriptures "the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38) and "the field is the world" (Matthew 13:38).[3] These scriptures would be used on future membership certificates as will be seen later.



THE AMERICAN EDUCATION SOCIETY was formed for the sole purpose of increasing the number of pious, enlightened, and faithful Ministers. Its founders were urged to this enterprize from the consideration, that "the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few." "The field is the world"—the great family of man. To gather in this field, which is "white already to harvest," about seven hundred thousand spiritual reapers are needed, besides those now engaged in this blessed work. This estimate is made upon the ratio of

Figure 1: Opening paragraph of the 1831 American Education Society circular. In 1829 William Cogswell was chosen as General Agent of the Society for the New England States, to solicit churches and wealthy people to contribute to the society's cause. His success in this endeavour saw his election to Secretary in 1832.

Circular Used as Single Sheet of Stampless Letter



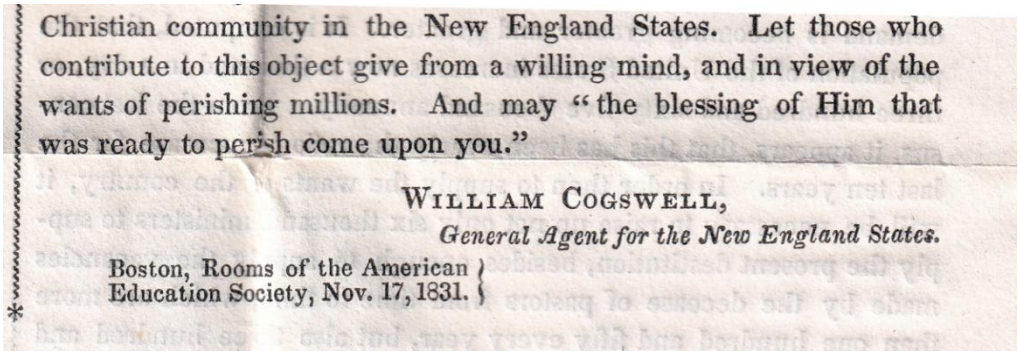
AMERICAN EDUCATION SOCIETY.

To the Christian Community.

THE AMERICAN EDUCATION SOCIETY was formed for the sole purpose of increasing the number of pious, enlightened, and faithful Ministers. Its founders were urged to this enterprize from the consideration, that "the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few." "The field is the world"—the great family of man. To gather in this field, which is "white already to harvest," about seven hundred thousand spiritual reapers are needed, besides those now engaged in this blessed work. This estimate is made upon the ratio of giving only one minister to a thousand souls. To supply the United States with evangelical teachers, allowing only one to a thousand inhabitants, (and eighty years ago there was in New England one liberally educated minister to about every six hundred souls,) six thousand, at least, are wanting.—There are [illegible] and one thousand churches, connected with the Congregational, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Baptist denominations, which have no settled minister. In eight counties in the south western part of the State of Indiana, containing a population of between thirty and fifty thousand, there is but one settled Congregational or Presbyterian minister. Ohio, containing nearly a million of people, has only three or four hundred educated ministers of all the Christian denominations in the State. There is then a deficiency of six hundred such ministers in Ohio alone, leaving a destitute population of six hundred thousand. In twelve counties, adjoining that State, there is not a single Presbyterian or Congregational minister of the gospel. This, in a great degree, is but the appalling picture of the Southern and Western States. Even in New England there is a greater demand for ministers at the present time, than there has been for the last twenty years; and this demand is becoming greater and greater. It is computed, that the population of the United States increases now a thousand in a day, or three hundred and sixty-five thousand annually. From the last census, it appears, that this has been nearly the ratio of increase for the last ten years. In order then to supply the wants of the country, it will be necessary to raise up not only six thousand ministers to supply the present destitution, besides enough to supply the vacancies made by the decease of pastors from time to time, which are more than one hundred and fifty every year, but also three hundred and sixty-five more annually, that is, a minister every day. Five hundred ministers, therefore, must be raised up annually, to supply merely the increasing demand of the country, not to say anything in respect to the supply of its present destitution, or of foreign missions. By the year 1860, the United States will be peopled with about thirty millions of inhabitants, if they increase as fast as they have increased the last ten years. And more than half of this mass of population will be west of the Alleghany mountains, where now there are but few ministers of the gospel, but few literary institutions, and but few of the means of grace, and where we continue to be a most useful deficiency, unless special efforts are made to supply it. There also will be the seat of the Beast, another spiritual Babylon, where the mother of harlots may again forge her chains, establish her Inquisitions, and practice her abominations. Ministers the people will have, and if we do not supply them, they will be supplied by the energy of the Jesuits. If this should take place, every right, and privilege, and blessing we inherit from our fathers, procured by their prayers, sufferings, and blood, will be wrested from us, and sacrificed on the shrine of most fiendish despotism. There will be a [illegible] republic, certify ministers in its offices. The times call for alarm. And now what shall be done? Shall our churches famish for the bread of life? Shall the waste places of our Zion never be built? Shall our beloved country be overspread with Romanism, and be subjected to the superstitious and evil machinations of Popery? Shall the heathen perish for lack of vision? It must not be. It will not be. The opposition of Christians cannot always stop over such desolations. The knowledge of salvation will be imparted to them in our own country and in other countries, who are destitute of the means of grace. The gospel will be preached to every creature. It is so written in the statute-book of heaven. But how shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" It is by the foolishness of preaching, that God is pleased to save them that believe. What Christian, then, will not view the subject of educating pious indigent young men for the gospel ministry with intense interest, and sympathize in effort for this great and glorious enterprise! Who does not, at least for this work will refuse to lend aid to the American Education Society, which is wholly concerned to this blessed end? The institution, founded in prayer and high expectation of doing good, has, since its establishment, been instrumental of raising up four hundred ambassadors of the cross, who are now laboring in various parts of the earth. It assisted, the last year, six hundred and four young men, in ninety different literary and theological institutions, and the number of beneficiaries is constantly increasing. The year, that is past, was a year of great pressure and of signal relief. The Society, which at that time was greatly embarrassed, was enabled to discharge its debt to within eight hundred and seventy-six dollars. The author

Figure 2: First page of the 1831 American Education Society circular.

General Agent Cogswell sent out a printed circular of one sheet by way of a stampless letter. The circular has his name and position noted in it and is headed "American Education Society", being addressed "To the Christian Community". The date of the circular was November 17, 1831.



Christian community in the New England States. Let those who contribute to this object give from a willing mind, and in view of the wants of perishing millions. And may "the blessing of Him that was ready to perish come upon you."

WILLIAM COGSWELL,
General Agent for the New England States.

Boston, Rooms of the American Education Society, Nov. 17, 1831.

Figure 3: Last paragraph of the 1831 American Education society circular.

Few of these circulars sent through the postal system appear to have survived to this day, based on philatelic observations and searching over many years. Personally, I have only found this one. The stampless letter featured here, which is a single sheet comprised of the circular, was sent from the Boston Rooms of the American Education Society. The addressee was Mrs. Maria L. Mack of Haverhill, New Hampshire. In *Boston Postal Markings to 1890*[4] the red PAID handstamp is #229 (21.5mm x 6mm) and is reported as having usage from 1827 to 1843. The PAID handstamp on the American Education Society stampless letter was applied on November 25, 1831. The red Boston circular date stamp (CDS) is dated November 25, and it is from 1831 given the date of the circular. The circular used as the single sheet for the stampless letter is dated November 17, 1831. The usage of the 26.5mm Boston CDS is reported as being from June 6, 1826 to September 8, 1840.

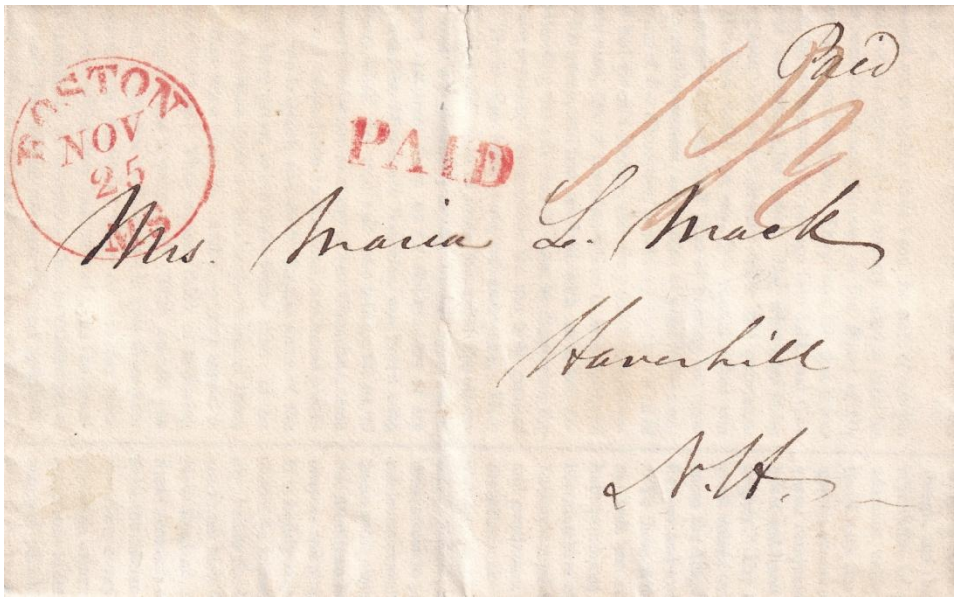


Figure 4: Addressee and postal markings of the 1831 American Education Society circular.
The red manuscript rate is 18¾¢ (rate usage May 1, 1825 to June 30, 1845) for a single sheet letter sent 150-400 miles. The distance from Boston to Haverhill New Hampshire is 157 miles using the 1812 Bradley Map.[5] Without using the Bradley map, an incorrect rate will result on this routing. The 18¾¢ rate fits better with the Spanish dollar, which was legal tender in the US until 1857. The Spanish silver dollar was made up of 8 reales, with 18¾¢ the equivalent to 1½ reales.

Illustrated Lithographs Used as Single Sheet of Stampless Letters

It is well known in postal history circles that official government postage stamps were first issued in the USA in 1847, with some local post services operating from the early 1840s. Further, the use of envelopes in which to send letters did not commence until the 1840s, in line with other postal reforms. All early 19th century correspondences were by means of folded stampless letters, with addresses on the outer surface, consisting mostly of a single large sheet of paper. This was because prior to July 1, 1845 in the USA, postage was determined by the number of sheets of paper comprising a letter, as well as distance. Keeping the number of sheets to a minimum was therefore a priority. This meant that folded letter sheets predominated, and very few envelopes passed through the mail before 1850. During this pre-envelope period, illustrated letter stationery printed by lithography was sometimes used as the sheet of paper that would be folded, to create a stampless letter sheet. These were a type of precursor to illustrated envelopes that began to increase in number from 1850, but with an illustration "inside" the folded letter rather than on an outer envelope.

As Milgram records in his publication *American Illustrated Letter Stationery 1819-1899*, "for the most part these images were produced in very limited numbers by lithography."[6] However, an llustrated membership certificate by lithography used as the sheet of a folded stampless letter is far less common than that of illustrated letter stationery. Illustrated letter stationery was produced for the purpose of writing letters, while membership certificates were produced for the individual to recognize their membership and participation in a society's activities. Such lithographic prints were not treated by Milgram in his publication for this reason. Having a membership certificate sent as a folded stampless letter is rarely seen because people prefer their professional and/or membership certificates to be displayed in an unfolded manner, not folded, marked, and potentially damaged through use in the postal system. Two different examples of a similar, but different lithographic design used by the American Education Society, are evaluated. One such example is a membership certificate of the American Education Society, sent through the mail in 1832. This membership certificate was presented to William Buell Sprague (1795-1876), a Congregational and Presbyterian clergyman.

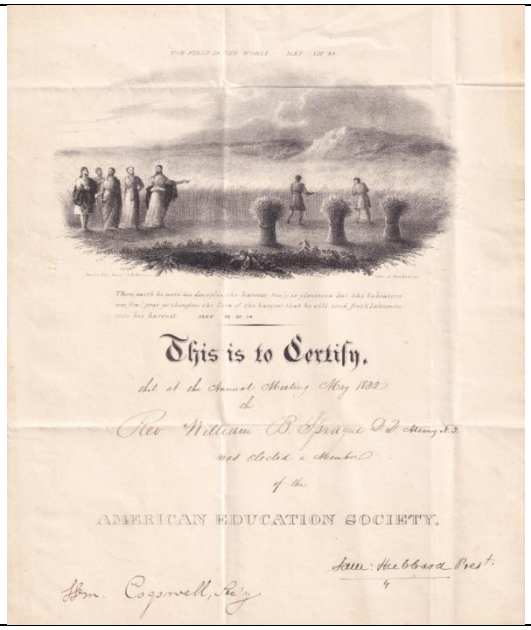


Figure 5: 1832 membership certificate of the American Education Society for William B. Sprague, which includes an illustrated lithograph by John Ritto Penniman.

Sprague is most well known for being a collector of historical documents and pamphlets, becoming the first person to gather a complete set of the autographs of the signers of the United States Declaration of Independence. According to Lyman Draper, Sprague collected 40,000 autographic specimens over four decades.[7] Sprague was also the compiler of *Annals of the American Pulpit (nine volumes, 1857–1869),* which was a biographical dictionary of the leading American Protestant Christian ministers who died before 1850. With this stampless folded membership certificate sent through the mail, Wiliam Sprague also kept as companion to it an unfolded membership certificate. This was also from Boston, but from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, dated 20 September 1839.

There were various ways one could become a member of the American Education Society. Donations of higher amounts could be made to guarantee Life Membership. Also, members of a church congregation could donate on behalf of a minister to become a member. For those of high repute the Board could elect them to become a member. In the case of Sprague, he was elected to become a member. All those elected to membership at the 1832 Annual Meeting were listed in the Sixteenth Annual Report of the American Education Society, May 1832. Sprague's name appears on page 39 of this Report.[8]

The verso of the sheet of paper is a membership certificate signed by Samuel Hubbard, President, and William Cogswell, Secretary, certifying that Rev. William B. Sprague of Albany, New York, had been elected a member of the Society at the Annual Meeting of May 1832. The illustrated lithograph includes quotes from the scriptures both above and below the illustration, from Matthew 9:37-38 and Matthew 13:38 as outlined earlier in this article. The lithograph depicts a scene showing Jesus Christ explaining to four of His disciples the parable of the wheat and the tares as described in Matthew 13:36-43. Christ is explaining to His disciples how there is an abundance of people who need to hear the Gospel message but a scarcity of individuals actively sharing it. He is using the analogy of a plentiful harvest needing many labourers to illustrate this point. This being the essence of why the American Education Society was founded as mentioned in the 1831 circular earlier treated.

The lithographic print is by early American artist John Ritto Penniman (c 1782-1841). Penniman was among the earliest lithographers in America and was one of the first artists to work for the noted Pendleton Lithographic Press (1825-1836) which was founded in Boston. In 1826 Pendleton Lithographic won a silver medal for the best specimen of lithography at the annual exhibition of the Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, the year of Penniman's first lithography.[9]

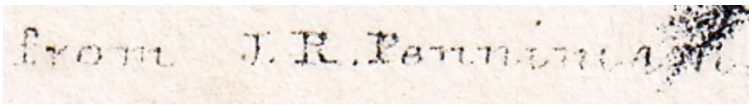


Figure 6: "from J.R. Penniman" at bottom left of lithographic illustration.

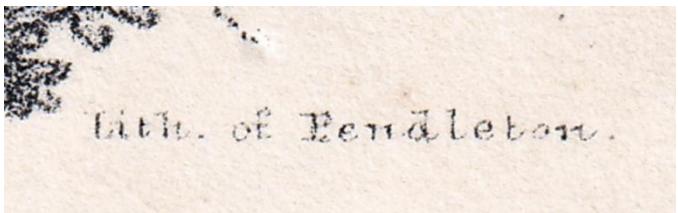


Figure 7: "Lith. of Pendleton" at bottom right of lithographic illustration.

The addressee is Reverend Sprague of Albany, New York. The red Boston CDS is dated May 21, and it is from 1832 given that the membership certificate is dated May 1832. This is the same Boston CDS as used in the previous example, reported as being used from June 6, 1826 to September 8, 1840. The red manuscript rate is also 18¾¢ (rate May 1, 1825 to June 30, 1845) for a single sheet sent 150-400 miles. The distance from Boston to Albany is 169 miles.

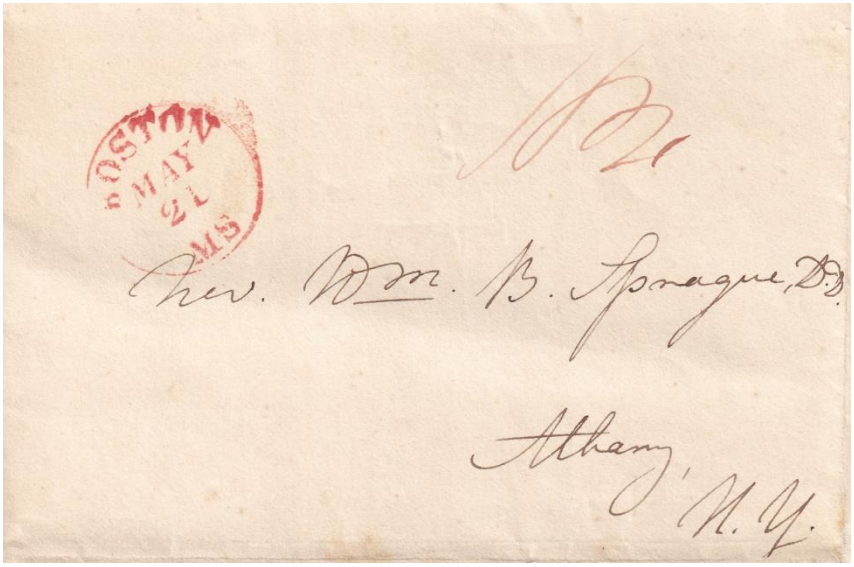


Figure 8: Addressee and postal markings of the 1832 American Education Society lithographic membership certificate used as a folded letter.

From many years of philatelic observation, collecting and research, this is the only known example of this first design lithographic print that was used as the sheet of paper sent as a folded stampless letter through the postal system. I have seen examples of this membership certificate in an unfolded state but not sent through the postal system. These are all held in public institutions. For instance, one unfolded example is held at the Boston Athenaeum, which is a combined library, museum and cultural centre. The one in the Boston Athenaeum however is for an Honorary Life Membership, due to a donation of $40. Unlike postal history collectors, paper ephemera collectors prefer such examples to be unfolded, and as mint as possible.

The American Education Society would use the same John Ritto Penniman lithograph into the 1840s for membership certificates, but in a different design format. The new design has an ornate heading of “American Education Society” at the top of the certificate. There are also now the full 12 disciples with Christ, standing in front of a group of trees in the lithograph (the earlier version only had Christ with the four closest of his disciples, without any trees in the background). Similar scripture quotes are included on both certificates, although they are in different fonts and positions on the certificate.

The other key difference is that the earlier certificates were printed on a heavier cream paper, while the later certificates were printed on a light weight buff paper. This was no doubt a cost saving exercise. The earlier certificates do look much nicer in clarity and appearance.

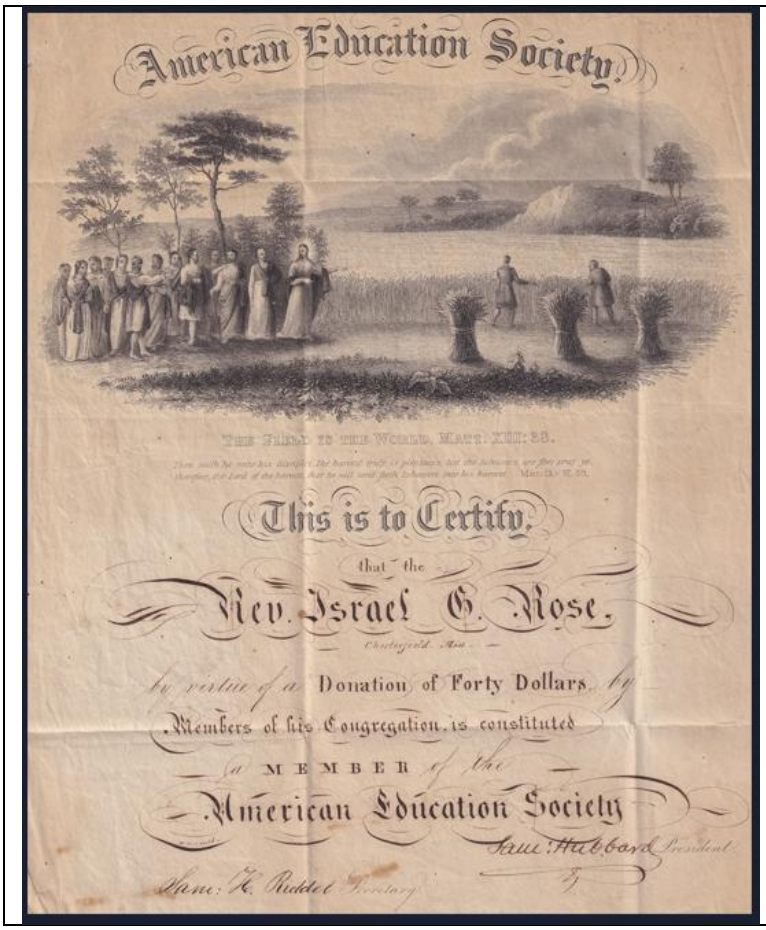


Figure 9: 1841 membership certificate of the American Education Society for Israel G. Rose, which includes an illustrated lithograph by John Ritto Penniman.

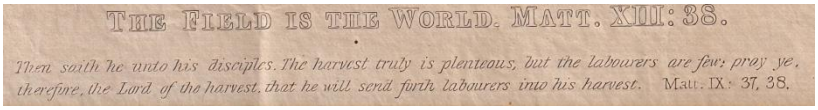
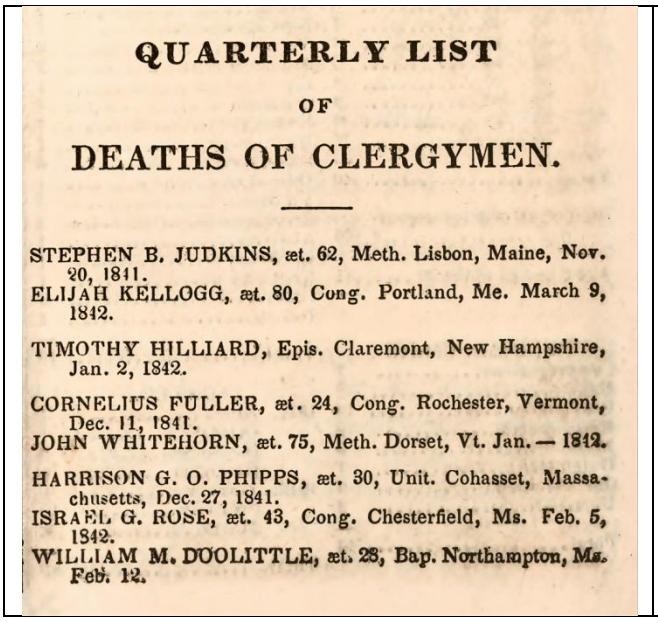


Figure 10: Detail of the scripture printed on the second design of the certificate.

This certificate was issued to the Reverend Israel G. Rose of Chesterfield Massachusetts and while it is undated, it can be precisely dated to September 1841 based on the postal markings, the officers who signed the certificate, and the life of Israel Rose himself. The members of the church congregation that Israel Rose was responsible for paid a $40 donation to the American Education Society to secure his membership. Samuel H. Riddel signed the certificate as Secretary of the American Education Society. He did not commence this position until 1841. While Samuel Hubbard (1785-1847) signed the certificate as the President of the American Education Society. Hubbard was a long-standing President of the Society for sixteen years from 1827 until 1843. This means that the certificate had to have been issued between the years of 1841 and 1843. Israel G. Rose is reported as being deceased on February 5, 1842, at the young age of 43 years. This was reported on page 423 of *The American Quarterly Register* Vol XIV (14).[10] The date of the Boston postmark was from September 28. This means given all the clear evidence that the certificate could only have been issued in the year 1841.



QUARTERLY LIST

OF

DEATHS OF CLERGYMEN.

STEPHEN B. JUDKINS, æt. 62, Meth. Lisbon, Maine, Nov. 20, 1841.
ELIJAH KELLOGG, æt. 80, Cong. Portland, Me. March 9, 1842.

TIMOTHY HILLIARD, Epis. Claremont, New Hampshire, Jan. 2, 1842.

CORNELIUS FULLER, æt. 24, Cong. Rochester, Vermont, Dec. 11, 1841.
JOHN WHITEHORN, æt. 75, Meth. Dorset, Vt. Jan. — 1842.

HARRISON G. O. PHIPPS, æt. 30, Unit. Cohasset, Massachusetts, Dec. 27, 1841.
ISRAEL G. ROSE, æt. 43, Cong. Chesterfield, Ms. Feb. 5, 1842.
WILLIAM M. DOOLITTLE, æt. 28, Bap. Northampton, Ms. Feb. 12.

Figure 11: Death notice for Israel G. Rose of Chesterfield, MS, as published in 1842 edition of *The American Quarterly Register* Vol XIV (14), page 423.

The new design of membership certificate is also known used as the single sheet of paper to create a folded stampless letter. The usage of the red 30mm Boston CDS on this folded letter is reported as being from 1835 to 1844. The date of the postmark is September 28 and it can only be from 1841 as previously explained. The red manuscript rate is 12½¢ (rate May 1, 1825 to June 30, 1845) for a single sheet letter sent 80-150 miles. The distance from Boston to Chesterfield MS is within this distance range.

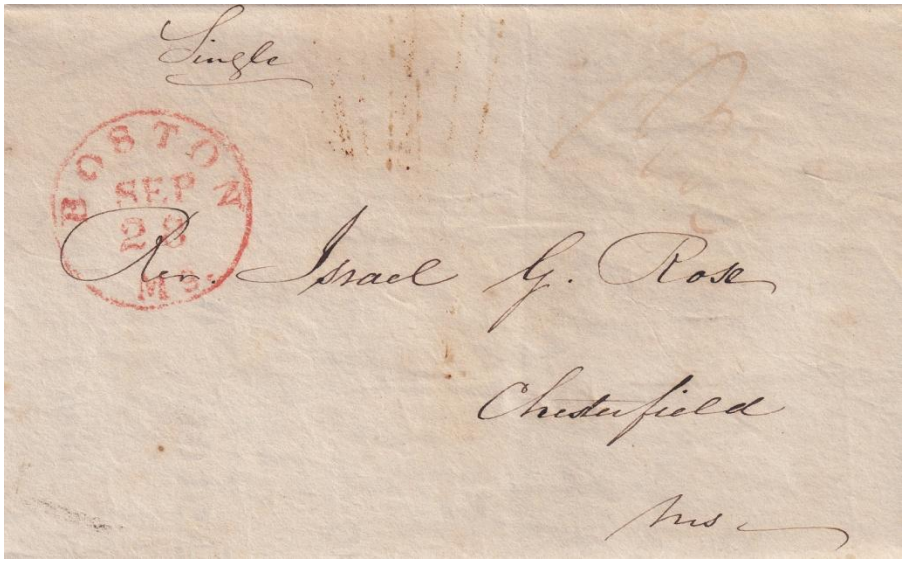


Figure 12: Addressee and postal markings of the 1841 American Education Society lithographic membership certificate sent as a folded stampless letter.

According to a recent post by Kurt Sanftleben of Paper Americana, the Rare Book Hub has only one listing of this certificate that has previously been sold at auction. However, it was a trimmed

example without the "American Education Society" heading and not postally used. The OCLC, a global platform that links library collections from over 100 countries, shows that two institutions hold examples of the certificate in an unused state – the Indiana University and Dartmouth College. But there would be a sprinkling among other institutions. To date, this is the only known example of the second design of the lithograph to have been used as the sheet of paper for a folded letter that was sent through the postal system.

The use of illustrated lithography as the sheet of a folded stampless letter in the early 19th century is quite rare. For these two different membership certificates of the American Education Society, they are each the only ones known postally used of the small number of overall certificates surviving today.

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