

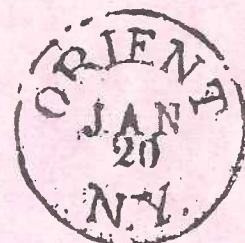


## LONG ISLAND POSTAL HISTORIAN

THE NEWSLETTER AND JOURNAL OF THE LONG ISLAND POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Dedicated to the collection and research of the postal history of  
Brooklyn (Kings Co.), Queens, Nassau and Suffolk Counties.



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# Recruit a New Member We Need Articles Now !







## IN MEMORIAM

### Arthur Fitzpatrick

### October 4, 1992

Sadley we must report that Arthur Fitzpatrick, a Charter Member, passed away on Sunday, October 4th, after a long illness. And to his wife, Betty, and the family we extend our heartfelt sympathy.

Art had played a very big part in the organizing of our Society in 1980 and was very active in its early years, serving as both Secretary and Vice-President as late as 1986. He also produced a newsletter from our beginning up until 1983. For the Newsletter first Art had contacted the ten charter members for a brief history to introduce each one to the others. At this time an excerpt from Art's own introduction seems fitting:

"Through membership of similarly interested collectors I hope to develop some knowledge of the markings, routes, DPOs, etc. of my chosen area (North Fork Villages). In acting as corresponding secretary in the organization of our group, I have been very pleasantly surprised by the enthusiastic acceptance of the idea of a club by those collectors of the Long Island postal material so far contacted. If such interest can be maintained our group should have a long and pleasant life."

Art kept busy with his secretary's duties, reporting on membership changes, annual meetings, dues reminders, club correspondence, and helping to man our Society's booth at the LISDA Show in Hempstead, as well as publishing our Newsletter. He was also the correspondent for our study group for 'Manuscript Postmarks'. Art was especially interested in getting youngsters involved in Long Island Postal History, recognizing the need for newer members to carry on as time goes on. In addition to those many activities, Art supported our Society in another way - he continued to pay his dues as a sustaining member.

Even after his illness began to take its toll Art continued to keep in touch, sending news clippings from local newspapers concerning postal matters. For instance, he also reported on the auxiliary postmarks in use at Hicksville and the Mid-Island Processing Facility. It was Art who informed us of the new postmark. 'LONG ISLAND, NY', first used on August 24, 1987 in conjunction with the opening of the new postal facility in Melville.

Though Art and I became good friends, often communicating by telephone, I had not known him prior to our Society's beginnings. As a successful bidder in one of Herman Herst's auctions, my name and address were not given to Art, but it was arranged for Herst to forward Art's letter to me, allowing me the prerogative of answering or not. I certainly liked Art's idea to form such a Society and agreed to join as a charter member.

As both a friend and fellow member, I am well aware of our Co-Founder's many contributions and can say fervently that Arthur will be missed.

Carl F. Baker

# First Air Mail To Fire Island

Jere C. Austin



THE YEAR 1929 automatically conjures up memories of the stock market crash and the beginning of the great depression, but 1929 was a year of many other things. In 1929, the airplane was emerging from its infancy. It was still such a novelty that earthbound people automatically looked up at the sound of a passing airplane or airship. Charles Lindbergh, "Lucky Lindy", was a national hero. Boys from seven to seventy were fascinated and absorbed by this new dimension to speed of travel coupled with the fascination of soaring the skies.

1929 was the year that a Blue Point greenhouse flower grower whose avocation was speed—speed on the water—and a group of men who had joined together to purchase an airplane in order to learn to fly—combined on the Fourth of July as principals in a challenge race. The race matched a proven speedboat, a sleek mahogany racing machine, holder of the title, "Queen of the Bay" for many years; against a metal and wood-framed cloth-covered biplane in a race across Great South Bay, each carrying a sack of United States mail.

The writer, as a small boy, remembers one magic summer evening, a ride on the bay in *Jen*. Her skipper-owner, Fremont Abrams, was at the wheel proudly showing his adult passengers what his famous boat could do. The small boy recalls the mahogany dashboard with its mysterious black and white dials blocking his vision forward, and white curtains of water rising from the sides of the boat and falling far astern. Turning to peer aft over the top of the black leather seat, small eyes saw

the after cockpit, at the other end of the long, polished mahogany engine cover,—it may have been a city block away—lost in the swirl of salt spray that wind and boat speed combined to whip into a wild frenzy.

Herbert Abrams, son of the owner, who rode with his father during the years that *Jen* held sway as Queen of the Bay, who was old enough to be an able assistant in the racing cockpit, now himself a retired greenhouse flower grower, remembers many details of *Jen* and of the race that was destined to be remembered forty-three years later, not as a race between boat and airplane, but as an early U. S. Air Mail flight.

Abrams recalls, "The *Jen* was a 26 foot Hacker speed boat with a 200 horsepower Kermath engine. The engine turned at 2300 rpm when new. Later in her career, a down-draft carburetor was added that enabled us to use a mixture of gas and benzene and her top speed went up to 2750 rpm.

"*Jen* reached her peak performance during a race at Point Lookout that I remember well. Guy Lombardo was a participant and I believe it was one of his first races. I remember my father reducing speed to 1500 to make it appear like a contest. This

is not to deprecate Guy Lombardo, understand—after all, he went on to make a big name for himself in speedboat racing. He certainly is a man of many talents.

"As I say, that was the peak. In all the other races, if she were tuned properly, *Jen* generated 2650 to 2700 rpm, which represented about 50 to 55 miles per hour "over-the-ground" if there was not too much wind or sea resistance.

"The *Jen*, over several years of racing on Great South Bay, was never beaten in her class of 26' speed boats. The larger 30 footers, with their 250 horsepower engines, could beat us by about 50 feet in a 10 mile race of two laps around a five mile course.

"The number of turns in a race course was very important in determining a close race. A turn at high speed put terrific strain on the propellor so that a slight misalignment would occur, enough to reduce top speed by as much as 100 rpm. It was normal for a boat of that class to come in from a two lap race with her top speed reduced by 300 to 500 rpm, just from the wear and tear of the turns.

"My father took the wheel in all of the races. My main function was to take care of the stop watch and the timing details. Races were held on July 4th and Labor Day weekends. There was usually a race sometime during Race Week prior to the afternoon sailboat races. There sometimes were races on Saturdays—but not every week. The cost of overhauling the boat for a big race was too much to be borne too often. It usually cost about \$300 to overhaul the motor, plus the



cost to realign the propellor and refinish the bottom for least water resistance. And it took several tune-up trials prior to a race."

During the early months of 1929, while Fremont Abrams was making plans for another racing season, a group of men in the Patchogue area were organizing The Patchogue Wing, Suffolk Flyers, Inc. The concept of a flying club was not new, there were several such clubs on Long Island. News stories of the day mention seven full-fledged airports. The largest and most successful of the flying clubs was the Sunrise Flying Club, organized by Bert Shields, and flying near Rockville Centre. The Curtiss-Wright Flying Service was the largest commercial organization of the day. Centered at Curtiss Field, it had 118 employees and 35 planes of various types and nearly 200 students. The area that was to become Idlewild and later Kennedy International Airport, was still building. Known as the Jamaica Sea Airport, it had an ambitious building program that included dirigible mooring masts.

The Suffolk Flyers were unique for the way they financed the purchase of a club airplane. Their airplane may have been the first that was not either privately or commercially owned.

Membership in the "Patchogue Wing" was open to all for membership dues of ten dollars per year. The "Suffolk Flyers" was a separate holding corporation. Its certificate of incorporation, dated May, 1929, declared that the purpose of the corporation was "to promote aviation in all its branches and to acquire . . . real property including balloons, dirigibles, airplanes, hydroplanes, hydroairplanes and all kinds and types of vehicles . . . now known or which may hereafter be discovered or invented to be used in navigating the air . . ."

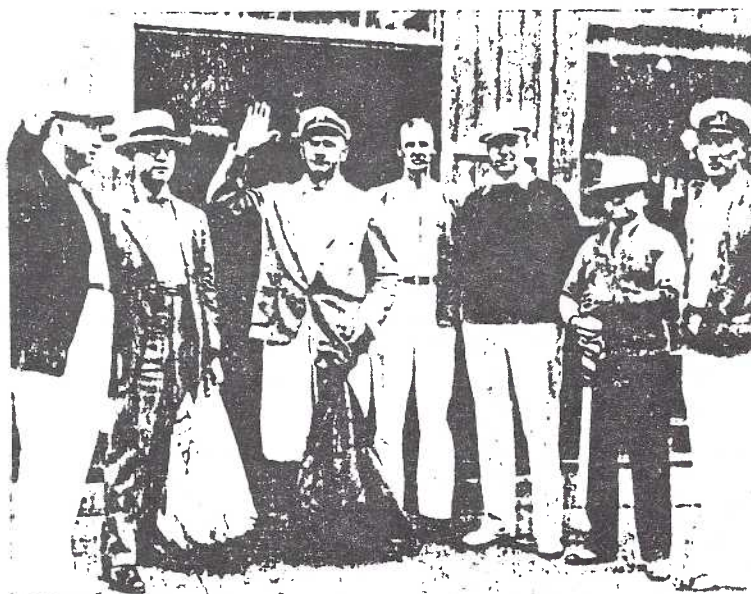
Fifty dollars bought a share of stock in Suffolk Flyers, Inc., and thus part of an airplane. In this way the club raised approximately \$3500. As the club's activities were aimed at recreational and educational pursuits, the articles of incorporation specifically stated that no matter how many shares a single member held, he was to have only one vote in conducting the affairs of the corporation.

During the first few months of 1929, the fledgling flyers were busy locating a suitable flying field on which to base their operations, and in evaluating the various makes of aircraft that were available. When word was out that a group of people in Patchogue were going to buy a plane, company pilots began flying demonstrators into their first airfield, located between North Ocean and Jayne Avenues, just to the north of Roland Baker's orchard.

The ink was hardly dry on the certificate of incorporation when the Suffolk Flyers

placed an order with the Brunner-Winkle organization for one of their "Bird" biplanes. They made a substantial down-payment and got in return a promise of early delivery. The plane was to be built in the company factory in Glendale (Brooklyn). The plane's normal passenger carrying capacity would be two (besides the pilot) in an open cockpit, and could be rigged for "dual-stick" instruction. It was to be powered by a Curtis OX-5 engine which would be loaned to the club by Walter "Frog" Chapman, one of the club's directors who operated a small private flying field of his own behind his garage in East Moriches.

Meanwhile, the fledgling flyers were advised by experienced pilots that their North Ocean Avenue field, while adequate for experienced pilots, was not safe for use by student pilots because of its single runway, prevailing crosswinds and nearby tall trees. The hunt was immediately on for a more favorable location.



Herbert Abrams Collection

The Great Airplane-Speedboat Race, from Patchogue to Cherry Grove July 4, 1929 was about to start when this group posed for posterity. Left to right, they are: Postmaster Harry T. Weeks, Assistant Postmaster Robert D. Newins, Fremont Abrams, John Thurber, Herman Schoenfeld, William Stone and Fred Jones.

They next moved to Bayport, to an open field north of and adjacent to the Montauk Highway, and to the south of where Davis Field now exists. It was to be the club's flying field during the summer of 1929 before moving to a still better location at Roe Avenue and the Bay in East Patchogue.

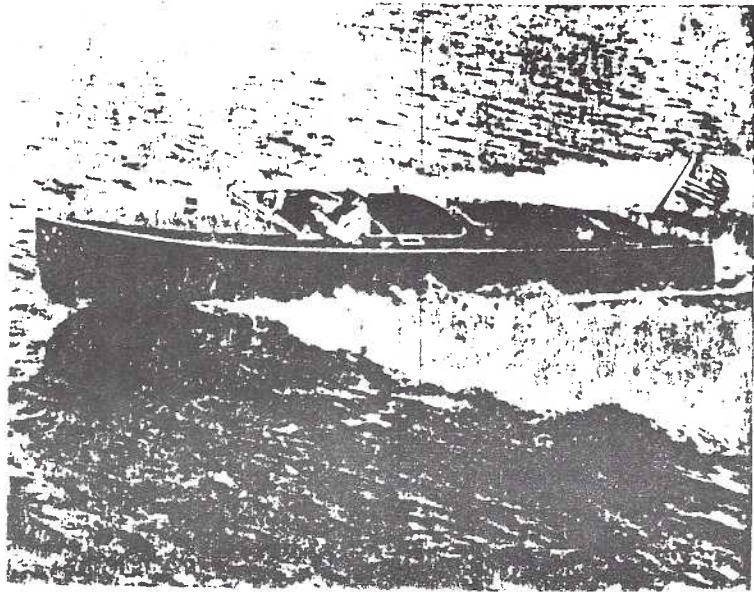
As of June 25th, the day of promised delivery for their new airplane, there were well over 100 members of Patchogue Wing. Many of them also held stock membership in the holding corporation, Suffolk Flyers, which entitled them to enter the flying class. Of these, a good number had passed required physical tests and were eager to get started — all before their new plane had even been delivered to the flying club field in Bayport.

The idea for the air mail flight, or airplane - speedboat race, came about on a fine Sunday afternoon in June on the beach at Fire Island. There were several families enjoying the beach that afternoon. Fremont Abrams and his family joined a group that was already there. He mentioned with justifiable pride how fast he made the trip across the bay in his speedboat. Herbert Austin, who was president of the newly-formed Suffolk Flyers, had the audacity to suggest that the club's new airplane could have made the trip in less time.

Before the afternoon was done, plans were being laid for a match race to take place on the next Fourth of July. It is not recorded whose idea it was to have the two contenders carry mail. Patchogue Postmaster, Harry T. Weeks, obtained permission from the 2nd Assistant Postmaster-General for the contestants to carry U. S. Mail. Frank Toth, of Patchogue, designed a special air-mail cachet to stamp the mail carried. Interest was generated by the newspaper stories and letters began to come into the

Patchogue Post Office for the special cachet.

The race was to start at 10 o'clock in the morning from the Patchogue Post Office. Austin was to drive to the Bayport field and the waiting airplane. Abrams was to dash straight down Ocean Avenue and jump into his waiting speedboat. Newspaper stories built up the anticipation by writing of the various "ifs" that could decide the race. "While Austin is still on the way to Bayport, Abrams plans to have his speedboat cutting through the water straight for Cherry Grove . . . while Austin circles and climbs for altitude . . . Abrams hopes to be drawing near his goal . . . Abrams has but to flash by . . . and toss his mail onto the dock. Austin must fly over and drop his mail south of the post office . . . Abrams needs at most only seven minutes . . . needless to say, he will do everything except get out and push . . . Austin must reach Bayport, climb for altitude . . . an air pocket may throw the plane off course and delay the dropping of the mail a few seconds and lose the race to Abrams."



Herbert Abrams Collection

Fremont Abrams at the wheel of Jen.

June passed and July came. Fremont Abrams had *Jen* tuned to a fine hair and ready for the race. But, as of Wednesday morning the 3rd of July, there was still one important ingredient missing — the new airplane of the Patchogue Wing, Suffolk Flyers, had not yet arrived on the club flying field in Bayport.

There was an unexpected delay in delivery. The plane was at Roosevelt Field where it went from the factory for government testing and inspection. The plane was passed as air-worthy by proper officials, but the plane's engine refused to function properly. Club members made daily trips to Roosevelt Field and labored to the point of exhaustion to get the dual magnetos timed and functioning properly. Race day grew nearer. The Bird airplane organization offered their own demonstrator plane for the race if needed, but after the offer had been made, their plane, too, had to go into the shop for repairs. Their pilot, William Hunt, was available, but he had no plane to fly.

However, determination of the would-be flyers won out over recalcitrant magnetos



and at eleven thirty on the morning of July 3rd, word was received in Patchogue that the plane was in the air and on its way. Fifteen minutes later, a call came from Bayport, "She is here!" and at eleven forty five, the new airplane settled on the flying field at Bayport.

Postmaster Harry T. Weeks announced that the race was on at 10 AM the following day.

Newspaper accounts of the race seem to agree on all details but one—the time difference between winner and loser. Some stories made it 50 seconds, others gave the winner only a 10 second margin. However, they all agree that after receiving their respective bags of mail, the contestants took off by automobile from the Patchogue Post

Office at exactly 10:25 AM. Each carried a sack containing 1,750 pieces of mail. Abrams drove straight south to the Mascot Dock where he boarded *Jen* at 10:27 and set off for Cherry Grove at 45 miles per hour. Austin drove to Bayport where Pilot William Hunt waited at the controls of the new airplane. The plane was four minutes behind Abrams in getting underway.

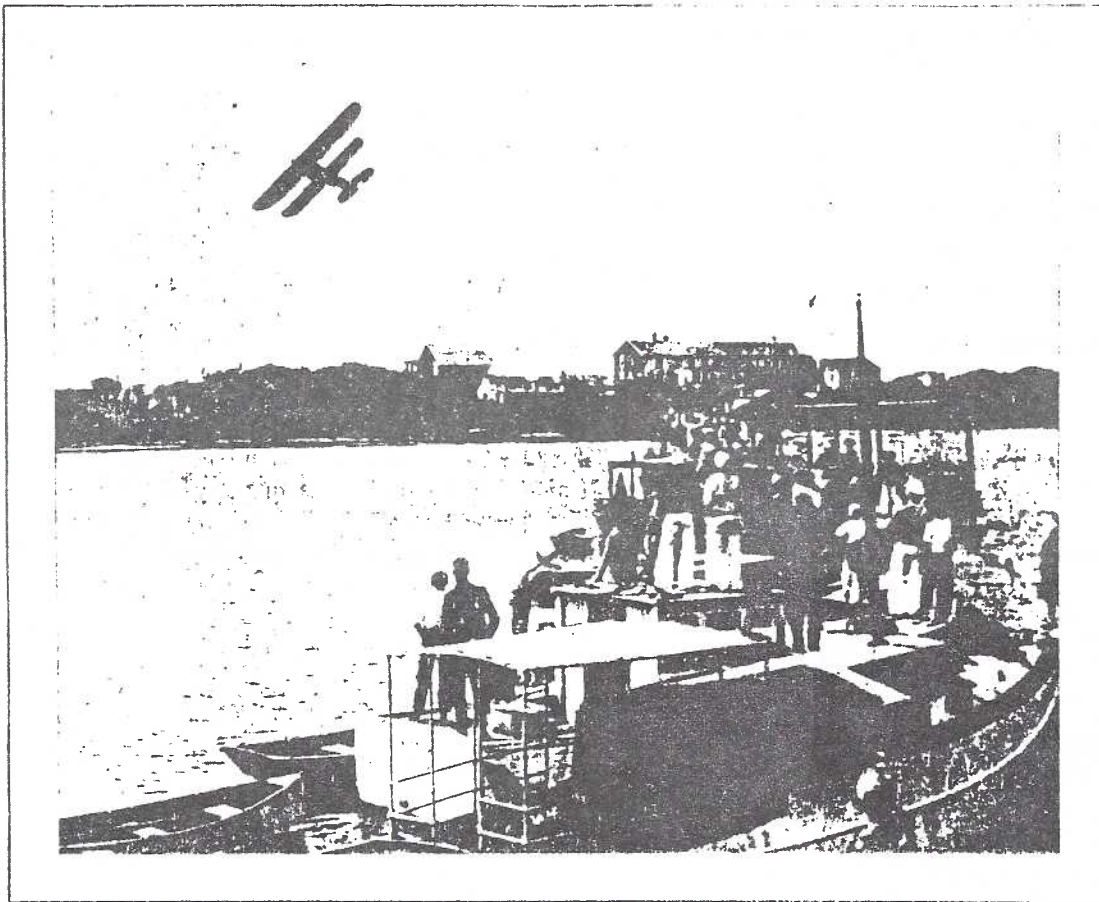
Herb Abrams picks up the story again as he remembers it:

"I was in the cockpit of *Jen* at the Mascot Dock waiting for my father. The wind on the bay had gotten quite high but was favorable. It seemed an interminable wait. Then the car was at dockside and my father was throwing the bag of mail into the cock-

pit and bounding in after it. We cast off and *Jen* roared to full power. She quickly reached planing speed and settled on her course for Cherry Grove seven miles to the southwest.

"It was a different kind of race — there were no other boats ahead or behind or alongside, yet there was an urgency to it. We were constantly looking to starboard and aft over our shoulders for a first glimpse of the airplane.

"I calculated afterwards that *Jen* must have done 45 to 50 miles per hour over the seven miles that day. I remember we were approaching Cherry Grove, the dock was plainly in sight. The terms of the race were that we had to drop our sack of mail on the dock—anywhere,



Pilot Bill Hunt had just dropped a bag of U. S. mail on a sand dune, outside a Fire Island Post Office, when this picture was snapped. The date was July 4, 1929 and the plane had raced Fremont Abrams in the speedboat "*Jen*," from Patchogue to Cherry Grove.

by any means possible, and we were beginning to envision another victory for *Jen*.

"It was then that we got our first glimpse of the biplane rising over the tree tops to the north, barely visible, but unmistakably rising, and heading for the same destination that we were."

The *Suffolk Citizen* wrote afterward: "The contest attracted thousands to the starting points, while everybody was out on the dock at Cherry Grove awaiting the two racing, mail carriers." The *Advance* in a caption to a picture of Abrams in his yacht, called it a "Sporty event . . . viewed by crowds on mainland and beach." The *N. Y. Times* wrote that "a crowd of several thousand persons lined the shore front all the way from East Patchogue to Bayport to watch the thrilling race . . . and a

large crowd was on the dock at Cherry Grove."

The plane took off into a northwest wind and had to circle to the south before it could head out across the bay. *Jen* left a long white wake that made her easy to spot from the air and she was, at that point, well on her way to her goal.

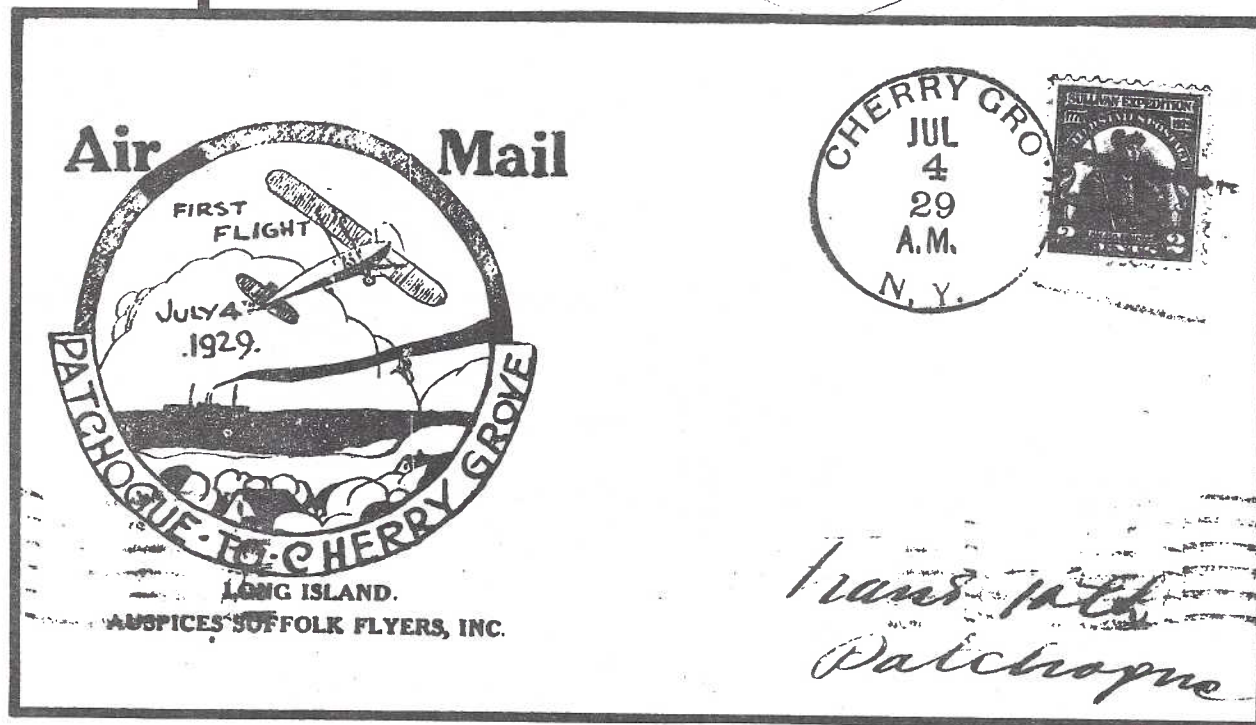
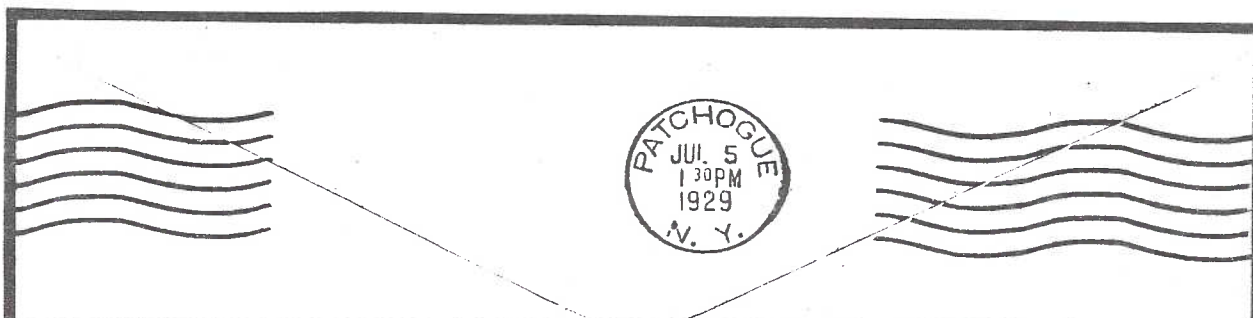
But 45 or 50 miles per hour over the water was not a match for 120 through the air. The consensus of news stories seems to be that the plane got to the beach well ahead of the speedboat but was compelled to turn and circle three times before the mail bag could be dropped.

The writer recalls his father telling the story afterwards — of how the third pass was "do-or-die." From the plane they could both see *Jen's* wake getting nearer

and nearer to the dock and there would not be enough time for another pass without losing the race.

Abrams was driving *Jen* at full speed and closing fast on the dock, but pilot Bill Hunt's third pass at the Cherry Grove Post Office was accurate. The mail bag hit the sand dune either (according to your news source) 10 seconds or 50 seconds before the other bag of mail reached the dock.

As an anti-climax to the race, it is recorded that the Suffolk Flyers' new biplane returned to Bayport, making the complete round trip in 13 minutes. Fremont Abrams' elapsed time from the Patchogue Post Office to the Cherry Grove dock was recorded at 113 1/2 minutes — a feat that today, 43 years later, would be very difficult to beat.



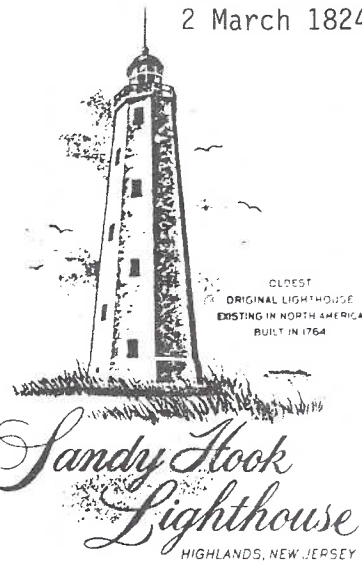


Mail Originating on the Ships & Islands of New York Bay

Almos  
from Sandy Hook  
Ship Merrim  
3 March 1824

Letter written on a ship  
passing Sandy Hook, hand  
carried by the returning  
Pilot to New York, and  
mailed at the 1¢ Drop  
Letter Rate.

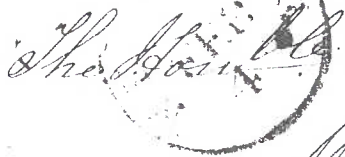
2 March 1824



Almos Binney, Esquire.  
New York -  
If this letter is not called  
for in two days the Postmaster  
is requested to forward it to Boston  
Massachusetts.

Shows residue of 5¢ 1847 stamp (#1)  
Letter written at Fort Columbus (Governors Island)  
3 February 1848. Hand (or Military Dispatch)  
carried to New York City, and mailed 4 February.

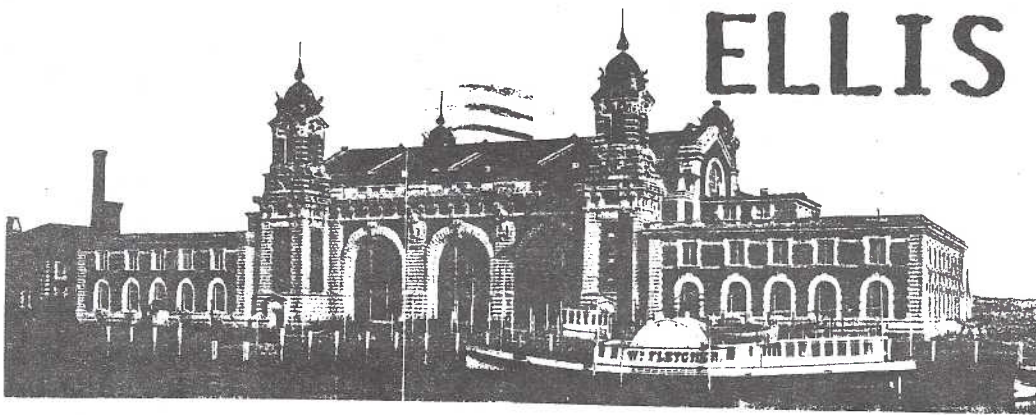
Fort Columbus, N.Y. Harbor.  
Feb 3/48  
Mary Ann Smith -



William L. Marcy  
Secretary at War.  
Washington, D.C.



have  
to  
a b  
try.



# ELLIS ISLAND

Official Mail  
Postcard Notice  
from the  
Immigration Service

7 May 1912

Department of Commerce and Labor  
IMMIGRATION SERVICE  
OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER OF IMMIGRATION  
Ellis Island, N. Y. H.  
RETURN AFTER FIVE DAYS

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300



*Josef Paternan*  
*Cap. J. & Co.*  
*Market St. Newark*

N. Y. Form 51

## NOTICE TO CALL ON BEHALF OF DETAINED ALIEN

Department of Commerce and Labor  
IMMIGRATION SERVICE  
ELLIS ISLAND, NEW YORK HARBOR

*Agazzi, Andreas*  
*Bot*

has arrived at Ellis Island by S. S. \_\_\_\_\_

This immigrant refers to you. If you desire to call on his or her behalf, you may do so. Ferryboat leaves Barge Office (Battery Park), every hour, on the hour.

You are not required to pay anything to any one in connection with this matter.

If you come to Ellis Island, bring this card with you.

S. I. No. *284*

Temporarily detained No. \_\_\_\_\_ 11-1984

WILLIAM WILLIAMS,  
Commissioner of Immigration.



*S. Bruch*  
*Detention Quartermaster*  
*Room 211*



THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS

*14.11.17*  
*de Ann!*

**CENSORED**  
 U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE  
 ELLIS ISLAND, N. Y.

*Mr. H. Muhler -*  
*525 River Terrace*  
*Hoboken N.J.*

*Ihnen herzlichst*  
*g. Die 3 Briefe*  
*ste an, und habe*  
*eben gleich*

*schickt, die Leute waren*  
*sehr dankbar & glücklich,*  
*dass sie wieder warme's*  
*Heiz hatten.*

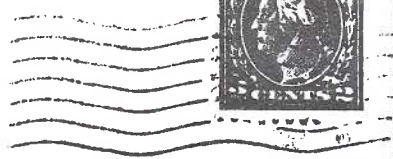
*Mit besten Grüssen*  
*August 1917*

World War I period CENSORED handstamped marking by the US Dept of Justice on Ellis Island, written in German, addressed domestically to Hoboken NJ, paying the wartime postcard rate of 2¢ by the addition of a 1¢WF onto an ordinary 1¢ postal card. 19 November 1917.

Corner Card (return address) of the Immigration Service Benefit Asso. (Union) on Ellis Island. Mailed post-war on 3 February 1922 paying the 2¢ domestic letter rate.

IF NOT DELIVERED IN 5 DAYS RETURN TO

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 ELLIS ISLAND, N. Y.



*Mr. W. H. Halstead,*  
*Fort Livingston,*  
*N.Y.*

% U. S. IMMIGRATION STA.

**LONG ISLAND PRECANCELS**  
on and off cover

Stamps from the collection of: Brian Levy  
Covers from the collection of: Brad Arch

Precancels are known to have been in use on a local basis since soon after the introduction of adhesive postage stamps in the United States.

The Bureau of Engraving & Printing experimented with precancels starting in 1916. Regular production of Bureau Precancels started on May 2, 1923 on the then current regular issues of the 1922 series.

For more than 50 years the precancels included the name of the post office and state at which they were authorized to be used by permit holders. More recently there has been a change to the 'lines only' type of precancels for use nationwide, and then to what is now known as service inscribed stamps without any killer lines.

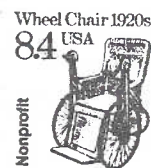
**AMITYVILLE NY. & BETHPAGE NY**



**Sisters of the Order of Saint Dominic**  
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Amityville, NY 11701



**Sisters of the Order of Saint Dominic**  
555 Albany Avenue  
Amityville, NY 11701



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USA 05



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Carreta 1770s

7.6 USA



Nonprofit

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Brooklyn, N. Y. 11234

Popeorn Wagon

16.7 USA 1902



Bulk Rate

Surviving vast stretches of time, precious relics are discovered in the  
Middle East which mirror a turbulent Jerusalem 2,000 years ago...



Box 275  
Montpelier  
Vermont 05602

Mr. Brad Arch  
P.O. Box 275  
Cedar Grove, N.J. 07009

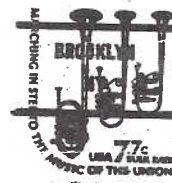
8/75



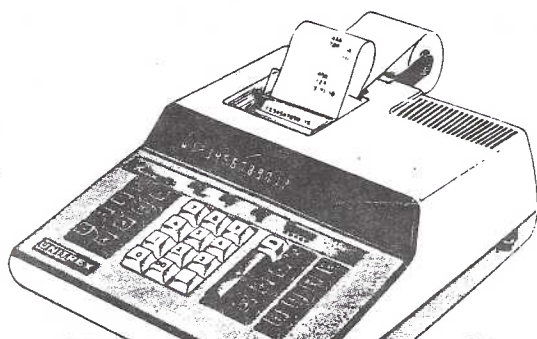
Address Correction Requested  
Return Postage Guaranteed

BROOKLYN NY

Jack M. Williams  
World Market Perspective  
Suite 204  
1760 Marine Drive  
W. Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7V 1J4



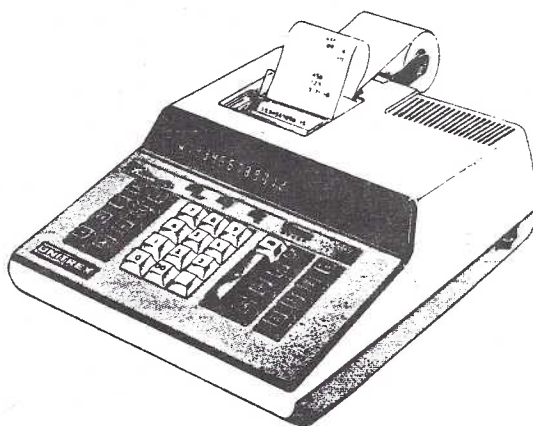
►Grayarc Mail Order Subsidiary of ►Dictaphone 882 Third Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11232



S52218A 1077 W

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Bulk Rate



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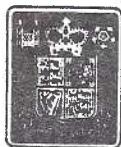
39-60 54th STREET, WOODSIDE, N.Y. 11377



HERB SPINDELLE IN FRANCE  
26-20 141 STREET  
FLUSHING, N.Y. 11354



7026



Coal Car 1870s  
13.2 Bulk Rate  
USA



NAME		
Mr. Brad Arch		
ADDRESS		
144 Hamilton Av.		
CITY	STATE	ZIP
Clifton, NJ		07011

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## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

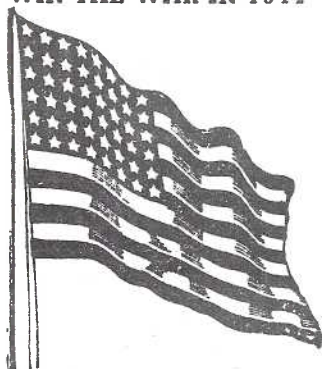
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P. L. & R. 562

### WIN THE WAR IN 1944



#### THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

Oh!—say can you see by the dawn's early light,  
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming!  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars thru the perilous fight,  
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming;  
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,  
Gave proof thru the night that our flag was still there,  
Oh!—say does that star-spangled banner yet wave  
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave!



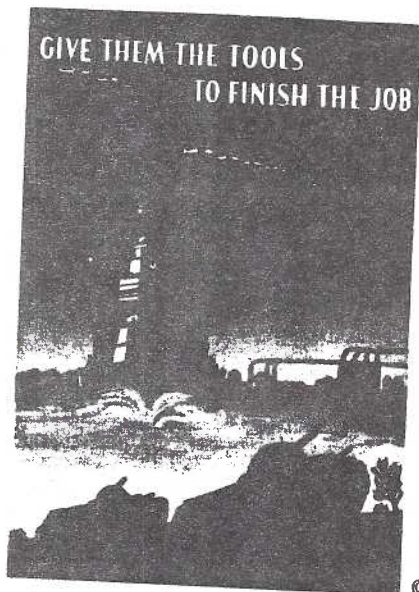
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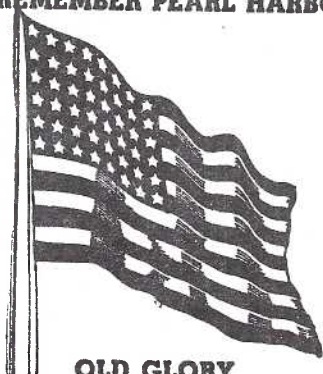


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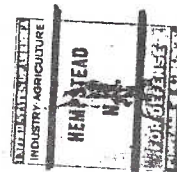
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**REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR**



**OLD GLORY  
REMEMBER JAPANESE ATROCITIES  
BUY BONDS  
SO LONG AS THERE IS A LIVE  
JAPANESE SOLDIER OUTSIDE  
OF JAPAN!**



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16.7 USA 1902



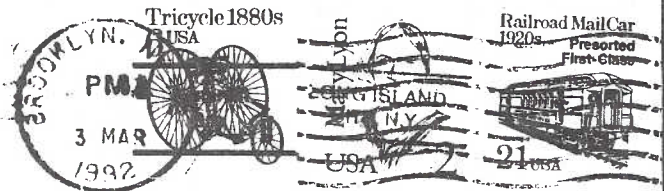
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Queens, N.Y. 11414



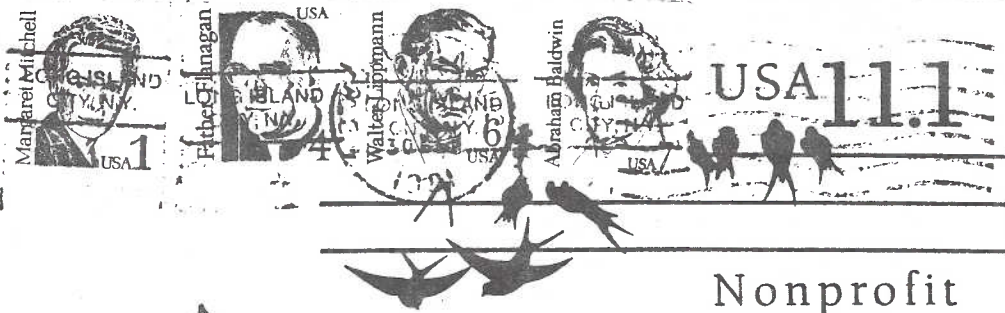
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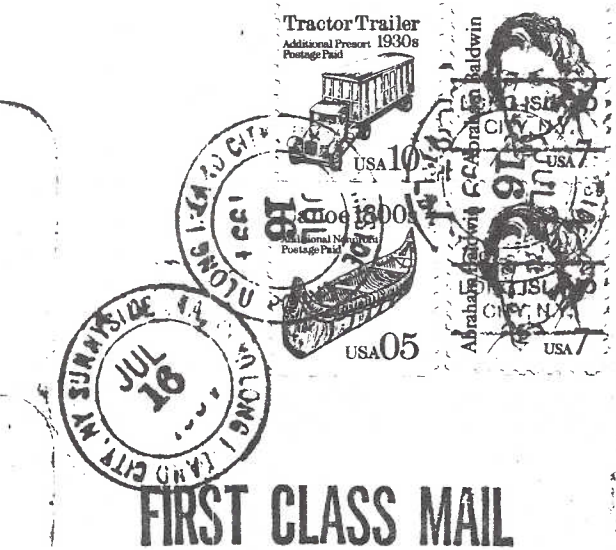
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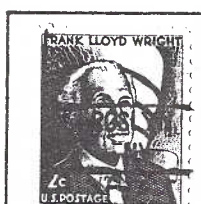
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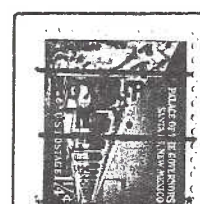
Roosevelt



Roslyn



Roslyn Heights



Roxbury



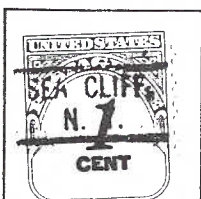
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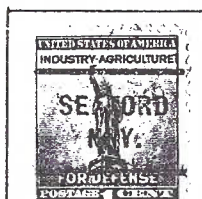
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Sayville



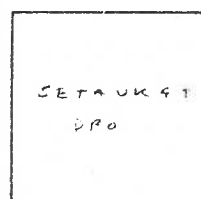
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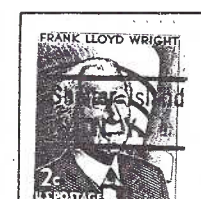
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Selden



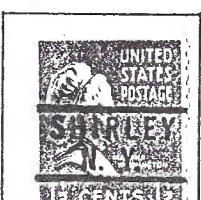
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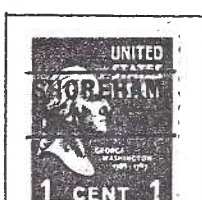
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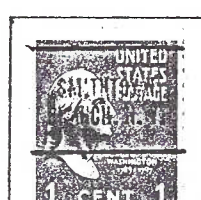
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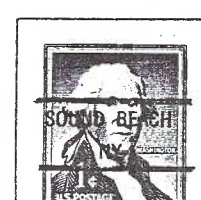
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Smithtown



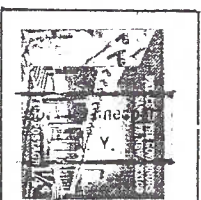
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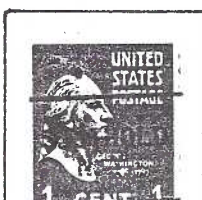
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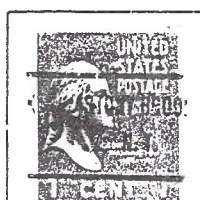
Southampton



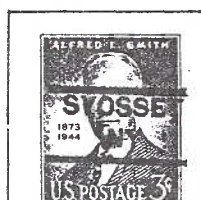
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Southold



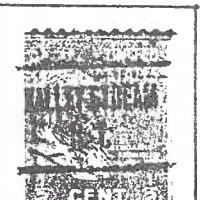
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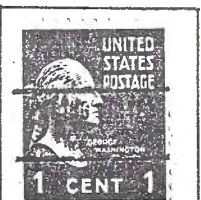
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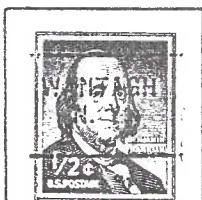
Upton



Valley Stream



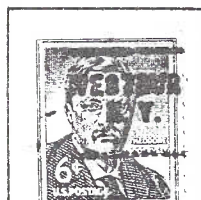
Wading River



Wantagh



Water Mill



Westbury



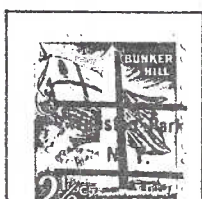
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West Islip



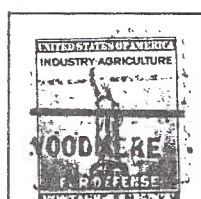
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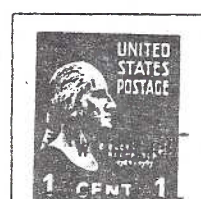
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Woodbury



Woodmere

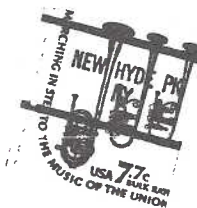


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NEW HYDE PARK NY & PORT WASHINGTON NY

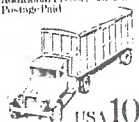
# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Published by Dow Jones & Company, Inc.  
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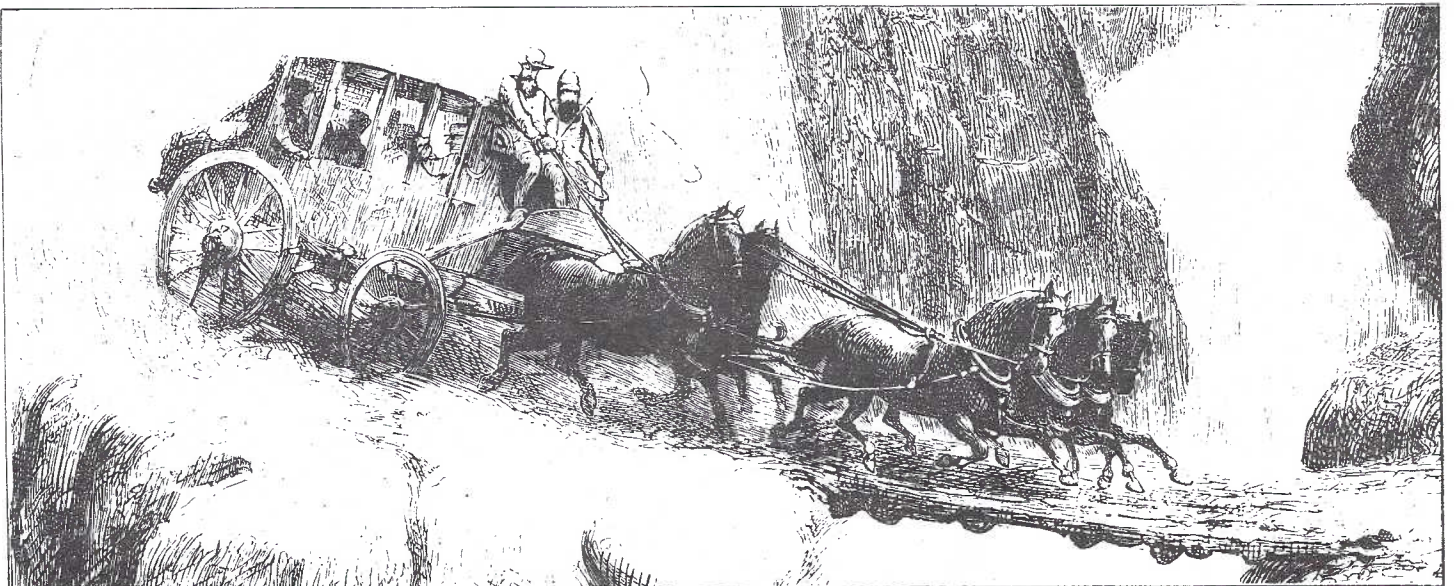


## The Stage Coach.

Tarnished and battered and old,  
Heartlessly hidden away,  
Left to the moth and the mould,  
Darkness and dust and decay.  
This was the pride of its day,  
Now all its glory is o'er—  
Faded and vanished for aye:  
Gone is the driver and four.  
How shall its story be told?  
What shall a song of it say?  
Once it was brilliant as gold,  
Once it was gilded and gay.  
Fine in their festive array,  
Many the bride that it bore:  
Now are they wrinkled and gray.  
Gone are the driver and four.

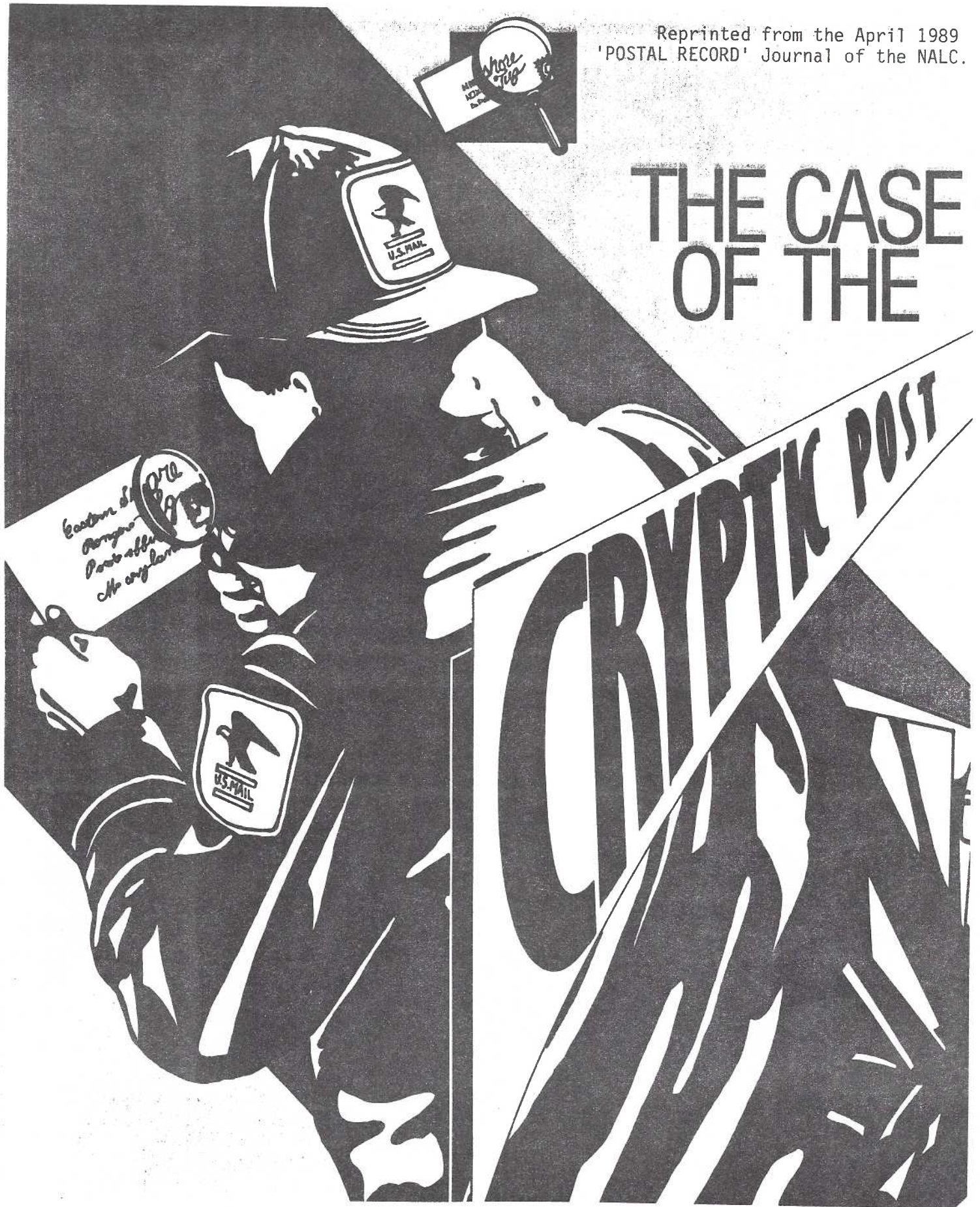
Where now the driver bold?  
Where does he rest to-day?  
Where the quaint labels he sold,  
Our letters to convey?  
Others bring the mail to-day,  
With a rush to Old Inn's door,  
Man, like stamp, has passed away;  
Gone are the driver and four.  
Long through the heat and the cold,  
Ever from May until May,  
Over the highways it rolled;  
Time has now made it his prey.  
Never a stately display,  
Never a dash as of yore,  
Never a swing or a sway:  
Gone are the driver and four.  
Over new roads that men lay,  
Rush we with rattle and roar.  
Only sweet memories stay;  
Gone are the driver and four.

—BISSEL CLINTON.





Reprinted from the April 1989  
'POSTAL RECORD' Journal of the NALC.





**S**herlock Holmes with a satchel—that's the image a lot of people must have of their letter carriers when they blithely mail letters and parcels with addresses that would challenge the deductive powers of the legendary detective.

Misaddressed missives, envelopes with cities or states left off, letters addressed in foreign languages and even envelopes that are completely blank—in all, about 89 million pieces of mystery mail pass into letter carriers' hands every year.

And somehow, a surprising number—about 30 percent—of these enigmatic envelopes actually reach their intended destination when modern mail detectives figure out just where the mysterious missive is headed.

One Sherlock Holmes success was chalked up last Christmas by Penn Yan, New York Branch 681 carrier Leo Kenyon. In his letter tray one morning was an envelope—obviously a Christmas card—that in place of a full address had only a drawing of two faces and the words, "Penn Yan, N.Y."

But Kenyon recognized the faces—helped out a bit because both men in the drawing were wearing the traditional collar of a Roman Catholic priest. And he correctly delivered the card to the Rev. William Michatek and the Rev. David Mura at the rectory of St. Michael's Church in Penn Yan.

"It was a pretty good likeness of them," Kenyon said. "But the giveaway was the collars. They're the only Catholic priests in the whole county, so it wasn't that hard to figure it out."

## Dead letters

Other pieces of mystery mail don't meet such a happy fate. Letter carriers whose detective abilities are frustrated by incompletely addressed and undeliv-

*Neither  
scribbled addresses  
nor faulty destinations  
stay these carriers  
from delivering  
the mail*

erable letters must send that mail to a regional mail center, where a "nixie" clerk again tries to decipher the address. These postal employees are not allowed to open the mail, so they have few clues to help them.

If the mystery remains unsolved, the letter or parcel goes to one of seven national "dead letter" offices where clerks *are* permitted to open mail to determine where to send it.

In Philadelphia's Claims and Inquiry Branch, which receives undeliverable mail from seven states and the District of Columbia, 36 clerks try to find destinations for more than seven million dead letters and 300,000 dead parcels every year.

And, in addition to the legitimate mail, these offices also receive the incredible assortment of non-mail objects that are left in mailboxes every year—including wedding rings, solid gold watches, dead

A hand-drawn portrait of two priests was address enough for Penn Yan, New York Branch 681 member Leo Kenyon, who successfully deduced the letter's destination.

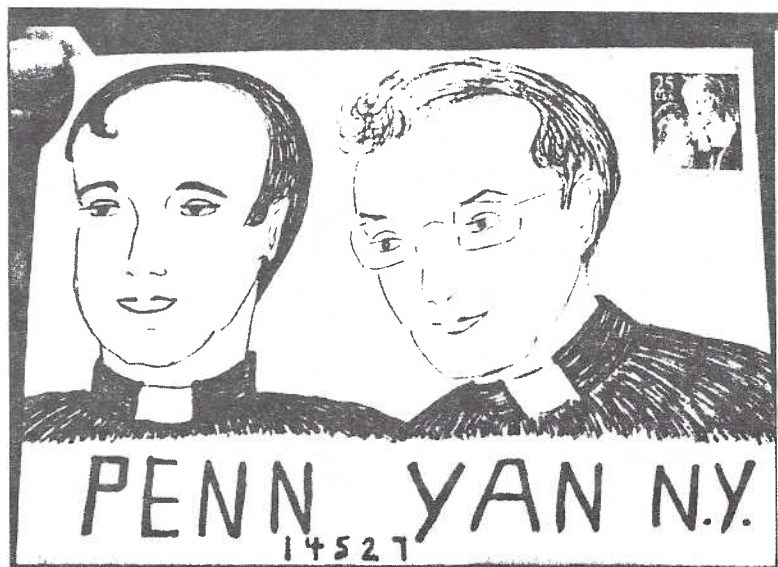
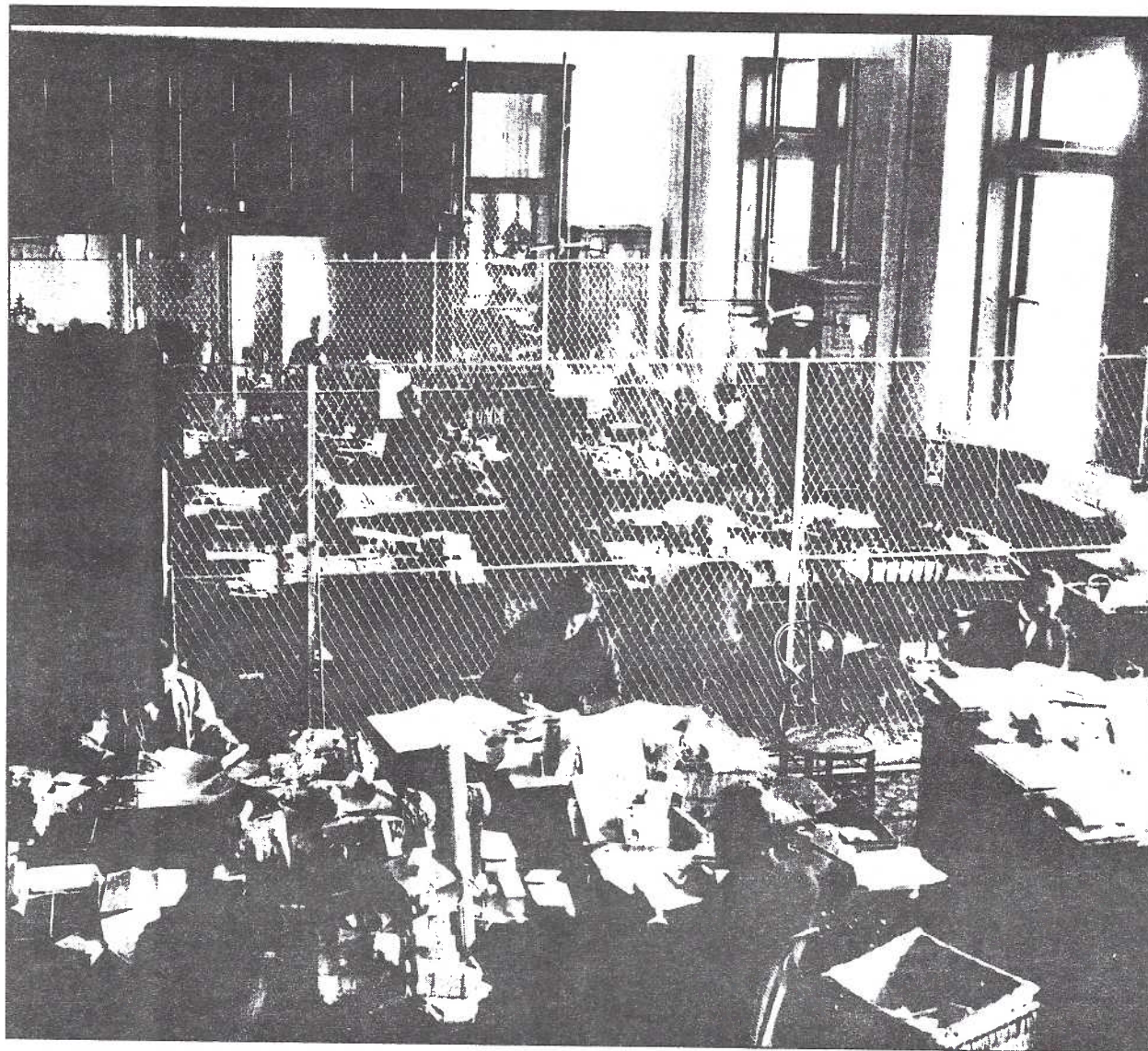


photo by Maurice Dumas. Finger Lakes Times





fish and machete knives like the one Humphrey Bogart used to slice his way through the jungle in *The African Queen*.

This time of year, the Dead Letter office, as it's affectionately called, is flooded with trays of mail addressed simply to "IRS." No postage, no return address to identify the resentful taxpayers.

"They write nasty messages on the outside, on the envelope too," a clerk told a *Washington Post* reporter recently. "Things like 'Taxation without representation.'"

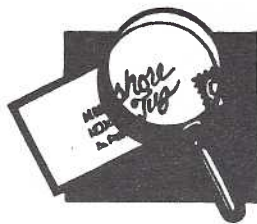
## Foreign correspondents

Like taxes, dead letters are inevitable—and have always been with us, at least since the beginning of free city delivery. Many early dead letters came from abroad, as relatives and friends back in the "old country" naturally tried to keep in touch with immigrants seeking better jobs in the United States.

Unaware of the size of this country, many foreign correspondents apparently assumed that if they sent a letter with just the person's name and the

The foreign division of the Dead Letter office, pictured in this 1894 photograph, was responsible for deciphering envelopes from abroad.

photo courtesy  
National Philatelic Collection



name of the city—not even the state—it would be delivered.

One Italian writer in the 1890s, for example, addressed a letter to “Chicago, New York,” thinking that New York encompassed the entire country. And if that weren’t bad enough, the same writer added on the envelope, “Dove si trova,” which means essentially, “Wherever the addressee can be found.”

By the turn of the century as many as 800 to 3,000 undeliverable foreign envelopes *daily* were being routed to a special Foreign Division of the Dead Letter Office. This mail came from 90 different countries and was handled by a staff of five clerks—who not only had to be proficient in a number of foreign languages but also functioned almost as mind-readers.

Many foreign mailers, unfamiliar with the spelling of American place names, would write addresses phonetically, challenging the detective skills of letter carriers and clerks alike.

For example, suppose you picked up a piece of mail addressed to “Mr. Brown, Oil Corn, Mississippi.” There’s no post office in Mississippi named “Oil Corn”—but there *is* an Alcorn University in Jackson. And that’s where the sender intended the letter to go.

Or how about a letter addressed to “Poniprehri?” Sound it out, as the Dead Letter clerks did, and you’ll discover it’s really going to Pawnee Prairie.

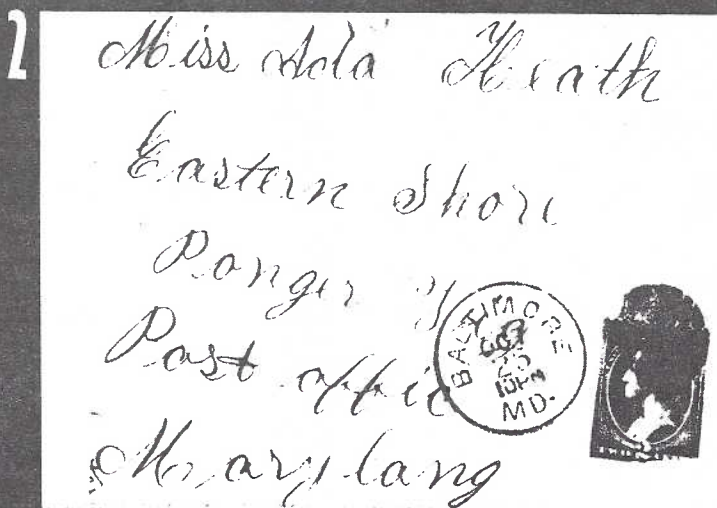
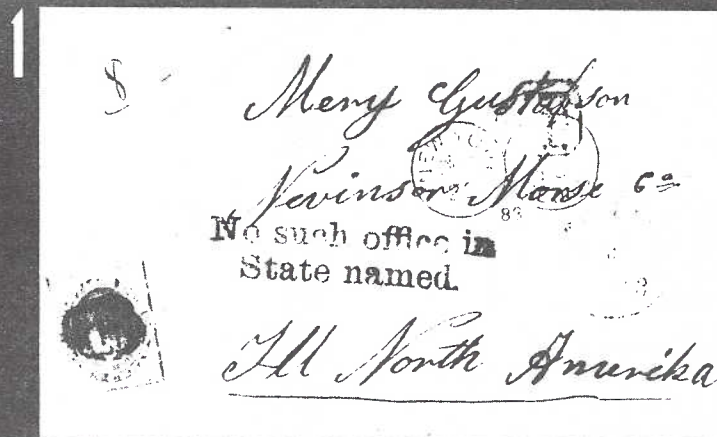
Other puzzling addresses included “Sonnguque” (which was really “Suncook”), “S.X. Pitsco” (for “Essex, Page County”), “Chinchichi” (for “Kankakee”) and “Provenctao” (for “Provincetown”).

## Sacred duty

The Dead Letter clerks were—and are—the only Post Office employees allowed to open mail. Today the job goes to the most senior, and trusted, clerks—who are instructed to read only

# GUESS WHERE

Carriers 100 years ago had to decipher these phonetic spellings and incomplete addresses. Can you?









carriers. In one year in the early 1890s, for example, some \$2 million was found in cash, checks, postal notes and money orders that came to the Dead Letter office.

After much detective work, most of the money found its way to its rightful destination. Cash which could not be delivered was credited to Post Office revenues, while other valuable objects were auctioned off—as is still the practice today.

Last year, \$872,000 in cash was taken from undeliverable letters and added to Postal Service revenues.

And in its dead parcels, the Philadelphia dead letter office has found a signed Miro lithograph worth \$15,000, cameras, television sets, watches, gold-plated baby shoes and countless other objects.

If Dead Letter parcels contain perishable foods, toys and used clothing, the Postal Service will donate those items to local charities. Unclaimed valuables such as credit cards are shredded.

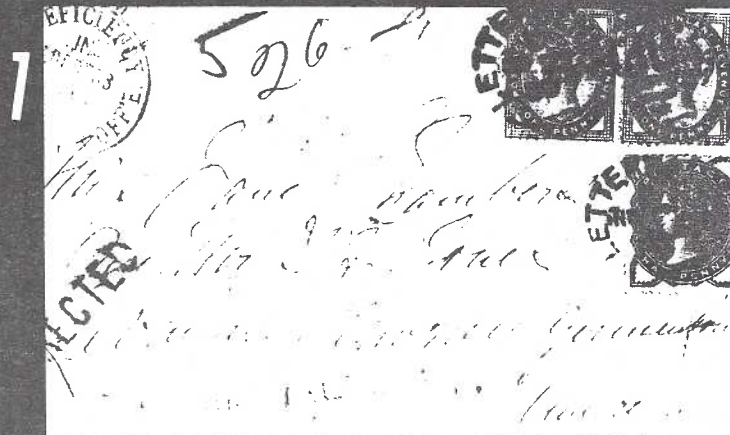
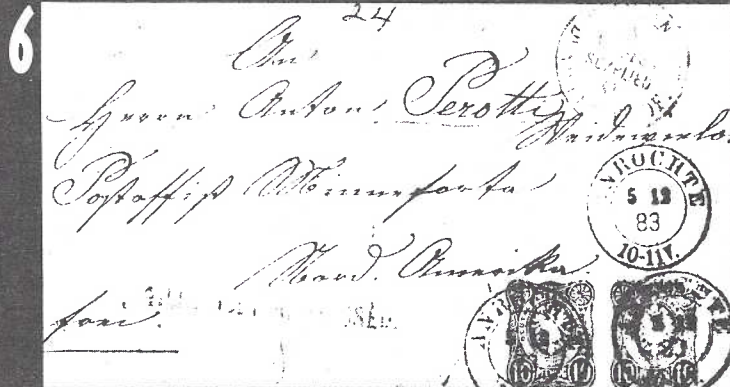
## A male mystery

In years past, postal patrons came to appreciate not only the reliability of their letter carriers and clerks, but also Post Office employees' uncanny ability to locate people. So from time to time, friends and relatives would purposely use the mail to find missing people.

One woman who had not heard from her son in 13 years mailed a letter addressed to "Mr. James Gunn, Power-Loom Shuttle Maker, Mass., America." And with just that little bit of information, Dead Letter clerks were somehow able to locate Mr. Gunn, who was working for the textile mills in Lowell, Massachusetts.

He received his mother's letter, and within a matter of months parent and child were exchanging letters on a frequent basis. And another case was solved by America's ace mail detectives. ☒

# GUESS WHERE



1. New Windsor, Illinois
2. Pungoteague, Virginia
3. Cullieka, Tennessee
4. Churchville, New York
5. Ithaca, New York
6. White Willow, Minnesota
7. Wayne Avenue, Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

# ANSWERS



LONG ISLAND POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

APS Affiliate #154

Annual Membership Subscription \$15.00

**OFFICERS:**

**President** - Brendan McCann, 65-39 182nd Street, Flushing NY 11365

**Vice-President/Recording Secretary** -

**Treasurer** - Martin Koenig, 1245 East 22nd Street, Brooklyn NY 11210

**Directors:**

**Corresponding Secretary/Editor** - Brad Arch, 144 Hamilton Avenue, Clifton NJ 07011

**Publicist/Promotions** - Richard Jones, 135 Commonwealth Avenue, Massapequa NY 11758

**APS Representative** - Brian Levy, 1983 Guildford Park Drive, Seaford NY 11783

\*\*\*\*\*

**MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

**NEW MEMBERS:**

Elmer J. Holmes, 243 Burnholme Ave., Woodbury NJ 08096 APS# 88399

David Dirks, 236 North Poplar St., Massapequa NY 11758 APS# 166076

**DESEASED:**

Arthur Fitzpatrick - Oct 4, 1992

\*\*\*\*\*

**Minutes of the Meeting of the LIPHS Board of Directors on October 31, 1992**

Present: Baker, Gifford, Jones, Koenig, McCann, Price, Rappaport.

The meeting was held at the home of our President, Brendan McCann, who called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

The minutes of the last Board meeting, on March 28, 1992, were read and approved.

Brendan noted with sadness the passing of Arthur Fitzpatrick on Oct. 4, 1992, Arthur was a founding member of our Society.

Brendan reported that Martin Margulis has resigned his position as Vice-President/Secretary because he is moving to Florida.

**TREASURERS REPORT:** Martin Koenig reported that he received a transfer of funds from the previous Treasurer, John Price of \$1614.12 on July 21, 1992. Receipts since then have been \$75 for dues, \$4 literature sales, bring the total to \$1693.12, from which a disbursement of \$239.57 was made relative to publishing the Journal, leaving a current balance \$1453.55.

**PUBLICITY REPORT:** Dick Jones described difficulty getting space for our Society at local stamp shows. He is planning to get us into the next Adria Show. Then followed a discussion of various ways of attracting new members.

**OLD BUSINESS:** none.

**NEW BUSINESS:** There was some discussion of our Journal, with unanimous praise for the efforts of our Editor, Brad Arch. Dick Jones suggested that we have an annual award in the name & memory of Arthur Fitzpatrick. A Motion was passed to change our Historian Award, to the ARTHUR FITZPATRICK AWARD, to be awarded annually for the best article in our Journal.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM, followed by an enjoyable swap session. The members thanked Brendan for a delicious luncheon before the meeting.

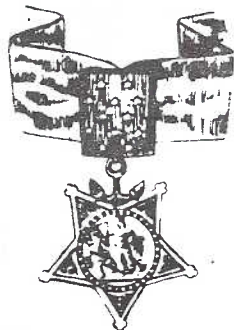
Respectfully Submitted,  
(signed) John Price

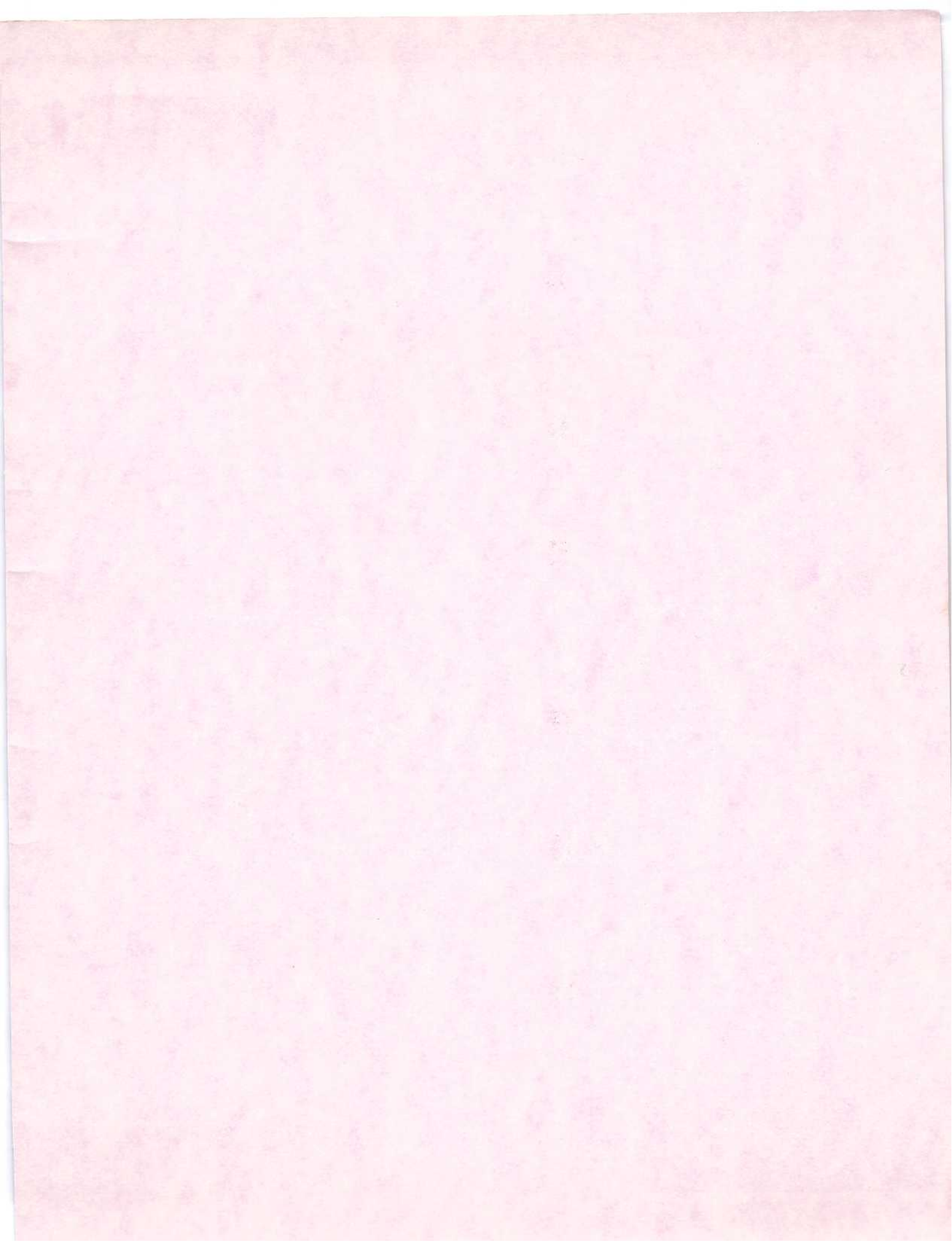
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**AWARD WINNERS !**

**ARTHUR FITZPATRICK AWARD** for the best article in the 1992 issues of our Journal goes to: J. Fred Rodriguez for the combined efforts of his articles on Fancy Cancel, Year Dated Postmarks, and the big effort of extracting Postal News of Long Island from newspapers.

**EXHIBITION AWARDS:** @ CINCOPEX - Rome NY - Oct. 17-18, 1992 which hosted the 25th Anniversary of the Empire State Postal Hist. Soc., There were 11 exhibits of NYS PH, only one of which included LI: 2nd Award (Silver) to Brad Arch for 'US 1869 Pictorial Issue Usages from Staten Island & Long Island.'







Long Island Postal Historian  
Brad Arch, Editor  
144 Hamilton Avenue  
Clifton NJ 07011



# FIRST CLASS



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## Sample Journals:

Sample Copies of this Journal are available at \$4.00, postpaid, from the above address

## Membership Information:

Membership Information and Applications are also available from the above address

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**ELLIS ISLAND** — and other New York Harbor Islands ... see page 7

