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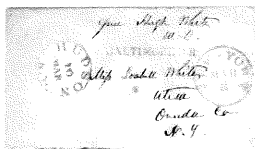
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EXCELSIOR!

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Editor's Box

I understand that publishing quarterly for the past year or so tends to present problems for some of our authors to do quick turnarounds. But there are many of you out there whom we haven't heard from yet. To those of you who have sent an article this past quarter, I pass along a big **THANK YOU!** As you are probably aware, after our September issue, we will be back on a semi-annual schedule and contributors will have six months in which to put together some nice articles or features. In the meantime, please consider taking the time to send an article during the next three months. Share your knowledge with others. Writing articles can be a learning experience for authors as well as a means of sharing your knowledge with others in the Society.

D.E.W.

THE POST CARD COMES OF AGE ***Post Card Postal History – 1893 to 1907***

By William J. Hart

Post cards known from early 1870s were initially used for advertising. Without writing they were accorded 3rd class mailing privilege. With writing first class postage was required at 2 cents starting October 1, 1883.

In this same time period the government started providing postal cards franked at 1 cent. The address side contained the inscription “THIS SIDE ONLY FOR THE ADDRESS THE MESSAGE ON THE OTHER SIDE.” The message side initially was used for written or printed information of personal or business nature. The latter was quickly developed by the imagination of the user to show pictures of product, places of business and trade marks in color or more conventional black. The example shown in **Figure 1** is a salesman calling card to identify the next call. This is an example of a Pioneer post card.

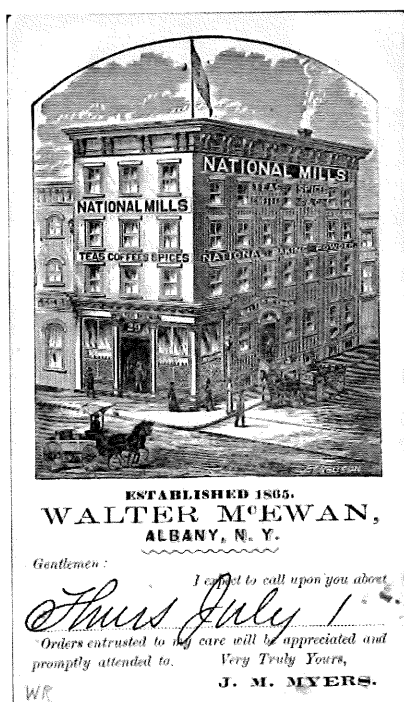


Figure 1. The message side of this postal card served as an ornate calling card for a salesman.

While the government cards can be found in the 1880s with pictures showing cityscapes and land marks, the producer had to assume the cost of the card before the printing. Conversely a printed card on plain stock required 2 cents postage. There was limited use, as many more are found unused than postally used.

The concept received a boost in user interest at the time of the Columbian Exposition, when an entrepreneur (Goldsmith) obtained a monopoly at the Fair. Using the then current postal card he made available reasonably priced picture cards of the Exposition through vending machines on which limited messages could be written and mailed home from the fair grounds.

Figure 2 illustrates the front and back of a typical card. It bears an International Postal Supply Company World's Fair Station cancel of 1893 on the government postal card, with a color picture of the Government Building and a message written on the back. *[It is appropriate at this point to provide a definition. Since this is a study of postal history, the address side will be referred to as the front and the picture side as the back.]*

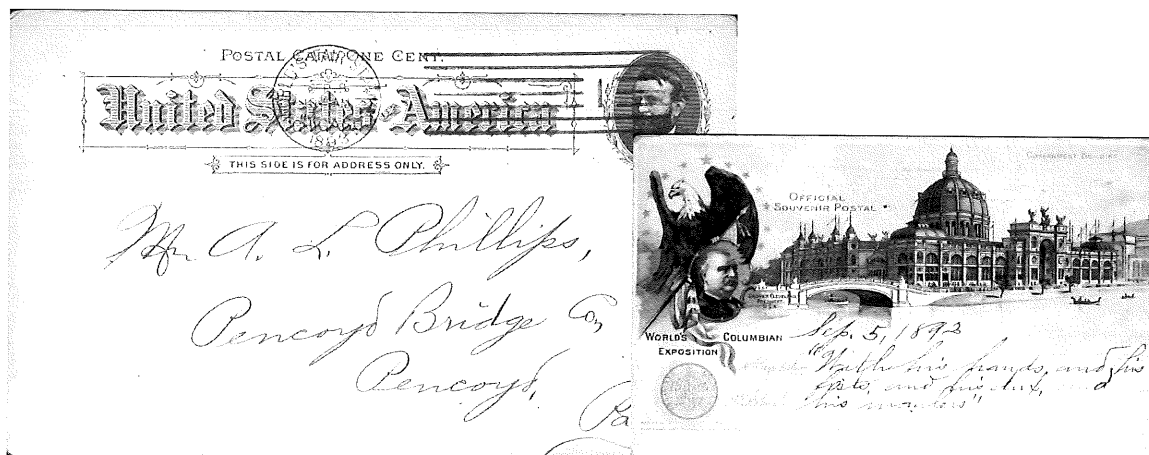
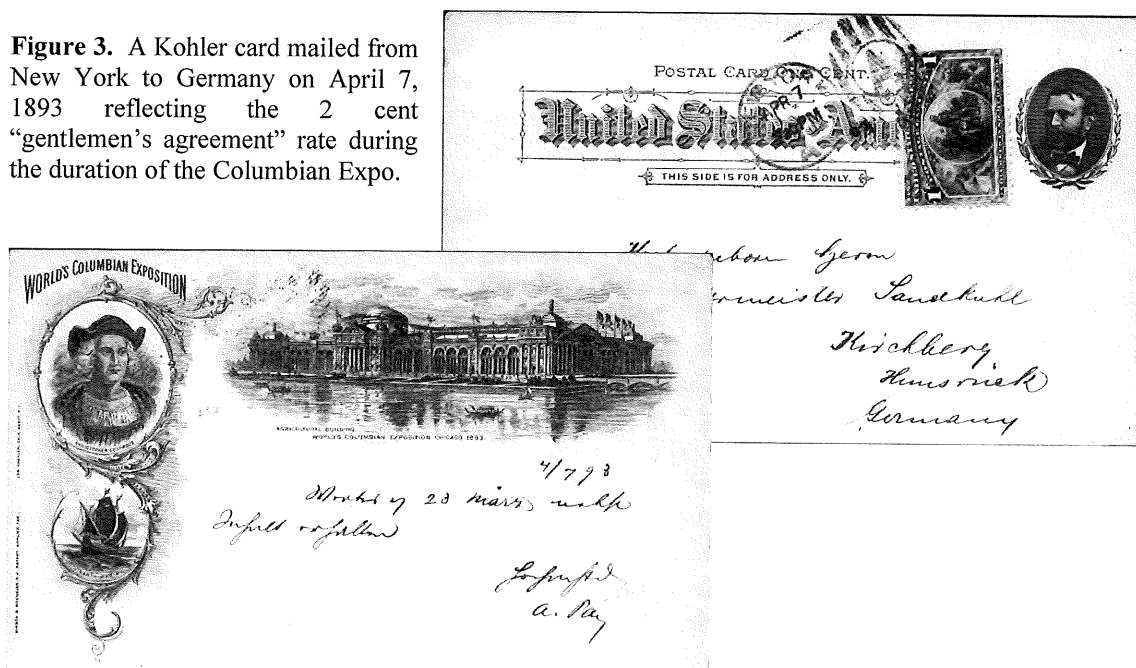


Figure 2. Front and back of an Official Souvenir Postal card from the Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

The government cards could be rated up to 2 cents for foreign destinations. Here an unusual development was encountered: the card being issued by the Post Office Department (P.O.D.) was slightly larger than the standard that had been set by the U.P.U. This nominally would have required an up-rating to 5 cents, but there seems to have been a “gentlemen’s agreement” to accept the 2 cent franking until the ‘Fair’ was over. Then in the *P.O. Daily Bulletin* dated November 20, 1893 the Postmaster General specified that the “C” card (now known as UX10) required four cents added postage for international mail. Examples of each of these rates can be seen in **Figure 3** and **Figure 4** respectively.

Figure 3. A Kohler card mailed from New York to Germany on April 7, 1893 reflecting the 2 cent “gentlemen’s agreement” rate during the duration of the Columbian Expo.



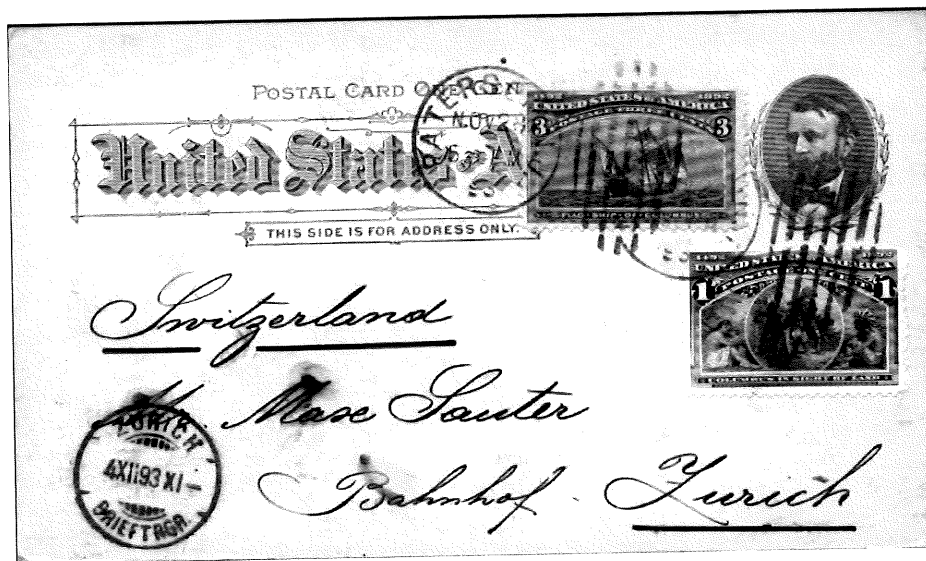


Figure 4. Mailed from Paterson, New Jersey to Zurich, Switzerland on November 23, 1893, this card bears 4¢ additional postage to meet the UPU letter rate as decreed three days earlier by the Postmaster General.

In the next few years use of picture cards became more common and went by a variety of names such as: Souvenir Card, Mailing Card and others with such names being applied to the address side of the card. While the postal history aspects of the cards have been recognized in a limited way the picture side developed a considerable following with extensive cataloging of individual producers. These cards are known as Pioneer Cards with some established as rare and expensive. A precise definition requires the card to have been published by an American firm before July 1, 1898, particularly if used. However, this article will be concerned with the address side such as the next example, copyright 1895, of N.Y. City Hall showing the 2 cent rate and seen in **Figure 5**.

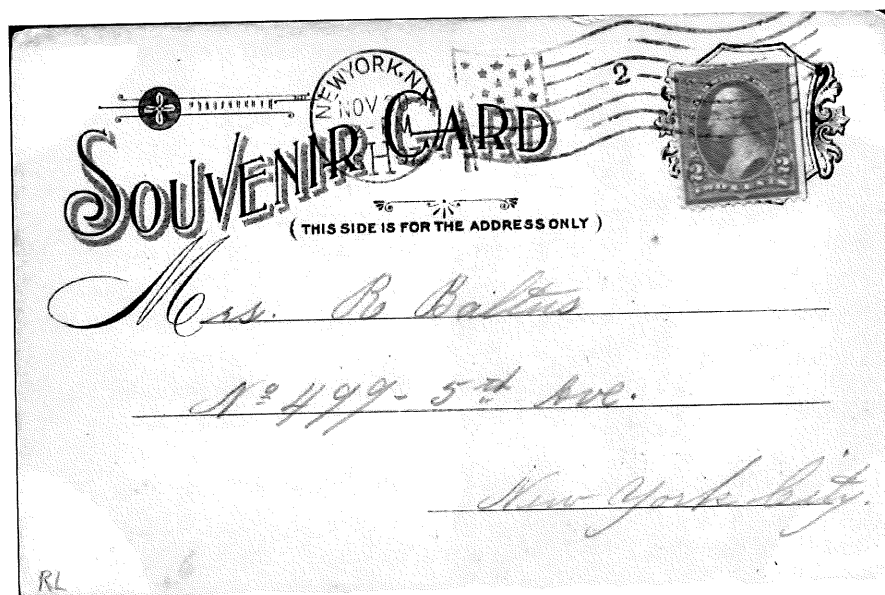


Figure 5. A privately printed Souvenir Card mailed in 1897 and properly franked with a 2¢ stamp.

A similar type picture, copyright 1897, of the N.Y. City Post Office on a government card could be sent with correspondence domestically for one cent or to foreign destinations for 2 cents. Private picture cards could be mailed domestically and to foreign countries at one cent, if they were marked 'Printed Matter' and had no other writing than the senders name and address. Examples of each are seen in **Figure 6**.

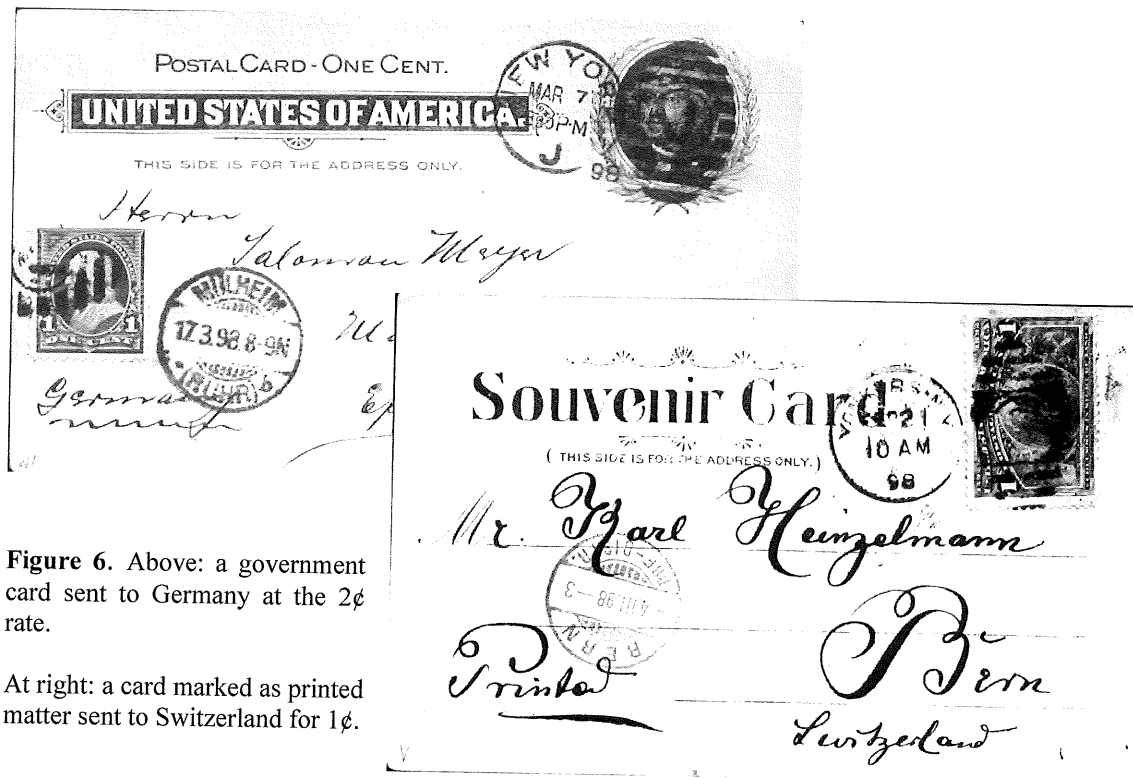


Figure 6. Above: a government card sent to Germany at the 2¢ rate.

At right: a card marked as printed matter sent to Switzerland for 1¢.

From the issuing of the first U.S. postal card, the P.O.D. was very proprietary about the phrase "postal card." At the same time the use of picture cards was spreading from Germany where they had developed the technology for the printing. A large proportion of the early cards sold in the U.S. were printed in Germany. By 1894 England allowed the domestic mailing of private post cards with correspondence on the reverse at the government card rate; Canada followed the next year. U.S. card publishers finally prevailed upon Congress to enact the now famous Act of May 19, 1898. The Authorization Statement of that Act would be found on U.S. cards for years to come. Not always understood by collectors was that the Act merely made legal the one cent rate for what it called "private mailing cards" with written messages effective July 1 for domestic mails. The Postmaster General (P.M.G.) was directed to establish the regulations of conformity, which he did with P.M.G. Order No. 242 in the June 18, 1898 issue of the *P.O. Daily Bulletin*.

That order had eight rules, the first three defining size, color, and quality. The fourth specified the use of the phrase 'private mailing car,' the 'Authorization Statement,' a place for the stamp and the phrase 'This side is exclusively for the address.' The fifth allowed for writing or printing and illustrations on the message side while the sixth made mandatory affixing a one-cent stamp. The seventh reaffirmed the government's monopoly on the issuance of postal cards. The

eighth rule required 'private mailing cards' with written messages to foreign countries to be mailed at the letter rate (i.e. 5 cents).

The earliest example of the above regulation found by the writer is July 29, 1898, as seen in **Figure 7**. However, two other examples at the one cent rate, called Souvenir Cards, have been found dated July 11 but not having the Authorizing Statement. One of these is illustrated in **Figure 8**. No doubt the card producers were unprepared, as it is difficult to find used 1898 cards properly inscribed.

Figure 7. The earliest example found by the writer of a card conforming to P.M.G. Order No. 242 is dated July 29, 1898.

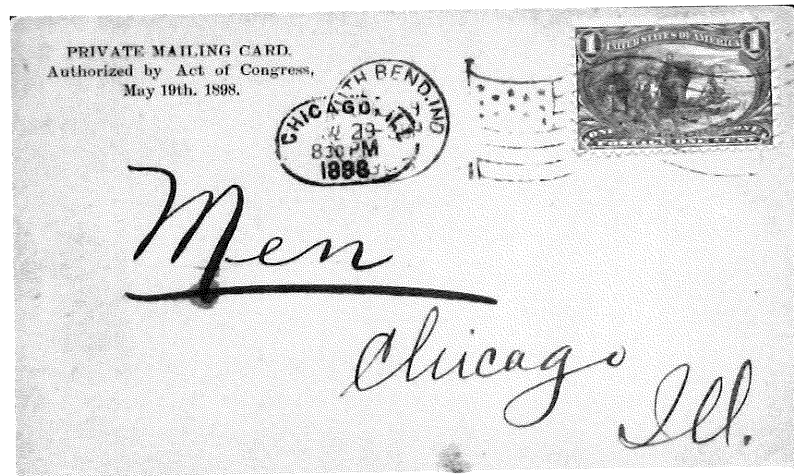


Figure 8. A Souvenir Card mailed on July 11, 1898, three weeks after the effective date of P.M.G. Order No. 242 but lacking the "Authorized by Act of Congress/May 19th, 1898."

Foreign use examples can be found of Souvenir Cards mailed with 5 cent franking and with 2 cent franking but charged postage due. Such examples are seen in **Figure 9**. The 15 centimes seen on the postage due card was the international equivalent of 3 cents, while the blue manuscript 25 was the German equivalent in pfennig.



Figure 9. At left: a card mailed to Germany in September, 1898 correctly franked with 5¢ postage.

Below: a card mailed with 2¢ postage applied and assessed postage due of 15 centimes (3¢) or 25 pfennigs in German currency.

A year later the *Postal Bulletin* of June 24, 1899 contained P.M.G. Order No. 354, as a modification of the year earlier order. It now allowed the sender to be identified on either the front or back and allowed engravings or illustrations on the face, if it did not interfere with the address. A one cent rate now was applicable to Canada and Mexico. A two cent rate was applicable to other countries, but the address side of the card should include the phrase "*Postal Card – Carte Postale.*" This latter requirement was to make it admissible to the Postal Union. **Figure 10** and **Figure 11** are the earliest examples of this regulation.

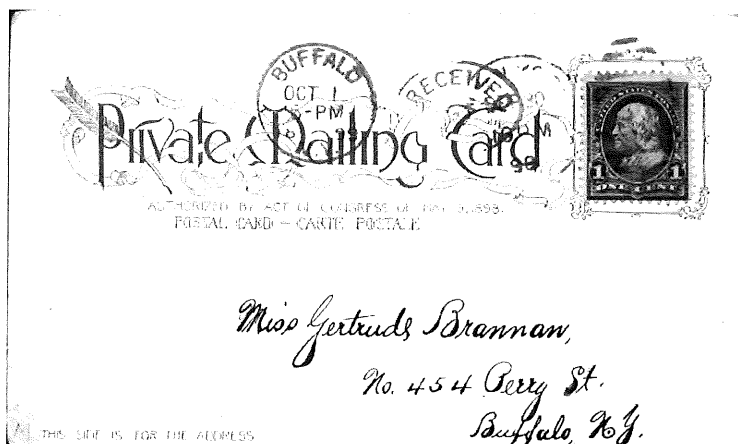


Figure 10. An intercity domestic use card from Buffalo, NY sent October 1, 1899. This is the earliest example of a card bearing the "*Postal Card–Carte Postale*" phrase found by the author.

Figure 11. The earliest example found by the author of a card to a foreign country correctly franked with 2¢ and bearing the required phrase of “*Postal Card–Carte Postale.*” The card is postmarked at New York December 26, 1899.

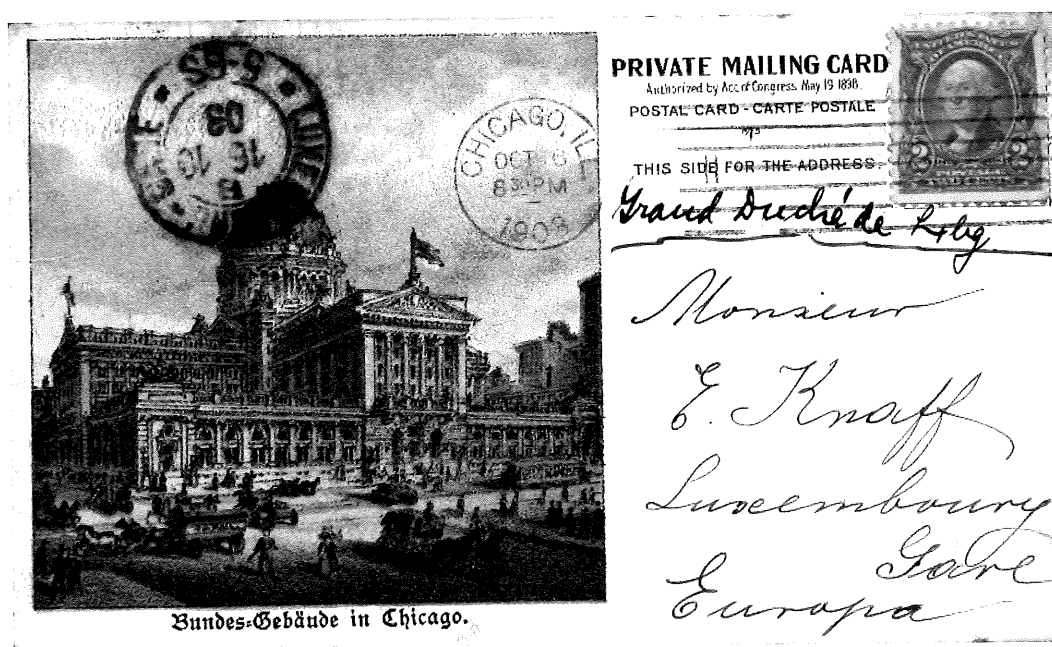
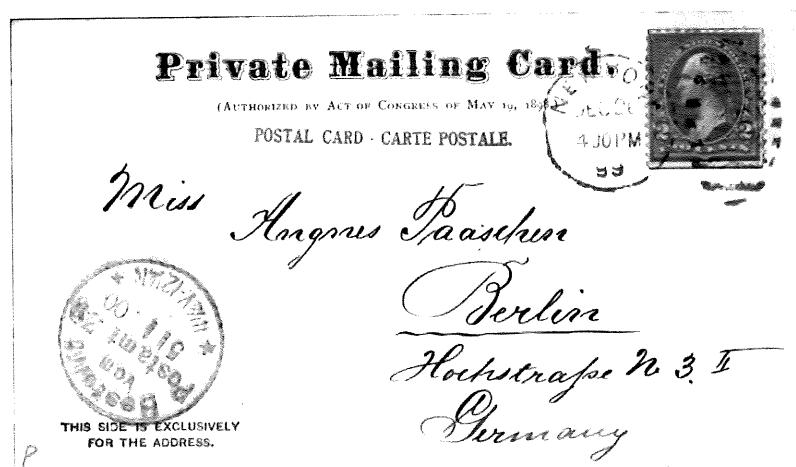


Figure 12. Mailed in October 1903, this card is the only one seen by the author with an illustration and all of the other required details of P.M.G. Order No. 354 on the address side.

The November 20, 1899 issue of the *Daily Bulletin* contained the P.M.G. Order No. 722, which extended the definitions of the previous order to define the minimum size of the card and to include under the one cent rate Porto Rico, Guam, and the Philippine Islands.

It is appropriate to note here that the specific requirement for the “private mailing card” logo for the one cent rate was expanded in practice, allowing for other ‘mailing card’ names. The American Souvenir Co. card seen in **Figure 13** was copyrighted in 1895 and would be classified as a Pioneer card had it been used before July 1, 1898. It had no defining logo and was marked for two cent for domestic use as produced. The producer was able to have the card apply to the

new regulations by blocking out the original rate requirement with a white label that can be seen under the stamp.

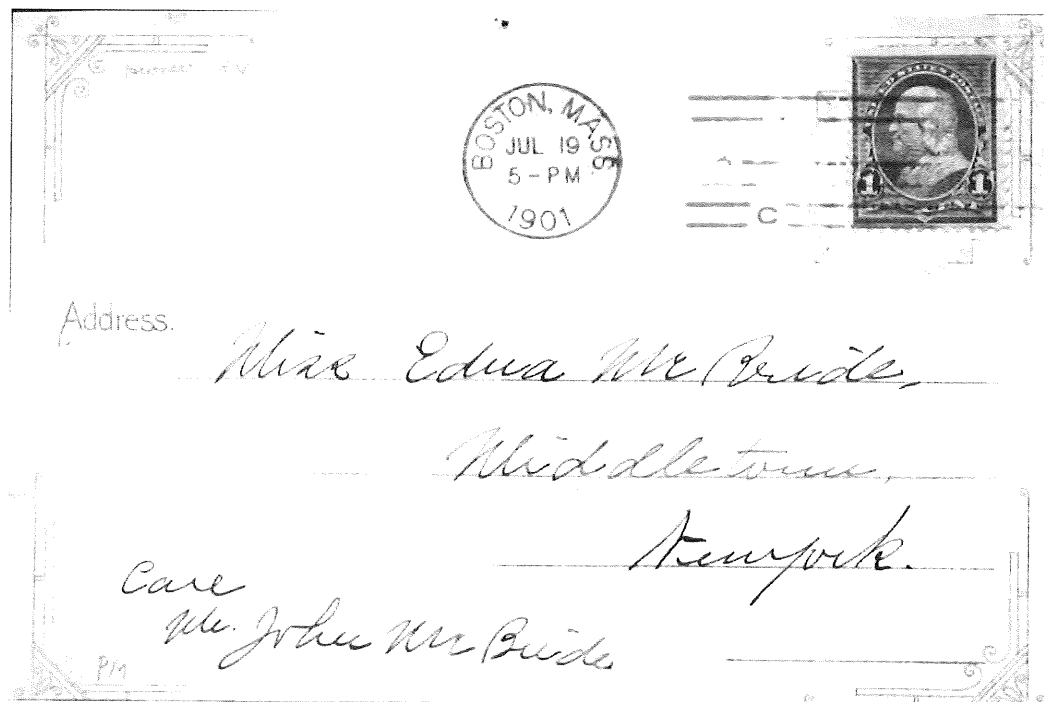


Figure 13. An old style American Souvenir Card that originally had a preprinted “*Two cents for domestic use*” in the space where the stamp would be placed. A white label, seen under the 1¢ stamp, and applied by the card producer, blocks out the old applicable rate in order for the card to meet the new regulations.

With each one of the above described P.O.D. directives that defined the parameters of a picture mailing card, it should be obvious that some time was required for the producers to provide cards that conformed to the definitions. The writer has attempted to show examples of how quickly the requisite card reached the marketplace. There may well be earlier examples of each category. They have not been easy to find and the author would like to establish how early each category can be found and would appreciate response from readers.

Finally the P.O.D. with the publishing of Order No. 1447 in the December 28, 1901 *Daily Bulletin* took one more step. This Order still referred to the May 1898 Act of Congress and was identified as a successor to the previous Order. The major change now called for the logo on the address side of the card to read “POST CARD.” Since cards bearing the word “Private Mailing Card” were still admissible and foreign cards appearing to say “post card” were admissible, providing they met the other requirements, change was slowly seen. Most early examples were special events or business cards. The earliest seen by the author is canceled February 25, 1902 from New York City. This card can be seen in **Figure 14**. The requirements may also be found under Section 418 of the *Postal Laws and Regulations* and a few cards can be found to so specify.

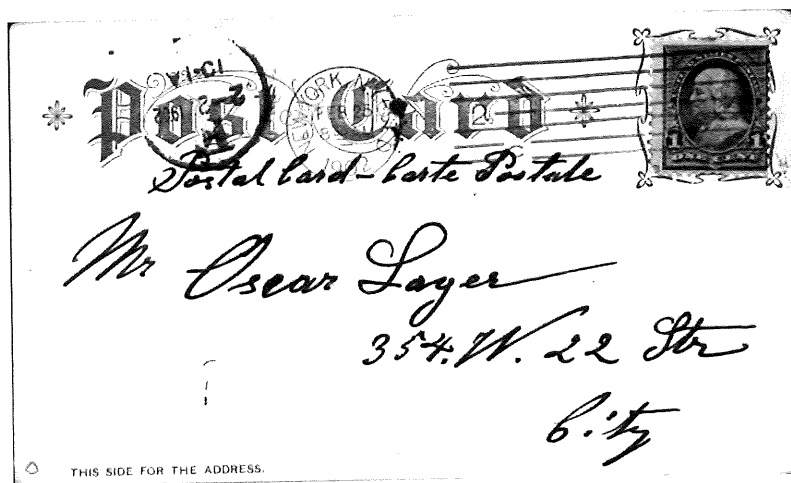
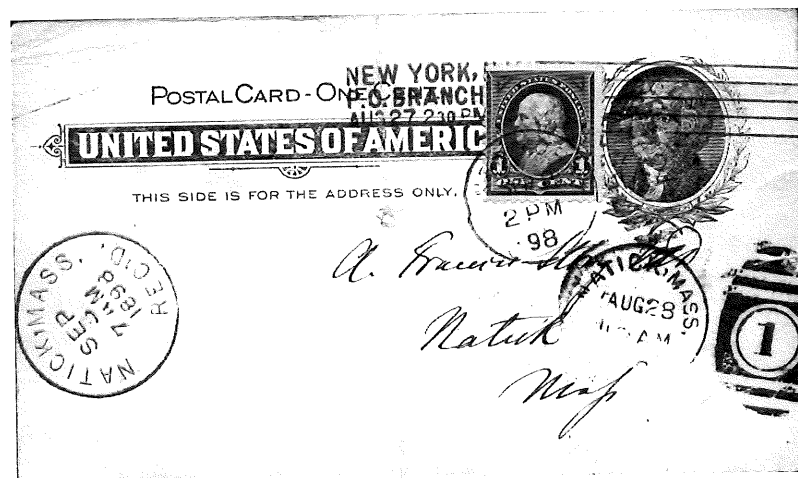


Figure 14. A card bearing the words “Post Card” as required by the December 28, 1901 P.O.D. Order No. 1447 and postmarked New York, N.Y. on February 25, 1902. It is the earliest card seen by the author which bears the “Post Card” inscription.

A significant use for the government postal cards by the second year of issue was for assessment notices from fraternal societies offering insurance. The cards, when returned with payment and a 1 cent stamp in an envelope, would be re-mailed as a receipt to the assessed. They are known as “re-mailed” or “double mailed” cards. The one cent franking defined by the 1898 Act was applicable but examples of an 1898 usage, such as the one seen in **Figure 15**, are difficult to find.

Figure 15. An 1898 example of a re-mailed card sent from New York, to Natick, MA. The recipient in Natick returned the card, payment, and a 1¢ stamp in an envelope. Back in New York, the 1¢ stamp would be adhered, the card marked “Paid” and then re-mailed to the original recipient as a receipt.



By 1905 the use of post cards became very prolific aided by the spread of Rural Free Delivery and extended for more than the next ten years until the telephone and the automobile changed people’s way of communicating. In this period both locally and foreign manufactured cards became available. The latter sometimes had the address side divided, as England for example allowed the left side used for correspondence for domestic mail by 1904 but Order 1447 still called for “this side for address only.” Very few examples are found like this 1906 card, seen in **Figure 16**, with the two cents franking accommodating the message; otherwise postage due would be assessed.

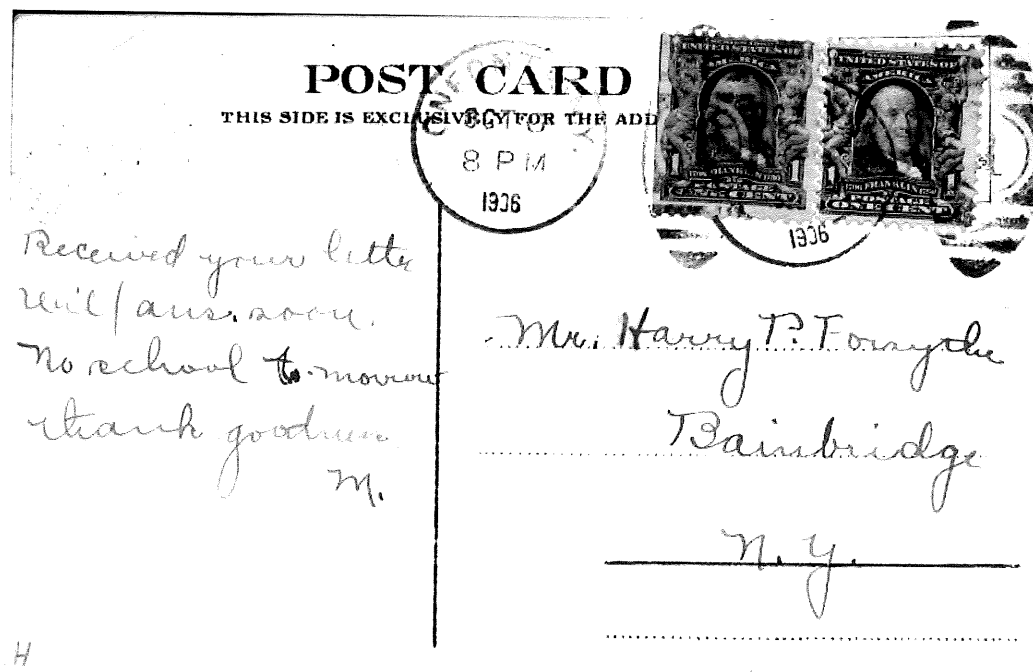


Figure 16. A properly franked post card from 1906. The message on the address side required 2¢ postage.

In the example shown in **Figure 17**, the writer returned from a trip to Sligo, Ireland with a card bearing English regulations and followed them. It was first marked “Held For Postage,” then marked “Sent Notice of Detention” and the addressee was requested to provide the additional one cent stamp. With the stamp added and cancelled, it was sent on with the notice “Originally Held For Postage But Now Forwarded On Receipt From You Of Amount Due.” Note that this not only cost the addressee the required one cent but the additional two cents to mail it back in an envelope.



Figure 17. An example of an under franked post card detained at the New York post office and marked **Held For Postage**. The recipient was sent a notice to send a 1¢ stamp to New York, whereupon it was applied to the post card and sent on its way to Mount Kisco, NY after applying the four line service marking explaining the process.

The above was the procedure when the sending office noted the infraction. It was implemented by the addressee being sent a copy of a HELD FOR POSTAGE NOTICE as seen in **Figure 18**. This P.O. form is the only one ever seen by the author.

N. Y. 187-1-Ed. 18-30,000

Post Office, New York, N. Y.

A "private mailing" or "post" card, addressed to you, is held for the reason that the necessary postage was not affixed by the sender. If you will *at once return this notice* with a ONE-cent stamp, in a sealed envelope, prepaid, addressed to

**"INQUIRY DEPARTMENT, POST OFFICE,
NEW YORK, N. Y.,"**

the card will be promptly forwarded to you, but otherwise it must be sent to the Division of Dead Letters.

POSTMASTER, New York, N. Y.

THE STAMP SHOULD BE INCLOSED LOOSE; NOT ATTACHED TO THE NOTICE.

The card when forwarded will be stamped in red ink "Originally held for postage, but now forwarded on receipt from you of amount due," by which it may be identified as the card referred to above.

5-2185

Figure 18. The Post Office form sent to a recipient notifying them that a post card was being held in detention awaiting the forwarding of an additional 1¢ in postage.

When the receiving office caught the infraction, it was expected to apply a postage due stamp when obtaining the due penalty from the addressee as typified by the post card seen in **Figure 19**.

Figure 19. This post card was mailed from Syracuse, NY to Keeseville, NY where the 1¢ postage due was collected from the recipient and the postage due stamp applied.



In this period of expanded use of cards, some producers provided decorations to the picture side in the form of glass, mica or other similar substances to create a form of glitter. At the same time many smaller offices were starting to use machine canceling devices. When it was found that the glitter was causing machine malfunctions, the P.O.D. put out Order No. 98 on February 16, 1907 indicating such cards were not mailable and were required to be mailed under cover. Such examples are not common and examples of glassine envelopes used to mail these cards are even less so. **Figure 20** illustrates an example of such a card as well as a glassine envelope which was used to mail a similar card under separate cover.

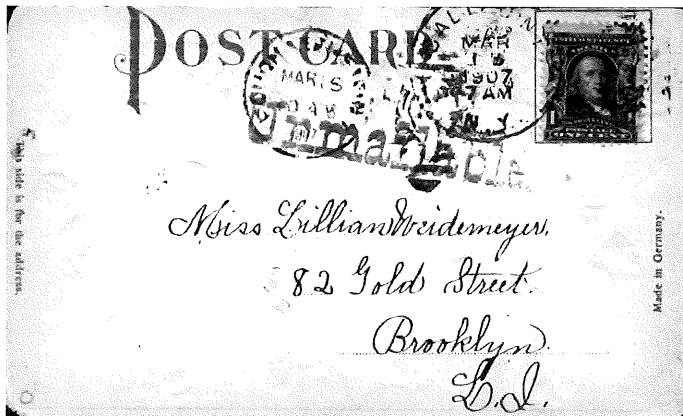


Figure 20. A glitter post card that was mailed from Salt Point, NY (DUT) was marked **Unmailable** at the transit post office of Poughkeepsie under new regulations of February 16, 1907. Below is a glassine mailer in which glitter post cards could be mailed.

With the proliferation of European cards with what has become known as the divided back (post card collectors consider the picture side as the front), there must have been some frequency of cards held for extra postage. In addition we accepted cards such as the Canadian post card seen in **Figure 21** with left side correspondence, since it was legal in Canada.

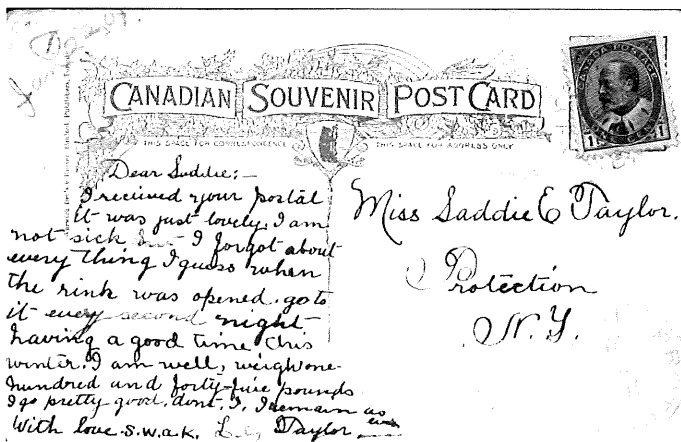


Figure 21. Mailed from New Brunswick on January 15, 1907, this Canadian post card with left side correspondence was accepted with no postage due since it was legal in Canada. A scarce Protection, NY (ERI) Doane cancel serves as a receiving marking.

The P.O.D finally amended Section 418 of the P.L&R. with Order No. 146 reported in the Daily Bulletin of March 4, 1907 allowing the face of the card of the card to be divided by a vertical line with the left half to be used for a message. A lesser known provision of this Order stated that very thin sheets of paper may be attached to the card, provided that it was completely adhered. Partly because many cards already on the market contained the statement – this side only for address - it took the better part of 1907 for the left half provision to be the norm. It would seem that the P.O.D. did not promote the change, as it must have had some impact on postal card use. While a few cards did show up in the market place identifying the March date, they are scarce. One is shown in **Figure 22**.



Figure 22. A early usage of a divided back post card dated March 22, 1907.

It was the writer's good fortune to find a "divided back" card with a message dated March 1, 1907 from Brookton (TOM), a small New York State office and with a small photo pasted on the picture side. Both sides of this card are shown in **Figure 23**. It is most probable that neither the sender nor the postal clerk handling it was aware of the new ruling, but the coincidence was most rewarding – the card represents a first day of rate.

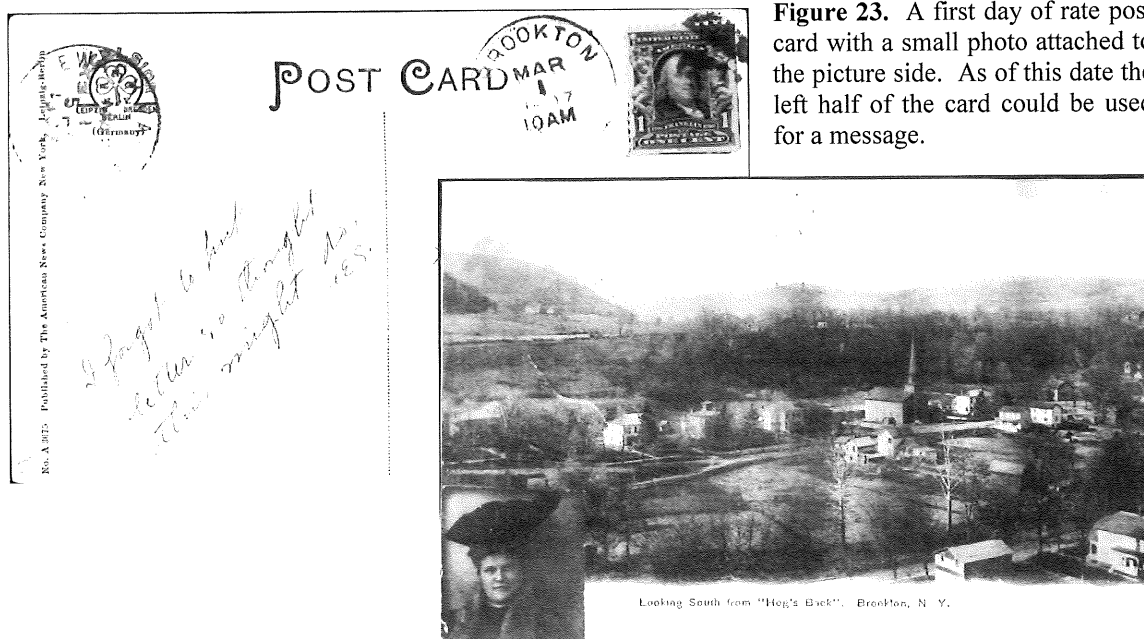


Figure 23. A first day of rate post card with a small photo attached to the picture side. As of this date the left half of the card could be used for a message.

A similar early use of the new ruling is seen in **Figure 24** on a card canceled in the first week on an RFD route.

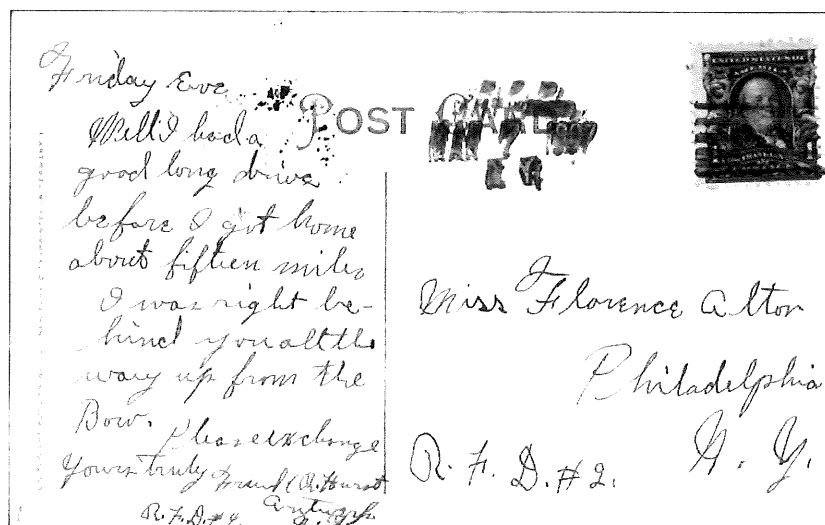


Figure 24. Early use of divided back on March 7 from the RFD route No. 4, Antwerp.

The next few years would see the peaking of this means of communicating, but the P.O.D. would remain vigilant keeping the public aware of the rules. The next card, seen in **Figure 25**, shows how a local addressee was required to pay for the sender's forgetfulness. Then the non-conforming attachment of a miniature envelope highlighted in **Figure 26** resulted in postage due. Finally, as seen in **Figure 27**, the imaginative use of a Christmas Seal for postage resulted in a two weeks delay.

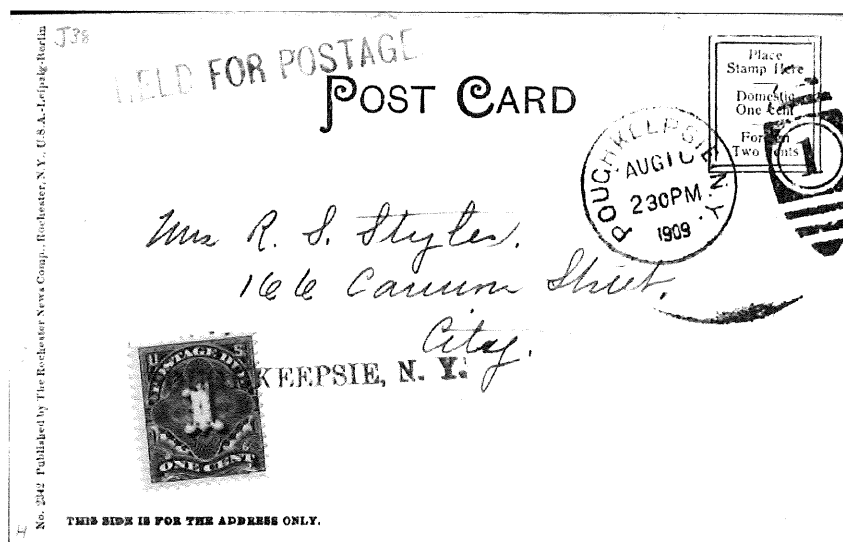


Figure 25. This card was held for postage when the sender failed to apply a stamp, resulting in the recipient having to pay the 1¢ postage due.

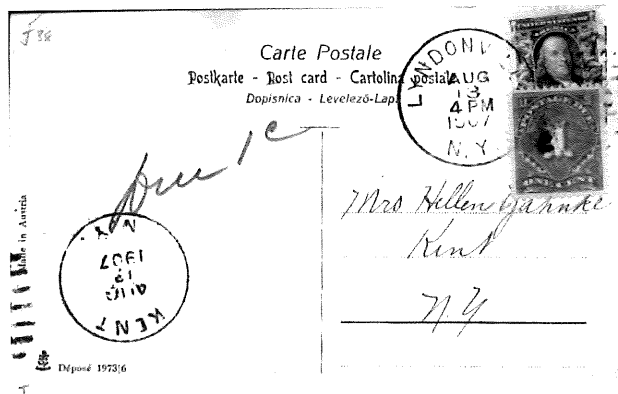
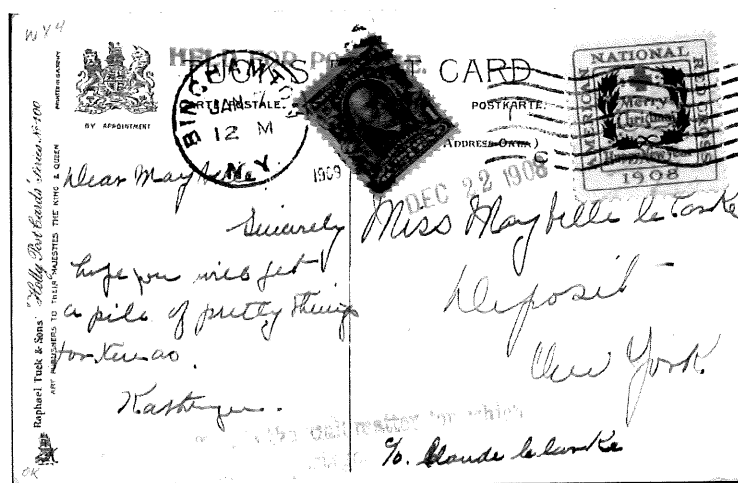


Figure 26. The attachment of a small envelope to this post card resulted in an assessment of 1¢ postage due.

Figure 27. When the sender of this post card attempted to use a Christmas seal in lieu of a stamp, the card was held for postage. By the time the recipient sent the 1¢ stamp to the Binghamton, NY post office, over two weeks had passed.



This article is an extension of a talk given to the Taconic Post Card Club in 2007, entitled “*The Postal History of Post Cards.*” It was also prompted by a response of the author to be found in the October 2006 of *The American Philatelist* (AP) representing a critique of David Straight’s article in the April 2006 AP (“*They Only Look like Postcards*”). Mr. Straight’s article opened the door to a subject which had not previously been tied to the successive Orders of the P.M.G. that expanded the use of post cards. This article attempts to do so. Also considerable assistance was provided by the staff of APRL. Special thanks goes to Peter Peloquin who provided the copy of the P.O.D. rarely seen postage due form.

References:

- Friedman, Dan. “*The Birth and Development of American Post Cards*”.
- Post Office Daily Bulletin, 1898 to 1907
- Wukasch, Kenneth C. “*Handbook of the Postal Cards of the World’s Columbian Exposition*”.
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COLUMBIA COUNTY CORNER

By George DeKornfeld

The envelope shown in **Figure 1** has all the attributes that make this postal historian smile. In addition to its eye appeal, a combination of historical significance, marcophily, mail-routing, and quite possibly, a new discovery, all combine to provide that warm, fuzzy feeling that results from the investigation and research it permits. Each of these categories will be evaluated separately for the sake of this article, although their inter-relationship should hopefully become obvious, proving that the sum of the parts is indeed sometimes greater than the whole.

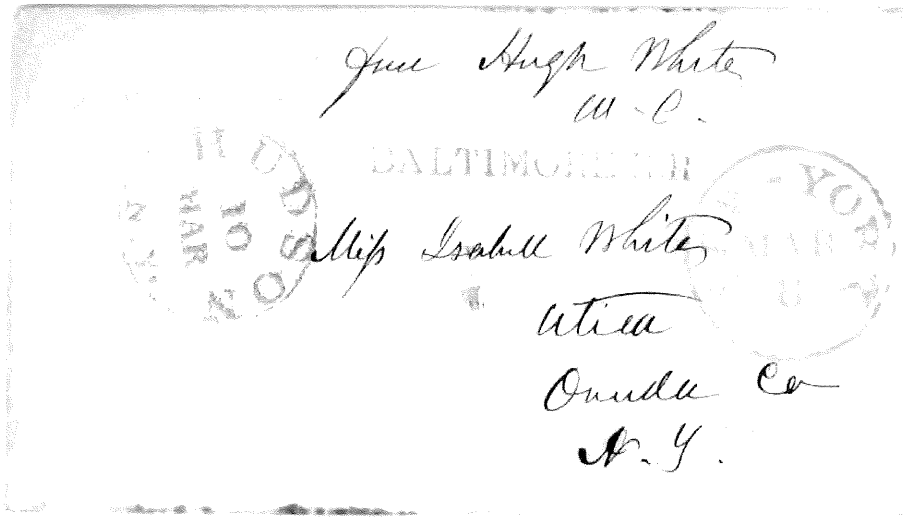
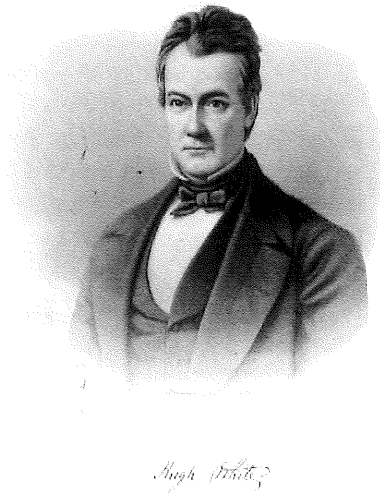


Figure 1. Free-franked cover from 'Hugh White M.C.' (Member of Congress). The final destination for this cover was Utica, New York. His daughter, Isabell, was the recipient.

Hugh White: Hugh White, seen at right, was born on Christmas Day, 1798 in Whitestown (Oneida County). Hugh led an uneventful childhood. After studying law and graduating Hamilton College in 1823, he spent some time in Manhattan employed at a law office, and although he was subsequently admitted to the bar, left to join his brother, Canvass, in the manufacturing of 'Water Lime Cement' at the Chittenango Cement Works. Moving to Waterford, NY in 1830, the brothers opened their Rosendale Cement Works in Cohoes, which is seen in **Figure 2**. Hugh became manager of the Cohoes Company, and also operated a saw mill and a flour mill at Cohoes Falls.

In 1837, Hugh won the contract to supply the cement required to construct the Croton Dam Reservoir and the New York City Aqueduct which included the building of a bridge crossing the Harlem River (The bridge, named High Bridge, was completed in 1848).



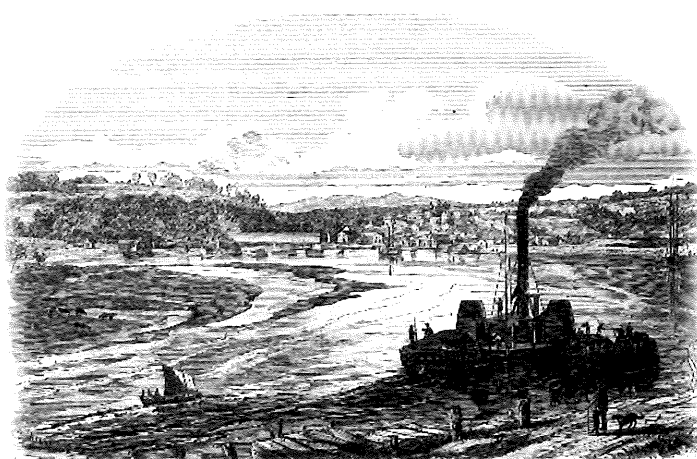


Figure 2. An early view of the Rosendale Cement Works

Hugh's political career began when, as a Whig, he was elected to the 29th Congress on March 4, 1845, representing the Saratoga region. He became a Republican soon thereafter (as that political party was formed) and served continuously through the end of the 31st Congress (March 3, 1851). During the 30th session, he acted as chairman of the Committee on Agriculture.

President of the Saratoga County National Bank in Waterford and a Trustee of the Waterford Presbyterian Church, Hugh White passed away on October 6, 1870. The Rosendale hamlet of Whiteport is named in his memory.

There are no postal markings or docketing on this cover that nail down a usage date. However, seeing that Congressman White served between 1845 and 1851, and that he used his franking privilege to send this letter, we can safely narrow down the usage to this six year spread. The red New York City handstamp is known used throughout this era.

Routing & Markings: The Washington, D.C. branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road opened in 1835 and it is reasonable to assume that, since the sender was a member of Congress, this cover originated in the Nation's Capital. Carried on the train as loose mail (there were no government Route Agents on this railroad during this time) the 47 x 5mm **BALTIMORE R.R.** straight-line marking was applied to indicate origin. The red New York City circular date stamp (CDS) was added, since this is where the cover actually 'entered the mails,' and the envelope was sent on to Utica, via Hudson.

Hudson Brown 30mm Transit CDS: True brown canceling ink, obtained from the secretia of the cuttlefish, is quite scarce in general, and unlisted as used at Hudson.

A color described as 'claret' that was used on many New York Foreign Mail cancellations was probably not a distinct entity but either a mixture of red and black inks on the canceling device, or an oxidized red ink, so the Hudson marking could fall into either one of these categories. However, these NYFM cancellations tend to appear washed out, whereas this CDS appears fully saturated, providing the possibility of an unlisted use of squid ink.

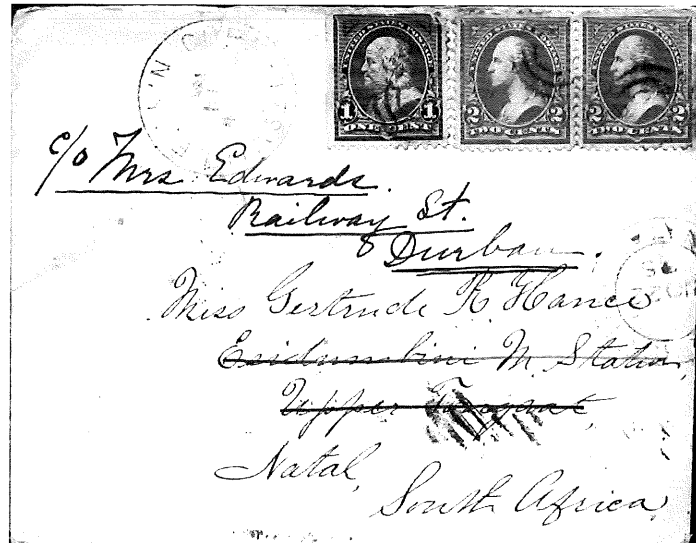
The 30mm size CDS is known used at Hudson between 1837 and 1851.

FROM CORBETTSVILLE, NEW YORK TO NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

By David E. Williams

The cover seen at right, mailed on October 11, 1895 from Corbettsville (Broome County), NY to Miss Gertrude R. Hance in Natal, South Africa, has both great looks and a very interesting historical and genealogical connection to Broome County.

The cover itself is franked with two 2¢ red and a single 1¢ blue First Bureau issues which paid the UPU rate for international surface mail to Natal. This rate became effective on July 1, 1892.¹



The back of the cover is seen at left. It bears a New York, NY transit marking of October 12 as well as a Cape Town, Cape Colony transit CDS dated November 13. The cover was originally sent to Miss Hance at Upper Tongaat, Natal. As evidenced by faint CDS of Tongaat on the front of the envelope, it arrived there on November 22. The faint November 23 Tongaat CDS on the back indicates it was forwarded the next day from there to Miss Hance in care of a Mrs. Edwards in Durban. A pair of clear Durban receiving marks shows that the letter arrived there the same day.

A Google search on the recipient finds that Miss Hance was a missionary for some 29 years in the land of the Zulus. She was born in 1844 in Brookdale, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. She began teaching school at age 16, and at age 18 her interest in missionary work was sparked when she heard an address by a lady missionary working in China.

In her early twenties she was both an attendant and Sunday School Teacher at the First Presbyterian Church in Binghamton, New York. It was at this time that she told the pastor, Dr. G. N. Boardman of her desire to become a missionary. Some three years later, she was teaching at an orphans' home in Binghamton, when the superintendent was dismissed and it became necessary for her to take over the running of the institution. A few months later, she was

appointed to the position permanently. Her continued success and satisfaction in her job encouraged her to feel that she might be successful as a missionary.

As a missionary sponsored by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Gertrude was sent in 1870 to Natal, some 1000 miles from Cape Town, South Africa. She spent close to twenty nine years there, returning to America for the final time in 1899.

Several years later she wrote a book about her experiences in Natal. Entitled "*The Zulu Yesterday and Today: Twenty-nine Years in South Africa*," it was published in 1916. It is in this book that we find the details of her work and the clues as to her connection with the hamlet from which the above cover was mailed. In one chapter of her book, she recounts her first return to America in 1886. Of this trip, she writes extensively. Traveling by steamer from Cape Town to London, she then arrived in New York City in September of 1886. Of her arrival there she writes:

A niece from Long Island met me in New York. After spending a few days with her and in Boston, I went to my old home where my father was born, at Corbettsville, N.Y., although we were just over the border in Susquehanna County, Penn. My only brother and my sister Frances were living there. My father and mother had both died while I was away...²

Interestingly, it now seems possible that this cover carried family correspondence to Gertrude from Broome County to the African shores of the Indian Ocean. Another Google discovery turned up a collection of correspondence at the Pitts Theological Library at Emory University between Gertrude Hance and her family in New York. According to the website,

The majority of the letters were written to and from her sister, Frank M. Hance between 1870 and 1899.³

[Editor's note: This is most probably Frances, not Frank.]

Some final rewards that were discovered in Gertrude's book were several photographs. Below, on the left is a photograph of Gertrude Hance herself. Next to her is the lady in whose care the cover was forwarded to when it reached Upper Tongaat, Mrs. M. K. Edwards, who at the time lived on Railway Street in Durban.



It turns out that, in 1869, Mrs. Edwards founded the Girls' Boarding School at Inanda, some thirty five miles distant from Durban. By 1916, the Inanda Seminary was the largest and highest graded school for Zulu girls in South Africa. Mrs. Edwards and Miss Hance were among the first of six single ladies to join the mission to the Zulus from America. Mrs. Edwards was still alive at age 87 in 1916. No record of her death was found. Gertrude Hance died in 1922.

References:

¹ Anthony Wawrukiewicz & Henry Beecher: "U.S. International Postage Rates, 1872-1996"

² Google Books: *The Zulu Yesterday and Today: Twenty-nine Years in South Africa*

³ Hance, Gertrude R. Family Papers: <http://www.pitts.emory.edu/Archives/text/mss016.html>

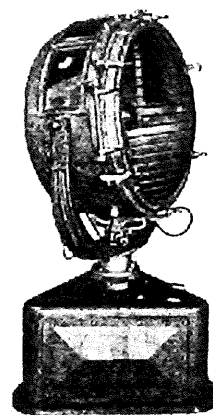
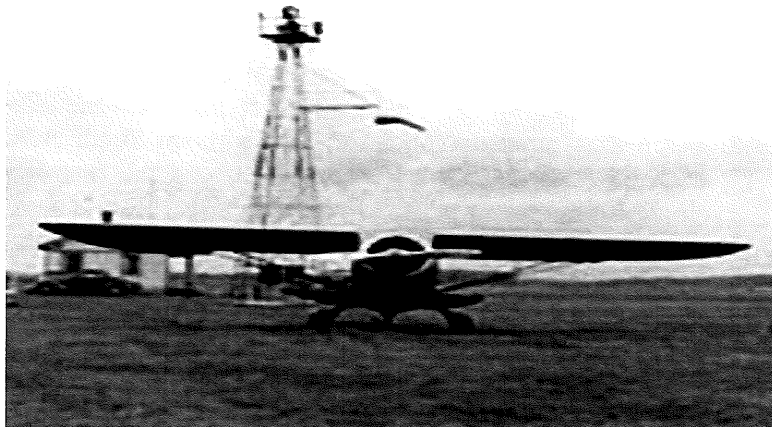
Night Flying Air Mail Service Comes To Schenectady

By Bob Bramwell

Schenectady was neither the first nor last town of its size to enjoy the advent of Air Mail service. As previously recounted, Colonial Western Airlines initiated CAM 20 service through Schenectady on June 1, 1928 with terminations in Albany and Cleveland, Ohio. But every city and town that enjoyed the benefit of Air Mail did so under a limiting circumstance: Air Mail could only arrive while the sun shone. It was an axiom that airplanes could only fly safely when the pilot could recognize the ground over which he was flying (recall that the French brought every portable light in Paris to Le Bourget when Lindberg landed in the dark after his history-making flight in May, 1927).

Now, this limitation had been recognized even before Air Mail service began in 1918. The first long distance routes, and primarily the Transcontinental Route from New York to San Francisco, were designed to follow existing rail lines so that mail planes could land near a railroad station, transfer the mail sacks to the train, and wait over night for the morning train to bring sacks of mail for transfer back onto the mail planes. We should recall that the speed advantage of mail planes in the late 1920's over express trains was barely 2 times. Steam engines could reach speeds of 80 miles per hour but had to stop for water periodically. Mail planes of that era could attain speeds of 125 miles per hour and had ranges of about 300 miles (as the crow flies), but could not travel after dark.

The inauguration of air mail service flying after dark was a risky proposition for both the Post Office Department, which conceived of and invested in the installation of lighting and radio technologies costing many hundreds of thousands of dollars in the post World War I era, and the pilots, mostly World War I veterans, who risked all. The dramatic solution was to create air mail routes with lighted beacons spaced just close enough together to be visible to pilots so that they could visually locate the next beacon as they passed the beacon to which they had been flying¹.



1000 watt Airway Beacon

Figure 1. Here is a monoplane in front of a typical beacon at an emergency airfield. At right is a 1,000 watt searchlight component of an Airway Beacon.

Tests of this capability began as early as 1924 and were satisfactory enough to encourage installation of beacon lighting over the middle of the transcontinental route by 1926.

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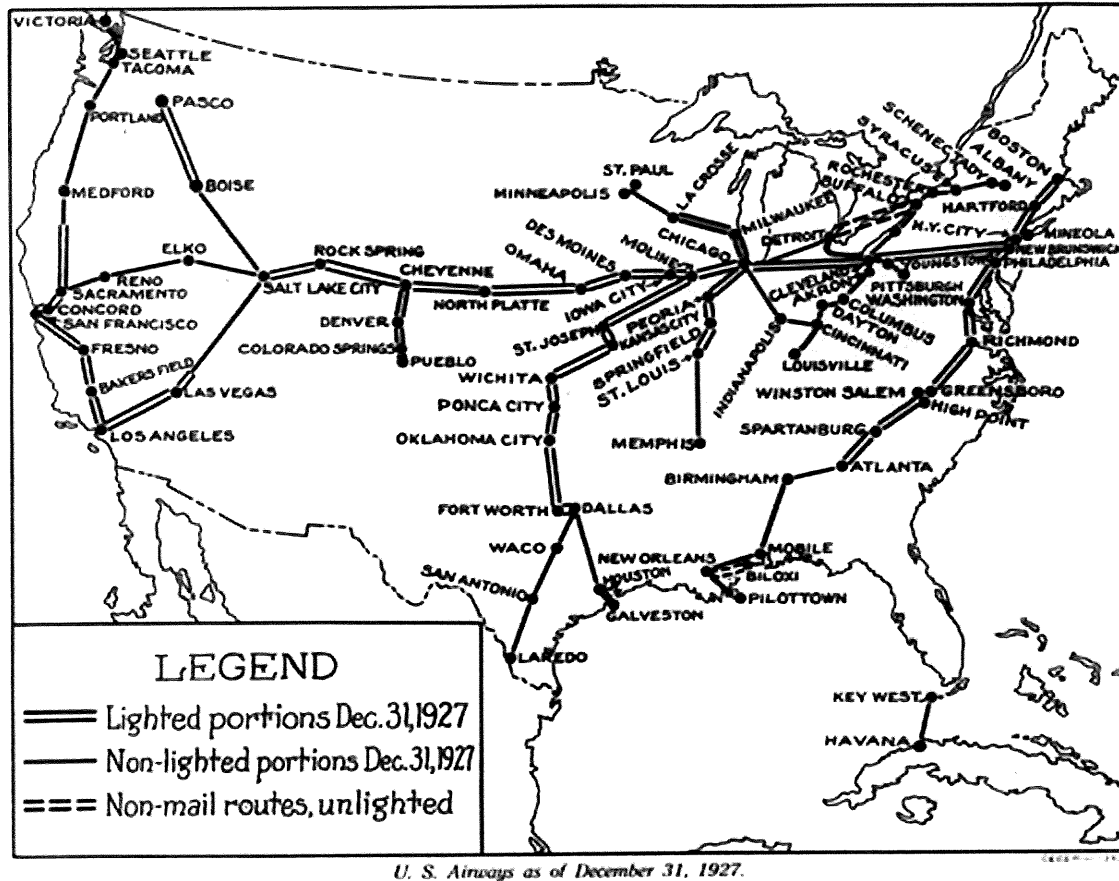


Figure 2. A map of lighted and unlighted Air Mail routes as of December 31, 1927. CAM 20 from Albany to Cleveland is shown as an unlighted route.

This achievement was commemorated in the 5 cent “Beacon on Rocky Mountain” issue of 1928 (Scott C11). As important as this development was, it is only fair to note that flying conditions were not always “average” and pilots flew at risk of failing to locate the next beacon, or worse, of losing sight of it in mid-flight as weather conditions deteriorated. The system of “scheduled airfields” was augmented by many “emergency airfields” with less powerful beacons. Many beacons were attended by keepers and major airfields had radio transmitters to send weather reports to Air Mail pilots.

The earliest scheduled tests of night flying on CAM 20 through Schenectady were conducted without the benefit of beacons. These flights were billed as “Into The Night” flights, and pilots literally took off during the waning hours of afternoon daylight and flew to the next scheduled stop to arrive after dark, locating the destination by its pattern of street lights, etc.

Airfields themselves were equipped with lights to mark landing areas. The first such test, or demonstration, occurred on May 1, 1929.

Figures 3 and 4 show Roessler Air Mail envelopes self-addressed in the fashion of the period by collectors of First Flight favor covers. The first departed Albany May 1st 1929 with a postmark time of 2 p.m. The second departed Schenectady the same day with a postmark time of 4 p.m., both west-bound. Flight time between Albany and Schenectady was no more than 15 minutes so it is likely that the actual logistics of getting mail from the respective post office to the airfield is not reflected in the time-of-day stamped on the postmark.

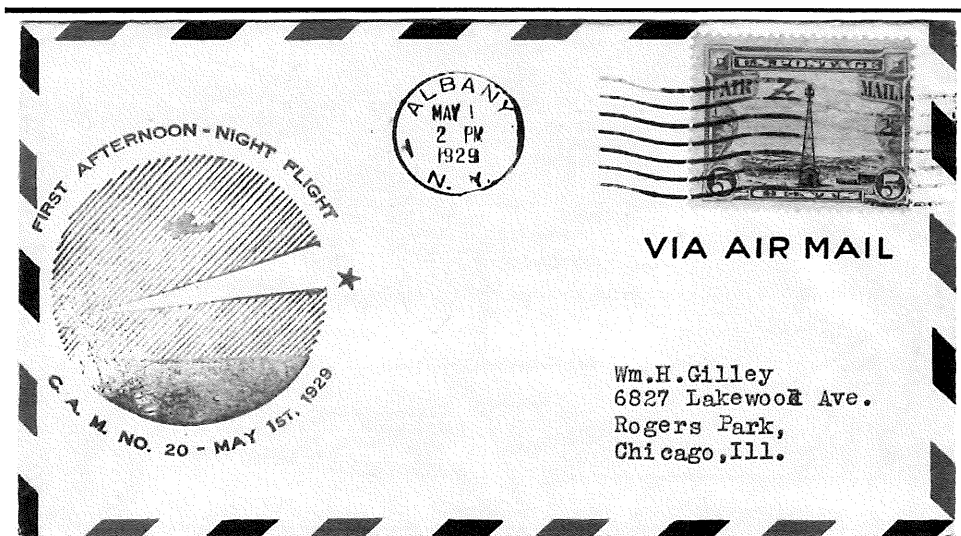


Figure 3. Flight cover mailed from Albany, NY on the first afternoon-night flight on CAM 20, May 1, 1929.

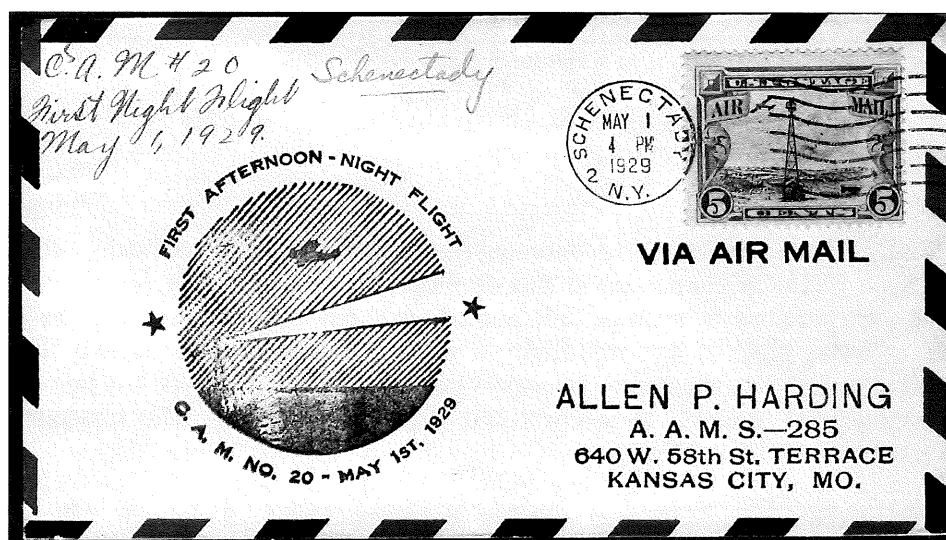


Figure 4. Flight cover mailed from Schenectady, NY on the first afternoon-night flight on CAM 20, May 1, 1929.

The next phase of Air Mail service, flights originating in darkness – referred to as “All Night Flights” – was initiated in Schenectady on January 27th, 1930. **Figure 5** shows a typical First Flight cover for this service on CAM 20 mailed from Schenectady, NY.



[Figure 5. A stylish Roessler Air Mail envelope prepared by the addressee, Dr. Booth of Conneaut, Ohio.]

Public acceptance of air travel was solidly in place by 1930. Municipal airports were built at a remarkable rate for the next decade and Air Mail service, despite its premium price, was used extensively by businesses. It was a heyday for the Post Office Department. The schematic map shown in **Figure 6** was released by the POD to publicize the impact of around-the-clock flying (3) on transit time in comparison with (1) the stage coach era and (2) railroads by shrinking the size of the United States.

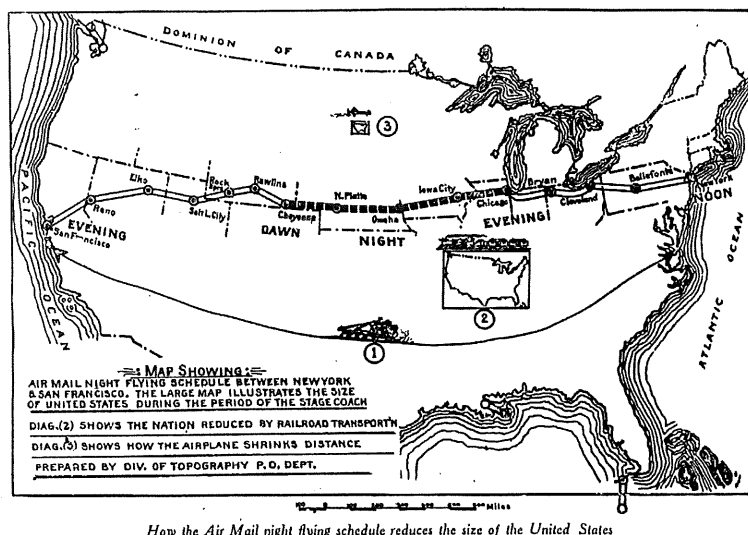


Figure 6. This map, prepared by the Post Office Department, served to publicize night flying airmail service to the general public. The map illustrates how around the clock flying can “reduce” the size of the United States.

Schenectady's General Electric Company, through its Mazda Lamp Division, was the supplier to the Sperry Gyroscope Company of the 1,000 watt bulbs that powered the beacon searchlights. In its full implementation, some 1,600 beacons were in operation along all the lighted airways. As magnificent as this accomplishment was, by 1929 it had been replaced by radio navigation aids!

¹ One history states:

High-intensity beacons are established approximately 10 miles apart along these civil airways. The beacon consists of a 24-inch parabolic mirror and a 110-volt, 1,000 watt lamp. The beacons, which rotate at 6 rpm, show a one-million candlepower flash every 10 seconds for 1/10th second duration. Intermediate landing fields are provided every 30 miles along these routes, in the absence of suitable commercial or municipal fields, and each is equipped with beacon, boundary, approach, obstruction, and wind-cone lights. The beam from the airways beacon is a high-intensity pencil of light of about 5 degree beam width visible 20 to 40 miles in clear weather. The beam is aimed 1.5° above the horizon. A small percentage of the beacon's light is reflected upward to provide close-range visibility. Two course lights are mounted on the tower just below each searchlight; one points forward along the airway and the other points backward. These 500-watt searchlights give 15 degree horizontal beam width. The course lights are fitted with either red or green lenses. Every third beacon has green course lights signifying that it is on an intermediate landing field. Thus the pilot knows at a long range the availability of landing fields. All other beacons had red course lights.

As the mechanism revolved and the clear flash of the beacon passed from the pilot's vision, the red or green flash of the course light came into view. Course lights flashed coded dot-dash signals to indicate the beacon's position on the airway. Code signals ran from 0 to 9; thus, if a pilot received a signal for the number 4, he knew he was flying over the fourth beacon of a particular 100-mile stretch of the airway. But he could not determine his precise position merely by receiving a course-light signal if he did not know independently over which 100-mile stretch he was flying [the author adds: fatigue and near-freezing temperatures plagued pilots so that concentration often lapsed]. Letters designated the airways, the first letters of their terminal cities. The order of the letters was established as south to north and west to east. Thus Omaha to Chicago was Airway O-C. LA-SF defined the Los Angeles to San Francisco airway and so forth.

Regular maintenance of the airway beacons and intermediate fields was crucial. This duty was entrusted to Airway Caretakers under a department of the Lighthouse Bureau. Daily they climbed the 51-foot steel towers [author: standard agricultural windmill structures without the windmill] to check every beacon within their territory, cleaned dirty lenses, replaced burned-out bulbs, etc. Repair problems requiring more expertise or equipment and tools not locally available were referred to "mechanicians," who serviced a 175-mile route with a half-ton pickup truck. Caretakers at intermediate fields were on duty from 6:00 PM to 6:00 AM. If a pilot "dropped" in to one of these emergency fields, Caretakers were expected to provide transportation to and from town, furnish them with meals, and assist in repairing their Aircraft.

Elsewhere, a representative of the Sperry Gyroscope Company described his company's rotating beacon mechanism:

The beacon, with a very bright Mazda lamp in it, rotated all night, turned itself on and off by a light control valve so that the beacons could be set out into the prairies or anywhere, with no attendant. But when night came and it got dark ... the light valve would turn the beacon on. It would start up and rotate, and would rotate until the sun came up the next morning, and that would turn it off. Some of the farmers started to complain [that] their cattle ... were not getting enough rest at night because these damned beacons were flashing all the time ...

Post Script

If Bill Cody was the Pony Express' poster boy, Jack Knight (**Figure 7**) became the poster boy, and almost the matinee idol, of the Air Mail service. At the critical time when transcontinental air mail service was stalled as a reality because the pilots of the day could only fly during the day, Jack Knight took it upon himself to fly the mail route from Cleveland to Chicago, 832 miles, completely at night. This was 1925, two years before Charles Lindberg's famous crossing of the Atlantic in his Ryan "Spirit of St. Louis," and should have placed Knight in the forefront of aviation history. Sadly, Knight did not possess Col. Lindberg's charisma or the pathos of Lindberg's personal story, and he does not get the recognition he rightly deserves.



Figure 7. Early Air Mail pilot Jack Knight.

BIG FLATS, CHEMUNG COUNTY, Part II

By Alan Parsons

This article is a follow-up to the *Post Office of the Issue* in the previous *Excelsior!* (Sept. 2008 issue). I was pleasantly surprised, when reading the previous *Excelsior!*, to find its featured post office in a community about five miles from my home, and, of course, located in one of the three Counties I collect. I congratulate David Williams for having the postcard picturing the early 1900s building then housing the Big Flats post office; it's an item I had not seen before.

Whether he intended it or not, David's use of the Big Flats postcard and his write-up on the same page inspired me to look hard at my accumulation of Big Flats postal history and to make my first visit to the Big Flats Historical Society, where I purchased a history of Big Flats containing a chapter on the Big Flats Post Office with the same undated building illustration David used.

The Historical Society staff was very hospitable and happy to help. The museum has an extensive well-displayed collection of Big Flats history, including postal artifacts. The Curator knew there were Big Flats stampless covers in its files, but couldn't take the time to locate them the day I visited. She suggested I contact her later for this, and I plan to do so.

As David Williams correctly quotes in his text with the Big Flats postcard, "...the USPS Postmaster Finder shows the original name as Big Flatt, with the name being changed to Big Flats sometime prior to 1831." The real thrust of this article is to challenge the statement by the USPS that the Big Flats Post Office name changed from Big Flatt to Big Flats "sometime prior to 1831."

Admittedly, I haven't searched Post Office archives in Washington or elsewhere for how the Big Flats name had been spelled in postmaster reports or other official documents up to the beginning of the Civil War. All I did was look at the name spelling on the postmark/townmark of more than a dozen Big Flats covers between 1834 and 1861 to realize that something was wrong: either the Big Flats postmasters between 1831 and 1861 didn't know how to spell the name of the post office they were serving (not likely), or the Postmaster Finder date is off base by as much as 30 years.

Now the fun begins. **Figure 1** is the earliest Big Flats cover in my collection, a folded letter sheet (FLS) datelined Big Flats April 19, 1834 and mailed unpaid the next day to Auburn, NY. Two things to note on this cover are the spelling of the post office where it was mailed (Big Flatt) and the route for the letter to take: Via Geneva. The latter seems unusual on stampless covers traveling inland only, and implies there was more than one route from Big Flats to Auburn. The letter writer wanted to be sure the post rider took the right road. The 10¢ postage, to be collected from the addressee, paid for a distance of 30 to 80 miles.

Although January 1, 1809 is generally accepted as the date for establishment of the Big Flats Post Office, the USPS Postmaster Finder, after giving January 1, 1809 as the date of appointment of its first Postmaster, goes on to state: "*Robert Miller submitted his first financial return on January 1, 1809. His exact appointment date is unavailable.*"

No other postmaster appointments for Big Flats are shown on the Postmaster Finder or elsewhere until January 30, 1833, when Caleb L Gardner was appointed. I assume the manuscript townmark in **Figure 1** is in Gardner's handwriting. I have three additional FLS (1835, 1838 & 1839) mailed in Big Flats while Gardner was postmaster, and each shows similar handwriting and identical spelling of the town name.

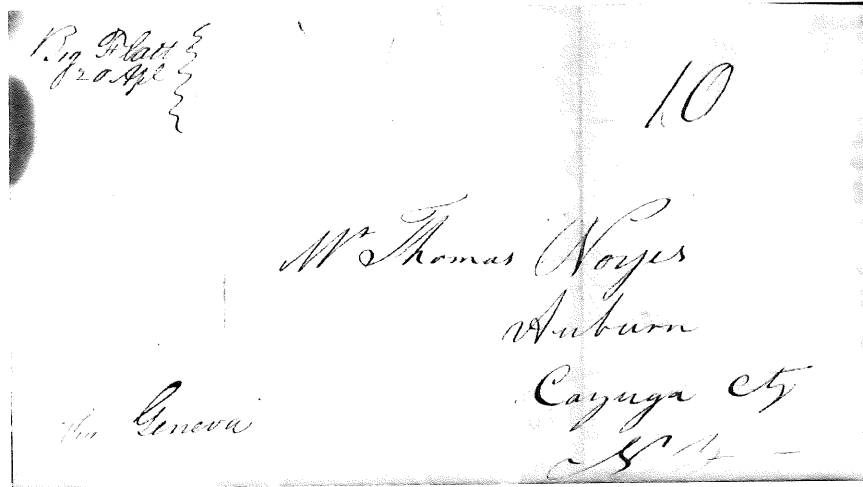


Figure 1. Manuscript "Big Flatt" folded letter sheet mailed on April 20, 1834

Caleb Gardner was still postmaster on March 19, 1836 when Chemung County was formed out of Tioga County and thus he became the first postmaster of Big Flats in its new County. On July 29, 1841 he was replaced by Ebenezer S. Roberts, who served until May 15, 1844.

Figure 2 is the first of two stampless covers in my collection written by Postmaster Roberts, both in 1843, and in both cases the spelling of the town name increases by one letter to read "Big Flatts." It shows Postmaster Roberts exercising his franking privilege by writing *Free* and then his name and status in the upper right corner. Of primary importance for the purpose of this article, however, is the spelling of the post office name in the upper left corner ("Big Flatts") and in the dateline on the letter written by Roberts: "Big Flatts January 2nd 1843."

Figure 2. A free frank cover mailed by Big Flats postmaster Ebenezer S. Roberts in 1843. He writes the town name both on the cover, and in the letter dateline, as "Big Flatts."

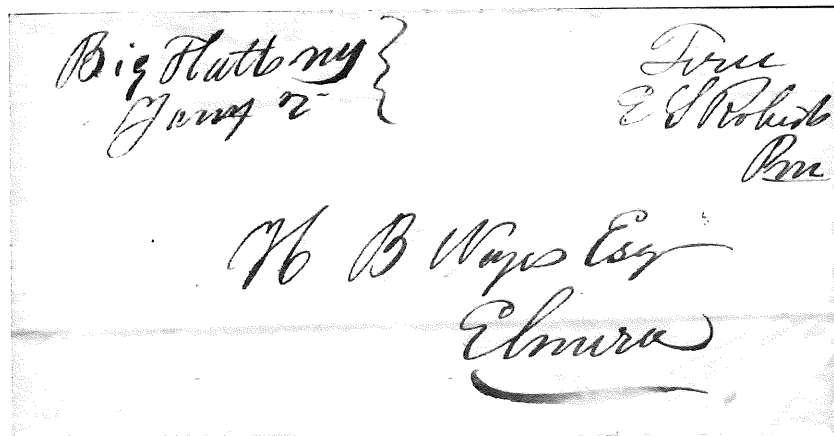


Figure 3 is another example of Postmaster Roberts' free frank, this time, however, at a post office other than his own. The letter is datelined May 3, 1843 and was mailed May 5, 1843 while Roberts was rafting lumber down the Susquehanna River. He spells the name of his hometown "Big Flatts" twice on the front of the FLS postmarked Columbia, PA., first in the letter's destination address and again in the free frank where he had to name the post office he served as postmaster. The hand stamp "FREE" in the upper right was applied by the Columbia Post Office.

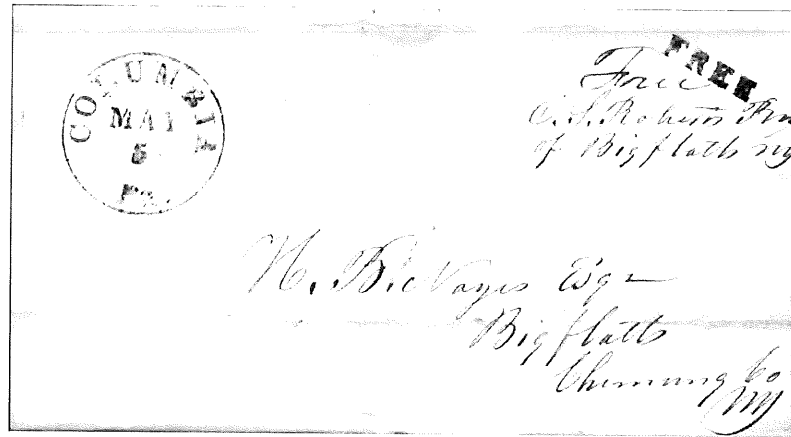
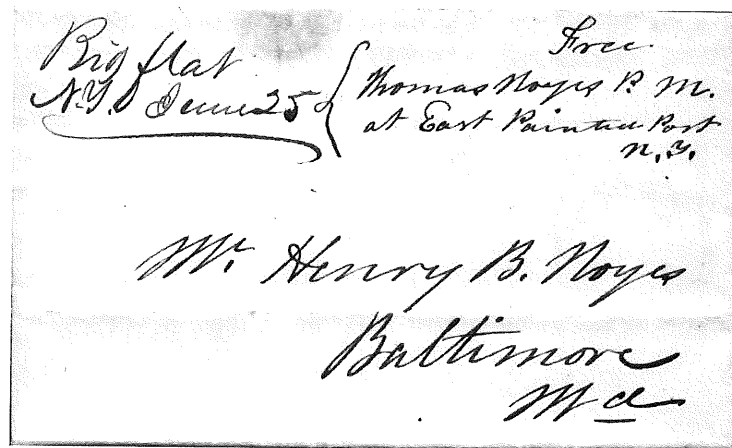


Figure 3. Another free franked cover by postmaster Roberts using "Big Flatts" as the town name.

The folded letter sheet in **Figure 4** continues the use of free franking at the Big Flats post office, this time, however, by a postmaster from another post office, to wit, East Painted Post, Steuben County, NY. This community (now East Corning) adjoins Big Flats to the west, the two being separated by the County line between Chemung and Steuben Counties.

Figure 4. Was postmaster Roberts in a hurry when he wrote "Big Flat" without the double "t" or did someone else postmark the folded letter sheet?



In **Figure 4** the name of the Big Flats Post Office is styled "Big Flat." This FLS was mailed June 25, 1843 and Postmaster Roberts was still in office. The handwriting for the townmark is probably not his; the person who wrote the townmark might not have been aware of its current spelling and settled for the shortest possible name.

Another question posed by the above letter sheet is: Why did the postmaster at East Painted Post choose to use the Big Flats Post Office to mail his letters? Without doing any research, my guess is that the two post offices did not have the same frequency and timing of mail pickup and delivery and the postmaster at East Painted Post knew he could get his letters out sooner if he took them next door to Big Flats.

By August 5, 1844, when the FLS on the left in **Figure 5** was brought to the Big Flats Post Office, Ebenezer S. Roberts was no longer postmaster and it was up to Lauren A. Tuttle to process the mail. He appears to reject the single "t" spelling and returns to "tt" at the end of the town name, omitting the "s" used by his predecessor in office. This is so with the fls at the right in **Figure 5**, eight days later, both items having the East Painted Post postmaster free frank.

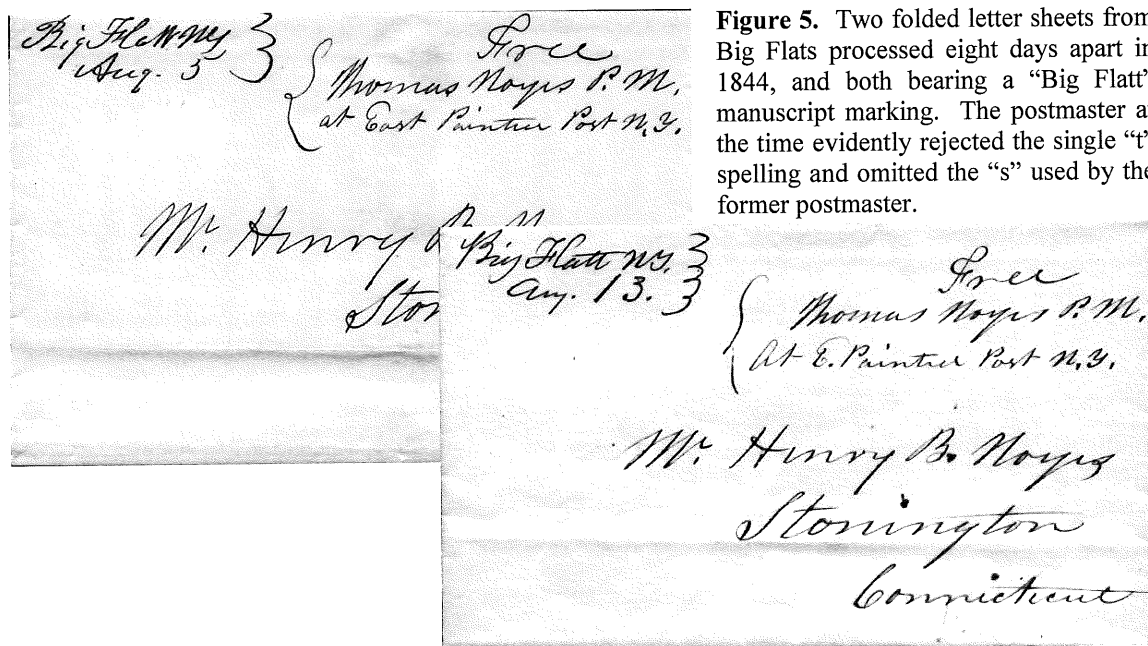


Figure 5. Two folded letter sheets from Big Flats processed eight days apart in 1844, and both bearing a "Big Flats" manuscript marking. The postmaster at the time evidently rejected the single "t" spelling and omitted the "s" used by the former postmaster.

Returning to mail requiring payment of postage, **Figure 6** is a prepaid folded letter sheet dated July 24, 1846 and mailed the same day at the Big Flats Post Office. Lauren Tuttle was still postmaster and his style of townmark in **Figure 6**, as well as his town name spelling, resembles that found on the August 1844 covers in **Figures 5**.

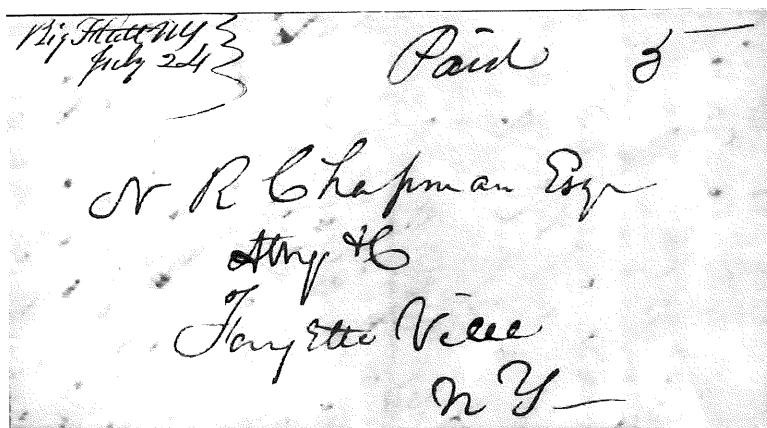


Figure 6. A prepaid folded letter sheet mailed on July 24, 1846 and most likely postmarked by Lauren Tuttle the postmaster at the time. Note the resemblance of the writing and the same spelling of the town name as those letters in **Figure 5**.

In **Figure 7** we see an early envelope (not FLS), torn and creased but with markings still readable. There is no year date on the cover. The manuscript rate marking “Paid 3” tells us that the cover was mailed after June 30, 1851. The townmark is clearly spelled “Big Flatt” and if the month written under the townmark is January (?), then the cover has to be dated 1852 or later. Lauren Tuttle was Big Flats Postmaster until April 4, 1852.

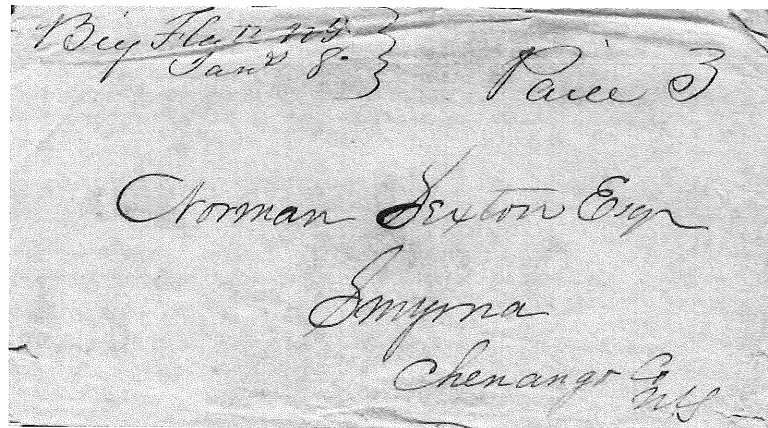


Figure 7. An early envelope mailed no earlier than 1852 which bears the “Big Flatt” spelling.

Another difficult item for establishing a year date is shown in **Figure 8**. This is an unpaid folded letter sheet apparently reporting school attendance throughout Chemung County in 1852 or 1853. In either event, based on the Nov.10 mailing date, Horace Weller would have been Big Flats Postmaster when it was mailed, and he appears to have favored the post office name style used by Ebenezer Roberts, i.e., “Big Flatts.”

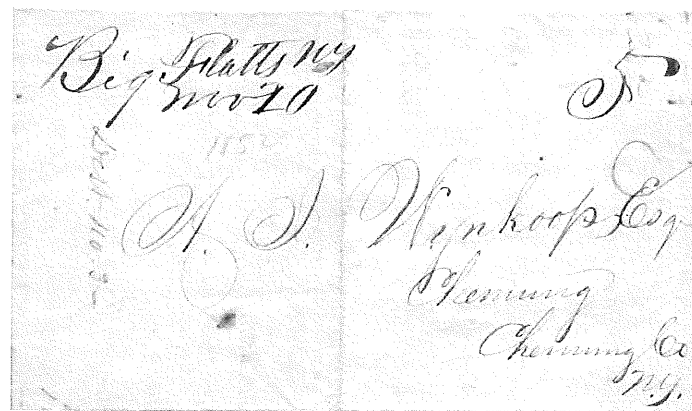


Figure 8. A folded letter sheet from 1852 or 1853 with the town spelling reverted to “Big Flatts”

This concludes the stampless covers in my Big Flats collection. The earliest stamped cover I have for Big Flats, seen in **Figure 9**, shows manuscript markings still in use and the post office name spelled “Big Flatt.” The cover lacks any year date but we know the stamp was in use between 1851 and 1857.

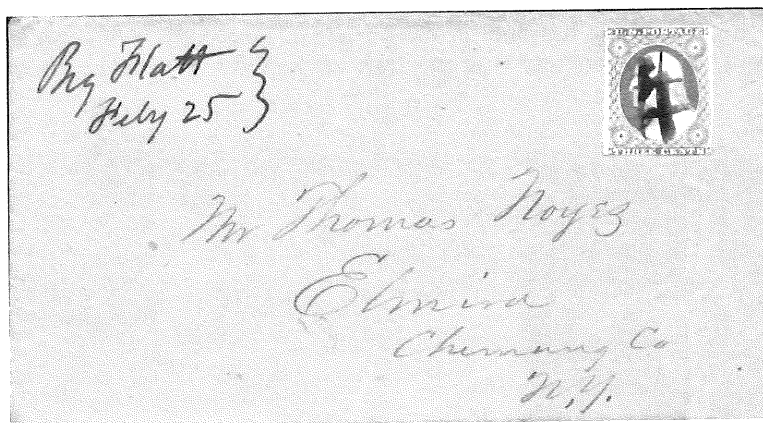


Figure 9. A stamped cover from the 1850's with a manuscript "Big Flatts" town marking. The imperforate stamp, Scott Type A10, was in use between 1851 and 1857.

When did the Big Flatts Post Office first use a handstamp on its outgoing mail and how did this device spell the name of the town? The date of use of the first handstamp was probably in the 1850s, and here is where the *American Stampless Cover Catalog, Volume 1* (5th ed., 1997) and George J. Bernadt's *Postal Markings of New York State 1792-1856* (ESPHS 1993) come to the rescue: both list a blue 30mm circular town and date stamp for Big Flatts mail first seen in 1854. The ASCC reports the name in the handstamp as "Big Flat" while Bernadt uses "Big Flatts."

As near as I can tell from the stamped Big Flatts covers in my collection, the Big Flatts postmark described above did not use the name "Big Flatts" until 1862 or later.

The earliest Big Flatts cover I have with a hand-stamped postmark is probably the one shown in **Figure 10**. I say probably because there is no indication of a year date anywhere on the envelope or on an enclosure. The stamp on the cover was issued in 1857 and in use until mid-1861. The postmark on the cover is the one described in the ASCC.



Figure 10. A cover most likely from the late 1850's with a hand-stamped "BIG FLAT" postmark.

Two more covers using the **blue** "Big Flat" postmark are shown as **Figures 11 and 12**. Still no year date on either cover, but it is probably safe to assume both are 1861. **Figure 11** is a Civil War patriotic cover featuring General Winfield Scott and referring to an 1861 legal filing in the fine print below the illustration. The cover was mailed August 12 from Maryland to a Big Flatts resident who had moved to Elmira. The Big Flatts Post Office forwarded the cover August

15 as evidenced by its written "Fwd 3" at the top and its hand-stamped postmark at the bottom. The 1857 stamp seen on **Figure 11** was demonetized at the start of the Civil War to prevent its use by Southern post offices.

Figure 11. A Civil War patriotic cover mailed to Big Flatts and forwarded from there to Elmira, also in Chemung Co. The cover bears a blue circular date stamp (CDS) with the town name spelled as "Big Flat".



The stamp on the cover in **Figure 12** was issued in 1861 to replace the demonetized 1857 3¢ stamp. The cover has a well-inked townmark still using the name "Big Flat" and an over-inked cancel almost obliterating the stamp. This cover could easily be the last of the Big Flats postmarks or townmarks where the second word in the town name is spelled other than "Flats." I have at least six more Big Flats covers with the 1861 3¢ stamp (it's a common stamp), and on all of them the postmark reads Big Flats.

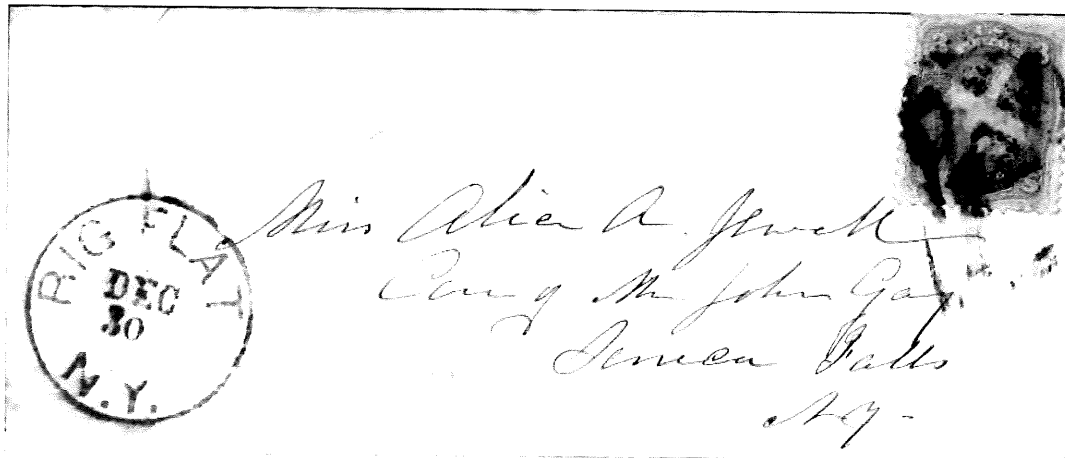


Figure 12. A cover bearing the 3¢ issue of 1861 which still exhibits a **BIG FLAT** CDS.

It took more than a half century, not 22 years as the USPS Postmaster Finder would have us believe, for the spelling of Big Flats to settle into its current form, still going strong after 147 years!

CHAUNCEY MITCHELL DEPEW
A Lifetime of Service to New York

By George McGowan

Chauncey Mitchell Depew was born in Peekskill, New York on April 23, 1834. He attended private schools and graduated from Peekskill Military Academy in 1852. After attending Yale, he was admitted to the Bar in 1858 and opened an office in Peekskill where he practiced until 1861. In 1865 he was appointed ambassador to Japan but declined to pursue a railroad career.

In 1866, Depew became attorney for the New York and Harlem Railroad. In 1869 he accepted the same position for the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad (N.Y.C. & H.R.R.). In 1876 he was moved up to general counsel for the entire Vanderbilt system. In 1892 he joined the executive board of the N.Y.C. & H.R.R. as second vice president, and then elected president until 1899. **Figure 1** illustrates a letter sent from the Executive Chamber in Albany, New York on January 16, 1899 to Depew when he was President of the NYC&HRR, at Grand Central Depot in New York City.

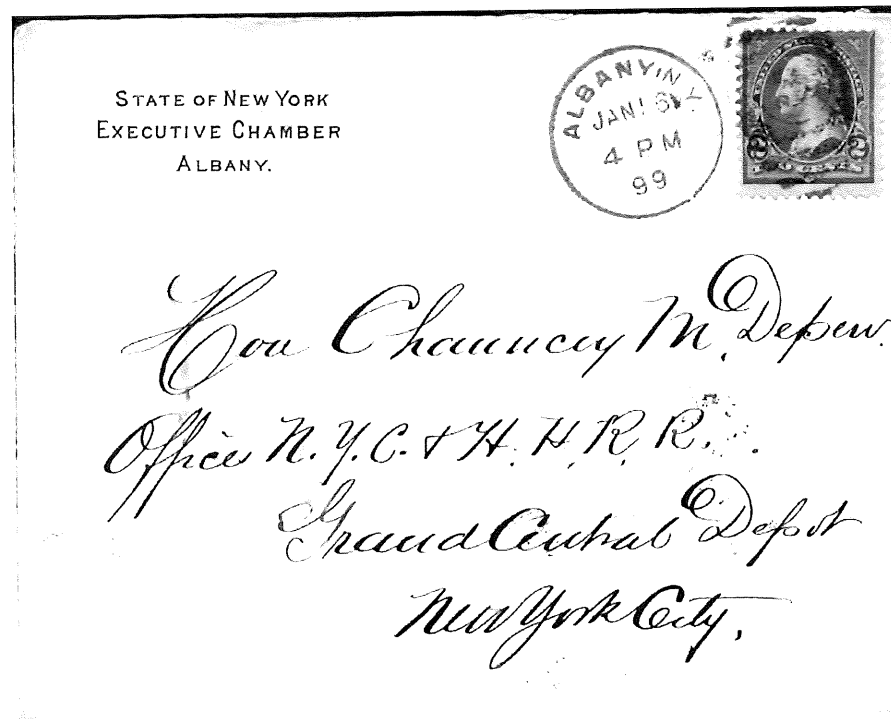


Figure 1. A letter mailed from Albany, New York on January 16, 1899 and addressed to Depew when he was President of the NYC&HRR at Grand Central Depot, New York City.

Depew also served in various capacities for Western Union, The Hudson River Bridge Co., The Niagara River Bridge Co., The New York state Realty & Terminal Co., The Union Trust Co., Equitable Life Assurance Co., and Kensico Cemetery Association. In 1877 he was appointed regent of the University of the State of New York where he served until 1904.

Chauncey Depew became a member of the New York Assembly in 1862 and 1863, serving for a time as Acting Speaker. From 1864 to '65 he was elected Secretary of State for New York on the Union ticket. In 1874 he was appointed a commissioner for the building of the State capital. He also served as: Clerk of Westchester County, Immigration Commissioner, Boundary Commissioner, President of the Court of Claims for New York City, and Commissioner of taxes and assessments for the City of New York.

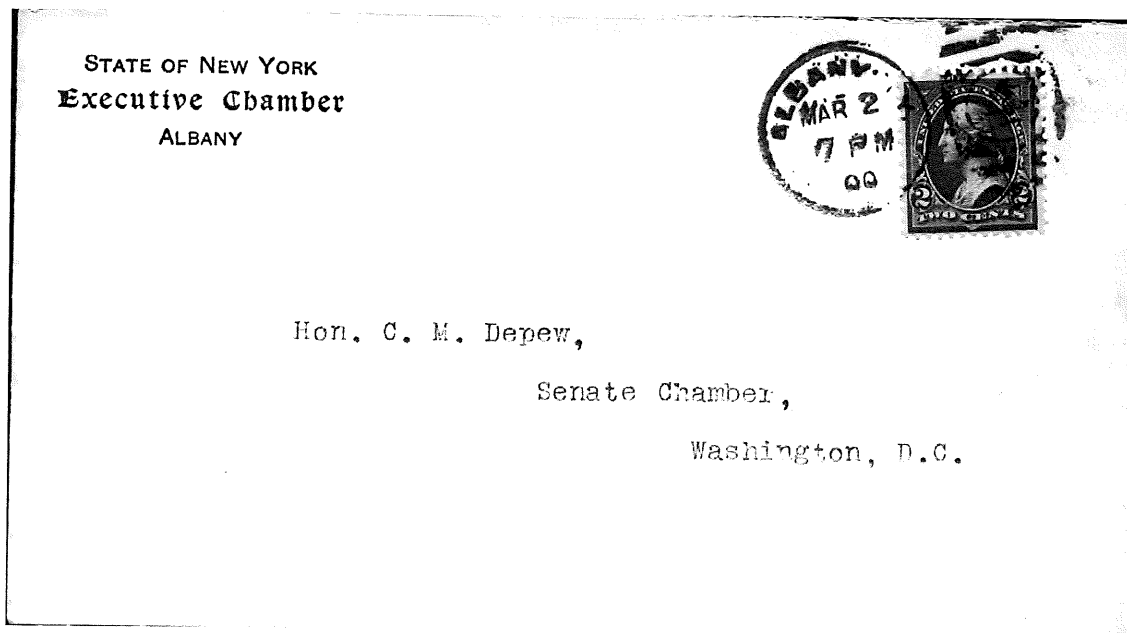


Figure 2. A letter mailed from Albany, New York on March 2, 1900, to U. S. Senator C. M. Depew.

Depew ran, and lost, for the position of Lieutenant Governor of New York, but was successful when he ran for the U. S. Senate as a Republican, and served from March, 1899 until March of 1911. The letter in **Figure 2**, again from the Executive Chamber in Albany, was mailed to U.S. Senator Depew two days before he was sworn into office on March 4, 1900.

His list of accomplishments was extensive. After serving as U.S. Senator, he resumed his legal and corporate business interests in New York City until his death on April 5th 1928 of pneumonia. He is buried in Hillside Cemetery, Peekskill, New York.

References:

Biographical Dictionary, US Congress
Wikipedia

POST OFFICE OF THE ISSUE

Nineveh Junction, Chenango County

According to Kay and Smith's *New York Postal History*, and the USPS *Post Office Finder* website, the Nineveh Junction post office was established in Chenango County on June 7, 1892. The first postmaster was Horace A. Bushnell. However in the 1882 *Report of the Postmaster General of the United States* we find listed under "designation of railway post office" a line of 60 miles running from Nineveh (Broome County) to Carbondale, Pennsylvania. The terminus of this route (#6031) is listed as Nineveh Junction, at that time, simply a railway station on the line operated by the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company. Thus for ten years before its establishment as a post office, Nineveh Junction played an important role in the delivery of the mail in the Southern Tier of New York.

In the early years of operation, the turnover of postmasters was great. In less than six years there were four other men who succeeded Mr. Bushnell as postmaster. E. W. Parsons served for one month in 1893, and was succeeded by Lester G. Merritt who served the longest stint of any of the four at two years and three months. Following Mr. Merritt, in February 1896, was Orin E. Brown whose term lasted but two years. In February 1898, Newell B. Williams assumed the position, but was replaced in September of that year by George A. Johnson.

The appointment of George A. Johnson as postmaster of Nineveh Junction was the beginning of a long running service to the Post Office Department and to the hamlet of Nineveh Junction. Mr. Johnson served six weeks shy of twenty five years, ending his service in July of 1923.

Seen below are two photographs supplied to your editor by Linda Sullivan, the great granddaughter of George A. Johnson. In the left photo, George is seen standing in front of the Nineveh Junction post office sometime in the early 1900's. At right is an undated portrait of George himself.

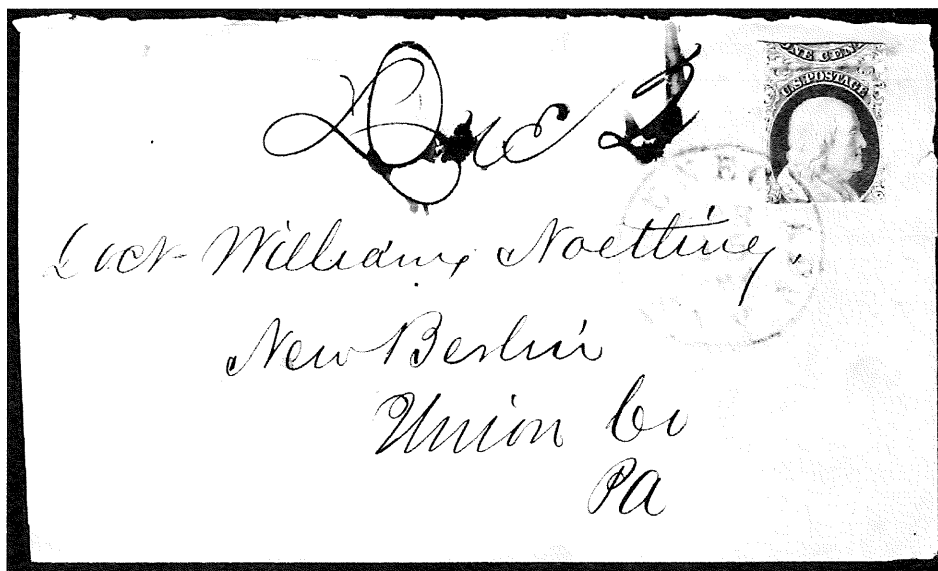


Of the nine persons who succeeded Mr. Johnson as postmaster of Nineveh Junction, none served longer than ten years. The Nineveh Junction post office was discontinued on April 30, 1954. Since then, service has been provided by the Afton (Chenango County) post office.

COVER OF THE ISSUE

When Was This Cover Mailed? And Who Said So?

Submitted by Bob Bramwell



April 15, 185? Schenectady to New Berlin, Pa. franked with 1851 Sc. #7.

The year in the postmark is very faint but appears to be either 1854 or 1857. The seller identified the date as 1857, but had no more proof than I since there were no contents. In either year, it is not clear why the Schenectady Post Office would accept a letter with 1 cent postage for delivery to New Berlin, Pa.

In 1854 the rate for a paid letter of ½ ounce was 3 cents, or 5 cents for an unpaid letter, to a distance of 3,000 miles. I am unaware of a provision for a partially paid letter such as this, so the question is: Was this letter correctly rated, and if so, is it possible to know where the rate was determined? Or where it was collected?

If the letter was sent in 1857, while the 3¢ rate remained in force POD regulations then required prepayment. So it remains questionable why the Schenectady Post Office would process the letter as presented.

Of course, many collectors with more experience than I have will very calmly state that in either 1854 or 1857 postal regulations were honored in the breach routinely; so the answer may simply be that the Schenectady postmaster couldn't be bothered to hold the letter for satisfaction of the underpayment and was quite confident that the 2 cents would be collected on the other end. Does it follow that the Schenectady postmaster marked the letter "Due 2"?

So far, this cover could have been postmarked in either 1854 or 1857. Due to the extreme nature of the miscut, I believe a 1¢ plating specialist could easily identify the two positions involved here. That being the case, is there an explanation that emerges from the combination of franking and marking on this cover that allows the year of service to be determined? I welcome input from members.