

The Journal of the Empire State Postal History Society

September 2005

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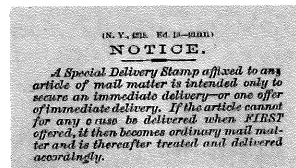
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EXCELSIOR!

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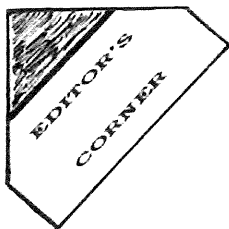
Future Publication

The March and September 2006 and March 2007 issues will be forthcoming on approximately a monthly basis until caught up. The expected catch up date is July 1st. At that time the new editor will assume the position. We hope you will support him to the fullest degree.

* * * * *

Among some upcoming items are:

1. An examination of the Poughkeepsie Palmer & Clark machine cancel by Larry Laliberte. It will enclose a census of the known examples.
2. The official hand cancel period of NY S RFD by Bill Hart.
3. Champlain Valley Coverage (by Glenn Estus) and Columbia County (by George Dekornfeld)



A Match Made In Heaven

Drew A. Nicholson

In addition to the postal history of Dutchess County, I collect post cards with geographical and historical images from the County in general and especially the Town and Village of Pawling wherein I reside. *Excelsior!* Production Editor, Larry Laliberte, also is a post card collector, with concentration in Poughkeepsie, his hometown; Larry as well has amassed an extensive postal history collection of Poughkeepsie.

From this Corner, the "Marriage Made In Heaven" is the forming of two concurrent collections—postal history and post card—which focus on the same topic. They go together like bread and butter, pancakes and syrup, and peanut butter and jelly!

This connection was not necessarily recognized in the past. About ten years ago I met a prominent postal history collector and exhibitor at a major New York City show who was bemoaning the introduction of a post card dealer into a bourse put on by his local stamp club. His comment was something like this: "What a bunch of junk! Only old ladies collect that stuff—you, know, greeting cards and the like." Listening to this tirade, I was reminded of the first post card collection I had ever viewed.

When I was around thirteen I visited my widowed Aunt Paulyne for a long weekend at her home in New Jersey. One evening she talked me into sitting down and viewing her post card collection. To me post cards were the things you wrote home to others when you were on a trip. BORING, thought I. Most of the collection *did* consist of the aforementioned greeting cards—mostly Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter with a smattering of "Wish you were here!" cards—but the last two pages were *fascinating!* They consisted of electric trolleys competing with strange-looking autos for street space and railroad engines, puffing away. (I grew up living near and regularly traveling on the fully-electrified lower section of the Harlem Division of the NY Central and *never once* saw steam!) To me, these were the ultimate of what is called today, Boy Toys. Alas, it was a passing fancy because nothing came of it.

I had seen illustrations similar to these in my history textbooks, but they were presented mostly without the benefit of color and very small in size. When I entered college to prepare to become a history teacher I noticed that very few of the images in textbooks I used originated from post cards—most were photographs, posters and broadsides. After becoming a junior high (now called middle school) teacher one of my occasional jobs was to give input to a committee to select a new textbook when the old one either wore out or became too outdated; I noted again that the authors had chosen very few post cards as images.

But things change! The year I retired (1996) I chaired a committee to once again choose a history textbook. The new textbook—as well as books of historical nature in general—contained a significant number of images drawn from post cards. When I returned to the classroom as a substitute teacher the following year I viewed a positive reaction from the students to this change. Many reacted as I had to those last two pages many years before. Historians had finally tapped the vast storehouse of images provided by the many thousands of easily accessible post cards.

Post card collecting had also changed. Clubs were springing up locally and regionally. Early in this decade Larry Laliberte enticed me to join him (and ESPHS members Bill Hart and Peter Peloquin) as a member of the Taconic Post Card Club. By that time I had been drawn into collecting those delightful historical images that seemed to perfectly reinforce the postal history collection I had been diligently forming.

(Continued on page 10)

POUGHKEEPSIE, N.Y., CITY OF SCHOOLS: PART 3 – THE FEMALE INSTITUTIONS

By Lawrence J. Laliberte

Introduction

The subject of this installment of *Poughkeepsie – City of Schools* presents an ongoing challenge when new items appear. There were many schools that had similar names, for instance, the Poughkeepsie Female Academy (on Cannon St.) when it opened, had already merged with the Poughkeepsie Female Seminary that had not yet opened but had acquired property on Mill St. That property was eventually occupied by the Poughkeepsie Female Collegiate Institute which should not be confused with the Poughkeepsie Collegiate School, which was a boy's school (See *EXCELSIOR!* March 2005). To compound matters, references will occasionally be seen with one of the proper names omitted.

Other schools would be established, operate for a few years then close only to be replaced by another at the same location creating another challenge in determining periods of operation.

When Vassar College (See EXCELSIOR!, Sept. 2004) opened in 1865, it was found that many of the freshman were not fully prepared for the rigors of its curriculum; this lead to the establishment of many of the “preparatory” schools that are covered in this article.

Poughkeepsie Female Academy (Seminary)—1836-1885: Cannon Street

The Village of Poughkeepsie in 1836 had a population of between seven and eight thousand people, sixty three dwelling houses and a number of stores. Several streets had even been paved. In that year, three very important school buildings were erected.

Dr. John Barns owned a large number of building lots near the center of town on Market and Cannon Streets that he was looking to develop. The committee that had been formed to establish a female school negotiated with Dr. Barns for a building lot on Cannon St. Bids were received in September for the construction of the school at a cost of \$14,000. The Poughkeepsie Female Academy took title to the nearly completed building in December of that year. Dr. Barns still owned the lots around the new school and when he transferred title, there was a stipulation in the deed that read: "...no building of any nature should be erected within ten feet next west to the west line of the school lot and that no building 'with windows opening on the said lot of land hereby conveyed' should be erected on the property immediately east of the school lot." [Confusing, but an accurate quote! Ed.] For many years a house stood on this lot and there were no windows opening on that side of the school.

A newspaper report in the spring of that year described the nearly complete building as "a new and fine institution....in the first style of modern architecture, built of brick, 64 feet front and 60 feet deep, three stories high, with a furnished basement, would conveniently accommodate 75 boarding pupils and have ample room for the various departments of the school."

Benson J. Lossing, noted historian and author, espoused the "progressive" nature of the curriculum with regards to the higher level of courses required. After attending the public examinations of students at the end of the first term he wrote in *The Casket* (a local literary publication) of November 5, 1836 "History, Astronomy, Mathematics, Algebra, Philosophy, Rhetoric, et cetera, were considered useless studies and necessary only for the intended professional scholar whose business it is to acquire a knowledge of these things. To teach them any language but their vernacular tongue was a thing scarcely dreamed of, and to have intimated

that young ladies were capable of delving into the mysteries of natural science and the abstract studies of metaphysics, would have subjected the asserter to the sneers of the many. But such notions are fast disappearing..."

Miss Arabella Bosworth, who had successfully conducted girls' schools in the city for a number of years, was the school's first principal. Conflicts of authority between the board and the principals in the early years contributed to a high turnover rate. Things eventually settled down, and in 1859 Rev. Daniel G. Wright was appointed principal.

Poughkeepsie became a city in 1854 and was already known as "The City of Schools". Schools were such an integral part of the community that many enthusiastically participated in area activities and many, including the Female Academy, opened to the community for special events. The student body was frequently invited to events at many of the boys' schools in the city.

Under Dr. Wright, the school reached its peak of attendance in 1865-66 with a total of 205 pupils, of which 74 were boarding. **Figure 1** shows covers used during his administration.



Covers top, top center and bottom from collection of Drew Nicholson. Bottom center is author's.

Fig. 1 Advertising covers used during Dr. Wright's administration

The school's reputation was such that it could advertise: "...on certificate of the Rector, as he was called, graduates of his school were admitted to the freshman class of Vassar College, without examination."

Enrollment at the school steadily declined as education around the country slowly improved and the necessity of sending a young lady away to be schooled diminished. Dr. Wright, who bought the school in 1876, remained as principal until its closing in July 1885 due to his inability to pay the mortgage. The sale, for \$8,400, was a bargain considering that a gym had been added and many improvements had been made. Sections of the building were rented for various purposes. In 1887, the Women's Christian Temperance Union acquired the building. **Figure 2** shows a post card of the building. Because of its large size, many of its rooms were rented for various uses including living apartments. Miss Jane Mandeville, who had been a teacher at the Collegiate School upon its demise, rented space there to conduct her "select school," a girl's preparatory school, until 1890.

The building gradually fell into such a state of disrepair, that it was torn down in 1950.

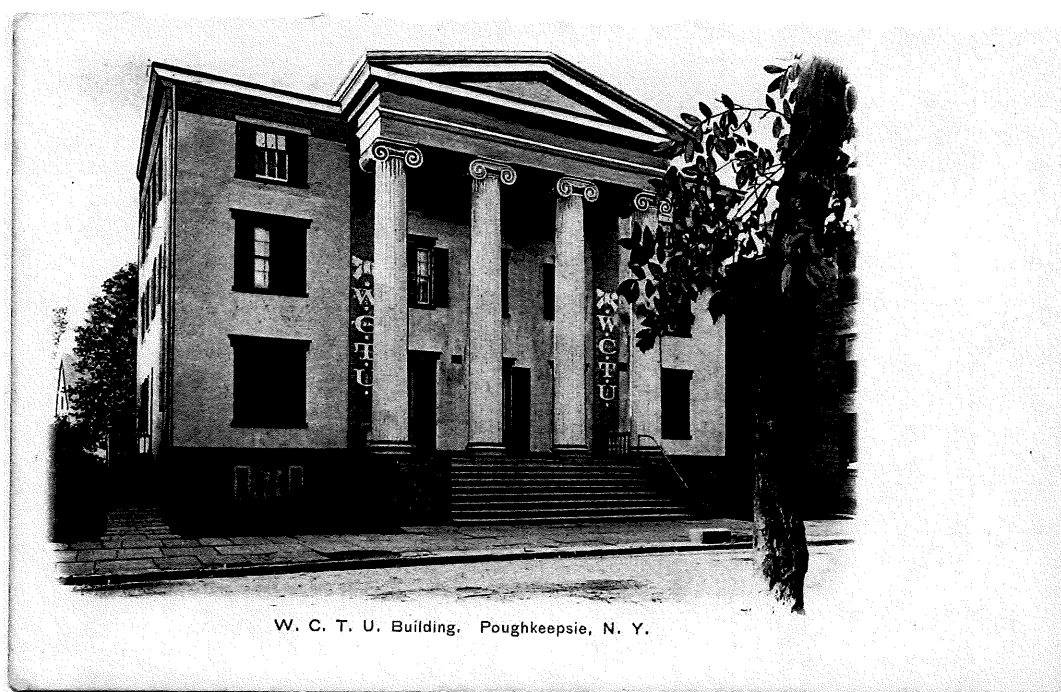


Figure 2. The Poughkeepsie Female Academy building as it appeared after it was acquired by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union about 1905.

St. Faiths School (1907) became Glen Eden Seminary—1910-1918: North Road

Little information is available about St. Faith's School because it operated for such a short period. The property was acquired by F.M. Townsend, who conducted the Glen Eden Seminary as a preparatory and finishing school. No postal history items have been located. **Figure 3** shows two post cards of the site, each with a different name.

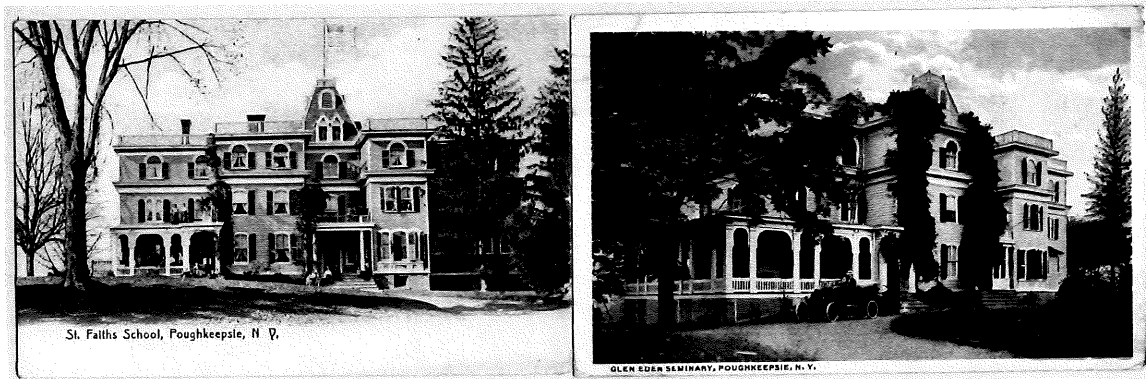


Figure 3. Same location, two different names.

Brooks Seminary about 1870 became Putnam Hall—1908-1934: 78 Hooker Ave.

This is another location with two names. (Figure 4.) The Brooks Seminary listing appears only in the 1876 Street Directory; it was operated by Edward and Mary White. In 1908, Ellen C. Bartlett operated Putnam Hall at this location. It was one of the longer lived institutions. Figure 4 shows a post card view of the building.

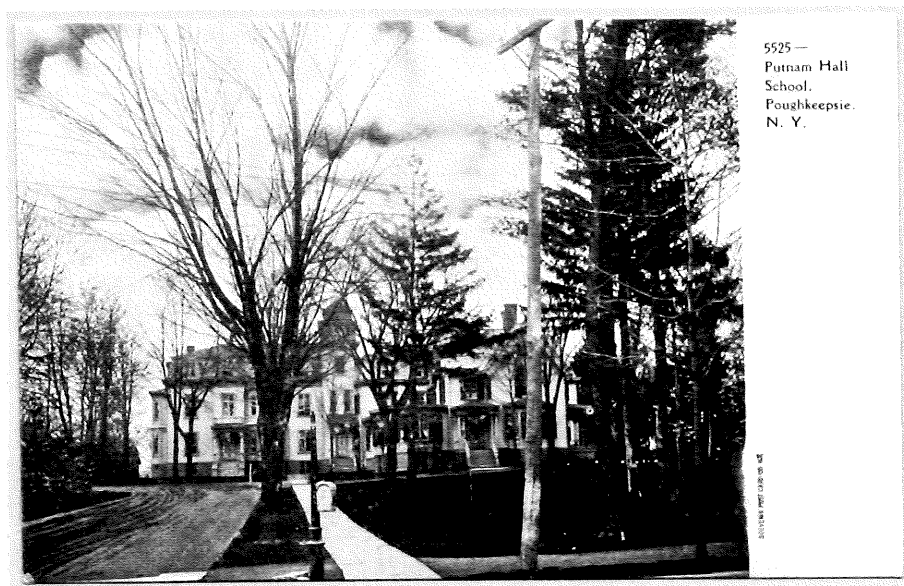
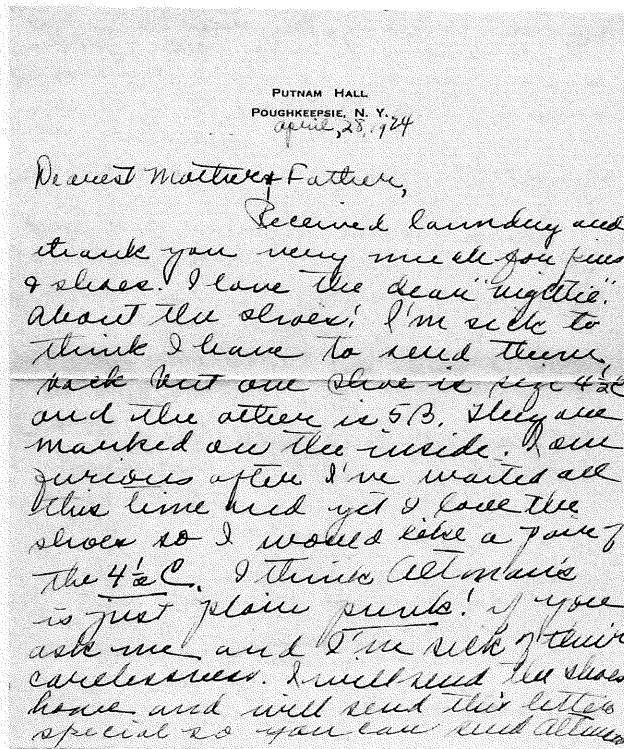
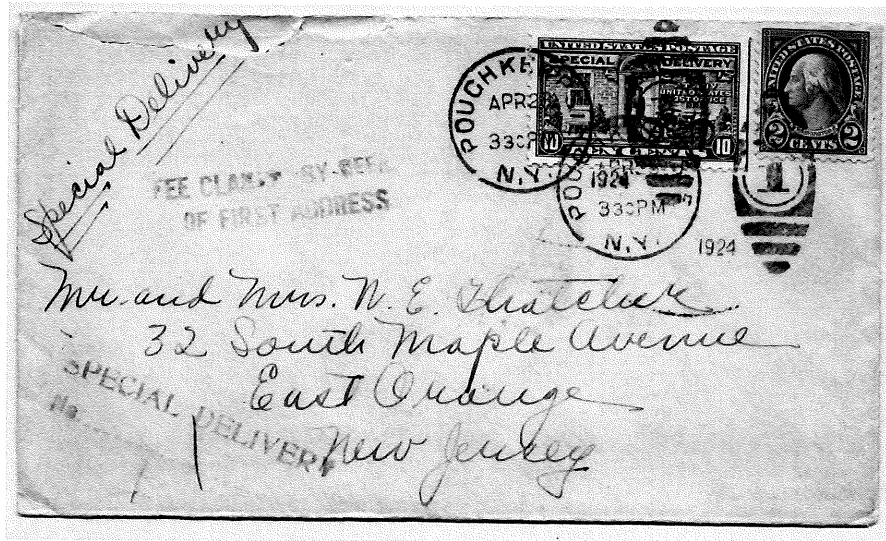


Figure 4. The Putnam Hall main building

- A letter sent home from a student at Putnam Hall has two elements that are of interest to the postal historian. The first element appears in the first two words of the letter: “Received laundry.” That illustrates the common practice of the time of sending dirty laundry home via the post to be washed. The second is “will send this letter special.” That she did can be seen in Figure 5. It must have been obvious to the recipient that it was sent by special delivery.



April 28, 1924

Dearest Mother & Father,

Received laundry and

I thank you very much for pies & shoes. I love the dear "nightie" about the shoes! I'm sick to think I have to send them back but one shoe is size 4 1/2E and the other is 5B. They are marked on the inside. I am furious after I've waited all this time and yet I love the shoes so I would like a pair of the 4 1/2C. I think Altman's is just plain **punk!** If you ask me and I'm sick of their carelessness. I will send the shoes home and **will send this letter special** so you can send Altman's a word immediately and thus not waste time and you can tell them to send them directly to Putnam Hall please. I do hope you'll do it as quickly as possible because I want the shoes. I'm just sick about

Figure 5A. Cover and page 1 of a letter from a student at Putnam Hall.

Figure 5A. Transcription of page 1 of letter

Lyndon Hall School—1902-04: 324-28 Mill St.

This was another site used by several schools: The Poughkeepsie Female Collegiate Institute operated here from 1853-1870, followed by Cook's Collegiate Institute for Young Ladies, mentioned only in the 1876 *City Street Directory*. Lyndon Hall was located here from 1902 to 1904. Again, no postal history items have surfaced. **Figure 6** shows a post card of the building.

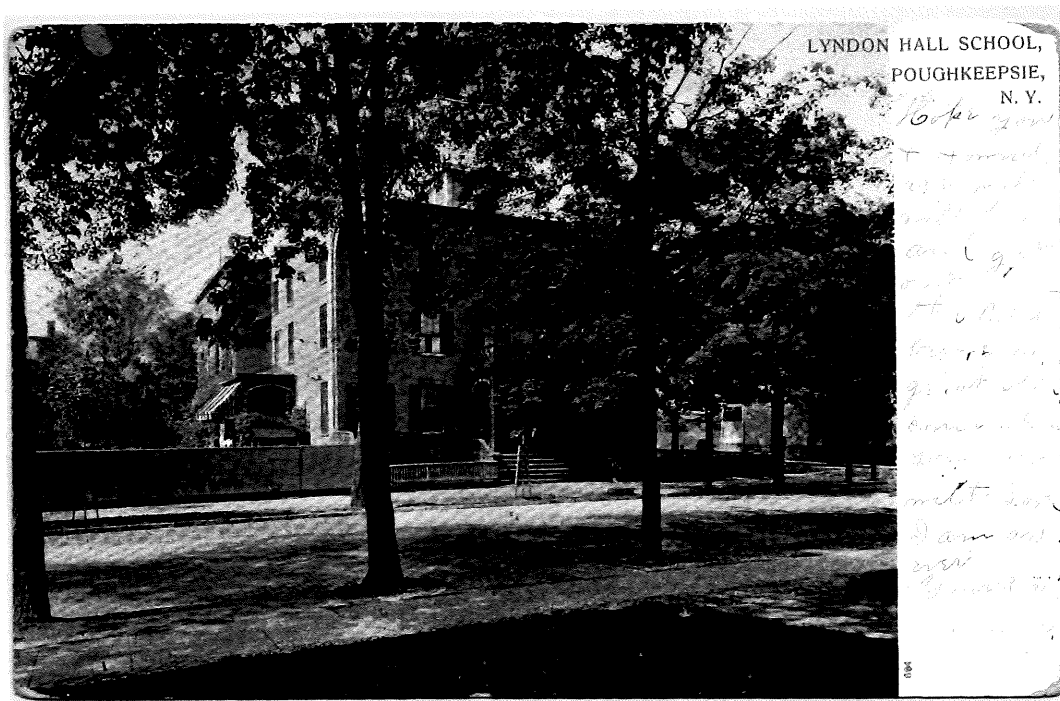


Figure 6. Post card view of Lyndon Hall School

This concludes the series of articles on “Poughkeepsie City of Schools.” We hope you have enjoyed learning about the significant role Poughkeepsie played in the education of young ladies during the 19th and early 20th centuries. ☒

References:

- *City Street Directory* (Poughkeepsie)—various years on file at Adriance Memorial Library.
- Platt, Edmond. *History of Poughkeepsie*. Dutchess County Historical Society, 1987 (reprint).

[Larry grew up in Poughkeepsie and many of his hobby interests remain in his hometown even today. He lives in Carmel, NY and can be contacted at largin1@verizon.net.]

Editor's Corner (continued from page 3) Post cards obviously can lend themselves especially well to certain aspects of postal history: RFD markings have a much greater tendency to appear on post cards (message side) than other types of mail; post cards also strongly support a presentation of advertising covers. (See **Figures 1 and 2** below) A new class of exhibiting—the Display Class—also lends itself to the use of post card images for illustration purposes. But even in the Postal History Class gentle use of a post card or two used in this manner would be acceptable.



Figure 1a. PC of Mizzen Top Hotel (1907)

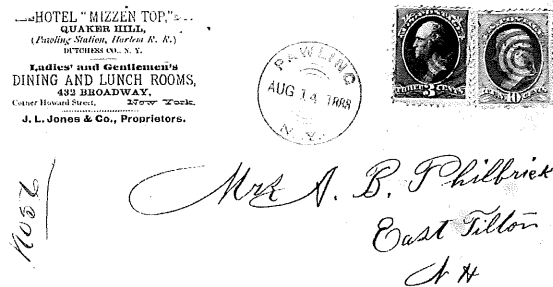


Figure 1b. Mizzen Top Hotel ad cover (1888)

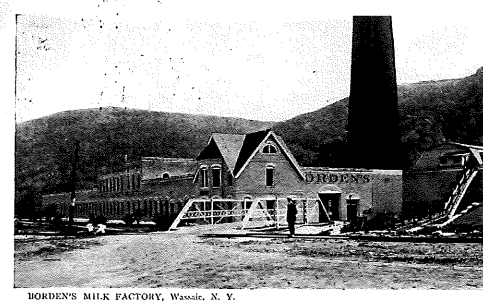


Figure 2a. PC of Borden's Milk Factory (1919)

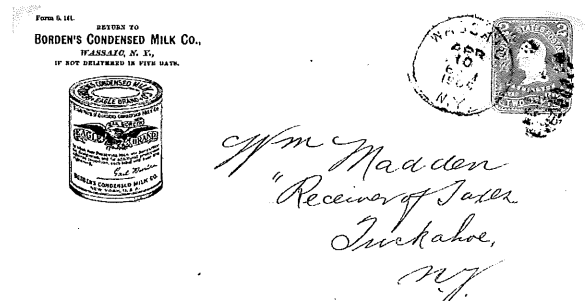


Figure 2b. "Borden's Condensed Milk Co." ad cover (1905)

Post cards are glimpses into the past. Often particularly useful are "Real photo" post cards: These are real photographs on thick photographic paper fashioned into post cards, most of which were produced from photographs taken by a local photographer. It is amazing what these images can contain! From the postal historian's viewpoint, these images can explain why certain postal routes were established (mountains and streams blocked certain routes); how certain post offices functioned, where they were located and the services they provided (a post card image was used in a prior issue to illustrate Bill Hart's treatise on the establishment of the RFD System); and in this issue one will find a post card image used to support the existence of a printing plant operated by John Lewis Child in which self-addressed envelopes were undoubtedly printed, some of which were used to create early FDCs. And of course Larry Laliberte's liberal use of post card images to illustrate his Poughkeepsie article.

So...if you are not a post card collector consider at least purchasing a few to embellish your postal history collection. Doing so is well worth the time and effort, and it's relatively inexpensive (unless you decide to focus on RR depots or some other hot topic). You'll be surprised at how much you'll learn about your collecting topic(s) by examining post card images.

Thanks are due to this issue's authors: Frank Braithwaite, Larry Laliberte, Robert Markovits, and Chet Smith. Special thanks to David Williams who took the time to help me out by editing the Robert Markovits article—a great job, David! ☒

Where are they NOW: New York Post Offices

By Chester M. Smith, Jr.

[Chester M. Smith is of course the co-author of the bible of New York State postal history collectors: New York Postal History: The Post Offices and First Postmasters from 1775 to 1980 (APS, 1982). He and John Kay also authored Pennsylvania Postal History (Quarterman Publications, 1976). It should be noted that in reference to Chet's comment in the last paragraph below, the ESPHS Publications office has but two copies remaining of the New York State volume. The price remains the same: \$29.00 to ESPHS members, \$40.00 to non-members.]

The designation of where a post office is located has been treated in number of ways by those compiling lists of post offices. John L. Kay and I always tried to give the operating county for the books that we did including New York Postal History.

In the case of Pennsylvania we tried, with over ninety percent success, to pinpoint by longitude and latitude every post office. This method is better but we did not try to find all the site changes which in some cases can move post offices by miles.

Recently I have started to try and locate the post offices by what county they NOW are located in. In general most are in the same county where they operated, but in a significant number of cases the county is different. For New York State there are over five hundred post offices that operated in some other county than where they are currently located. Many of these are because counties were created out of other counties.

Now to my problem, where are the post offices in the tables below located NOW. For example, Harrison operated in Clinton County, but since it was discontinued in 1808 and after that Franklin County was created it could still be in Clinton County or Franklin County.

Port Glasglow is a more interesting example. It operated in Ontario County. After it was discontinued Livingston, Monroe, Yates and Wayne were created from Ontario County. Port Glasglow could be in either Ontario County or any of the other four counties.

These are all the New York post offices that I have not been able to locate. I am sure some of you will say Port Glasglow is in XYZ County. Anybody that knows anything about XYZ knows that. If you do I would appreciate your sharing it with me.

One little side note: The New York Post History book has finally sold out according to the American Philatelic Society. They are happy because it took over 25 years to accomplish. Up goes the price now! ☒

Now here is a small ad. The only area of New York postal history that I collect is summer and winter post offices. If you have any gathering dust I would be happy to acquire them.

Chet Smith can be contacted at: P.O. Box 286, Pine Grove Mills, PA 16868
Email: cms@psu.edu.

Where Are They Now?

County	Formed	Dates	Post Office
Clinton		1807-1808	Harrison
Franklin	1808		
Genesee		1829-1829	Barber Hill
Wyoming	1841		
Herkimer		1795-1796	Steuben
Oneida	1798		
Saint Lawrence	1802		
Ontario		1817-1821	Port Glasgow
Livingston	1821		
Monroe	1821		
Yates	1823		
Wayne	1823		
Queens		1884-1891	East Hinsdale
Nassau	1898		
Queens		1892-1892	Evelyn
Nassau	1898		
Queens		1884-1884	Floral
Nassau	1898		
Queens		1885-1886	Floral
Nassau	1898		
Queens		1868-1868	Fox Borough
Nassau	1898		
Seneca		1819-1821	East Wolcott
Wayne	1823		
Seneca		1804-1814	Lancaster
Tompkins	1817		
Wayne	1823		
Steuben		1839-1848	Brimmersville
Schuyler	1854		
Steuben		1838-1848	Campbell's Creek
Schuyler	1854		
Steuben		1845-1848	Cold Spring Mills
Schuyler	1854		
Steuben		1846-1847	Cossville
Schuyler	1854		
Steuben		1834-1834	Gortons
Schuyler	1854		
Steuben		1828-1851	Hammond's Mills
Schuyler	1854		
Steuben		1822-1823	Juliana
Schuyler	1854		
Steuben		1850-1853	Lyons Hollow
Schuyler	1854		
Steuben		1834-1835	Oak Grove
Schuyler	1854		
Steuben		1853-1854	Patchin's Mills
Schuyler	1854		
Steuben		1839-1850	Pineville
Schuyler	1854		
Steuben		1823-1836	Rathbun's Settlement
Schuyler	1854		

Steuben		1848-1851	Tontine
Schuyler	1854		
Tioga		1829-1829	Beaver Flat
Chemung	1836		
Tioga		1806-1807	Cantine's Mills
Tompkins	1817		
Chemung	1836		
Tioga		1815-1816	Mott's
Tompkins	1817		
Chemung	1836		
Tioga		1829-1833	Piedmont
Chemung	1836		
Tompkins		1828-1842	Bensonville
Schuyler	1854		
Tompkins		1825-1833	Cayuga Inlet
Schuyler	1854		
Tompkins		1821-1841	Fall Creek
Schuyler	1854		
Ulster		1826-1827	Bloomington
Sullivan	1827		
Ulster		1823-1826	Hogan's Corners
Sullivan	1827		

~..~..~

“Oh, darn it, I don’t have enough money!”

Oneonta N.Y. { Paid - ~~18 3/4~~
Jan 16
To Milo W Thed
North Bergen Post Office
Genesee County
1835
Paid 12 1/2
Unpaid 8 3/4

20 3/4

Oneonta, NY (Jan. 16, 1835), addressed to recipient at “North Bergen post office” (1903) in Genesee County with 6 ¼¢ due.

An example of a **partly** unpaid FLS. Apparently the sender arrived at the Oneonta post office with insufficient cash to completely pay for the cost of his letter to an “Absent Friend,” as he addressed him. Thus the letter was sent onward with 6 ¼¢ to be collected from the addressee. Letter rated under the Act May 1, 1825, under which the rate for 150-400 miles was increased from 18 1/2¢. ☒



The NY Metro Counties:

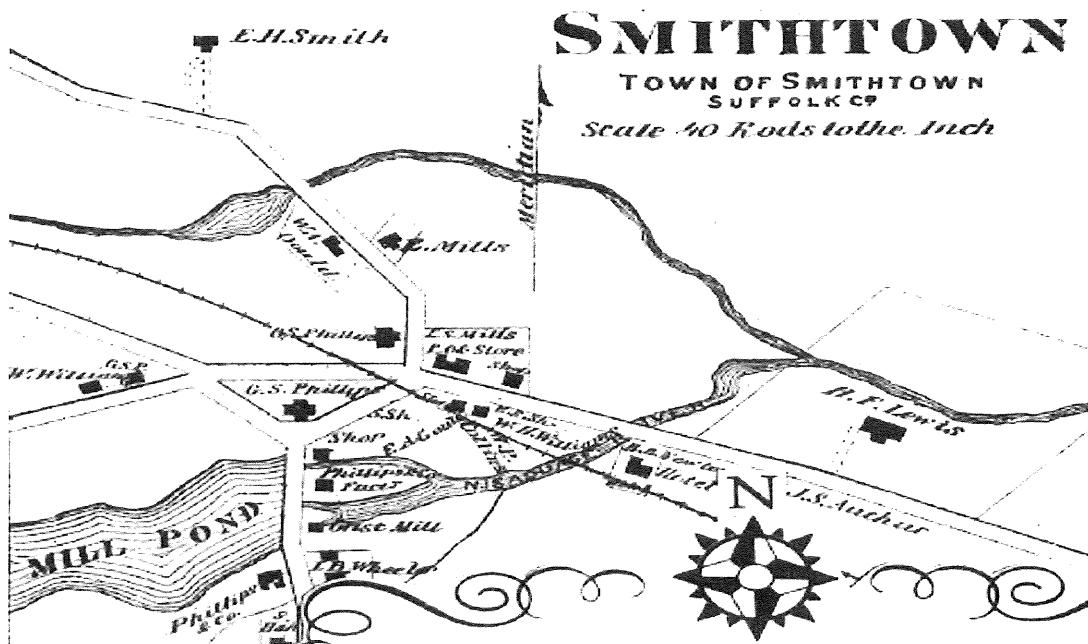
Nassau, Suffolk, Queens, Kings, Richmond, New York, Bronx, Westchester, Rockland

Smithtown: A Story Full of Bull...Smith

By Frank Braithwaite

No history of Smithtown would be complete without telling the tale of Richard “the Bull” Smith’s famous ride. In 1664, after securing the deed for his land from Lion Gardner, Smith still needed to make a deal with the local natives. Nesconset, Sachem of the Nesequake Indians, told Smith he could have all the land he could circumnavigate from sunrise to sunset while riding on the back of his bull. He waited till the longest day of the year, June 21st, and took his bull, Whisper, around what is present-day Smithtown. This Herculean feat of traveling 50 miles in 12 hours, on an animal known for endurance but not speed, is the stuff of fireside storytelling. Some say Richard trained his bull for the event, and others say he took Whisper’s favorite cow out the night before to mark a trail with her scent.

Located within the 50-square mile boundary of this new town was the Nissequogue River. Smith knew it would play an important role in the development of the town; not only would it provide transportation and an abundant food source, it would help to power the mills that ground grain, cut wood and fulled wool. The head of this river also would be the site of Smithtown’s Post Office for 133 years, and would bear the name *Head of the River*. The 1873 map below shows the head of the Nissequogue River, just east of Mill Pond.



There was no formal postal service in the early years on Long Island, but mail was not ignored. There was a post road (**Figure 1.**) established in 1765 that ran from Brooklyn, through Smithtown, to Southold along the north shore, then jumped across Shelter Island to Sag Harbor and back to New York, along the south shore. There were military couriers that traveled by boat to the Naval base at Sag Harbor, oyster and whaling boats that may have carried letters, and stage wagons, where the passengers shared the ride with the mail sacks.

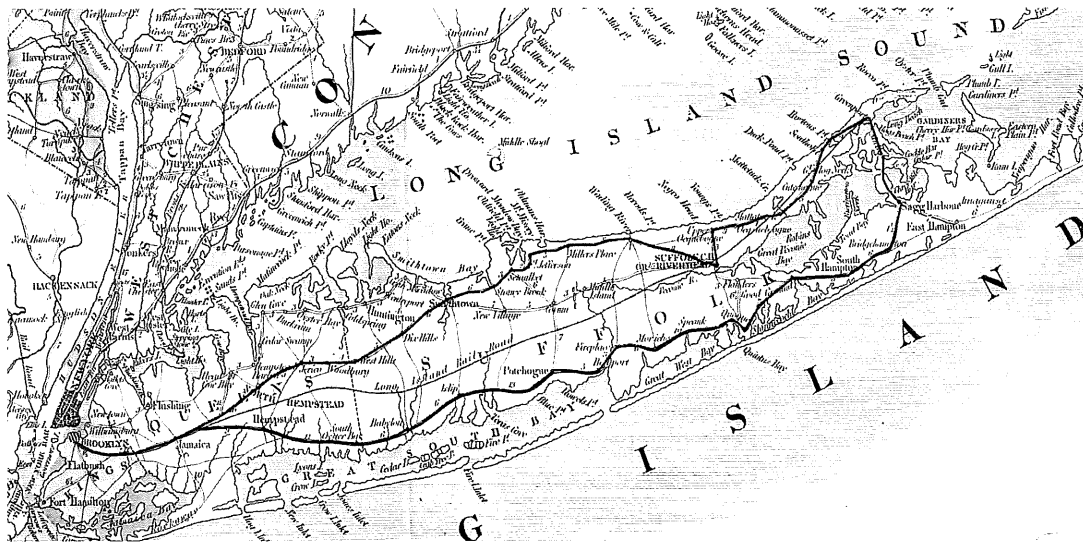


Figure 1. The post road as it was in the 1700's

Most of these early stagecoach endeavors were unsuccessful and abandoned, especially during the Revolutionary War, but mail delivery continued during the British occupation of Long Island, due to an enterprising young man named William Dunbar. Every two weeks, Dunbar made the lonely journey on horseback, heading east along the south shore and returning westward along the north shore. In 1775, his actions were a violation of British law, since he was not an official mail carrier, but the necessity of the times caused the practice to be winked at. I am not aware of any covers from the colonial period that bear Smithtown postmarks, leading me to believe that most correspondence was most likely carried privately.

In 1794, Postmaster General Timothy Pickering wrote to New York's Postmaster to propose a formal postal route:

"I sent to your care ten packages for as many post offices to be established on Long Island. I suppose that divers of them are very unimportant in themselves yet they will be an accommodation to their neighborhood particularly as stations for the delivery of newspapers. As fast as conveyances present, be pleased to forward them. I have left out Winnacomack [Dix Hills] as you advise and put Smith Town in its place..."

A letter in September of that year formalized the appointment of the Postmasters:

"Upon recommendations of David Gelston, Esq., I have appointed the following persons Postmasters on Long Island...Benjamin B. Blydenburgh, Smith Town... The first mail must be sent unlocked as the Postmasters do not have any keys until they receive the packet..."

Blydenburgh held several other positions in the Town, including Overseer of the Poor, Assessor, and Overseer of Highways. The Postmaster position did not occupy much of his time, as the mail delivery was only twice a month. Mail was dropped off at the Epenetus Smith Tavern on Main Street, a popular stopping place for those making the trip from “the city” to points east. When George W. Phillips was appointed Postmaster in 1819, he moved the Post Office two miles west, to his home and country store at Head of the River. (The significance of the westward move will be discussed later). In 1820, a stage line was started that left Brooklyn every Tuesday at 8AM, made seven stops including Smithtown, and arrived in Riverhead Wednesday afternoon; the post road passed by the basement door of the Phillips store, where the post-riders left the mail. The office resided in the Phillips Store at Head of the River for 70 years.

Figure 2 shows a letter written by Postmaster Phillips evoking his free-franking privilege. The letter was personal, and not eligible for free-franking privilege, but made the forty-mile stagecoach ride to its addressee none-the-less.

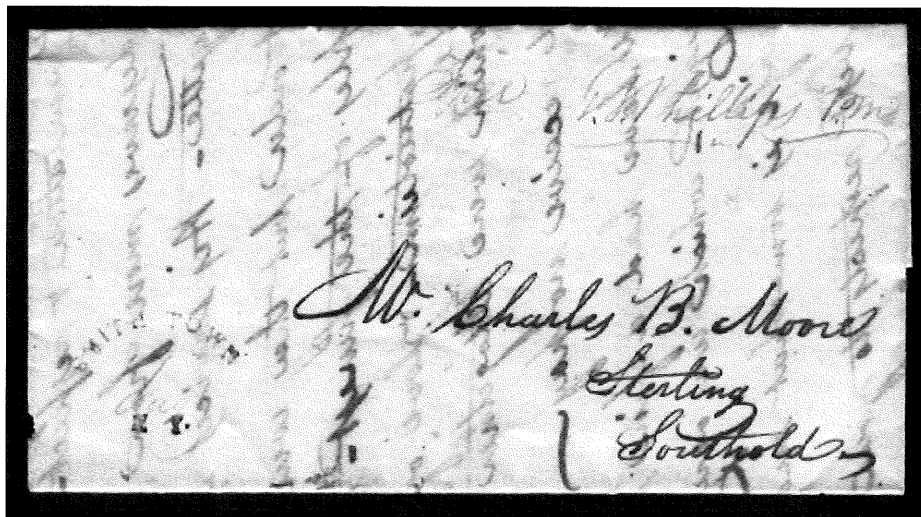


Figure 2. 1824 letter sent by Postmaster G.W. Phillips discussing the arrival of La Fayette in America.
This cancel is only known used in 1824-5.



Figure 3. Enlargement of cancellation in Figure 2.

Figure 4 (on the next page) shows a hand-stamp that is known used only in 1825 and is the basis for the listing in the *American Stampless Cover Catalog (ASCC)*. Here the free frank was properly applied, since the contents were official business.



Figure 4. Free frank to Postmaster Jeremiah Moore of Farms, NY

Smithtown's population had grown from 716, in 1776, to more than 1800 people by 1835. That same year, an advertisement appeared in the *Hempstead Inquirer*:

"The proprietors of the Riverhead, Southold and Smithtown line of stages have commenced running a stage three times a week from Smithtown to Brooklyn, leaving the inns of Thomas Hallock and Jesse Mills at Smithtown every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning at six o' clock".

The proprietor of the stage was Ezra Smith and his two sons, Elias and George. Smith had been running the stage for many years before he was awarded two mail delivery contracts by the USPOD in 1837: Route 570 and Route 571. Both of these routes started in Jamaica, went through Smithtown, and ended either in Suffolk (Riverhead) or Oysterponds (Orient), but took completely different paths. Smithtown was the only common stop in the middle of the route, giving it the benefit of four mail deliveries per week.

Around this time a twenty-year-old boy named Joseph Hull Conklin emerged as one of the drivers of the Smith Stage. The stories of his determination to deliver the mail are plentiful; perhaps the best illustration was the blizzard of 1838. Conklin left Smithtown at 5PM in the fury of a blinding snowstorm. Two miles out of town, he could go no further, so he abandoned the stage and led the horses to a nearby house; grabbing the mailbags and the best horse, he blazed a trail eastward. Forty-eight hours later, he returned to Smithtown with the east-end mail.

Conklin did the stage run for seven years before giving it up to live with his wife, Thankful, in a modest home in Smithtown. Walt Whitman, a teacher in Smithtown and a friend of Conklin, boarded with them for a few years, and was an occasional companion on the stage run. It is said that every night Whitman went to bed while Thankful washed and ironed Whitman's only shirt. The photo to the right shows Conklin many years later, worn down by life, as he had a difficult time making a living after leaving the stage. **Figure 5** (on the next page) shows the stage route that Conklin traveled.



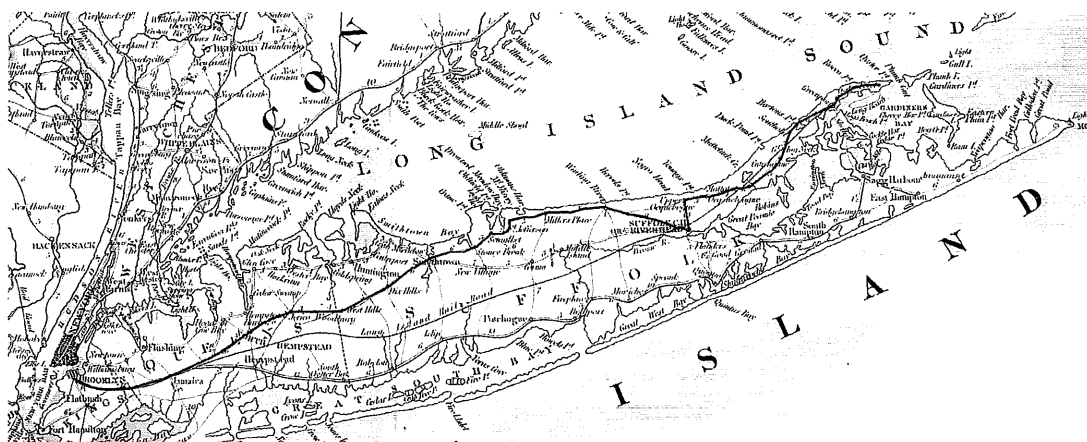


Figure 5.

In 1838, Jesse Mills became the Smithtown Postmaster at Head of the River, the residential west side. The Hallock Inn, though not officially a post office, became the depository for mail on the east side, known by the locals as the *Branch*. Examination of the Hallock account books shows that the mail stages stopped there often. The businessmen of the Branch must have liked the convenience of having the postal stop so close to the commercial end of town. The mail stage drivers stopped there because it was the most popular spot in town. Judge J. Lawrence Smith wrote, “*Uncle Tom [Hallock] kept a good homelike house and was a popular landlord; the weary traveler was sure of a sumptuous meal and a good bed.*” The depository at Hallock’s would set the stage for a two post office town in later years.

Although the Branch residents were unsuccessful in establishing an *official* post office in their neighborhood, they still could use the Hallock Inn –*unofficially*– for mail matters. However, in 1845, the federal government created a postal monopoly and outlawed the use of private carriers of the mail, except for those with government contracts. This new law would have closed Hallock Inn as a postal stop and probably cost the Hallocks dearly, as they depended on the incidental business they would receive from residents picking up and dropping off mail. Everyone would need to deposit mail a few miles west, at Head of the River, to receive an official postmark to verify point of origin and date, which was the requirement. **Figures 6 & 7** show covers postmarked at Head of the river during this time.

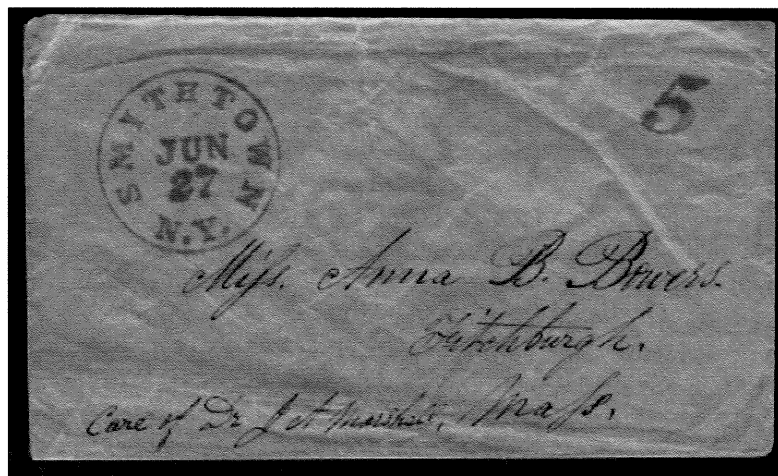


Figure 6. Posted between 1845-1851 to pay first class rate for less than 300 miles

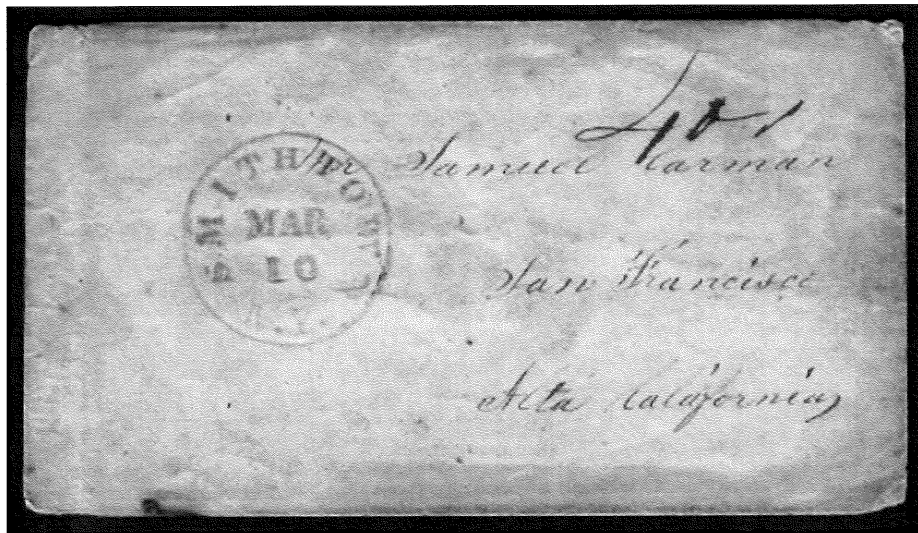


Figure 7. 40¢ paid the rate for passage by steamboat to Isthmus of Panama, where it would be transported over land by foot, mule or a small boat, and taken to San Francisco by another steamer. The absence of a PAID stamp indicates the letter was sent collect.

The Hallocks and many local businessmen must have lobbied hard to move the post office to their side of town and eventually they succeeded. Judge Smith gives this account of the events:

"While the town business was always, in early times, transacted at the Branch, the post office, being the only one in town, was at the Head of the River. After the inauguration of President Harrison the Smithtown Post office was removed to the Branch; this created great dissatisfaction among the residents at the Head of the River. The difficulty was finally compromised by establishing a new office, called Smithtown Branch in the new place, and carrying back the old post office with its old name back to Head of the River".

Judge Smith recorded these events in his book almost thirty years after the fact and I believe compressed the events in his telling, because the Branch did not get their Post Office—officially—until 1849, during Zachary Taylor's Presidency. Record keeping was not always an exact science in those days. It wasn't until 1874 that I could find any reference to the necessity for proper record keeping. In the town records of that year, a committee was appointed to "procure a fireproof safe for the use of town records" and be "authorized [sic] to index the town records..." Even if the town had kept meticulous records, the appointment of the new Postmaster probably would not have appeared in them, as it was a Postmaster General appointment.

Judge Smith's quote (above) requires some clarification because it has misled some historians. The sticking point seems to be the part that states "After the inauguration of President Harrison..." Some researchers would interpret "President Harrison" as William Henry Harrison, whose inauguration occurred in March 1841. I could find no such records that show a closing of the office at Head of the River and an opening of the Branch office, prior to October 16th 1849—which is recorded in Kay & Smith and is based on officially published USPOD records. As previously stated, the Hallock Inn was used as a postal stop, but I must reiterate that it had no appointed Postmaster. Others have surmised that it was

Benjamin Harrison in 1889, rather than William Henry; Benjamin Harrison would be impossible because Judge J.L. Smith's historical account was written in 1882. As a result, I presume that Judge Smith made an error in his account of the events—most likely the result of the aforementioned memory compression, which is common among elderly people relating events of many decades prior to the retelling.

In 1849, Smithtown did not have a newspaper. The *Long Islander*, a Huntington newspaper, reported on July 20th that the new Postmaster of **Smithtown** was James Hallock. I have also obtained a document signed by the Postmaster General, dated July 14th, 1849, naming Hallock as Postmaster (*Figure 8*). It was at this time the office was moved from Head of the River to the Hallock Inn.

JACOB COLLAMER,
POSTMASTER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING:

Whereas, On the 14th day of July, 1849, James Hallock was appointed Postmaster at Smithtown in the County of Suffolk, State of New York; and whereas he did, on the 13th day of July, 1849, execute a bond, and has taken the oath of office, as required by law:

Now, know ye, That, confiding in the integrity, ability, and punctuality of the said James Hallock, I do commission him a Postmaster, authorized to execute the duties of that office at Smithtown aforesaid, according to the laws of the United States, and the regulations of the Post Office Department: To hold the said Office of Postmaster, with all the powers, privileges, and emoluments to the same belonging, during the pleasure of the Postmaster General of the United States.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the Post Office Department to be affixed, at Washington City, the 31st day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-nine, and of the Independence of the United States the seventy-fourth.

J. Collamer

Figure8.

On November 9th 1849, the *Long Islander* made the following report:

“The Post Office, at Smithtown, L.I., having been removed a short time since, some two miles to the eastward of its former location, the P.M. General has changed its name to “Smithtown Branch” and has established a new office at the old location by the name of “Smithtown” and appointed Lyman B. Wheeler, Esq., Post Master.”

This *must* be the incident that Judge Smith refers to in his book; it is the only conclusion, I feel, that makes sense. *Figure 9*. verifies the appointment of Hallock as Postmaster in Smithtown Branch.

JACOB COLLAMER,
POSTMASTER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING:

Whereas, On the 16th day of Oct. - 1849, James Hallock - was appointed Postmaster at Smithtown Branch in the County of Suffolk, State of New York; and whereas he did, on the 16th day of Oct. - 1849, execute a bond, and has taken the oath of office, as required by law:

Now, know ye, That, confiding in the integrity, ability, and punctuality of the said James Hallock, I do commission him a Postmaster, authorized to execute the duties of that office at Smithtown Branch aforesaid, according to the laws of the United States, and the regulations of the Post Office Department: To hold the said Office of Postmaster, with all the powers, privileges, and emoluments to the same belonging, during the pleasure of the Postmaster General of the United States.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the Post Office Department to be affixed, at Washington City, the 31st day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-nine, and of the Independence of the United States the seventy-fourth.

J. Collamer

Figure9.

The earliest recorded cover from Smithtown Branch, according to *ASCC* is 1853 and exhibits a manuscript cancel. The cover in *Figure 10* shows an early hand-stamp; in many years of searching, I have not seen an earlier one.



Figure 10. Posted during the Civil war era.

Having two post offices on opposite sides of town, Smithtown and Smithtown Branch, seemed to satisfy everyone. Life went on as usual, with the exception of the loss of a few men to a war that was anything but civil...but there was change in the air. During and after the Civil War, the northeast was experiencing a population boom. Freed slaves and immigrants were coming to New York City in search of jobs and a new life. The farmers and businessmen of Smithtown knew they could benefit from a rail service that would connect them with these hungry mouths.

Unfortunately, the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) did not have a stop at Smithtown. The closest stop was Suffolk Station, 12 miles away. The LIRR's original plan was to create the fastest route from Brooklyn to the Greenport Ferry. From there passengers would cross the Long Island Sound, connect with another rail line and continue on to Boston. At the time, it was the fastest route from N.Y. City to Boston and very lucrative for the LIRR. To keep costs down and travel time to a minimum, they avoided the north shore and any other populated area, completely ignoring the needs of the Long Island residents. This decision would come back to bite them when an all rail line was constructed along the Connecticut shoreline, connecting NYC with Boston, and started the LIRR's demise. Everyone knew that fast, dependable transportation was the wave of the future, and the LIRR needed to change to accommodate small towns.

The people of Smithtown made many efforts to bring the railroad through their town. Negotiations with the LIRR resulted in a proposition whereby the town would organize an independent corporation, do all the construction and lease it back to the LIRR. Connection with the railroad would not come without a cost; the creation of the Smithtown-Port Jefferson Railroad meant the town would need to raise \$80,000 in cash and bonds to undertake this engineering challenge. The Nissequogue River became an obstacle that would be crossed with the largest iron structure (in its time) on Long Island. The sloops and scows that worked the river and helped haul the tremendous amount of steel needed to build this mighty trestle, did not know that they were helping to dig their own graves. When the first steam locomotive lumbered into town

1872, it marked the beginning of the end for these hard-working boats. The docks they once hitched to, fell into disrepair and were eventually consumed by the waters they once served. The arrival of the train was not only a shot in the arm for commerce, but it meant faster and more frequent mail delivery. **Figure 11** shows some fancy cancels from this breakthrough period.

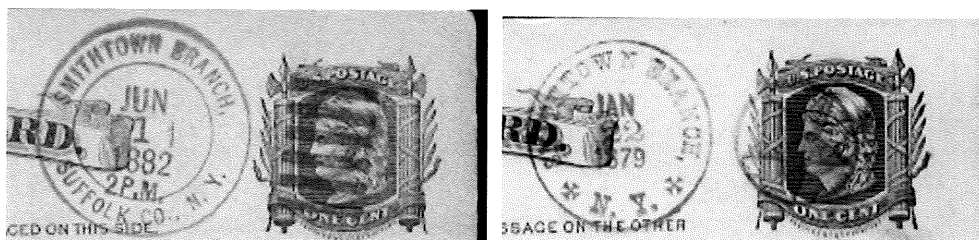


Figure 11.

In the 1890's, a new building was erected on Bellemeade Road to house the Smithtown Branch Post Office (**Figure 12**) and Head of the River P.O. was moved to the E.L. Arthur Store at the intersection of Middle Country Road and St. Johnland Road, on the present-day site of the Smithtown Bull statue (**Figure 13**).

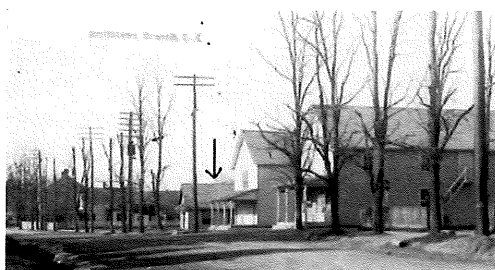
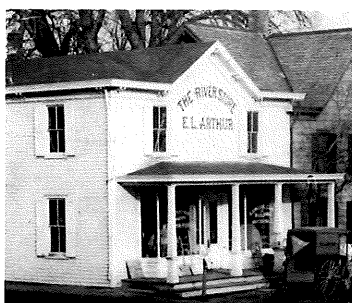


Figure 12. P.O. on Bellemeade



Postmaster Arthur kept it there for a short time, and eventually a stand-alone Post Office was erected on the south side of Middle Country Road, directly below the train trestle. Mail delivery was three times a day: 8:20AM, 11AM, and 6PM. Imagine sending an invitation back on the morning train to the city, and receiving a reply on the 6PM train that evening?

Figure 13. E.L. Arthur Store

Figure 14 shows the train trestle with Mill Pond below. The arrow points to the mail train's target—the Arthur Post Office.



Figure 14.

It wasn't always easy for the Postmaster, as Charlotte Adams Ganz explains:

"Sacks of mail for the Head of the River were thrown from the open baggage car door of the mail train just before it crossed the trestle of the Nissequogue River going east. Occasionally a sack missed its mark and landed in the swamp or sometimes in the river. Postmaster Arthur always kept a long pole handy for retrieving it."

There are reports of boys being paid to fetch the sacks if they floated down the river beyond the reach of the Postmaster. Wouldn't that make a nice auxiliary mark? "Water-damaged due to mail sack landing in the river." **Figure 15** shows Postmaster Arthur attaching the mail sack for the train to snatch on its westward run.

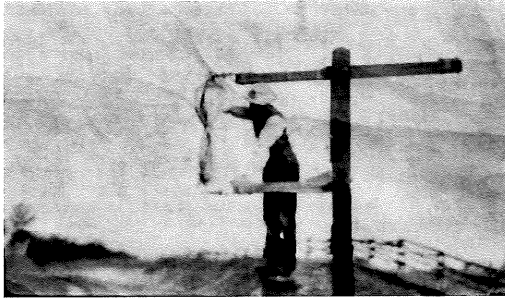
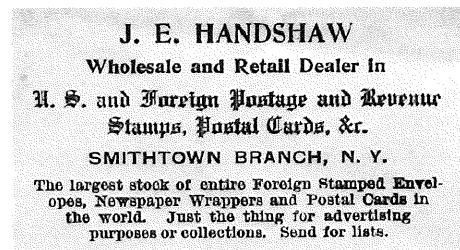


Figure 15. Photo circa 1895

Around this time, another Smithtown resident was making his mark on the world; J E. Handshaw, a farmer, carpenter, and printer, was beginning to turn his casual interest in stamps and coins into a lifelong career. In his book, *Looking Backward*, he fondly recalls the purchase of his first packet of stamps from J.W Scott, a man he would come to consider a friend, as well as a business associate. Eventually becoming a stamp dealer and giving up his other careers, Handshaw reminisces about many profitable deals and a few monumental blunders. He also became quite a real estate owner and landlord, controlling as many as five properties in Smithtown and Brooklyn.



In 1889 he erected a photograph gallery next to his print shop that he rented to an old school friend named E.F. Mills. Mills spent only two years in Smithtown before relocating to Huntington, but must have done wonderful work, as his photos survive today. **Figure 16** shows a cover sent by Mills to Handshaw while the latter was on his first European stamp-buying trip.

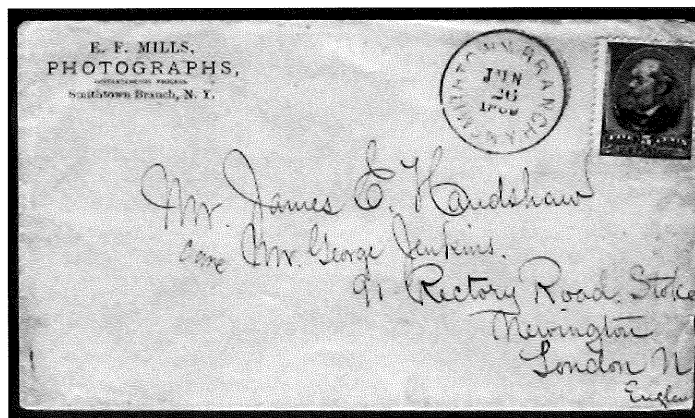
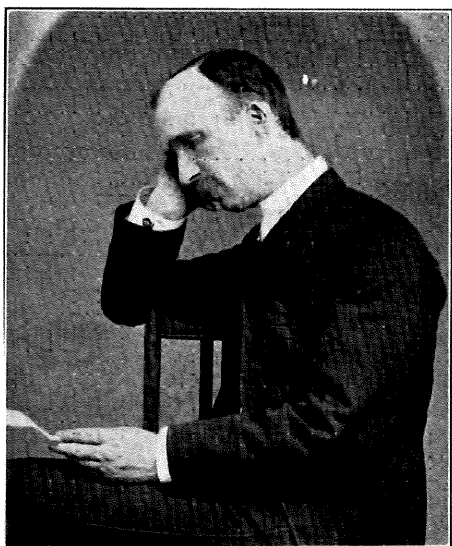


Figure 16.

Mills to Handshaw cover



J. E. Handshaw,
(From a photo, by E. F. Mills, about 1890.)

The London receiving mark on the reverse is dated July 3rd 1889. Handshaw's diary entry for July 5th states, "*Visited more stamp dealers today and did a little business with some of them, then helped Mr. Brown get his trunk to Euston Station. I was delighted to receive four letters from the U.S. today.*" The above letter, no doubt, was one of those he was "delighted to receive." The photo below was taken by Mills and appears in Handshaw's book.

Handshaw made a total of four trans-Atlantic excursions to buy & sell stamps and even turned one trip into a family vacation. He was becoming quite well known in the stamp community and the success of his business warranted the rental of an office in N.Y. City on John Street. During his career, he purchased the entire stock of several stamp dealers, most notably the business of the "Father of stamp collecting", J.W. Scott. According to Handshaw, in the fall of 1916, he and Scott were in his office and Scott very frankly asked, "Handshaw, why don't you buy me out?" Apparently Scott wanted to retire from the business and since he controlled practically all of the stock of *J.W. Scott Company*, he was in a position to sell it. Not long afterwards Handshaw acquired the entire stamp stock and the J.W. Scott name. Long hours and failing health was taking its toll on him, so after only three years of ownership, He sold the J.W.Scott Company to the Edgewood Stamp Company of Milford, Connecticut.

James Elbert Handshaw was 71 years old when he died in 1926, but his legacy lives on with beautiful covers such as the one in **Figure 17**.

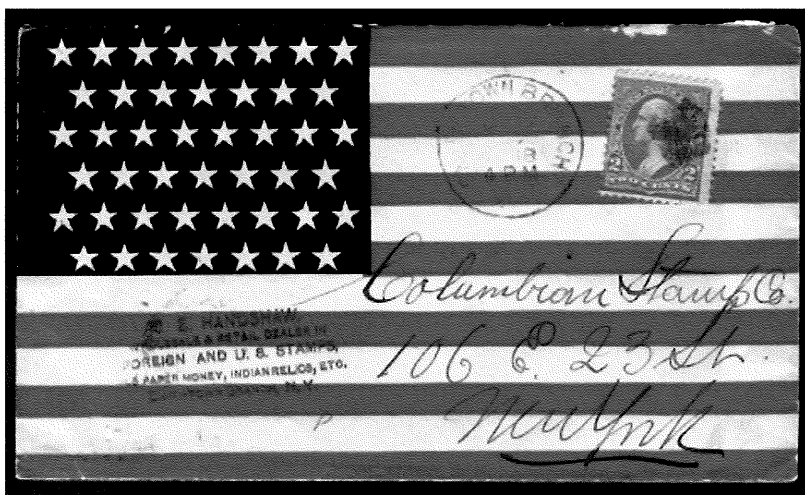
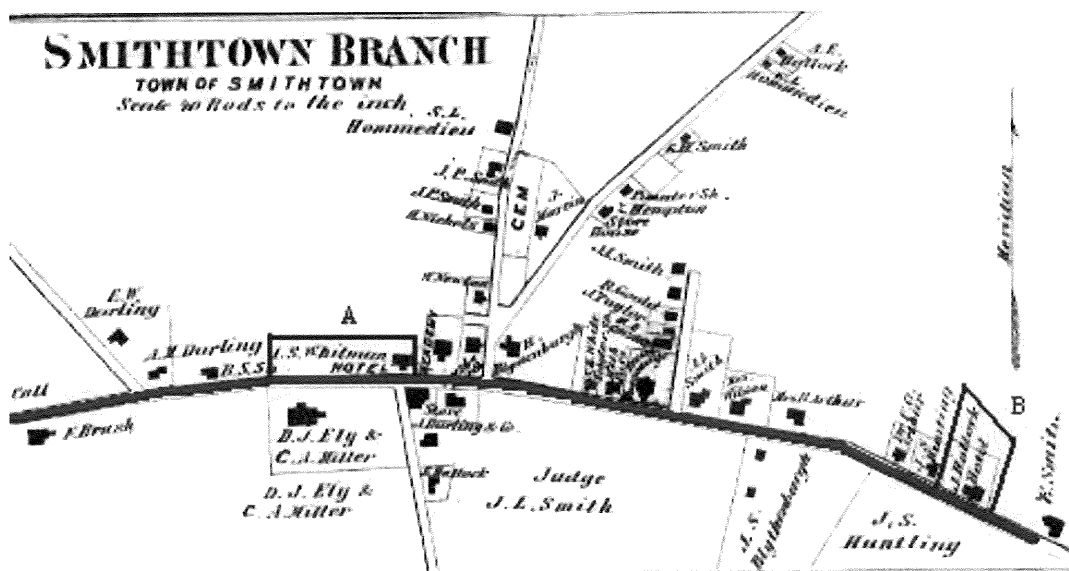


Figure 17. Spanish/American War patriotic cover

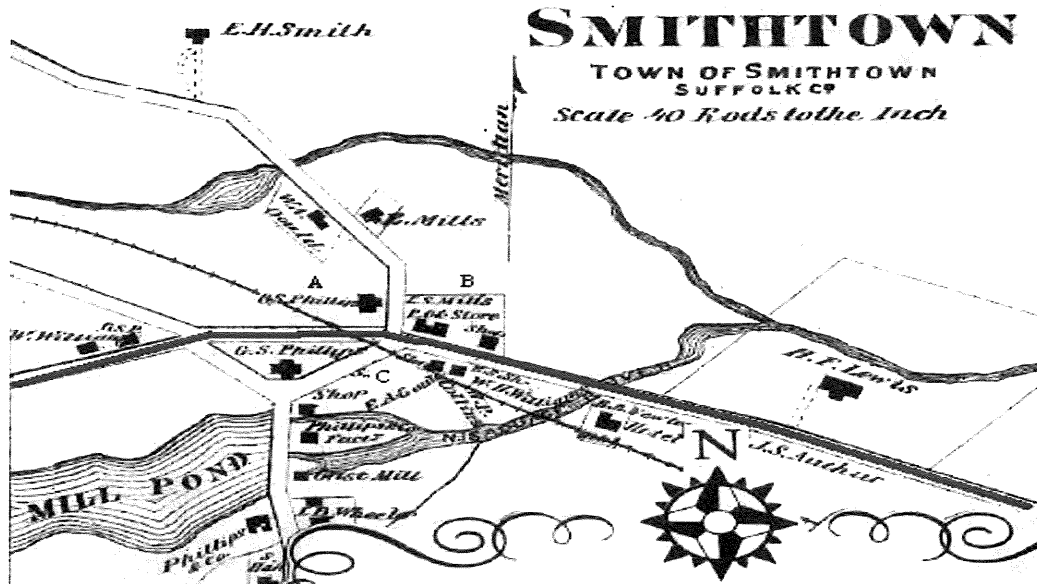
There is an amusing end to our story, as seen in the *Smithtown News*:

Appendix A- 1873 map of Smithtown Branch



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- EXCELSIOR!* September 2005, Whole No. 5/New Series

Appendix B- 1873 map of Smithtown



- Post road in red.
- Figure A is the Phillips' residence, where E.L. Arthur built his general store and Post Office in the 1890's. It is the current site of the Smithtown Bull statue.
- Figure B is where the Phillips' Post Office and Store was until 1838, when it was taken over by Col. Jesse Mills, the Postmaster at that time.
- Figure C is where the first stand-alone Post Office was erected. It was here that Postmaster Arthur gathered the bags thrown from the mail train.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank librarian Cathy Ball, whose research assistance and infectious enthusiasm kept me digging deeper, and Noel Gish, who not only wrote THE book on Smithtown history, he loaned many items from his personal collection for reference.

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An 1887 Short Paid Postal Card From Germany to New York City



A. German auxiliary marking: **Removed from Mailbox**

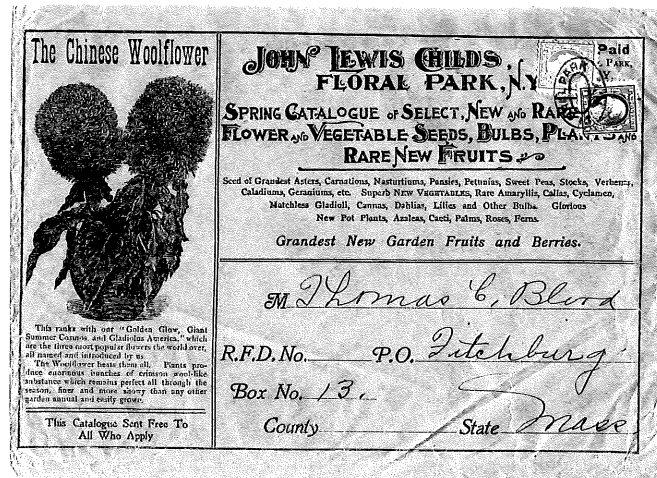
B. US charge markings: = 3¢ postage due



A German commercial post card dropped in the mailbox outside the Bremen 5 post office after closing (appears to read 10N=PM) on December 3, 1887. As was the practice at that time the German post office forwarded the card to its destination after applying the auxiliary marking explaining the reason for accepting the card into international mail rather than return it for additional postage. The German international postal card rate in 1887 was 10 pfennig, not 5! The US applied charge markings indicated that the US was to collect the deficiency amount of three cents. ☒

JOHN LEWIS CHILDS: ANOTHER SIDE OF THE MAN

By Robert L. Markovitz



Typical John Lewis Childs advertising cover of the period.

Frank Braithwaite's fine article in the March 2005 *Excelsior!* detailed John Lewis Childs' very prosperous seed and bulb business. It also noted how he used his influence from this business to cause some interesting changes to two post offices in Queens and Nassau Counties, Floral Park and Flowerville respectively. However, I would like to present another side of this interesting and enterprising gentleman.

The servicing of First Day Covers began in earnest in the early 1920's with such giants as Roessler, Nickles, Gorham, and others; but to me, aside from Boston's B. L. Drew, a dealer who made Columbian First Day Covers, the initial First Day Cover servicer was John Childs.

I examined my stock and reviewed my holdings of 2 c Lincoln commemoratives (Sc. 367). This group amalgamated my holdings with those of the late great collector Lawrence S. Fisher. Much to my surprise, I found five different Lincoln First Day Covers that were all addressed to Mr. Childs in Floral Park, NY. Figure 1 shows one of these five First Day Covers.

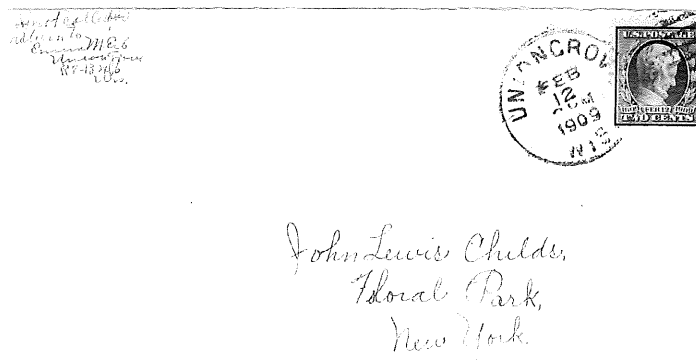


Figure 1. February 12, 1909 First Day Cover of Sc. 367 mailed from Union Grove, WI to John Lewis Childs.

In addition to this cover from Union Grove, Wisconsin, other covers were found from Alpena, Michigan, Saint James, Minnesota; Staatsburg, New York; and Kinston, North Carolina. From these, it appears obvious that Mr. Childs was in touch with many collectors around the country, and got them to send him First Day Covers, at least of this particular issue. This is a previously unknown aspect of his life.

Like the cover in **Figure 1**, two others were hand addressed to Childs but have return addresses of a commercial nature. These are illustrated in **Figures 2 and 3** below.

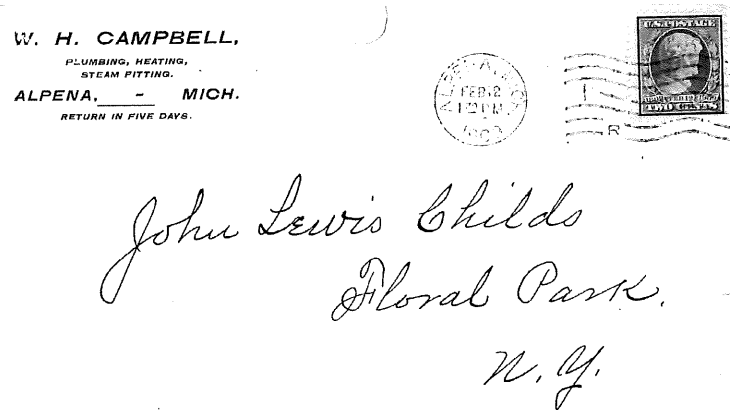


Figure 2. Lincoln First Day Cover from Alpena, Michigan on a corner card of the W. H. Campbell Company of that city and mailed to John Lewis Childs in Floral Park, New York.

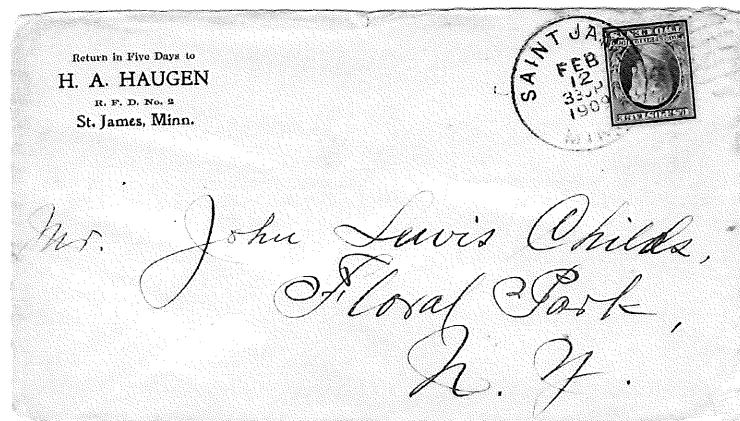


Figure 3. Another Lincoln First Day Cover bearing the commercial corner card of H. A. Haugen of Saint James, Minnesota, which is also hand addressed to John Lewis Childs in Floral Park.

The remaining two First Day Covers were created on Childs' business return envelopes. These are pictured in **Figures 4 and 5** (found on the next page). Note that neither of these covers bears any kind of return address.

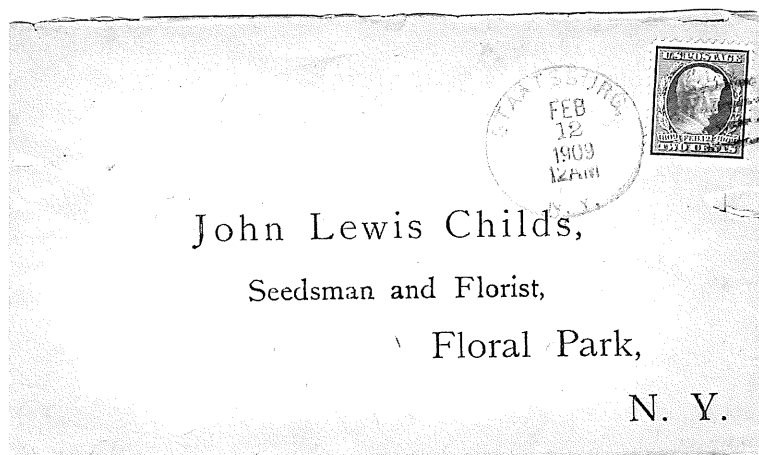


Figure 4. A Lincoln First Day Cover from Staatsburg, NY on business envelope of John Lewis Childs.

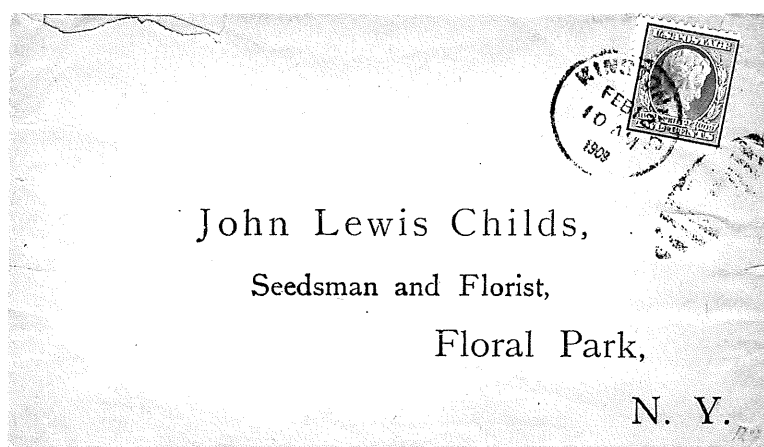


Figure 5. Another Lincoln First Day Cover on the business envelope of John Lewis Childs, this one posted from Kinston, North Carolina.

John Childs' philatelic presence appears to be everywhere in the 1909 to 1920 period. At a recent show I found another instance where philatelist Childs was at play. In this case he utilized two revenue stamps in an attempt to avoid the proper payment of postage. This cover, seen in **Figure 6**, was mailed from Franklinville, North Carolina on the morning of March 22, 1916, and is franked with two copies of the 1 ¢ red documentary revenue stamp of 1914.

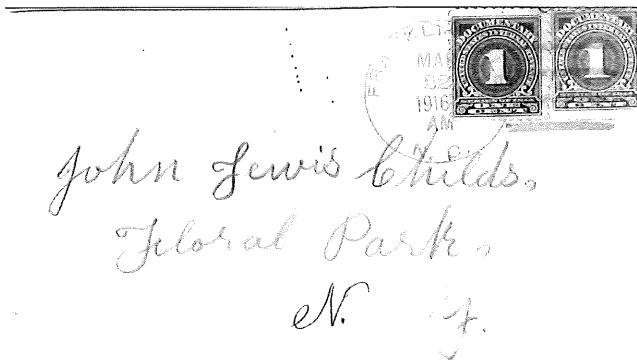
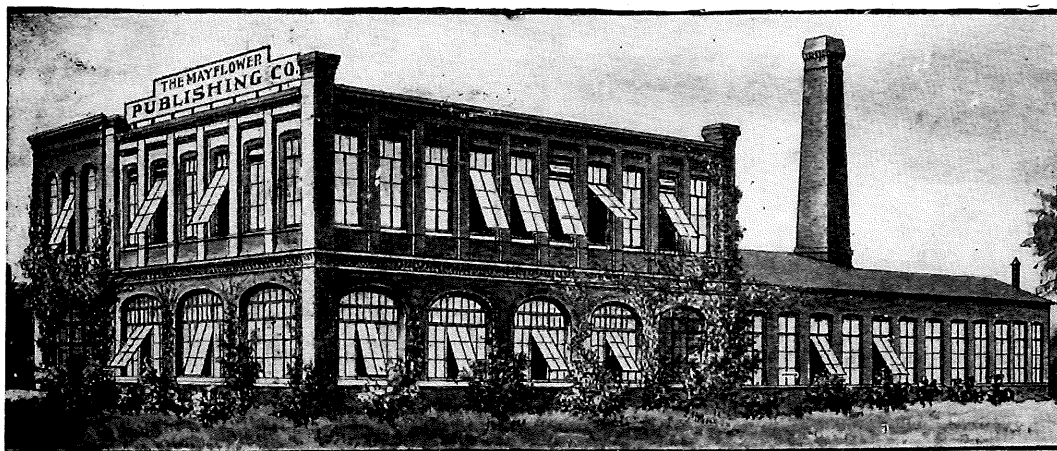


Figure 6. Letter postmarked in Franklinville, North Carolina on March 22, 1916 and mailed to John Lewis Childs. In lieu of proper postage the cover bears two 1 ¢ red revenues from 1914, either Sc. R196 or R207.

In closing, I show a picture of John Lewis Childs' Mayflower Publishing Company located in Floral Park, New York.



**Printing House of the Mayflower Publishing Company, Floral Park, N. Y.
Part of the Establishment of John Lewis Childs.**

Photo from picture post card

Just what role Childs' floral and publishing business played in his philatelic endeavors is not specifically known. His printing firm, the Mayflower Publishing Company certainly had the capabilities printing his own catalogs, stationery, and business return envelopes. It would not be farfetched to assume that this might just have included First Day Cover envelopes or cachets. ☒

[Ed. note: Staatsburgh, NY (Dutchess Co.) was a post office used by well-known seedsman, A.T. Cook, of nearby Hyde Park (who used the Lent and Staatsburgh post offices to mail his seed and vine catalogs). Is it possible that the business return envelope FDCs were part of an arrangement that John Lewis Childs had with his fellow seedsmen? An examination of a modern North Carolina road map indicates that Kinston and Franklinville are approximately 120 miles apart. Are they also sites of contemporary seedsmen? This would be an interesting aspect for a dedicated researcher to pursue! DAN]

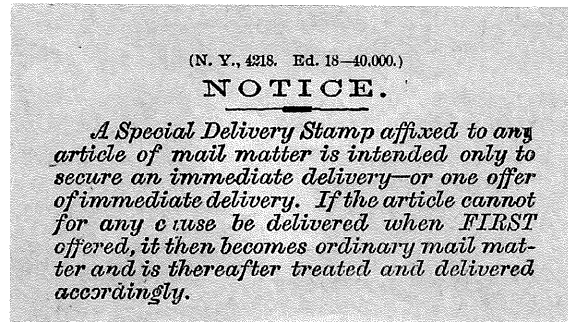
[Bob lives in semi-retirement in Massachusetts and can be contacted with any questions or comments at: P. O. Box 891, Middletown, NY 10940.]

This article was edited by David E. Williams.

NEW YORK CITY NON-DELIVERY SPECIAL DELIVERY NOTICE

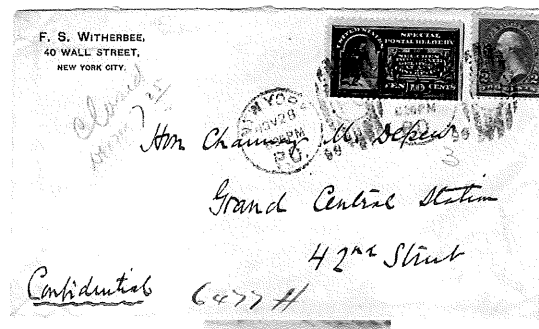
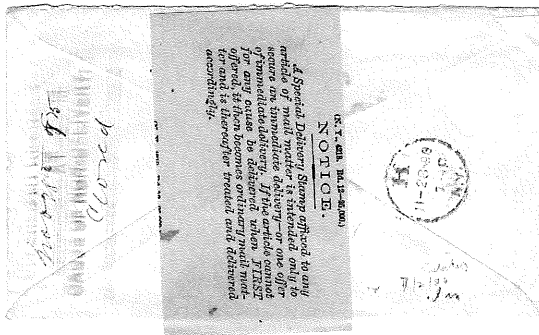
By Robert Markovits

The printed notice illustrated with this short article is one of at least thirty different editions, although I truly believe there are at least 40 editions of this NYPO form #4218 *check notice* for special delivery mail which could not be delivered

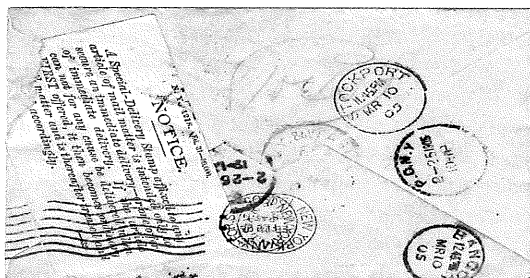


This is a *check notice* for special delivery mail which could not be delivered. The notices are found in the late 1890s to early 1900s and were mainly found in the downtown area. There are *unnumbered* labels as well, but how many I know not. Not to be outdone, Brooklyn, NY has an *unnumbered* plain vanilla-colored label to be watched out for.

The covers below illustrate their use (note that each label is accompanied by a purple hand-stamp).



Note the magenta hand-stamp "Offered At Address/____AT____/Cause of Non-Delivery"; it appears on the reverse beneath the label.



On this cover the hand-stamp appears on the front at lower right, also in magenta.

For an article in preparation, I would appreciate viewing covers, both front and back, that bear this label. Although the labels appear almost exclusively on the reverse of a cover, I need to view the front in order to acquire the address location, which is an essential part of the article.

It is interesting to note that Brooklyn, NY, not to be outdone by its cross-East River neighbor, also has an unnumbered plain vanilla label that needs to be watched out for. ☒

[Information and photocopies are solicited and can be sent to Bob at P.O. Box 891, Middletown, NY 10940.]

A Challenge!

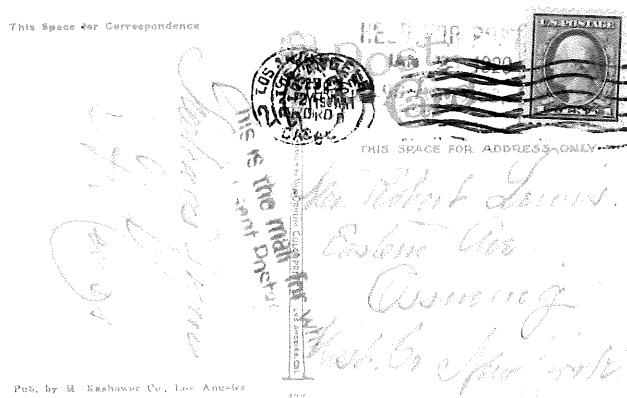
By Bob Markovits

What *regular* issue (that's the only hint I will give) United States postage stamp is *not yet* recorded on a cover from New York City or any other New York State location. At this point I record Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, one Texas City, Siberia and Guam as the only locations of use.

[Hmm, this is beyond the Editor's knowledge, but I believe there's a good chance that being used in Siberia and Guam are a clue! Who can rise to the occasion and accept the challenge? Answers from responders will appear in a future issue. Please contact the Editor with your answer.]

A Glimpse of the Future:

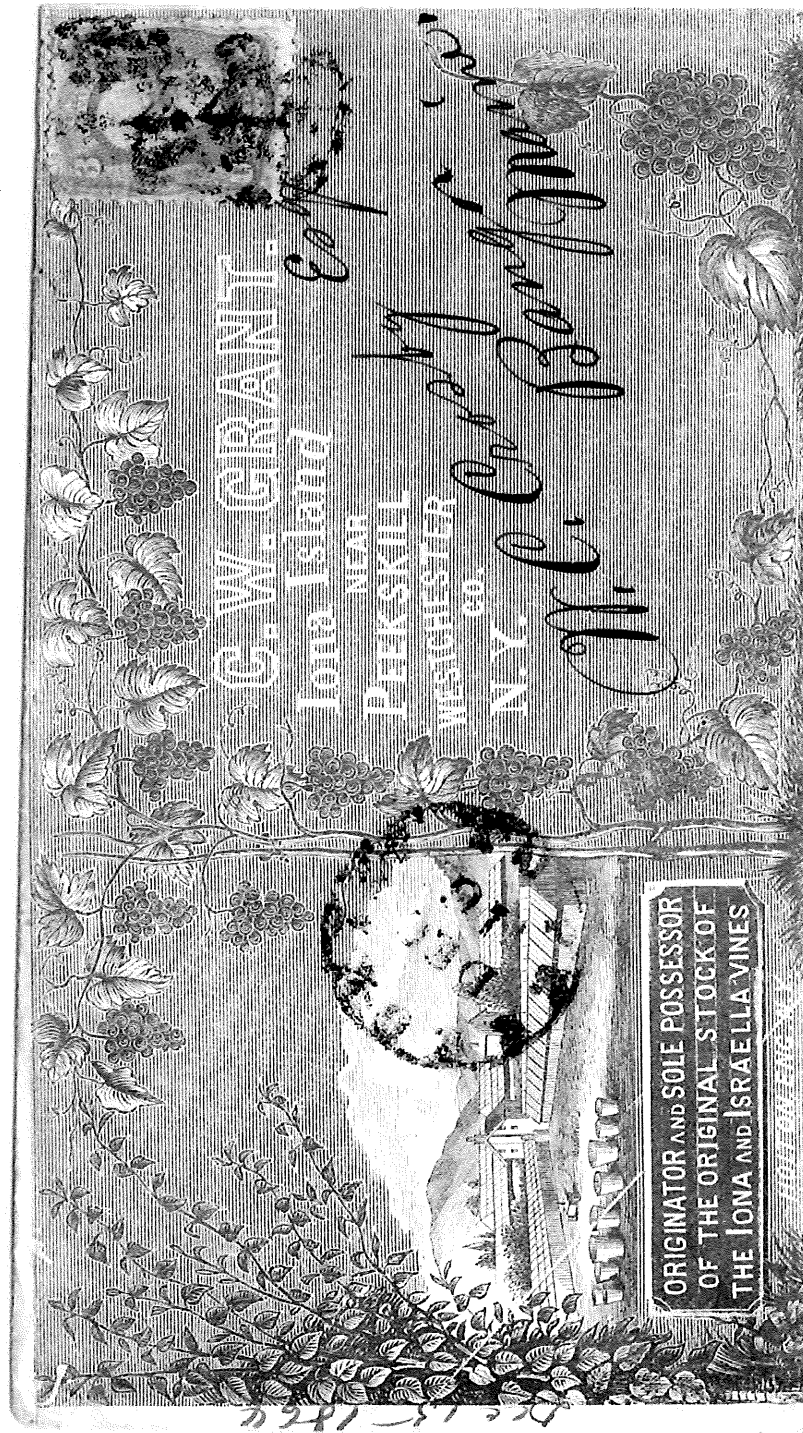
**“HELD FOR POSTAGE” and
“THIS IS THE MAIL FOR WHICH YOU SENT POSTAGE”**



The above card bears both of the title markings and is taken from the Editor's collection. How many members possess similar cards?

Peter Peloquin, who has authored in these pages before, has prepared an article with this very subject in mind. It will appear in a future issue.

A Beauty From Iona Island!
(Located in the Hudson River opposite Peekskill)



From the collection/stock of Bob Markovits