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EXCELSIOR!

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ERRATA

It was brought to my attention that there are several typos or factual errors in the September 2017 *Excelsior!* that need to be corrected.

Page 5, paragraph 3, line 3 "1st 1920" should read "1st 1820"

Page 19, Figure 7, Clinton should be listed in Oneida County, not Dutchess County.

Page 19, Figure 7, "Clinton Hallow" should read "Clinton Hollow".

If errors are noted in any future mailings of *Excelsior!*, please let me know so that we may post the corrected version on the ESPHS web site.

AN AMERICAN LETTER MAIL COMPANY 1844 FOLDED LETTER FROM NYC TO ALBANY – A SCARCE NEW FIND

By: Charles J. DiComo, PhD

I am pleased to report a new addition to the American Letter Mail Company (ALM) census and story. I recently acquired the folded letter illustrated in **Figure 1** amongst an accumulation of New York State stampless letters. Initially, the handstamp did not strike me as familiar. But after an email to Scott Trepel and John D. Bowman, as well as a search of my philatelic library, it was evident what I had found. Interestingly, a bit more research demonstrated that it is a scarcer transit and use than first reflection.



Figure 1. Folded letter dated 12 July 1844, from New York City to Albany with red "Collect 6¼ cts NEW YORK OFFICE" handstamp, type ALM-NYC-C05.

Before we dissect the folded letter, let us briefly detail the history of the American Letter Mail Company¹. The ALM was an Independent Mail Company from the 1840's, organized by Lysander Spooner² in 1844 to carry letter mail at reduced rates between various cities in direct competition to the U.S. Post Office Department (USPOD).

At this time, the government held the sole right to establish post offices and post roads under the Constitution. Spooner and other Independent Mail companies challenged this monopolistic position. A few succeeded, despite the government fining guilty parties, such as railroad carriers who permitted these private mails on their routes. Spooner aggressively defied the government, tried to bring his case to the Supreme Court, and established the ALM in defiance of the USPOD.

ALM initially began mail service from New York City (NYC) to Boston and Philadelphia on 23 January 1844, followed by Boston to NYC on 24 January, and Baltimore to Philadelphia on 25 January. Later on they established offices and/or agents in a number of other Northeastern cities, such as Hartford CT, New Haven CT, Gardiner ME, and Newport, RI (**Figure 2**).

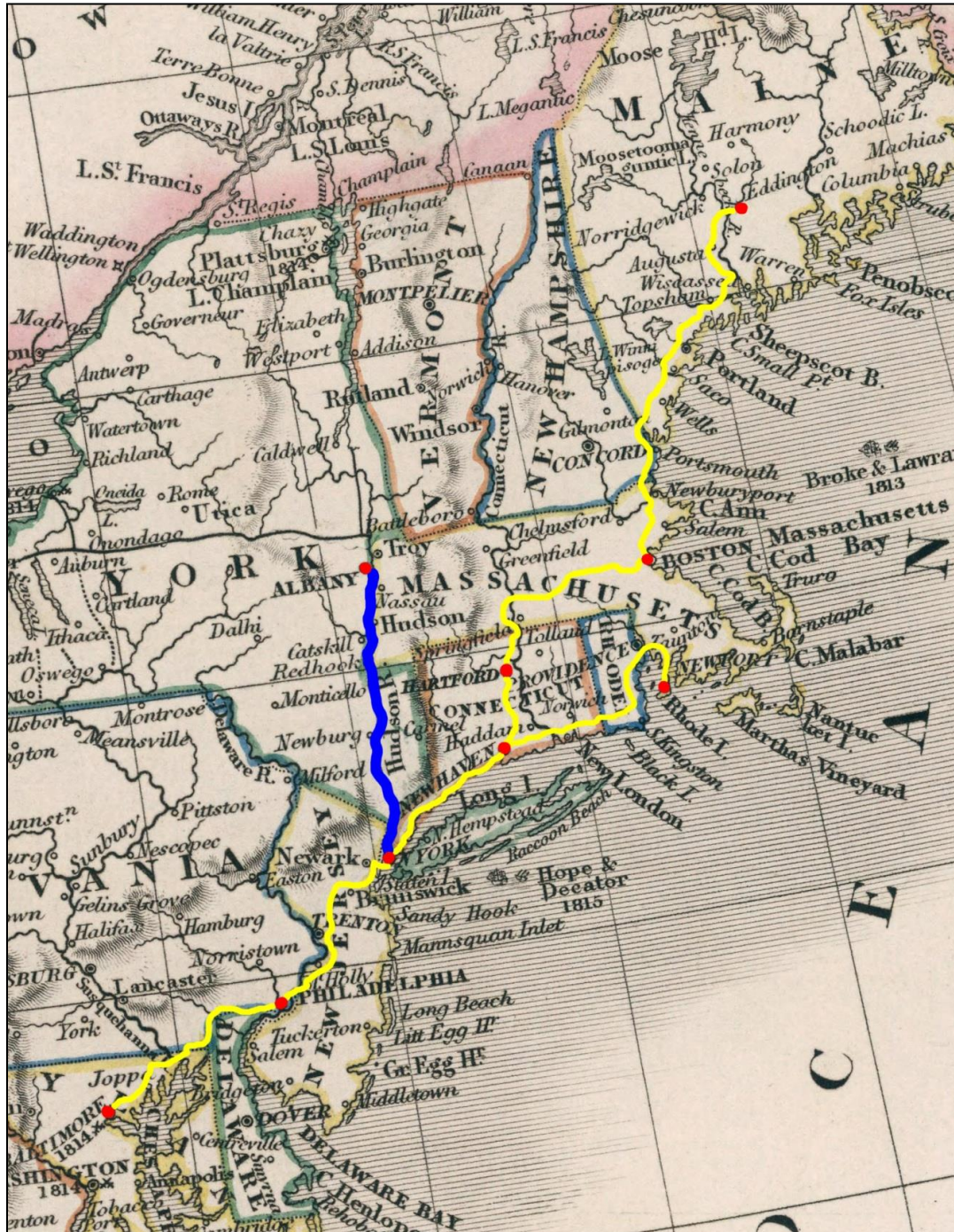


Figure 2. ALM mail service routes (yellow lines) established in the Northeastern U.S. to and from their primary cities (red dots), with the route our folded letter traveled from NYC to Albany (blue line).³

The American Letter Mail Company established postage fees at 6¼¢ per half ounce or 5¢ if paid by stamps that were sold at 20 for a dollar (**Figure 3**).



Figure 3. ALM Scott #5L1 5¢ black, thin paper; Sheet of 20 (for a Dollar).⁴

There was no question that the postal rates imposed by the government at this time were lofty. For example, it cost 18¾¢ to send a letter from NYC to Boston, and 25¢ from Boston to Washington, DC. Spooner took care in planning his business, challenged the USPOD rates, and showed that his firm could carry the post more economically and with superior service. This was short-lived however, as the government's Act of 3 March 1845 effectively halted all private inter-city mail carrying operations, and by 1 July 1847 when the Act became effective, almost no letter mail was delivered privately by any company between cities.

Let us now examine the newly discovered artifact in question in **Figure 1**. This single-sheet, folded letter has a very clear strike of American Letter Mail's boxed "Collect 6¼ cts NEW YORK OFFICE" 18 x 12 mm handstamp in red, type ALM-NYC-C05.⁵ This handstamp was utilized from 15 June 1844 to 15 June 1845. This is an early use of this handstamp from the first month and an enlarged scan showing its design detail is illustrated in **Figure 4**. John D. Bowman accounts for approximately 100 known examples of this NYC-originating cancel in his 2014 census.



Figure 4. Type ALM-NYC-C05 boxed "Collect 6¼ cts NEW YORK OFFICE" 18 x 12 mm red handstamp.

The letter is dated 12 July 1844 and was mailed from an attorney, James McGay, Esq. residing at 20 Chambers Street in New York City (**Figure 5**). The letter, addressed to "*Mess. Gausewort and Hill, Counselors at Law, 3 Douw's Buildings, Albany, NY*", is also docketed on the back flap in the recipient's hand, confirming arrival at their law practice office in Albany (**Figure 6**).

Figure 5. Dateline in header of letter, "New York 20 Chambers Street Friday evening July 12th 1844".

Figure 6. Docketing on reverse flap of letter "Jas McGay July 12/44", confirming receipt in Albany.

The contents of the folded letter mention a legal matter involving the case *Mack vs. Phelan* (**Figure 7**). In brief, James McGay, the attorney for M. Phelan mentions a \$16.00 debt of Mr. Mack's which Mack's attorney offered to pay, with McGay relaying that he was heading to Albany by boat with the necessary papers including an order to compromise and a general release to Mack from Phelan so the affair can be closed. As was typical of the period, he ends the letter with the formal and respectful closing "*I have the pleasure to remain, your obedient servant.*" One can only presume that this case was settled by both men.

New York 20 Chambers Street
Friday Evng July 12th 1844

Gentlemen,

In the matter of "Phelan assignee of Joel Mack
vs. Mack", I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your
two letters, in one of which you state that you are
willing to pay \$16.00 in discharge of Mack's Debt —

I propose to arrive in Albany myself
on Tuesday Morning next, and will probably leave there
again in the evening boat — I will take that
opportunity of bringing with me the necessary papers
in the above case, including an order to compromise
and a general release to Mack from Phelan when
the whole affair can be closed

I have the pleasure to remain

Yours Most Obedient Servant

James Mc Gay
Att'y to Mr Phelan

To
Messrs Ganssvoort & Hill
Albany

Figure 7. Contents of the folded letter discussing a legal matter involving the case Mack vs. Phelan.

There are two features of this folded letter that make it noteworthy. The first is that it does not contain the typical “**Forwarded By American Mail Company**” handstamp used in conjunction with the boxed “**Collect 6¼ cts NEW YORK OFFICE**” on letters leaving NYC (**Figure 8**). This is denoted as type ALM-NYC-F14, two-line, 42 x 8 mm, found in red, used from 01 June 1844 to 18 July 1844. We would have expected this handstamp be struck on the letter being that it is dated 12 July 1844.

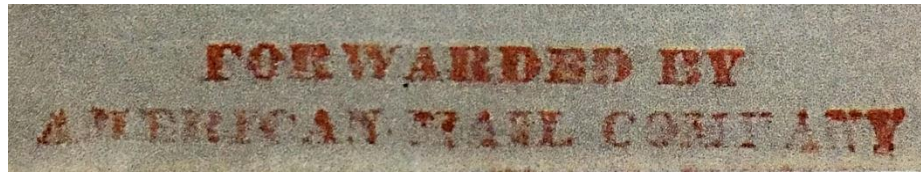


Figure 8. "Forwarded By American Mail Company" 42 x 8 mm red handstamp, type ALM-NYC-F14.

The second, more prominent attribute of this letter is that it traveled north up the Hudson River (by water or land) with its final destination being Albany. Out of the approximately 100 letters in the Bowman census, this is believed to be only the second or third known example to have made this trip via an American Letter Mail Company’s agent. Most ALM letters went to Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.

Why so few made the trip to the Empire State’s Capitol during this period of increasingly more business-related communication or why so few examples have survived may never be known. However, we are fortunate that we can add this appealing folded letter with its crisp “Collect” handstamp and legal content to the archives.

Acknowledgements

The author specifically wishes to thank John D. Bowman for sharing his vast knowledge with this ever-learning postal historian and his contributions to the analysis of this folded letter. However, any errors or an omission is the author’s responsibility. The author can be contacted at charlesdico@gmail.com

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IONA ISLAND ITS NAME, GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND POST OFFICES

By: Larry LaLiberte

ITS NAME

There is an island that sits at the Northeastern most section of Rockland County in the town of Stony Point that has an intriguing history. The earliest named reference is Wanakawaghkin in a 1683 deed showing its purchase from Native Americans by members of the Van Cortlandt family. Subsequently, it has been known as Manahawag, Selby's Island, Weyant's Island, Sidbury's Island, Courtland Island, Beveridge's Island, and finally Iona Island.¹

There are several theories as to how the island acquired its current name.

One theory says that it was named after the Iona grapes grown on the island by Dr. Charles W. Grant who acquired the island from his father-in-law, John Beveridge.

Another theory, the most original, reputedly has Dr. Grant referring to the island as "I-Own-a-Island." While it sounds

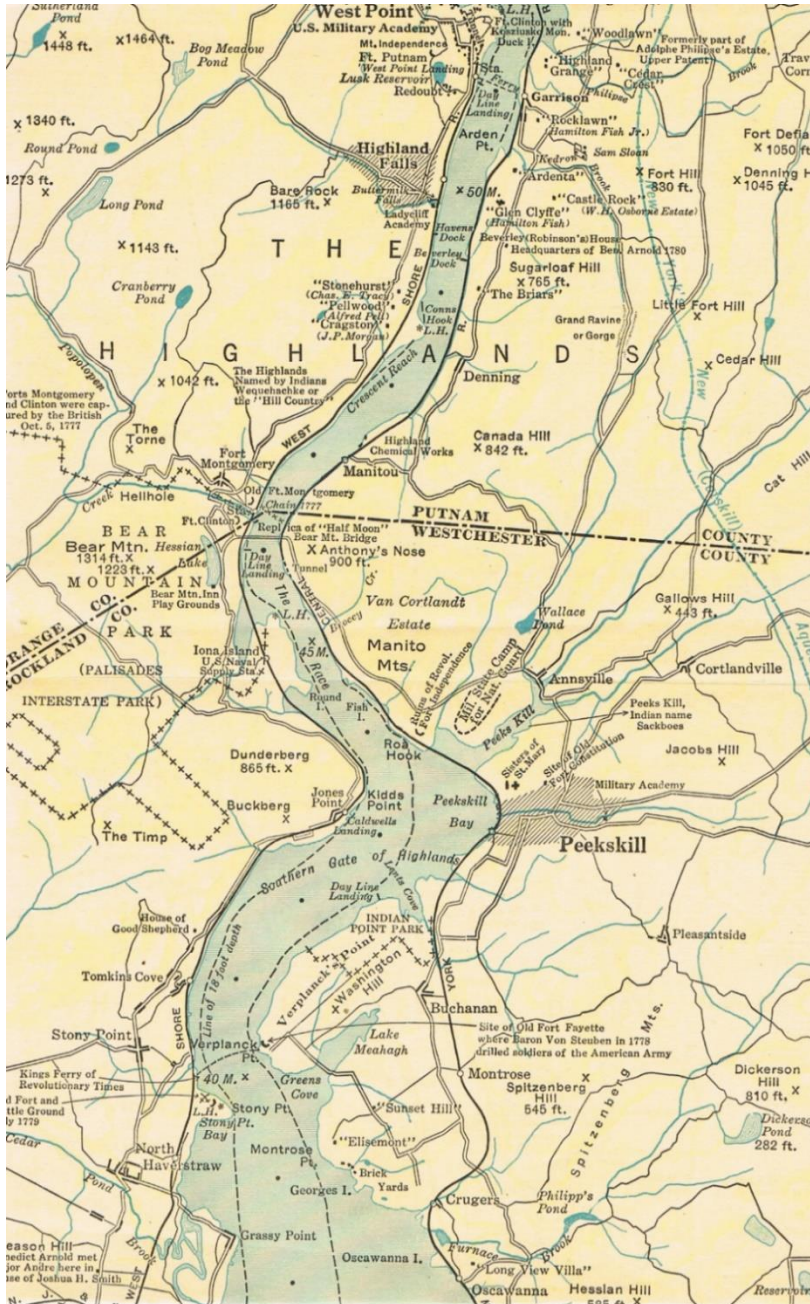


Figure 1. 1923 map showing the location of Iona Island in the Hudson River.

farfetched, if you are lucky enough to own an entire island, you can call it whatever you want.²

The author has his own theory. Beveridge is an old Scottish name dating back to 1302.³ Off the western coast of Scotland, are the Southern Hebrides Islands, one of which is Iona Island. It is a small island but is significant in Scotland's history; it is considered the birthplace of Christianity when Saint Columba landed there in 563 AD.⁴ So, it is not out of the realm of possibility that Iona Island is named after the one in Scotland.

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The map in **Figure 1**, taken from the 1923 "Tourist Map of Hudson River" produced by Rand McNally for the Hudson River Day Line, shows its location in the Hudson River opposite Peekskill and New York's National Guard Camp Smith. It will help the reader visualize its location and the actions during the war and its later history.

During the Revolutionary War, it was central to the action on the Hudson River. Forts Clinton and Montgomery were constructed to the North with the famous chain at Fort Montgomery crossing the river to Anthony's Nose. In early October of 1777, British General Sir Henry Clinton moved up the river with the intention of meeting up with General John Burgoyne who was advancing south down the Champlain valley. The plan was to effectively cut the colonies in two.

General Clinton landed his troops at Stony Point to the south and marched them North around Donderberg Mountain west of Iona Island. Clinton split his troops into two brigades which were assigned to attack the forts from the rear. Meanwhile, the flotilla that transported the British army was to move north and bombard the forts from the river.

The attacks were successful and the chain crossing the river was broken the following day allowing the fleet to move north. They travelled as far as Kingston where they received word of Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga. Outraged, they burned the city and then retreated.

In May of 1779, the British again forayed up the Hudson. This time their target was Stony Point which was in the early stages of being fortified by the colonists. With only about 40 troops manning the fort, it easily fell. On July 16th, Washington's troops, led by Gen. Anthony Wayne in a surprise midnight attack, retook the fort. After carrying away the cannons and supplies, the fort was abandoned.⁵

The British reoccupied the fort on July 20, 1779 only to abandon it in mid-August as they started to focus their efforts in the southern colonies.⁶

Stony Point was important because it was the western landing for The Kings Ferry which was the main route for Washington's movements across the Hudson River and his eventual march south to victory at Yorktown, Virginia.

It is only a matter of supposition that Iona was ever occupied by the British.

DEVELOPMENT

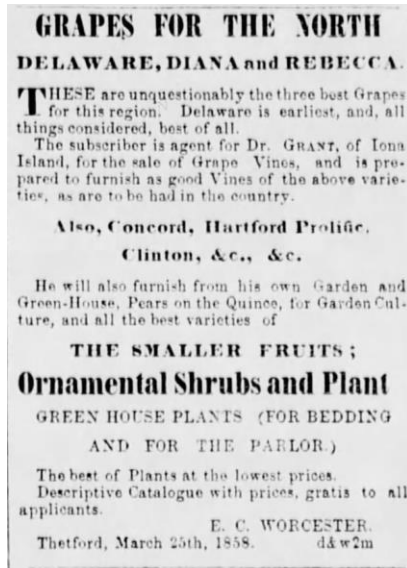


Figure 2. Advertisement from the *Burlington Weekly Press*.

Serious development of the island commenced when John Beveridge of Newburgh bought the island for his son-in-law, Dr. C.W. Grant,⁷ in 1847. Dr. Grant proceeded to cultivate native grapes which became known as Iona grapes as well as Delaware, Concord, Hartford Prolific, Clinton and other popular varieties. A total of 20 acres were devoted to the vineyard and some one thousand fruit trees were cultivated.⁸ All were offered as is shown by the ad in **Figure 2** from the April 2, 1858 issue of the *Burlington Weekly Press*.

During the Civil War, Grant had a contract to supply the Union forces with fresh produce which was grown on the island.

It is during this period that we see the first evidence of postal activity. A cover similar to the one in **Figure 3**, except dated Dec. 15, 1864 and in violet, is posted at Peekskill, NY, across the river. One can deduce from the advertising on the cover that Grant is the “*Originator and Sole Possessor of the Original Stock of the Iona and Israella Vines*” and, if the illustration is accurate, the vineyard and associated buildings were quite extensive.



Figure 3. This cover is docketed Feb 26, 1867. Mailed at Peekskill, N.Y. to Metuchin, N.J.

Cover from author's collection.

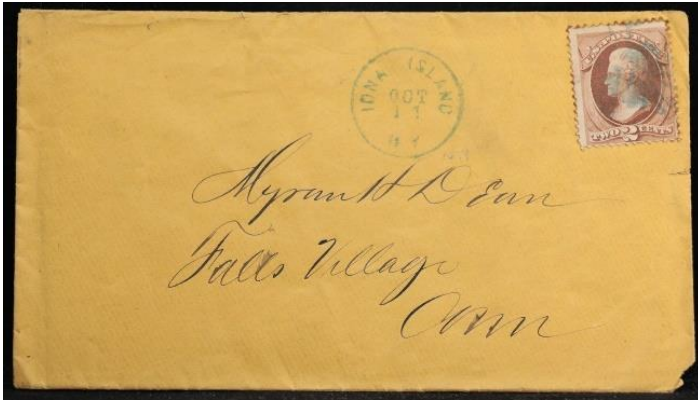


Figure 4. Cover from the first post office.

To illustrate the extent of the buildings, when the Plymouth Young People's Association of Brooklyn ran into scheduling problems for an organ concert in June of 1869, Dr. Grant offered "the use of his organ and chapel at Iona Island, capable of holding three to four hundred persons".⁹ The steamer *Sleepy Hollow* was to provide transportation. This article seems to contradict the statement "In 1868, his creditors foreclosed on the island."¹⁰

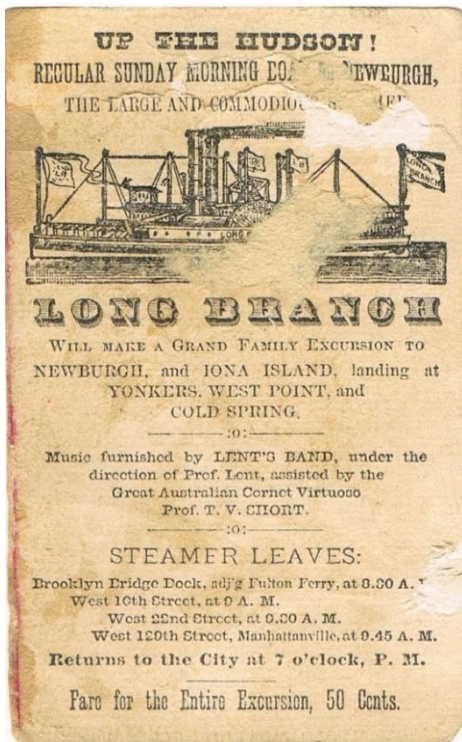


Figure 5. An advertising card promoting excursions to Iona Island.

The first post office was established on the island on January 4, 1870 with Alvah Bushnell the Postmaster. It was discontinued on June 23, 1874 with service reverting to Peekskill. **Figure 4** is a cover mailed during this period to Falls Village, Conn.¹¹

On June 28, 1871, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* ran the headline, "The Sabbath School Excursion of Plymouth Church – Iona Island invaded by 1,350 Picnickers – A Joyous Excursion and a Day of Delight." By then, it had become an annual event. The steamboat *Sleepy Hollow* was chartered for the occasion, leaving at 8:20 a.m. and arriving at 12.30 p.m. The reporter met with Mr. Hasbrouck, one of the proprietors, who gave him a tour of the less traveled portions of the island, including a cave. After the tour, the reporter rejoined the picnickers who had rendezvoused at the dancing floor near the hotel which had been converted from Dr. Grant's mansion.

By June of 1875 the steamers *Sleepy Hollow* (now called the *Long Branch*), *Armenia*, and *William Cook*, were offering regular service to the island.

The Wednesday, June 21, 1876 edition of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* ran an article about the excursion of the First Independent Methodist Church to Iona Island to wit excerpts follow "...the destined spot being Iona Island, the most beautiful of the many pleasure grounds which grace the Hudson. The starting point was Fulton Ferry, and the barge chartered for the occasion was the *Geraldine* (See Note 1), which was tugged by the steamer *Long Branch*," (**Figure 5**) "...at the moment, the two boats went to Iona Island, each carrying about 1,000 people." The article continues "-Some took a walk round

the island, inspecting its vineyards and apple trees, which are extensive. Others ran for the hobby horses (carousel) which was propelled by steam.”

July 4th, 1879 had the added attraction of two scull races off the island and could be observed from “the new and mammoth palace saloon steamer *NUHPA*.” The fare was only 50 cents.¹²

Iona Island was so popular that the June 23, 1883 issue of *Harper's Weekly* featured a wood cut on its front cover (**Figure 6**). The first two paragraphs of the article follow:

SUNDAY-SCHOOL CHINAMEN ON A PICNIC.

JOHN CHINAMAN is the object of so much derision, both innocent and nocent (Sic), that we take pleasure in expressing our conviction that his picnic at Iona Island, North River, on the 11th of June, was a complete success. He organized it himself, and it was all his own, although he invited more than three hundred white Americans to accompany him; he saw to it that there was plenty of food, music, and fire -works; he footed all the bills; he indulged in no rowdyism; (Sic) and he brought back his whole party sound and happy. How many white Americans could have done better?

That this was the most notable Sunday-school picnic ever held in the United States of America is, however, its chief claim to distinction. The hundred and fifty Chinese adults and children were exclusively Sunday-school scholars of several Baptist and Presbyterian churches in New York City, and the three hundred white Americans who went as invited guests were their Sunday school teachers, or their Sunday-school teachers' friends.

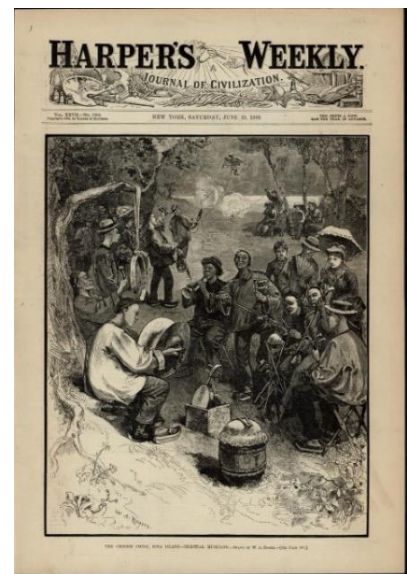


Figure 6. Cover of the June 23, 1883 *Harper's Weekly*.

WEST SHORE RAILROAD.
POPULAR EXCURSION
TO
IONA ISLAND.
AUGUST 22, 1889.
SPECIAL TRAIN

Will leave New York, foot Jay st, N. R.	9:40 A. M.
New York, foot West Forty-second st, N. R.	9:55 A. M.
Jersey City, Newark av. and Seventh st.	9:30 A. M.
Hoboken, Paterson av. and First st.	9:35 A. M.
Hoboken, Willow st. Crossing.	9:40 A. M.
Weehawken.	10:10 A. M.
Arriving Iona Island.	11:00 A. M.

Fare for the round trip, 75c. Children, 50c.
Returning special train will leave Iona Island at 6:35 P. M.

Do not miss this opportunity for a day's outing. Secure tickets of nearest agent West Shore Railroad.
IONA ISLAND
Is the most beautiful DAY SUMMER RESORT on the Hudson River.

Figure 7. Advertisement placed by the West Shore Railroad on August 18, 1889.

ENTER THE RAILROAD

The New York, West Shore, and Buffalo Railroad (N.Y., W.S. & B.) was formed in 1882 to build a line between Weehawken, N.J. and Buffalo, N.Y. to compete with the New York Central Railroad. The line was completed in 1884. A rate war ensued between the two lines with the New York Central ultimately acquiring the other and renaming it the West Shore Railroad and operating it as a separate division.¹³ In 1883, the N.Y., W.S. & B. entered into

an agreement with the New York, Ontario & Western Railroad (N.Y., O. & W.) resulting in the N.Y., O. & W. being granted trackage rights on the N.Y., W.S. & B. from Cornwall, N.Y. south to Weehawken Terminal.¹⁴

The first special train advertisement that the author has been able to find appeared in the August 18, 1889 issue of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (**Figure 7**). Note that it also touts the island as “..the most beautiful DAY SUMMER RESORT on the Hudson River.” This train was probably turned at Newburgh, since steam locomotives did not travel well in reverse.

Not one advertisement was found to have been placed by the owners of the island in the period 1870 to 1900.

Doodletown, shown on map in **Figure 8**, was a village situated at the crossroads in a valley at the confluence of Dunderberg Mountain to the south, West Mountain to the West and Bear Hill (later Bear Mountain) to the Northwest. Iona Island was across a marsh to the East. With the arrival of the railroad, the residents of this small village now could easily receive merchandise shipped from mail order houses.

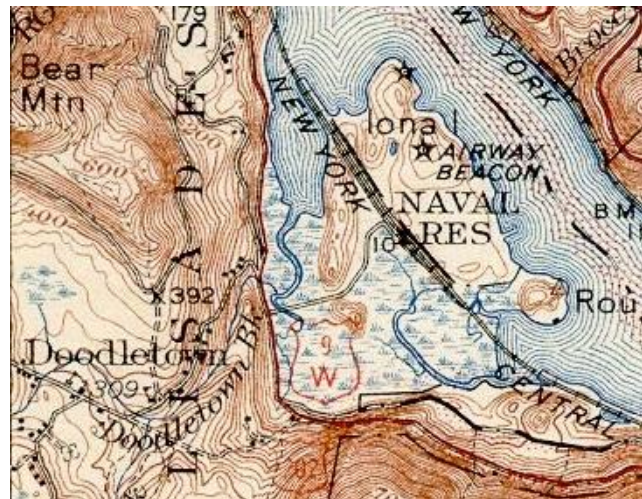


Figure 8. Coast and Geodetic Survey map from 1936 showing Doodletown and the Naval Reservation.

THE NAVY TAKES OVER

In 1900, the United States Navy was looking to establish an ammunition depot in the Northeast. The prime candidate, located at West Hoboken in New Jersey, was ruled out because of that state's restrictive laws concerning the location of powder depots. Other locations under consideration were; Iona Island, despite “it being so far removed up the Hudson and is not sufficiently well connected by railroad lines;” Croton Point on the Hudson, just above Sing Sing and Manhasset Bay on Long Island Sound.¹⁵ On March 12th, Iona Island was chosen and condemnation proceeding were commenced.¹⁶

The government paid \$140,000 for the reservation and took possession of it in April of that year; it was attached to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The reservation encompassed almost all the island east of the railroad tracks. Reference the maps in **Figures 8 & 9**.¹⁷

After its purchase, the West Shore Railroad re-designated the depot as Iona Island Station. This was done to facilitate the import of materials for construction. Three hundred men were put to work under the supervision of Chief Gunner Dugan.¹⁸

*guard, who occupy the cottages, are likewise very comfortable. They all agree that, but for the loneliness, Iona Island is an ideal station.*²²

More than 3,000,000 pounds of smokeless powder and over 1,000,000 pounds of black powder were stored at the depot. Operations carried out at the depot included weighing and numbering of each shell as it is received from the manufacturer or returned from the fleet before it is put into storage. 14-inch shells weigh 1,600 pounds and required a bursting charge of 50 pounds of powder for detonation. The quality of the powder was frequently tested to maintain

consistent results with mixtures being adjusted as required. A 14-inch shell required four 100-pound bags of powder to send it on its way.²³

It was during the disassembly of a 13-inch shell that had been received from the *U.S.S. Massachusetts* (BB-3) on November 4, 1903 that tragedy struck. At 12:55 p.m. on that date, a shell that was being disassembled exploded in shell house No. 3. Six employees died. Gunner Friese and a few other men, though injured, fought the ensuing fire and explosions which continued until 3 p.m. The Navy Yard tug *Pontiac*, which had just delivered a barge loaded with ammunition, moved the barge to a safe location. After evacuating all the women and children from the island, the tug assisted in dousing the flames. Shell houses Nos. 3 and 4 were destroyed. Shell houses Nos. 1 and 2 were badly damaged.

All the windows on the island and within several miles of the scene of the explosion were shattered. Most of the 1-pounder, 6-pounder and 6-inch ammunition received from the *Massachusetts* was destroyed.²⁴

The apparent shut down of the government on January 1, 1908 led to the temporary furlough of about 30 to 40 civilians employed at the depot. On February 24, a letter was received by Commander Braunstruter threatening to blow up the depot if those furloughed were not immediately returned to work. The matter was referred to the Secret Service.²⁵

THE SECOND POST OFFICE IS ESTABLISHED

On February 21, 1901, the second post office, a fourth-class office, was established on the island and was included in Rockland County route 107129. Robert B. Hoag was appointed the Postmaster.²⁶ The physical location of the office is not known but was probably on the depot grounds. This office was operated by the Post Office and not the Navy.

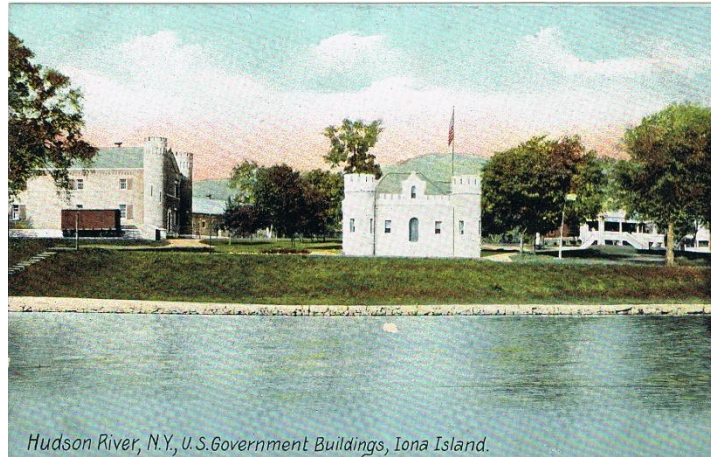


Figure 10. A post card of the administration and some of the other buildings.

With the creation of the post office on Iona Island, residents of Doodletown who previously traveled to either Fort Montgomery, Caldwell's Landing (later Jones Point) or Peekskill, now had a more convenient location to receive their mail. Although unofficial, Oscar Herbert brought Doodletown's mail from the post office to his store where residents could pick it up.²⁷ One of the buildings in the lower left corner of the map in **Figure 8** was probably the store.



Figure 11. Aug 27, 1906 cancel issued to fourth class offices.



Figure 12. Early type of 4-bar cancel Jul 28,

The earliest cancel for this post office in the author's collection is from Aug 17, 1906 and is shown in **Figure 11**. This was a standard issue target duplex canceller for fourth class post offices.²⁸ Beginning in 1906, as the target cancels needed replacement, new 4-bar cancels were placed in service.

The first type, shown in **Figure 12**, has a 32 mm CDS and a vertical dimension of the killer of 14 mm. This example was struck in blue ink.

Figure 13. Form 1528 with straight line Iona Island



Figure 14. Later type of 4-bar cancel.

During operations, Postmasters were frequently required to forward mail and provide changes of address. **Figure 13** is a Form 1528 dated January 12, 1911 that was used to notify the *Rockland County Times* of Haverstraw, N.Y. that newspapers sent to Samuel Herbert have not been picked up and remain dead in this office. The reason given is stated as "1st Dead, 2nd Moved to Brooklyn, 3rd lives at Fort Montgomery, 4th Moved to Harrison, NY" and is signed by postmaster R.B. Hoag and has a straight line cancel.

Sometime before July 1915, the second type of 4-bar cancel was introduced. The CDS on this cancel varied between 32.5 mm and 33.25 mm; the vertical dimension of the killer was increased to about 20 mm. It is shown in **Figure 14**.

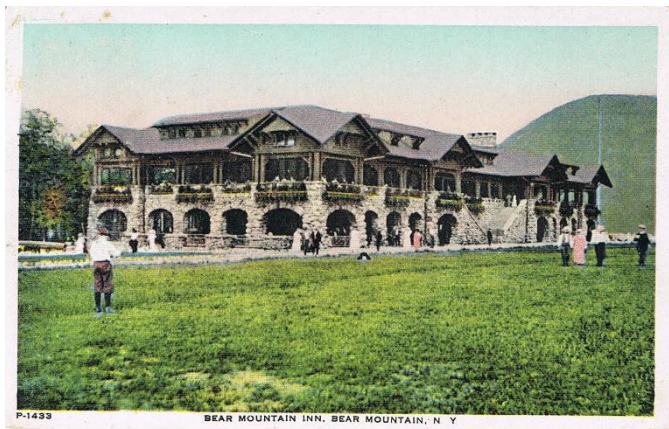


Figure 15. The Bear Mountain Inn as it appeared on a 1917 post card.

commenced in 1913 with the opening of a new dock at the park. This made the steamboat owners happy because it again provided a destination for excursions that hadn't existed since the closure of the picnic grounds on Iona Island. The Bear Mountain Inn, shown in **Figure 15**, opened in 1915.²⁹



Figure 16. The ovate canceller used by Iona Island as a third-class post office on Nov. 2, 1934.

On February 19, 1919, Postmaster Robert B. Hoag was reappointed under a Presidential appointment thus elevating the post office to a third-class unit. As such, it was issued a new ovate bar duplex canceller shown in **Figure 16**.

The July 22, 1922 issue of *The Postal Bulletin* announces the creation of Star Route No. 7645 to commence and end at Iona Island with that postmaster engaging the temporary help. **Figure 17** is a scan of that announcement. The route was “38 miles and back, 6 times a week” – from July 20, 1922 to September 30, 1922, at not to exceed \$9 a round trip.” (n.o.) signifies a non-delivery office. Similar routes were established seasonally usually showing the

Concurrent with the opening of the depot, a movement was developing to prevent the quarrying of the mountains in the vicinity or the placement of a prison complex in the Bear Mountain area. To this end, in 1900, New York and New Jersey joined together to form The Palisades Interstate Park Commission whose goal was to preserve the Palisades and the Hudson Highlands. The nucleus of the park was established at Bear Mountain in 1910. Steamboat excursions

NEW YORK.
7645. Iona Island by Bear Mountain (n. o.), Queensboro (n. o.), Tiorati (n. o.), and Kanawauke (n. o.) to Stahahe (n. o.), returning by Arden (n. o.), Cohasset (n. o.), Twin Lakes (n. o.), Summit Lake (n. o.), Queensboro (n. o.), and Bear Mountain (n. o.) to Iona Island, equal to 38 miles and back, 6 times a week. The postmaster at Iona Island, N. Y., is authorized to employ temporary star-route service from Iona Island by Bear Mountain (n. o.), Queensboro (n. o.), Tiorati (n. o.), and Kanawauke (n. o.) to Stahahe (n. o.), returning by Arden (n. o.), Cohasset (n. o.), Twin Lakes (n. o.), Summit Lake (n. o.), Queensboro (n. o.), and Bear Mountain (n. o.) to Iona Island, six round trips a week from July 20, 1922, to September 30, 1922, at not to exceed \$9 a round trip. [17 July.]

Figure 17. Scan of that portion of “The Postal Bulletin” showing Star Route 7645.

route beginning at Iona Island, traveling to Lake Stahabe, then returning to Iona Island. The distances decreased as the roads were improved in the park. This route ran roughly West and West-Southwest, following Seven Lakes Drive and Kanawauke Rd. to the lakes area just over the Orange County line.

Looking at the scan, note that one of the stops is Arden. This office was established in 1888. **Figure 18** shows a cover mailed at Arden with a return address of “Camp Onika of the Camp Fire Girls, Iona Island, NY”

As the years passed, more and more land was acquired by the park with the result that Doodletown disappeared. The line of X’s in the **Figure 1** map shows the boundaries of the park as it existed in 1923.

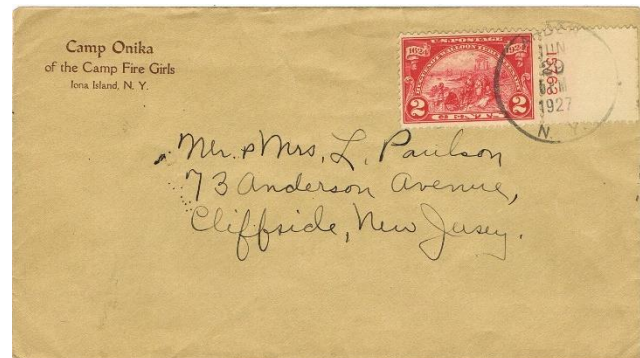


Figure 18. Cover from Camp Onika, June 20, 1923 postmarked at Arden.



Figure 19. The differences between the two die of the Columbia cancelling machine.

A Columbia machine canceller was introduced sometime in 1923. This machine received enough usage that the die had to be replaced at an unknown time between July 1929 and July 1930. The first die has fine lines and the wave of the killer falls at the start. The second die has heavier wave lines and rises at the start. **Figure 19** shows the differences.

On July 31, 1926, Mrs. Lucetta Hogan was appointed acting postmaster. One month later, Charles F. Fowler received a presidential appointment as Iona Island’s fourth postmaster.³⁰

TRAGEDY STRIKES AGAIN

Tragedy would again strike at the island, although this time in the form of a train wreck on July 5, 1927. N.Y., O. & W. train 24, after meeting feeder trains from Kingston and Monticello at Summitville, left there with 193 passengers at 11:25 a.m. for a non-stop run to Cornwall. The train, comprised of a baggage car, four coaches and a parlor car, left there for its non-stop run to Weehawken that would end just above the Iona Island station. A West Shore local was making a cross over at that point when the West Shore flagman, hearing the oncoming express, attempted to warn the doomed train of the blocked track ahead to little avail. Four people would be killed and 23 injured. **Figure 20** is a photo of one of the wrecked cars.³¹

The following are excerpts from the *New York Herald Tribune* of July 6, 1927.

Passenger Engineer Blamed – N.Y. O. & W. engineer William Brandt was blamed for disregarding the automatic block signals which had been set against his train.

Marines and Autoists Aid – Marines from the naval depot and tourist from their automobiles on the bridge also came to the rescue of the injured. Later, ambulances arrived with physicians from Haverstraw, Nyack, Suffern, Newburgh and the Cadet Hospital. Four of the seriously injured were sent to West Point and to St. Luke's Hospital in Newburgh.

Commander J.S. Wood, senior officer at the munitions depot, sent the staff doctors there to the scene and in response to urgent telephone calls from C.F. Fowler, the Iona station agent, physicians responded from every town in the surrounding territory, including the military academy.³²



Figure 20. One of the wrecked cars. Photo by Doug Barberio.

POST OFFICE (continued)

In studying the 27 covers and post cards in my collection, and others offered on eBay, almost all are postmarked between June 1st and September 30th which indicates most of the traffic came from campers and visitors to Bear Mt. I have found only one post card in the pre-World War II era that can be marginally considered as being posted by someone with some connection to the depot. **Figure 21** shows a card sent from Iona Island to the Navy Yard in Boston.

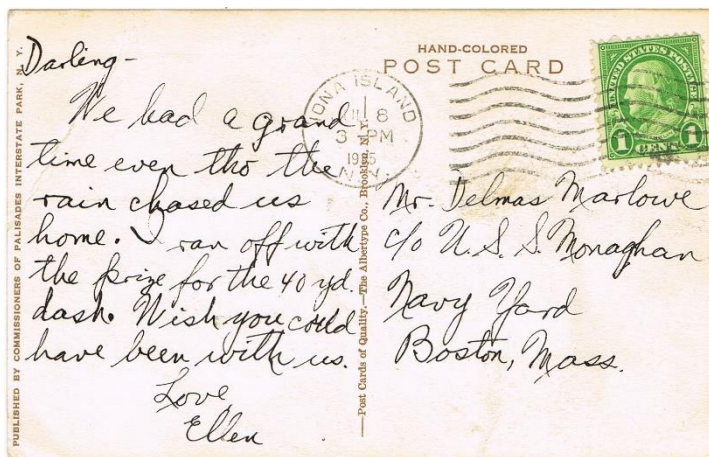


Figure 21. Post card mailed from Iona Island to the USS Monaghan at the Boston Navy Yard with a personal note.

Bear Mountain was being developed as a year-round destination with attractions that included ice skating and skiing in winter. This activity prompted the Post Office to establish a fourth-class office there on May 10, 1937 with Thomas F. Reilly as Postmaster.³³ **Figure 22** shows a four bar cancel from Bear Mountain dated October 12, 1937.



Figure 22. Cancel from Bear Mt. four months after its establishment.

Iona Island was downgraded from a third-class office to a fourth-class office on June 21, 1937.³⁴

On June 23, 1937, Star Route 7539 would commence operation from Bear Mt. to Lake Stahabe as soon as the mail was received from train 11. This was the route that normally began and ended at Iona Island. The following day, Iona Island was omitted from the route. The Star Route number would change year to year, but the area covered was basically the same. Fifteen camps were serviced in 1936 rising to 27 camps in 1941; all were in the Palisades Interstate Park. The Bear Mountain post office was upgraded to third class on July 1, 1939.

WORLD WAR II POST OFFICE OPERATIONS

With the outbreak of World War II, post office operations would change. On October 25, 1942, nine months into the conflict, a branch post office was established by the U.S. Navy that was serviced via Haverstraw.³⁵ This postal unit could now handle money orders, and as of

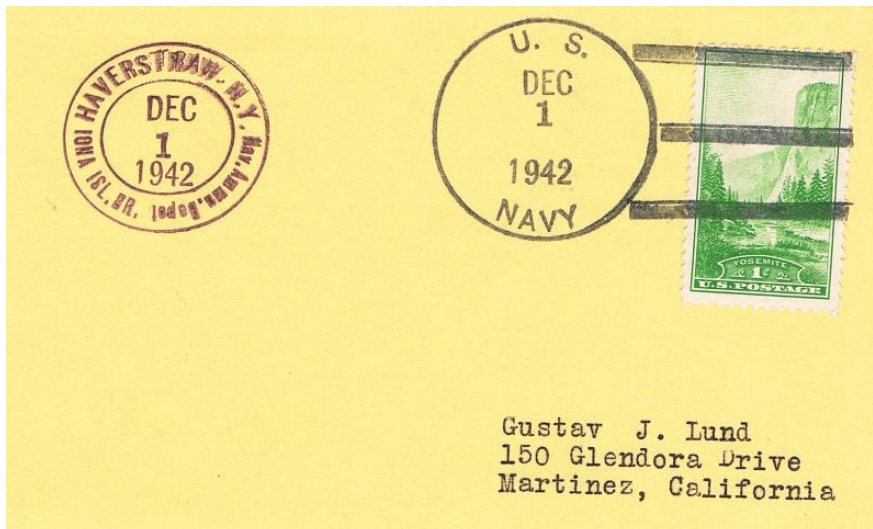


Figure 23. Philatelic creation showing both the non-descript navy cancel and the associated Haverstraw, Branch cancel.

December 7, 1942 could handle registered mail.³⁶ As a naval postal unit, we now encounter the non-descript three bar canceller. **Figure 23** shows a philatelic card with the naval cancel (Locy Type 3) and the Haverstraw branch cancel. It is interesting to note that, while the naval post office was established on October 25, 1942, the civilian

post office remained in operation until December 31, 1942. Mail from the civilian office was then directed to Bear Mountain.³⁷

Return addresses during this period are the only way to confirm that mail originated at the depot. **Figure 24** shows a personal letter with a return address N.A.D. (Naval Ammunition Depot) Iona Island.

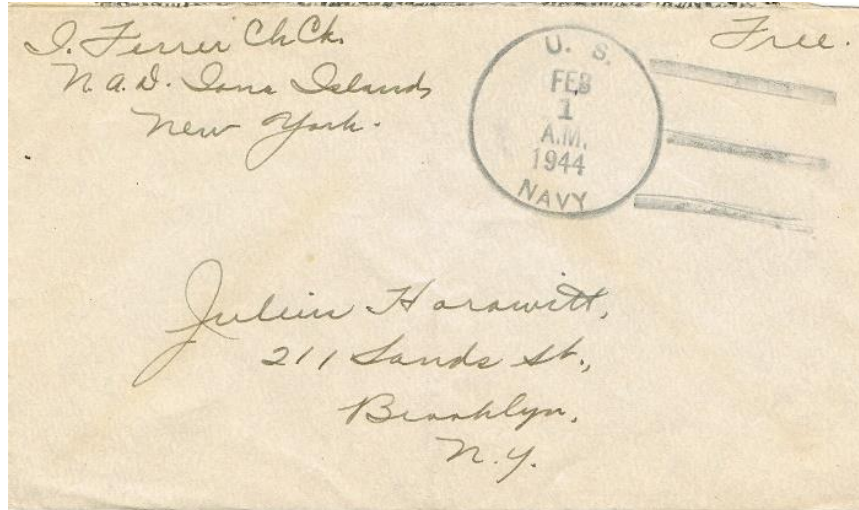


Figure 24. A personal letter sent from Iona during World War II.

An example of official mail is shown in **Figure 25**. This Penalty envelope, with preprinted address except for the ship's name, demonstrates the volume of mail that was probably generated from the depot. Take note of the canceler. It is the same one shown in **Figure 16** used when Iona Island was a third-class office. Maybe the naval canceler was damaged, and the clerk found this old one in a drawer.



Fig. 25. Official Navy Dept. mail with Iona Island return address. Dated Jan. 10, 19??.

Cover courtesy of Peter Peloquin.

After the surrender of Japan, the Navy set about re-evaluating its needs and started decommissioning many ships and bases. Because the depot had no room for expansion, it was slated to be closed. On March 26, 1946 the naval post office was closed.³⁸

Now we have an on again off again situation with the re-establishment of a civilian post office on the island. *The Postal Bulletins* list this see saw as follows:

*March 4, 1947 – Re-establish – fourth class, 23071, Iona Island (*716) Rockland County. Supply route 102788, Effective Mar. 17, 1947, a Haverstraw (“a” is the postmaster’s address.)*

March 18, 1947 – Postmaster salary set at \$201 effective March 17, 1947
March 20, 1947 – 23071 Iona Island, Rockland County. Order re-establishing this office effective Mar. 17, 1947, is hereby rescinded.

*June 19, 1947 - Re-establish, 23071, Iona Island (*716) Rockland County. Supply route 102788, Effective July 1, 1947, a Haverstraw.*

July 1, 1947 - 23071 Iona Island, Rockland County. Order re-establishing this office effective July 1, 1947, is hereby rescinded.

The final mention in *The Postal Bulletin* is on July 13, 1947: it directs that mail destined for the depot, which was previously handled through Haverstraw, should be directed to the Highland Falls, N.Y. post office. This is the apparent end of postal activity on the island.

AFTERMATH

The following is a segment of a FUDS (Formerly Used Defense Sites) report concerning the disposition of Iona Island dated 1997.

With the development of more modern facilities and the lack of expansion room on the island, use of Iona was curtailed after the war. In 1947, the Navy reached the decision to deactivate Iona and made the property available for restricted lease during the next year. The Bureau of Ordnance re-designated the island as an Annex to the U.S. Naval Ammunition Depot, Earle, New Jersey.

On 30 July 1957, the site was declared excess and transferred to the General Services Administration. Between 1955 and 1960, the General Services Administration (GSA) used the former depot on a permit basis for stockpile materials such as rubber and copper. In 1960, the GSA received official jurisdiction over the property. Other agencies under GSA control used Iona primarily for records storage during the 1960's. The Maritime Administration also used the main wharf for occasional trans-shipments of heavy freight. On March 30, 1965, the last carload of stockpiled material left the grounds and Iona Island was considered evacuated. Per quitclaim

deed dated 16 September 1965, GSA conveyed Iona Island and Round Island, 118.61 acres, free, to the Palisades Interstate Park Commission.

All of the buildings on the island, save five, have been demolished; the Park Commission uses those for storage. The Park Commission designated the island a bird sanctuary and is not open to the public. The railroad, now owned by CSX, still traverses the island, as seen in **Figure 26**.

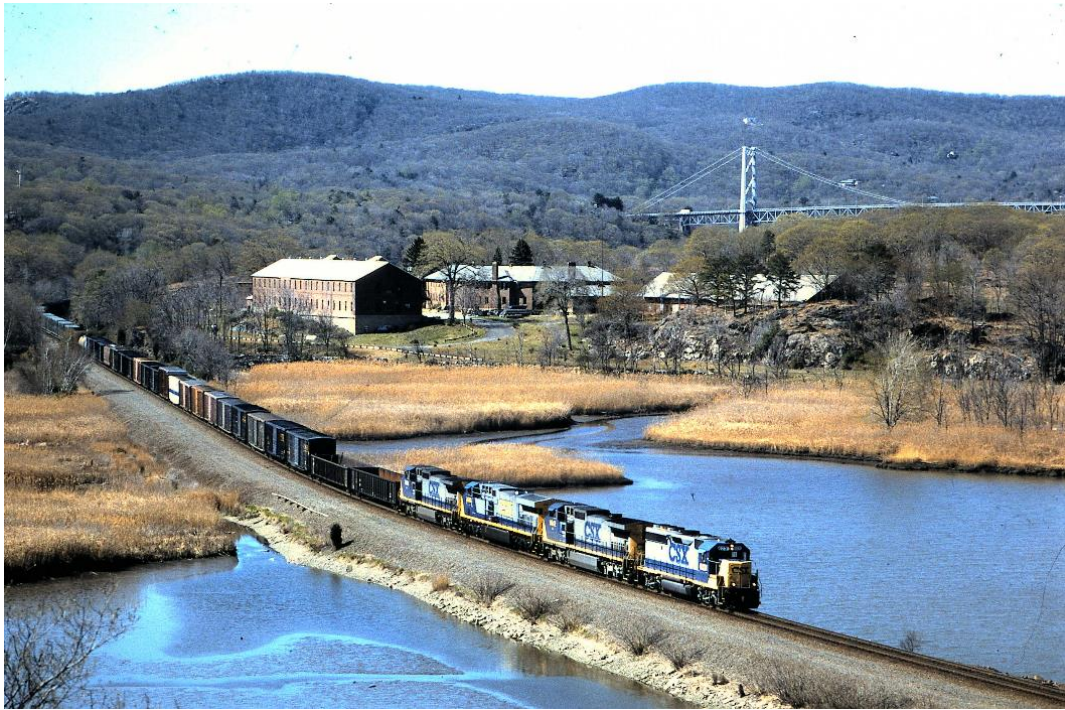
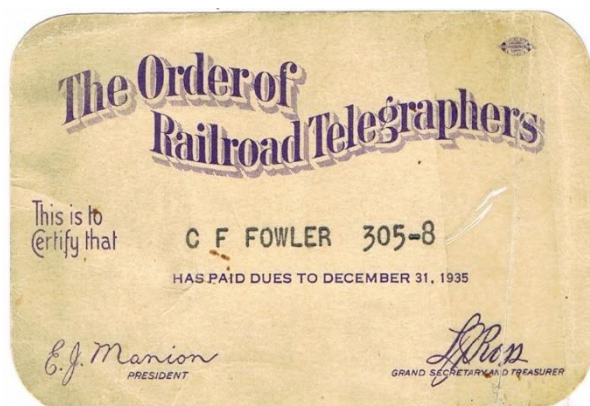


Figure 26. 1999. CSX freight train crossing the south causeway on Iona Island. This shot is looking north.

A VERBAL HISTORY

The following is a verbal history given to the author by Empire State Postal History Society member Peter Peloquin. You will recall that C.F. Fowler was the Stationmaster when the train wreck occurred in 1927.

My father, Louis Peloquin, related this story when he gave me the railroad employee card of Charles Fowler, Station employee at Iona Island. Charles Fowler was Louis's uncle. His job entailed tracking the trains as they passed Iona Island in the pre-World War II era. When the war started, he was called down to Army recruitment. The recruiting officer inquired about his job and he gave a description of his employment including the location. It was determined that the Army needed his help in keeping track of the military trains that would be passing Iona Island. During this time, he still kept his regular job with the railroad.



. This military job was considered critical and as a result it came with certain privileges. The most important of these was unlimited gas rationing coupons. At the end of the war, he was preparing to move south.

When a carpet at his house was pulled up, it was discovered that he was using the gas rationing coupons as padding for the rug. This upset my father because he had to sell his car due to being unable get rationing coupons.

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- [2] – *Rockland County Scrapbook* Ibid.
- [3] – <http://www.scotclans.com/scottish-clans/clan-beveridge/> , downloaded Nov. 2017.
- [4] – <http://www.southernhebrides.com/isle-of-iona/> , downloaded Nov. 2017.
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- [6] – *The History of Rockland County* by F.B. Green, MD, A.S. Barnes & Co, New York 1886.
- [7] – 1860 US Census. Many articles list the name as Dr. E.W. Grant. The cover shown in **Fig. 3** clearly shows the name as C.W. Grant and the census lists him as “Grant, Charles W.”
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- [17] – *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 15, 1900, pg. 10, www.newspapers.com, downloaded on Sep. 18, 2017.
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- [19] – *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Ibid.
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- [21] – *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 2, 1901, pg. 1, www.newspapers.com, downloaded on Sep. 18, 2017.
- [22] – *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 13, 1903, pg. 23, www.newspapers.com, downloaded on Sep. 18, 2017.
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- [30] – Postmaster Finder, <http://webpmt.usps.gov/pmt003.cfm>, downloaded on Sep. 3, 2017.
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- [32] – *Train 24 and the Iona Island Wreck*, Ibid.
- [33] – *The Postal Bulletin*, #17183, May 12, 1937, pg. 2.
- [34] – *The Postal Bulletin*, #17210, June 21, 1937, pg. 1.
- [35] – *The Postal Bulletin*, #18507, October 26, 1942, pg. 2.
- [36] – *The Postal Bulletin*, #18526, December 7, 1942, pg. 1.
- [37] – *The Postal Bulletin*, #18532, December 21, 1942, pg. 1.
- [38] – *The Postal Bulletin*, #18941, July 2, 1946, pg. 3.

Note 1. “Safety barges “were first developed to allay fears of exploding boilers that occurred in the early days of steamboat travel. They were towed in a manner similar to that of a present day auto and trailer and were as elegant as the steamers themselves without the necessity of climbing stairs to travel fore and aft around the paddle wheels and machinery. Most were retired and became freight barges to carry hay, livestock, and other staples to New York City from up-river communities.

Old Steamboat Days on the Hudson by David Lear Buckman, Grafton Press, 1907.

Note 2. There were two other amusement parks along the Hudson River.

Kingston Point’s development started in 1897. The five and one-half hour trip via steamer from N.Y.C. precluded it from being a day trip. From Albany, it was four hours, making it more attractive.

Indian Point Park was only a two and one-half hour trip from N.Y.C. This park was developed by the Hudson River Day Line and opened in 1923. It was located just south of Peekskill. See map **Fig. 1**. It had many of the same amenities as Bear Mt. which was the next stop for the day-liners and only an additional 20 minutes up river.

The author can be reached at largin1@verizon.net.

EMPIRE STATE POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

I hereby apply for membership in the Empire State Postal History Society. Knowing the purpose of the organization, I will, to the best of my ability, work to further the aims of the Society, cooperate in its research projects by volunteering data that I have gathered, and in general, support the officers and members in postal history efforts.

Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Mailing Address: _____

(Please use 9 digit zip code) _____

Collecting interests or specialties _____

Membership in other Philatelic Societies: _____

References (None required of A.P.S. members, otherwise list 2): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Remittance: Applications dated January - June \$20.00 (\$25.00 for non-US residents)

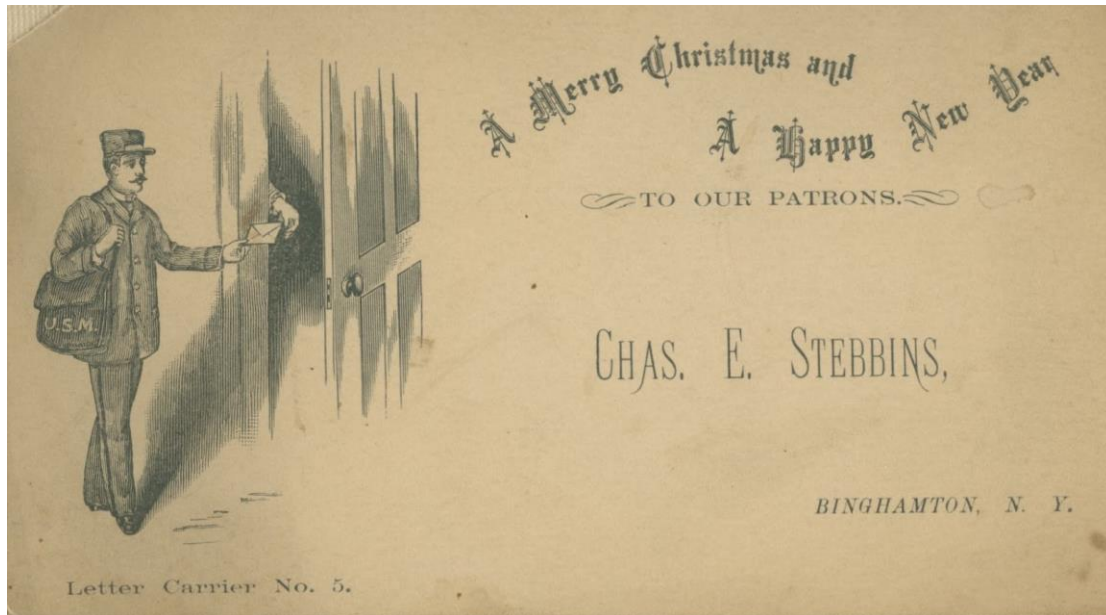
Applications dated July - December (1.5 year term) \$30.00 (\$35.00 for non-US residents)

Make checks payable to the Empire State Postal History Society. Mail completed application form and remittance to: ESPHS, % George McGowen, PO Box 482, East Schodack, NY 12063-0482

COVER OF THE ISSUE

By: David Williams

Binghamton Letter Carrier Appreciation Card



While searching the internet for pictures of Broome County postmasters, I happened upon the above image at <http://postcardparadise.blogspot.com/2012/10/letter-carrier-appreciation.html>.

As seen above, Charles E. Stebbins was Letter Carrier No. 5 at the Binghamton, New York post office. Although there is no reference to a date of this card, some research of Charles Stebbins resulted with a few facts.

Based on the 1910 and 1920 Federal census, he was born in 1859. According to the 1880 Federal census, he was employed as a cigar manufacturer in Binghamton. He became a letter carrier sometime after that, possibly by 1883.

In the 1890 *Official Register of the United States* he is listed on page 926 under "The Free Delivery System-Letter Carriers" as one of fourteen carriers in Binghamton, with a compensation of \$600 as of July 1889.

One must ask; is this card one that was supplied by the Binghamton post office and personalized for each of their carriers? It would seem a major financial undertaking for Mr. Stebbins to take upon himself. The author would be interested in seeing other examples of this type of card from Binghamton specifically, or other cities in general.

I must thank the owner of the above blog, who is only known as Christine H. for giving me permission to use the image for this article. Her father-in-law, John Korinek, was also a letter carrier in Binghamton from 1958 to 1988!

David Williams may be reached at davidinindiana@aol.com.