

**IT'S PATENTLY OBVIOUS**

BTA 16 February 2021

## PATENTS

The word derives from “Letters Patent”, which were official documents from the monarch, widely used over the centuries and still in use today, signing pronouncements and providing authorisations. These were open (“patent” is Latin for “open”), i.e., not sealed, so anyone could read them and see for themselves that they were authentic.



## A VERY EARLY LETTERS PATENT



Folded vellum letters patent, dated September 1355 (29<sup>th</sup> year of reign of Edward III) in French, appointing John Bonyngton to the office of Auditor for the Duchy of Lancaster, with responsibility for most of the North of England. Written in London, but the seal is lost.

The text starts "Henry duc de Lancaster, comte de Derby de Nicole [Lincolnshire] de Leicestre de Herford et de Northampton Senal d'Angleterre [= Seneschal, a senior court appointment in mediaeval England]. A tout ceulx que ses nos [lett]res ou orront saluz Sachez que nous consonantz entierement en ces discrecion & loialtee de mon char & bonne Johan Bonyngton....." and ends "....ces nos [lett]res patentes admers a me volunite donez sonez me seel a Londres le xx jour de Septembre l'an du rogne Ed[ward] vingt & neuve." The last words translate to "our letters patent made under my seal at London the xx of September of the 29<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Edward III"

Little is known about John Bonyngton, but a person with the same name was appointed Auditor for the county of Northumberland under letters patent, again with no seal, issued at Durham Castle on 22 September 1405. The document is held by the University of Pennsylvania, USA.



**THE MOST FAMOUS LETTERS PATENT: MAGNA CARTA**



**Gibraltar stamps for 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Magana Carta, showing how the original looked**



**Wrapper of a milk chocolate bar celebrating the same anniversary**

LETTERS PATENT WERE OFTEN USED TO ESTABLISH  
COLONIES, DISTRICTS OR TOWNS



—250TH ANNIVERSARY—  
—QUEEN-ANNE PATENT—  
—BAY SHORE-BRIGHT WATERS—

J. Magr  
176 Waterloo Ave  
Scarshole M. J.


## LETTERS PATENT FOR MAURITIUS



35c 1978 definitive stamp without date imprint showing part of the Letters Patent establishing the formal "Prise de Possession de l'île" issued in 1715 by Louis XIV to Guillaume Dufrense d'Arsel. The 1983 imprint imperforate pair is not currently catalogued.

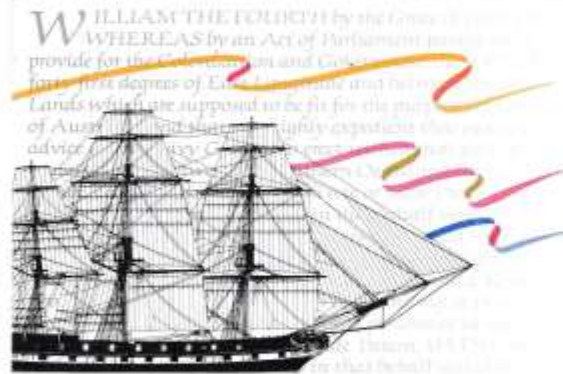
## THE LETTERS PATENT THAT ESTABLISHED SOUTH AUSTRALIA



 Australia Post

**150th ANNIVERSARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**  
 150 years ago, in February 1836, the first British letter was sent for South Australia. Images and new features in this stamp issue commemorate the State's sesqui-centenary. Symbolising the foundation of the colony is the Butter, the ship upon which Governor Hindmarsh travelled in 1836, while Otto Hryek's distinctive City Sign sculpture represents the modern image of the Festival State. The Letters Patent, the document which constitutionally established South Australia as a British colony and permitted settlement to begin, appears in the background of the design.

Designer: Igo Kirov, Adelaide  
 Illustrators: courtesy of the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust, the State Library of South Australia, and Mr Robert Sexton



1836 - 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA - 1986



Back and front of 1985 Australia Post FDC celebrating the 150th anniversary of founding of South Australia



## A VILLAGE CALLED HOLLAND PATENT

This village in New York State, USA was founded in 1797 and is named after the Letters Patent relating to the grant of land allowing its foundation.



1869 missive cover with blue Holland Patent postmark to Danvers Centre, Mass.



1880 cover from Holland Patent to Paris, forwarded onto Grand Hotel, Vienna. It has various June 1880 Paris postmarks on the back, and a manuscript "Answered August 3rd 1880" on the front.

## PATENTS

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, patents were abused by the English monarchs, who would grant monopolies on basic goods and products, such as making of salt or importing wines, by means of letters patent. These monopolies were granted to wealthy individuals who paid the monarch large sums of money in return. To stop this abuse, the English Parliament in 1624 forced James I to sign The Statute of Monopolies, which restricted the granting of monopolies by means of letters patent to true inventions only. This was the first patent for invention law anywhere in the world, but over the years, England was followed by many other countries with similar laws.



2010 booklet celebrating 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of new Dutch Patent Act. The previous Act was suspended in 1869, and for 40 years the Netherlands was the only advanced economy that did not have patents for inventions



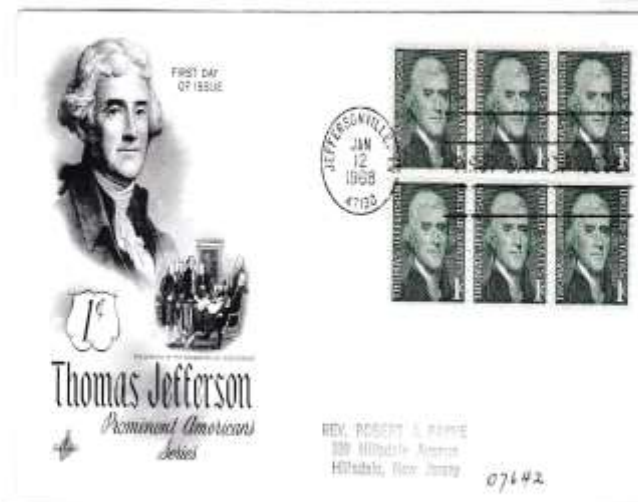
## SOME FAMOUS PEOPLE WHO WORKED IN PATENTS



Margaret Thatcher spent a few years as a patent lawyer. Edwin Stanton, who served as Secretary of War under Lincoln during the American Civil War, was a lawyer involved in a number of high profile patent infringement cases. Clara Barton, who made her name as nurse during the same war, was a clerk in the US Patent Office before and after that war. Sir John Monash, WW1 Australian general, had been a patent agent. Albert Einstein developed his most important theories whilst a clerk in the Swiss Patent Office.

## THOMAS JEFFERSON - THE FIRST HEAD OF THE US PATENT OFFICE

Under the first US Patent Act (1790) and until 1836, the US Secretary of State (Foreign Secretary in UK parlance) was also the Head of the US Patent Office, and had to approve or reject each patent application that came in. The US Secretary of State from 1790 to 1793 was Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of the USA. It is known that he took his Patent Office responsibilities very seriously.



## TWO PATENT OFFICE PIONEERS



Portion of a January 1836 Free Frank letter sent to Moses Poole at the UK Patent Office. Poole was one of the first patent examiners at the Patent Office, but at the same time carried on as a patent agent, something that would not be allowed now.



Henry Ellsworth was the first head of the US Patent Office (1835 - 1845). He encouraged both Colt and Morse to patent their key inventions. This undated Free Frank letter is signed by him and was sent from the Patent Office.

BENNET WOODCROFT (1803-1879), LEADING FIGURE IN UK PATENT REFORM, WAS A PATENT AGENT BEFORE HE JOINED THE UK PATENT OFFICE IN 1852



THIS 1850 LETTER, FROM EDWIN HEYCOCK, PAYS WOODCROFT  
£40 (2 x £20 NOTES WITH LETTER) TO PAY FOR A PATENT GRANT

Recd 10 August 1850

Professor Woodcroft

Dear Sir

The French Patent must  
be sent till Wednesday or Thursday when  
I purpose seeing you in London  
Enclosed is 40£ in two Bank Notes  
of 20£ each Numbered £ 19450 London 6 June 50  
£ 15887 Manchester 22 June 50

I am  
Yours truly  
Edwin Heycock



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TEXT OF LETTER TO BENNET WOODCROFT

Leeds 10 August [18]50

Professor Woodcroft

Dear Sir

The ? Patent ??? Wednesday or Thursday when I propose seeing you in London. Enclosed is 40£ in two bank notes of 20£ each numbered FE19450 London 6 June [18]50 [and] CX 15607 Manchester 22 January [18]50.

I am

Yours truly

Edwin Haycock

On the back, sender details:

10<sup>th</sup> August 1850  
E. Haycock

Leeds postmark Au 10

Arrival mark 12 August 1850

Addressed to Professor Woodcroft, 3 Furnivals Inn, Holborn, London

1d red brown stamp, cancelled 447

# AND HERE'S THE PATENT. AS A PATENT AGENT, WOODCROFT SPECIALISED IN HELPING INVENTORS GET PATENTS RELATING TO TEXTILE MANUFACTURING

1850



A.D. 1850 . . . . . N° 12,943.

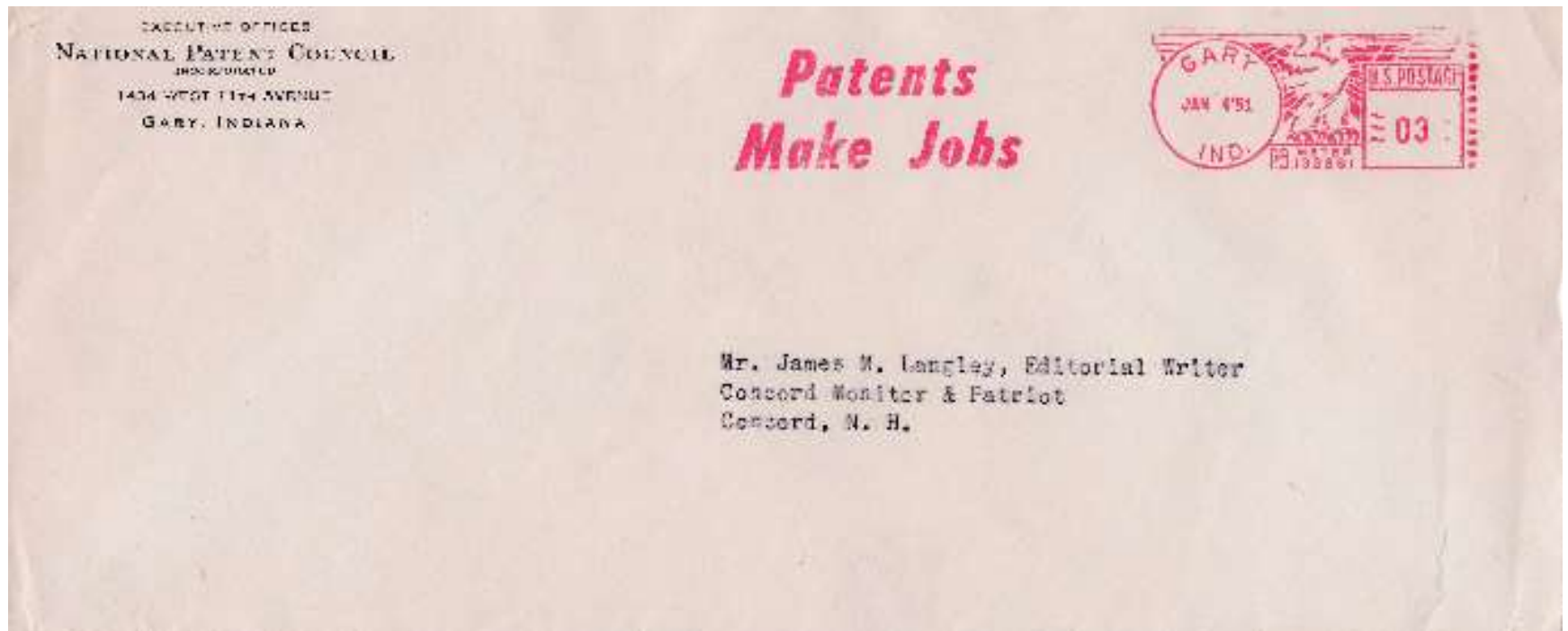
## Finishing and Dressing Woollen Cloths.

### HEYCOCK'S SPECIFICATION.

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME, I, EDWIN  
HEYCOCK, of Leeds, in the County of York, Merchant, send greeting.

WHEREAS Her present most Excellent Majesty Queen Victoria, by Her  
Royal Letters Patent under the Great Seal of the United Kingdom of Great  
5 Britain and Ireland, bearing date at Westminster, the Twenty-sixth day of  
January, in the thirteenth year of Her reign, did, for Herself, Her heirs and  
assigns, give and grant unto me, the said Edwin Heycock, my executors,  
and assigns, Her especial licence, full power, sole privilege and authority,  
that I, the said Edwin Heycock, my executors, and assigns, or such  
10 others as I, the said Edwin Heycock, my executors, and assigns, shall at  
any time agree with, and no others, from time to time and at all times  
during the term of years therein expressed, should and lawfully might make,  
use, exercise, and vend, within England, Wales, and the Town of Berwick  
upon Tweed, my Invention of "CERTAIN IMPROVEMENTS IN THE FINISHING AND  
15 DRESSING OF WOOLLEN CLOTHS;" in which said Letters Patent is contained a  
proviso that I, the said Edwin Heycock, shall cause a particular description of  
the nature of my said Invention, and in what manner the same is to be per-  
formed, by an instrument in writing under my hand and seal, to be enrolled in  
20 Her Majesty's High Court of Chancery within six calendar months next and  
immediately after the date of the said in part recited Letters Patent, as in and  
by the same, reference being thereunto had, will more fully and at large appear.

# PATENTS FOR INVENTION CAN BE CONTROVERSIAL. SOME ARE VERY MUCH IN FAVOUR....



## TWO CRITICS OF THE UK PATENT SYSTEM IN VICTORIAN TIMES

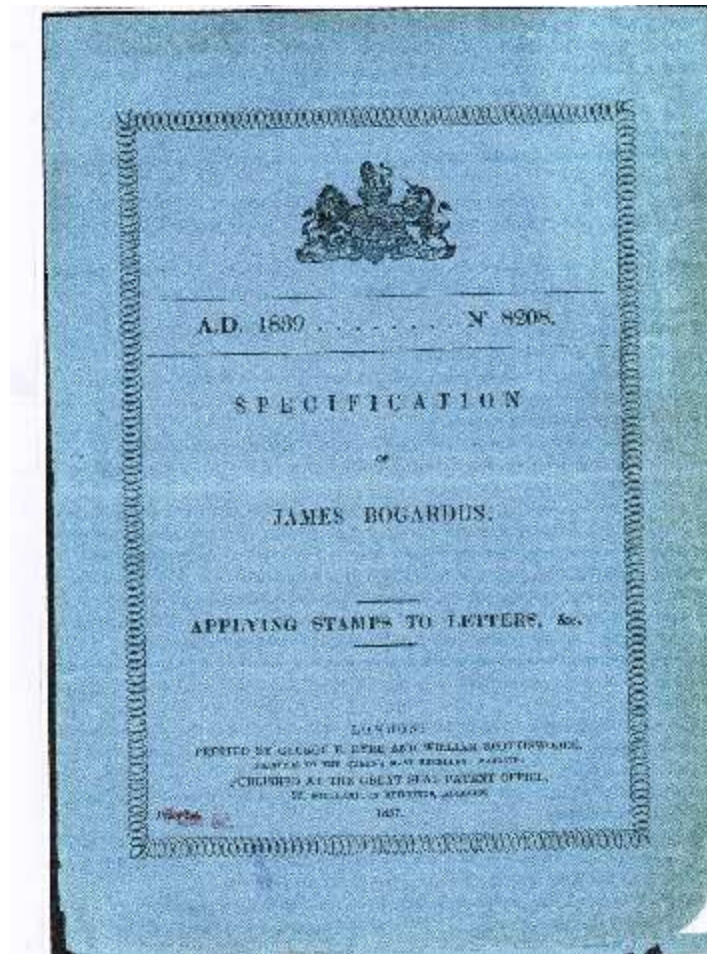


Charles Dickens was a persistent critic of the slow bureaucracy of the UK Patent system in the nineteenth century. He wrote a polemical article in 1850 entitled *A Poor Man's Tale of a Patent*, and in *Little Dorrit*, his hero, Daniel Doyce, is so frustrated by the system that he sells his invention to the Russians, who reward him. (At the time of its publication, the UK was in the Crimean War).



The successful engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel lobbied to have the patent system abolished. He was partly motivated by the poor experiences his father, another engineer, had encountered with the UK Patent system, partly by his own business practices, and partly as a matter of political principle.

James Bogardus' 1839 patent won a £100 prize given to the best entries to the 1839 Treasury Competition. The government, however, chose to follow Rowland Hills' approach



# FRONT PAGE OF BOGARDUS' PATENT, WHICH DOES NOT USE GUMMED STAMPS. A SEAL ATTACHES THE STAMP TO THE ENVELOPE

RESERVE COPY



A.D. 1839 . . . . . N° 8208.

Applying Stamps to Letters; &c.

## BOGARDUS' SPECIFICATION.

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME, I, JAMES BOGARDUS, of Trinity-Square, Tower Hill, in the City of London, Gentleman, send greeting.

WHEREAS Her present most Excellent Majesty Queen Victoria, by Her Letters Patent under the Great Seal of Great Britain, bearing date at Westminster, the Twenty-sixth day of August, in the third year of Her reign, did, for Herself, Her heirs and successors, give and grant unto me, the said James Bogardus, Her especial licence, full power, sole privilege and authority, that I, the said James Bogardus, my exors, adiors, and assigns, or such others as I, the said James Bogardus, my exors, adiors, or assigns, should at any time agree with, and no others, from time to time and at all times during the term of years therein expressed, should and lawfully might make, use, exercise, and vend, within England, Wales, and the Town of Berwick, my Invention of "IMPROVED MEANS OF APPLYING LABELS, STAMPS, OR MARKS TO LETTERS AND OTHER SUCH DOCUMENTS;" in which said Letters Patent is contained a proviso that I, the said James Bogardus, shall cause a particular description of the nature of my said Invention, and in what manner the same is to be performed, to be enrolled in Her said Majesty's High Court of Chancery within six calendar months next and immediately after the date of the said in part recited Letters Patent, as in and by the same, reference being thereunto had, will more fully and at large appear.

NOW KNOW YE, that in compliance with the said proviso, I, the said James Bogardus, do hereby declare that the nature of my said Invention, and

SIR ROWLAND HILL – INVENTOR AND POSTAL  
REFORMER



His role as the creator of the penny post is well known. What is not so well known is that he had a vested interest in the success of his scheme; he had obtained a patent for a printing press in 1835, whilst his brother, Edwin Hill, patented an envelope-making machine in 1845. The Portugal stamp of 1940, the first to celebrate Rowland Hill anywhere in the world, is on a 1941 censored cover from Cunha Ferreira, appropriately an old established Lisbon patent agency, to Momsen & Harris, one of the oldest Brazilian patent agencies. Both firms are still major patent agencies in their respective countries.

## NATIONAL PATENT OFFICES – UK

1829 entire from H. Pooley of the Patent Office, Lincolns Inn, to Mr. Green, requiring payment of £21/12/11d for grant of four patents.

“T.P. Chancery Lane” handstamp + “2” chargemark



The image shows the back of the letter, which is addressed to 'Mr. Green Esq' and 'Blackwall'. The text is written in cursive and reads: 'Enclosed I send you an account of the two requests for having four Patents granted them in value of £21.12.11 for which I shall be obliged if you can pay convenience'. At the bottom, the letter is signed 'H. Pooley' and 'W. Green Esq'. A red wax seal is visible on the right side, and a red circular postmark is stamped near the bottom right.



PATENT OFFICE OFFICIAL STATIONERY



**PATENT OFFICE OFFICIAL STATIONERY**

The 1892 Queen Victoria postcard request for a copy of a patent specification as finally issued



A WELL TRAVELLED LETTER FROM THE PATENT OFFICE  
15 December 1902 OHMS + stamp to Copenhagen, redirected to  
Essen, then to Krugers Hotel, Berlin





1983 PATENT OFFICE LETTER TO FRAUDSTER ROBERT MAXWELL  
Meter mark incorrectly gives Patent Office's address as "Southampton  
Building" – it should read "Buildings"



**THE US PATENT OFFICE WAS PICTURED IN US CIVIL WAR  
PATRIOTIC ENVELOPES**

**This was because much of the building was used as a military hospital  
during the conflict – maybe Clara Barton worked there**

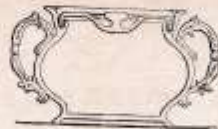


# A MULREADY ENVELOPE ADVERTISING A WEIRD PATENTED PRODUCT



THE EAST ANGLIAN ENVELOPE ADVERTISER.

CHUBB'S PATENT NIGHT COMMODES.



WILLIAM CHUBB,

The PATENTEE, respectfully invites the Public attention to the above-named Article, which is so contrived as entirely to prevent the escape of any effluvia, the moment the cover is put on.

This desirable end is accomplished, by means of a small channel, or groove, formed round the inside of the Vessel, capable of containing a sufficient quantity of water, which, when the cover is put on, renders the Vessel perfectly and permanently air-tight.

All the advantages connected with this improved Chamber Commode, need not be detailed; but it deserves to be especially borne in mind, that, in consequence of the complete access with which the chief end has been attained, it may be allowed without offence, to remain in the chamber, until quite convenient to remove it.

The Engraving above represents the Vessel, which is of fine cast-iron, and also the Cabinet Apparatus, which, with the lid down and the drawer out, answers for the purpose of a Bed-steps.

The Vessel is adapted to every variety of Cabinet Apparatus, without the possibility of contamination.

A small-sized Vessel has been provided for Nurseries, Offices, Ship Cabins, &c.

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