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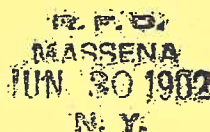
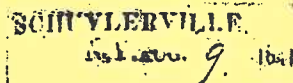
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EXCELSIOR!

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March 2005	February 5th
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Please inform the Editors if you are interested in writing for *Excelsior!* We can help!

PRISONERS' MAIL: ELMIRA, NY CIVIL WAR PRISON CAMP, 1864-65—AN INTRODUCTION

The album pages appearing on the following pages represent the 4-page exhibit mounted for and shown by President Al Parsons in the ESPHS' 2002 DeLisle Competition at Turning Stone Casino, near Oneida. Needless to say, the importance and quality of the exhibit was rewarded—it won the competition.

The prisoner-of-war camp in Elmira, New York is considered by some historians to be the Northern equivalent of the infamous Southern death camp at Andersonville. This is not only because of the physical conditions that existed therein, but also because of the extremely large number of prisoners that far exceeded the original capacity of the prison compound. The postal history of this camp runs the gamut of Civil War philately, including through the lines mail and flag-of-truce mail. Al is currently completing additional research on this pregnant topic. This research—illustrated with additional covers acquired over the past two years—will be published in *Excelsior!* in the near future.

While visiting with Al and fellow ESPHS member Harold von Hagn in mid-August and discussing Al's exhibit, I commented that additional illustrations of the camp would help to enhance the presentation. Harold immediately pulled out his extensive Elmira post card collection and provided the cards that make up the majority of the illustrations that follow—which certainly do help to "tell the story."

Figures 1 and 2 give a general view of the camp. The latter view is taken from Michael Horgan's superb account of this camp and gives one a clear picture of the crowded conditions in the camp. ("The camp was a tented encampment until December 1864 when the last of the barracks were completed." Horgan, 63) On Sept. 1, 1864 the population reached 9,480 (Horgan, 70), when they were still virtually all in tents

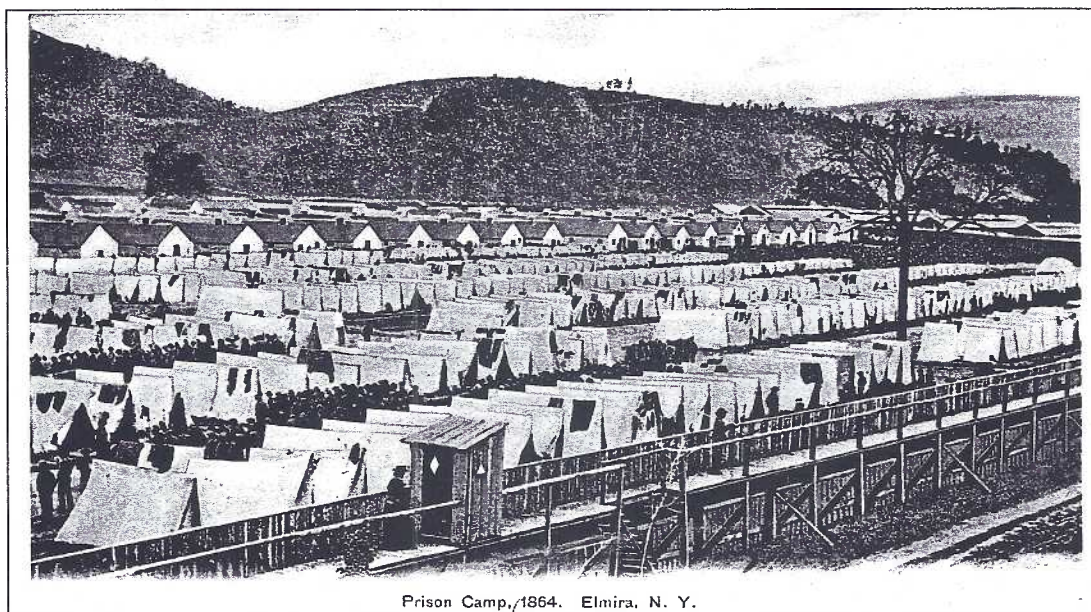


Fig. 1 "Prison Camp, 1864" Note preponderance of tents.

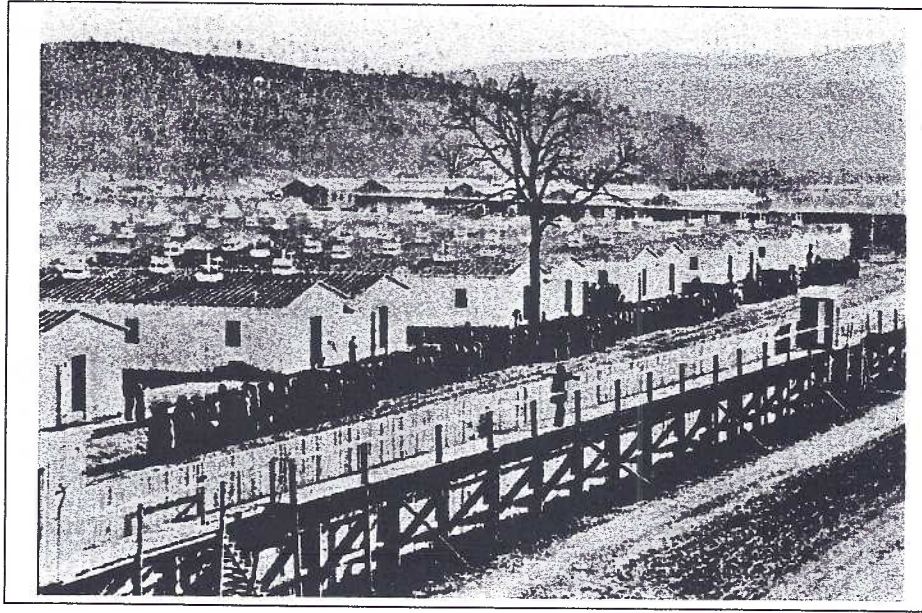


Fig. 2 "Roll call late winter/early spring of 1865." (Horigan, 164)

Imagine surviving an Elmira winter living in the thin-walled wooden barracks shown in **Figure 3** (note the word "Pen" in the caption). As one could expect, a large number of the p.o.w.s did not survive these harsh conditions. The **Figure 4** card is illustrative of this. There is today an impressive memorial in the Woodlawn National Cemetery in Elmira remembering and honoring those who died while confined in the camp. Just slightly less than 3,000 are buried in the 2 ½-acre Confederate section of the cemetery. Thanks to Harold, I had an opportunity to view this memorial and came away saddened by the sacrifice they made.

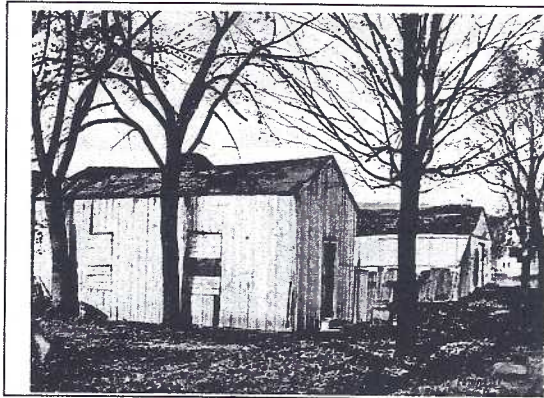


Fig. 3 "Rebel Prison Pen 1864"



Fig. 4 "Soldier's Graves, Woodlawn Cemetery"

Reference:

Horigan, Michael. Elmira: Death Camp of the North, Stackpole Books (2002).

By Drew A. Nicholson, Editor
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PRISONERS' MAIL

ELMIRA NY CIVIL WAR PRISON CAMP, 1864-65

July 6, 1864 – first prisoners arrive, 399 in number.

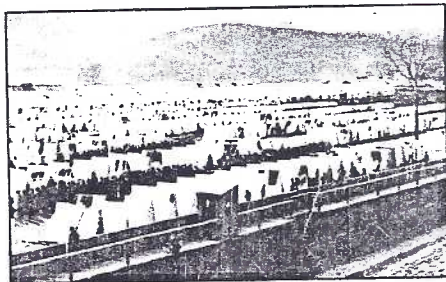
September 1, 1864 – prisoner count reaches 9,480, its high census mark.

April 1865 – Civil War ends; Lincoln assassinated.

July 11, 1865 – final group of prisoners leaves Elmira.

There are 93 known covers from Elmira's Civil War prison camp, according to Galen D. Harrison in his 1997 book, *Prisoners' Mail from the American Civil War*.

Reproduced below on an unofficial FDC for the 1995 Civil War commemoratives is the hand stamped Examined marking for prisoner mail at the Elmira camp. This is the only type censor marking known used at Elmira. Its earliest recorded use is July 26, 1864 and the latest is June 6, 1865.



Elmira Prison Camp (1864)

The prison camp was located west of the City of Elmira, on the north side of the Chemung River. Its mail was serviced by the Elmira Post Office; the cover above was cancelled at the Elmira West Side Station, located within a city block of the prison camp site. An historical marker has been erected at the site of the camp. Tents housed over 5,000 prisoners during the summer of 1864; some prisoners slept in tents until late December, when the last of the winter barracks were built.

PRISONERS' MAIL -- ELMIRA CIVIL WAR PRISON CAMP

Two covers, both dated August 25, 1864

Through the lines to Petersburg, Virginia:



Examiner's oval handstamp upside down. 3-cent U.S. issue of 1861 tied by Elmira N.Y. double-circle datestamp and by "Richmond Va. Sep. 8" circular datestamp. "10" rate handstamp probably applied at Richmond, to indicate amount of Confederate postage due from addressee.

Mail to Union address:



Clear strikes of Elmira datestamp and examiner's handstamp on well-worn cover to Philadelphia, Penna. Research needed to determine connection, if any, between addressee and Lincoln's assassin.

PRISONERS' MAIL -- ELMIRA CIVIL WAR PRISON CAMP

A second cover to the McCandlish home in Petersburg, this one dated September 24, 1864

Flag of Truce via Fortress Monroe:



Between August 29, 1864, when he mailed the cover on the previous page, and September 24, 1864, when the cover on this page was mailed, the prisoner who sent this mail must have obtained a supply of CSA postage and advice as to routing instructions to place on the envelope: thus the manuscript *Flag of Truce via Fortress Monroe* in the upper left of the envelope. The Confederate stamp is Die B from the 1863-64 no frame line general issue. It is tied to the cover by "Richmond Va. Oct. 11" circular datestamp. Although there is no indication on the cover as to the date it was received in Petersburg, it could not have been delayed too long by the inconveniences of war since the recipient answered the prisoner's letter on October 15, 1864.

PRISONERS' MAIL -- ELMIRA CIVIL WAR PRISON CAMP

January 20, 1865 to Philadelphia, Penn.



This cover came with the prisoner's letter, datelined "Military Prison, Ward 31, Elmira, N.Y., Jan'y 14th, 1865". From this it is an "educated guess" that the cancel is dated January 20, 1865. The letter is a request for money.

April 14, 1865 to Elmira, N.Y.



Local use folded letter mailed without postage; penciled "Due 2" to indicate postage to be collected from recipient. The letter is datelined April 12, 1865, signed by four prisoners, and is a request for bibles.

By Alan Parsons
Elmira, N. Y.
alatholleyrd@aol.com

THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Scale of Miles

0 100 200

Legend:

- Town lines distinguished by G. m. m.
- State boundaries by thin lines
- County boundaries by thick lines
- Railways by a line with cross-ticks
- Factories by a line with dots
- Saw Mills by a line with triangles
- Churches by a cross

Map of the State of New York, showing county boundaries, major cities, and geographical features. The map includes a scale of miles (0 to 200) and a compass rose. The title 'THE STATE OF NEW YORK' is prominently displayed at the top. The map is oriented with North at the top. The legend at the bottom right explains the symbols used for various features: Town lines distinguished by G. m. m. (green), State boundaries by thin lines, County boundaries by thick lines, Railways by a line with cross-ticks, Factories by a line with dots, Saw Mills by a line with triangles, and Churches by a cross. The map shows the Hudson River, the Erie Canal, and the Niagara River. Major cities like New York, Albany, and Buffalo are marked. The map is a black and white reproduction of a historical document.

Fig. 1

SCHUYLERVILLE, NY Straight-Line Town Markings— An Analysis of Twenty-one Stampless Folded Letters

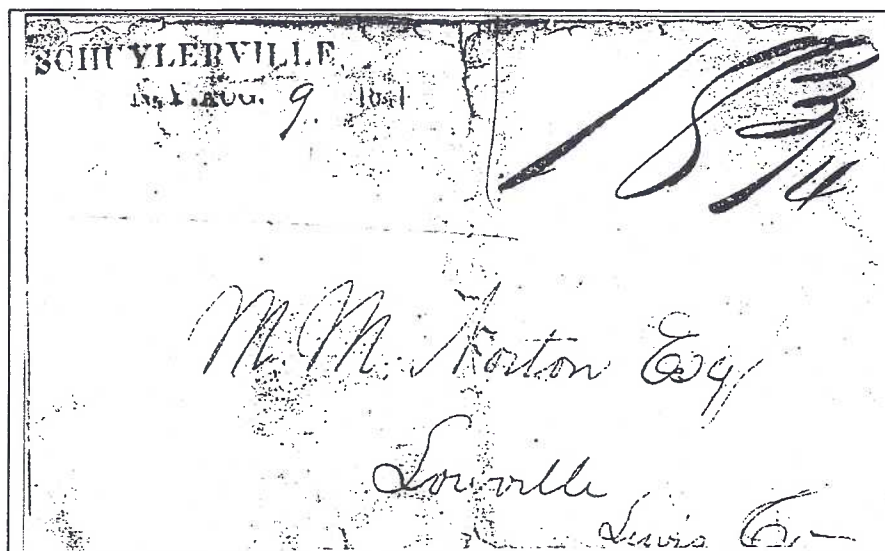


Fig. 2. SCHUYLERVILLE, /N.Y. Aug. 9 1841, Type 2 straight-line marking.

Introduction

For many years, the collecting and exhibiting of Saratoga County stampless folded letters (SFL) has been an interesting and enjoyable endeavor for this writer. All available towns in the county have been within my collecting scope. Schuylerville is one such town and has been of particular interest to me, especially of late.

Saratoga County is today (and was in the 1840's) divided into administrative districts called "towns." Schuylerville is located on the western side of the Hudson River about eleven miles east of Saratoga Springs, and lies in the town of Saratoga. Today Schuylerville is classified as a "village," but for the purposes of this article and because of standard catalog and handbook usage, the postal history term "town" is used.

Schuylerville has a unique place in our national history, laying claim to the personalities and events surrounding the Battle of Saratoga. There, British General John Burgoyne surrendered his army to General Horatio Gates in 1777 during the Revolutionary War. **Figure 1** locates Schuylerville on a map of Saratoga County drawn by David H. Burr in 1829 and republished in 1840 in the format shown by Stone & Clark of Ithaca, New York.

Although Schuylerville was the largest hamlet in the town of Saratoga in the early 19th century, its population was small by today's standards. In an 1866 atlas, Schuylerville's population was shown as but a fraction of that of the total Town of Saratoga's, which boasted a population of 3760 with 705 dwellings. In the 1840s it was part of the industrial corridor in the Northeast. Like many of the other river towns of the 1800's, the growth of Schuylerville was fueled by the availability of waterpower and cheap transportation, including the arrival of railroad service. In 1832 the creation of the Champlain Canal was a further impetus to the growth of Schuylerville which became an important shipping point thereon. A number of the straight-line markings reported in this article are found on SFLs with canal-related contents.

Schuylerville straight-line town postal markings are known from the 1841-1844 period. They are not rare but are still hard to find. It has taken this writer about 44 years to accumulate

the twenty-one SFL's used to generate the analysis-based type listing. The incentive for an in-depth analysis was generated because the varieties found in the accumulation did not fit neatly into the existent catalog listings. Hopefully, the separation by type in the listing will clarify the observed differences between strikes.

Development of the Analysis

This writer has experienced some difficulty with resultant frustration in identifying Schuylerville straight-line town markings.

Right off, one would assume that the standard catalog listings are accurate; after all, they were generated over a number of years by knowledgeable and competent philatelists. What happens, though, when one finds markings that don't completely fit the catalog descriptions? In the writer's case, the easy ones are types 1 and 2; the others were simply put aside.

Subsequently, this writer was fortunate enough not only to obtain Schuylerville SFLs in ESPHS auctions and from dealers but also to purchase the Hequembourg and Bernadt holdings of Saratoga County which contained many. Altogether, these combined to yield a total of twenty-one Schuylerville straight-lines on which to base this analysis

Naturally, with the many years of input into catalogs, a collector would try to correlate his examples with those found in the catalog listings. Therefore, this writer felt the best sources were the various editions of the *American Stampless Cover Catalog (ASCC)* as well as Bernadt's handbook (see **References**). The listings from these catalogs and the handbook were reviewed and are reproduced below:

SCHUYLERVILLE

A. *ASCC (3rd edition 1978)*—7 different straight-line listings as illustrated below:

SCHUYLERVILLE/N.Y. (1841; 41x8; Black)	60.00
Same (1841; 42x8, YMDD after N.Y.; Black)	70.00
Same (no /) (1842; 40x5; Black)	60.00
Same (1841-43; 42x2½, MD below; PAID; Black)	40.00
Same (1843-45; 41-42x2½, MD below; PAID; Red, Black)	40.00
Same (1842; YMD below; Black)	70.00
Same (no N.Y.) (1842; --, MD below; Black)	40.00

B. *ASCC (4th Edition, 1985)*—6 different s-l listings as below:

SCHUYLERVILLE/N.Y. (1841; 48x8; Black)	90.00
Same (1841; 42x8, YMDD after "N.Y."; Black)	85.00
Same (no /) (1842; 40x5; Black)	75.00
Same (1841-45; 42x2.5, MD below; PAID, PAID[slanted]; Red, Black)	60.00
Same (1842; YMD below; Black)	75.00
Same (no "N.Y.") (1842; --, MD below; Black)	55.00

C. ASCC (5th Edition 1977)—2 different s-l listings as below:

Town	Postmark	Dates Seen	Size	Color	Value
	SCHUYLERVILLE				
	N.Y. AUG. 16	1841			
	SCHUYLERVILLE/N.Y.	(1841-42;SL-41x8;Black)			125.00
	Same NY(1842-43;SL-41.5x2.5;PAID;Red,Black)				100.00

D. Postal Markings of New York State—2 different s-l listings as below:

SCHUYLERVILLE, N.Y.	MD Y	41x8m	sl	bk	1841-42		B	150
SCHUYLERVILLE NY	MD	41½x2½m	sl	o-r, bk	1842-43	PAIDslanted	C	100

Note the agreement between references C. and D. It is this writer's reasoning that this agreement exists because George Bernadt probably contributed to the New York State input into the *1997 Edition* of the *ASCC*. One theme was heard frequently from George when he authored his own book—he felt errors had crept into writings about SFLs and he was determined to personally verify each listing in his own book. Most likely that's why the **listings changed from seven/six (1978/1985) to two in the 1997 Edition.**

When the listings were documented in the *ASCC*, it is theorized that they were generated from a limited number of examples available to a particular contributor. Now, when this writer has twenty-one examples as a source of study and is able to examine and compare between them on an individual basis and to the catalog listings, it would seem to be an improved process. *[In this vein, it is too bad that Cal Hahn is not still alive and able to serve as a source. His enormous library of albums crammed with originals and photocopies of postal markings from all New York post offices from this period, along with when and where they were sold/purchased, would have been invaluable to John in his study. By the way, who knows where this collection went post death? Please let the Editor know.]*

There is one important incentive to differentiate between the different types: This writer has exhibited and is conscious of judges' views and comments, which are intended, of course, to be constructive. However...one remembers a critique of one of Charlie Sweeting's exhibits where Charlie had used the *ASCC (4th Edition, 1985)* as a reference and the judge felt that the later (1977) edition should have been cited instead. It turned out that the earlier edition was the more accurate one; the judge didn't know that. The lesson: Description accuracy is more important than using the latest reference. (Another lesson: The title page or synopsis needs to reflect your reasoning—you know most about your material and often need to educate the judges.)

The Analysis and Listing

Seven different types of Schuylerville straight-line postal markings are identified in this article. Broadly, there are **three different groupings**: Types 1 and 2 are used from 1841 and 1841-1842 and **represent the first two groups**. They are easily separated from the other types by their 3 mm letter height. The **third group** consists of types 3—7; these types consist of combinations of letter heights of 2 or 2.5 mm, accompanied by various lengths with one oddity—Type 5 has a large vertical separation between lines.

Confidence in the measurements increases with the number of examples available. Type 3 was the easiest to define as there were eight different SFLs available, seven of which had measurable lengths. For Type 3, one SFL had a 41 mm length and six others each measured 40.5 mm. The average length was 40.6 mm, which is why the Type 3 length is defined as 40.5 mm and not 41 mm. Furthermore, the Dec. 23, 1842 SFL bearing the 41 mm-long strike is definitely not one of the other types. *[Often, the normal wear-and-tear on a wooden or hard rubber device will cause great frustration when one attempts to take accurate measurements. The normal approach is either to 1) locate a (pristine!) strike of a newly introduced—unworn—marking, or 2) measure a number of markings and take an average; John has chosen to do the latter. Editor]*

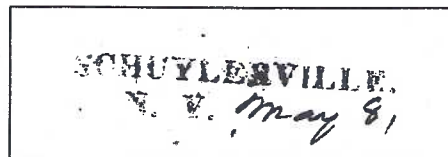
Please note that in the accompanying listing, seven types have been identified and a proposal for a catalog listing has been made. The listing uses the nomenclature of the *ASCC* with two refinements. A reading of the introductory paragraph prior to delving into the type-listing is highly recommended.

PROPOSED CATALOG TYPE-LISTING

Seven types with their individual characteristics are described below. The top line for each type represents a proposed catalog listing. The nomenclature of the 1997 Edition of the *ASCC* (less prices) has been used, including the symbol “/” to indicate a vertical separation between the two lines of type of these handstamps. Two refinements of the *ASCC* nomenclature are also introduced:

- The use of UPPER CASE LETTERS to indicate that the letter or number is part of the handstamp, and that lower case letters portray manuscript usage.
- The use of four numbers in sequence (all in mm) to describe size. This procedure is introduced because all Schuylerville straight-lines have two lines of printing, some types having two different letter-line heights. The four numbers represent the:
 1. total length and includes both lines with any periods if present;
 2. height of the letters in the first line;
 3. height of the letters in the second line;
 4. overall height of the printed portion, including any white space between the lines.

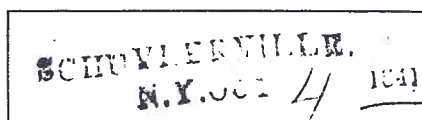
TYPE 1: SCHUYLERVILLE. N.Y. md (1841; 41x3x3x8; black)



- There are periods after the last E of SCHUYLERVILLE, and after the N and Y of NY.
- N.Y. is on the second line.
- The N of N.Y. is positioned beneath the H of SCHUYLERVILLE.
- The month and day are both in manuscript.
- The letter height of each line is 3 mm; the overall height is 8 mm.
- Length is 41 mm.
- Color is black.

Comment: Two SFLs checked: April 26 and May 8, 1841.

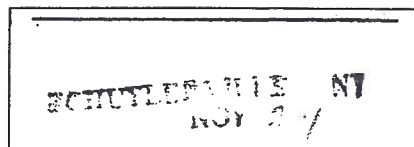
TYPE 2: SCHUYLERVILLE. /N.Y. md 1841 or 1842 (1841-2; 49x3x3x8; black)



- There are periods after the last E of SCHUYLERVILLE and after the N and Y of N.Y.
- N.Y. is on the second line.
- The N of N.Y. is positioned beneath the Y of SCHUYLERVILLE.
- The month is set in CAPITALS, the day is in manuscript, followed by the printed year of 1841 or 1842. The printed year has numbers 2 mm high.
- The letter height of each line is 3 mm; the overall height is 8 mm.
- Length is 49 mm.
- Color is black.

Comment: Five SFLs checked: Aug. 9, Oct. 4, Nov. 15, Nov. 29 and Dec. 20, all 1841. Only the printed year date of 1841 has been seen by this writer.

TYPE 3: SCHUYLERVILLE NY / md (1842-1844; 40.5x2x2x6; black)

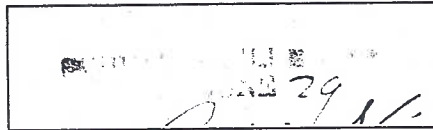


- There are no periods after the last E of SCHUYLERVILLE or the N and Y of NY.
- NY is on the first line.
- The month is printed in CAPITALS; the day in manuscript.
- The space between the E and NY varies from 5.5 to 6 mm; the average of six markings is 5.8 mm.
- The letter height of each line is 2 mm; the overall height is 6 mm.
- Length varies; the shortest is 40.5 mm and the longest is 41 mm, with an average of 40.6 mm.
- Color is black.

Comment:

<u>SFLs Checked</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Space Between E & NY</u>
Oct. 29, 1842	?	?
Dec. 23, 1842	41 mm	6.0 mm
May 1, 1843	40.5	5.5
May 15, 1843	40.5	5.5
June 5, 1843	40.5	?
May 9, 1844	40.5	6.0
Sept. 9, no yd	40.5	6.0
April 4, no yd	<u>40.5</u>	<u>5.5</u>
Average:	40.57	5.75

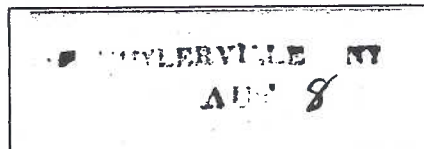
TYPE 4: SCHUYLERVILLE NY/ md (1843; 41x2x2.5x6; black)



- There are no periods after the last E of SCHUYLERVILLE or the N and Y of NY.
- NY is on the first line.
- The month is set in CAPITALS; the day is in manuscript.
- The space between the E and NY is 5.5 mm.
- Hybrid letter height:
 - town portion (first line) 2 mm.
 - month portion (second line) 2.5 mm.The overall height is 6 mm.
- Length is 41 mm.
- Color is black.

Comment: SFL checked: June 29, 1843. This type may also exist in o-r color ('97 ASCC; Bernadt)

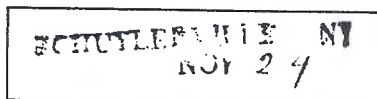
TYPE 5: SCHUYLERVILLE NY/ md (1843; 41x2x2.5x8; black)



- There are no periods after the last E of SCHUYLERVILLE or the N and Y of NY.
- NY is on the first line.
- The month is set in CAPITALS; the day in manuscript.
- The space between the E and NY is 5.5 mm.
- Hybrid letter height:
 - town portion (first line) 2 mm.
 - month portion (second line) 2.5 mm.The overall height is 8 mm.
- Length is 41 mm.
- Color is black.

Comments: SFL checked: Aug 8, 1843. Type 5 may be derived from Type 4 through widening of the vertical space between the two lines of type. Type 5 may also exist in o-r color ('97 ASCC; Bernadt).

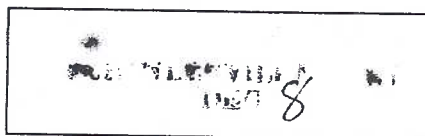
TYPE 6: SCHUYLERVILLE NY/ md (1843; 41x2.5x2.5x6; black)



- There are no periods after the last **E** of SCHUYLERVILLE or the **N** and **Y** of NY.
- **NY** is on the first line.
- The month is set in CAPITALS; the day is in manuscript.
- The space between the **E** and **NY** is 6 mm.
- The letter height of each line is 2.5 mm; the overall height is 6 mm.
- Length is 41 mm.
- Color is black.

Comment: Two SFLs checked: Sept. 26 and Nov. 24, 1843. This marking may also exist in **o-r** color ('97 ASCC; Bernadt).

TYPE 7: SCHUYLERVILLE NY/ md (1843-44; 42x2x2x6; black)



- There are no periods after the last **E** of SCHUYLERVILLE or the **N** and **Y** of NY.
- **NY** is on the first printed line.
- The month is set in CAPITALS; the day is in manuscript.
- The space between the **E** and **NY** is 8 mm.
- The letter height of each line is 2 mm; the overall height is 6 mm.
- Length is 42 mm.
- Color is black.

Comment: Two SFLs checked: Dec. 8, 1843 and Jan. 22, 1844. Type 7 may be derived from Type 3 through the lengthening of the horizontal space between the **E** and **NY**.

Finally, this writer would be interested in receiving any comments regarding this article. Particularly welcome would be data involving the use of the printed year date of 1842 in Type 2. Since the colors red or orange-red has been identified with some of these straight-lines, the proposed catalog listing could and should be inclusive of those colors, hopefully by type number.

References:

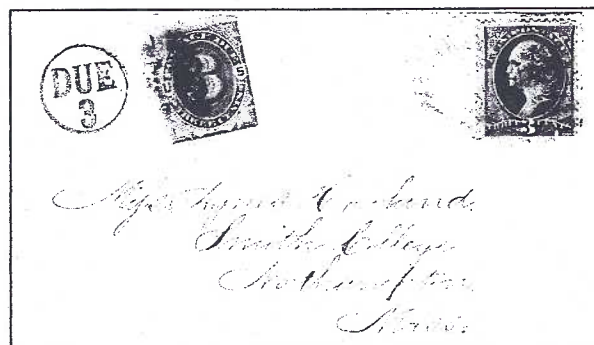
American Stampless Cover Catalog, Third Edition (1978), Fourth Edition (1985), Fifth Edition (1997). David G. Phillips Co., Inc.
Bernadt, George. Postal Markings of New York State 1792-1856. ESPHS (1993)

By John A. Lange, Jr.
373 Root Road
Ballston Spa, NY 12020-3227

THE COVER BOX—Interesting Covers Found in Dealers' Boxes

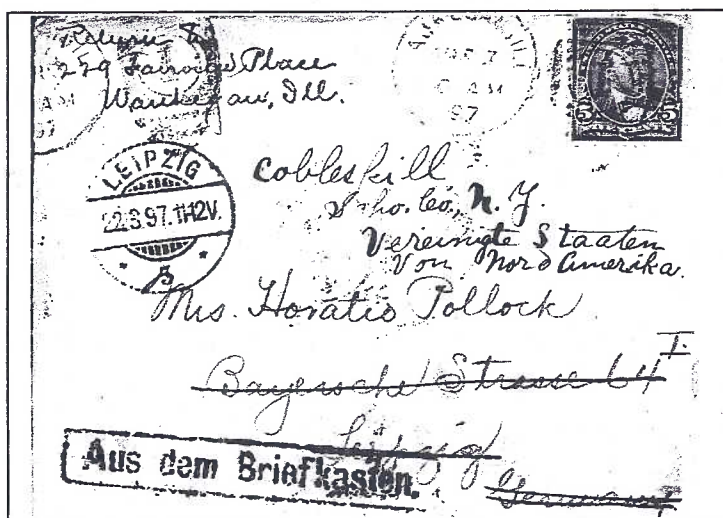
[Picking through dealers' cover boxes is a lot of fun—or a heck of a lot of drudgery depending upon what one finds. Below are illustrated two interesting covers that were found just that way. The first provided confirmation of that which was suspected but not proved. The second introduces the members to a marking they may never before have seen—a German marking which enhances a well-travelled Victorian-era cover.]

Peruse and enjoy. But remember, if you enjoy looking at them, you must participate by sending your examples. The Editor's supply is not infinite!]



“DUE 3” (in circle) This magenta marking ties Scott J3 to a cover from Poughkeepsie (JAN 18, 1882-barred oval duplex with slug 1) addressed to Smith College (Northampton, MA). The marking is **identical** in size, shape and color, and within the same time frame, to Larry Laliberte's cover which appeared in the March 2004 issue of *EXCELSIOR!* (page 8, Fig. 11).

The marking is thus firmly established as being applied in Poughkeepsie and might possibly have been found in the postal kit of the clerk who used duplex #1. Similar examples—color copies or originals—are sought by the Editor and Larry for further study.



“Aus dem Briefkasten” (Found in the Mailbox) (in a rectangle) This cover is further example of what happens to mail sent to a travelling Victorian lady. (See Cover Box page 20)

THE EDITOR'S CORNER—"Continued Change And More"

Drew A. Nicholson

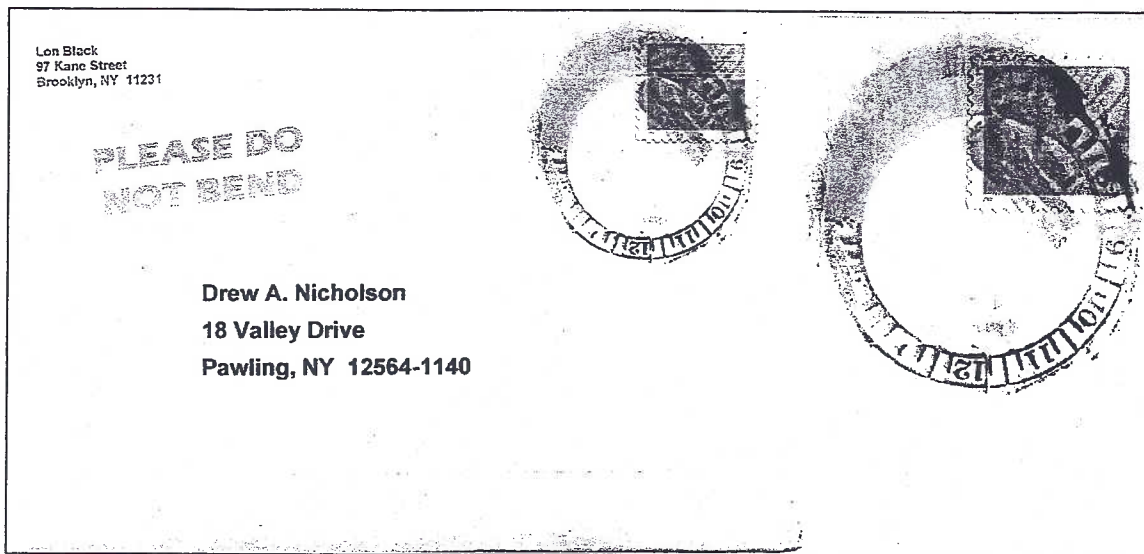
- Changes continue to be made within these pages although more subtly than in the past. The main change is the **change in font size**, which is principally two fold:

1. The title size has been reduced to 14 point.
2. The general text size has been reduced to 11 point.

For potential authors this means making an adjustment in the font sizes outlined in the September 2003 issue.

These changes come as a result of an article by Joseph E. Foley appearing in *The Philatelic Communicator* (Quarterly Journal of Writer's Unit 30, A.P.S.). Joe is the editor of this publication and writes continually on the subject of improving club and organization newsletters, etc. I became a member when I was appointed editor of *EXCELSIOR!* (The ESPHS leadership firmly believes that the editors of its publications belong to this professional group and therefore pays for my membership.) I should—and do!—bring something from this membership. The majority of the changes that have appeared herein over the past year have had their origins from articles, thoughts, and comments originating in *TPC*. Please be sure to inform me if any changes that are made cause you a problem as a reader, just as you are encouraged to comment if something "strikes your fancy."

- Subsequent to putting to bed Bob Markovits' article on the **Special Delivery Clock Cancels** I received the cover below in the mail. It appears to illustrate the resurrection of this cancelling device for a use for which it was not originally intended. While certainly not a clear strike, the "clock" portion is obvious and enough of the wording at the center-bottom is visible to enable one to reconstruct the following: "SPECIAL.../BROOKLYN..." The "RECEIVED/DATE/TIME" which was also originally located in the center of the device appears to have been removed. (See **Figure** below)



The cover contained a postcard (yes, I collect them too!) within a heavy cardboard shield, which precluded it being fed into the facer-canceller in a normal manner. It is apparent these devices are being pressed into service in the post offices where they previously had been used as the need arises. Whether this is solely by local mandate still needs to be determined.

- I attended the Phase II Dedication of the American Philatelic Center on June 25th. This is an amazing structure! I know a number of ESPHS members have used the new library facilities, as have I. The crowding is gone: in its place is space, space, space; the lighting is superb; the furniture is comfortable—and there is an outside patio facing Talleyrand Park readily accessible through a set of double doors (a perfect place for a head-clearer). In short, what a wonderful change! And this carries over to all the other services of the A.P.S. which make it so important—sales division, expertizing, *The American Philatelist*, etc. Truly, we now have a center for American philately.

But there is a need for funds to complete (the final) Phase III, which will further develop the center and open up valuable storage and further rental space. I believe that the ESPHS should make a monetary contribution towards what has already been accomplished (which serves so many of us on a regular basis), and to the future development of Phase III. It is my hope that the Board will act upon this need when next it meets, as many other philatelic organizations have already done.

- In The Editor's Corner in the March 2004 issue I broached the concept of a **Reader's Opinion Department**. Apparently nothing was sufficient to invoke a response. We need to hear from you—No news is not necessarily good news, to play upon that old saw.
- Former Rabbi and Jewish history expert, Walter Zanger (of "Mysteries of the Bible" fame on A&E and the History Channel) recently had an opportunity to examine the script on the postal card appearing in Larry Laliberti's article on Eastman Business College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. He concluded that the script was a combination of the Hebrew language written in Moroccan Arabic script, by a Moroccan Jew who had been totally assimilated into the Ottoman-Arabic culture of the region. The next step is to find a Jewish scholar or rabbi who is also of Moroccan heritage.
- Finally, my thanks to the six members who contributed to this issue. For those who are math challenged, this represents only approximately 3% of the membership!

* * * * *

THE PUZZLE BOX—Short Presentations About Puzzling Covers (#3)

"N. York () Harlem R.R."

This puzzler is the result of an astute observation by Larry Laliberte as he was sorting through an auction lot of Dutchess County ephemera.

The **Figure** on the next page shows what appears to be a strike of Towell 108-A-1 (also, Remele N13): **N. York & Harlem R.R.** (shown superimposed on the figure and rotated to match the appearance on the cover)—but it **lacks the ampersand between York and Harlem!** While much of the strike is quite faint and virtually unreadable, enough of the outer ring and letters remain visible to enable the viewer to extrapolate the complete cancel sufficiently to identify it. It should be noted that there is a **complete lack of ink** (examined under 30-power magnification) where the ampersand should appear. The month and day-date are also lacking, again with a complete lack of ink (similar examination).

(continued on next page)

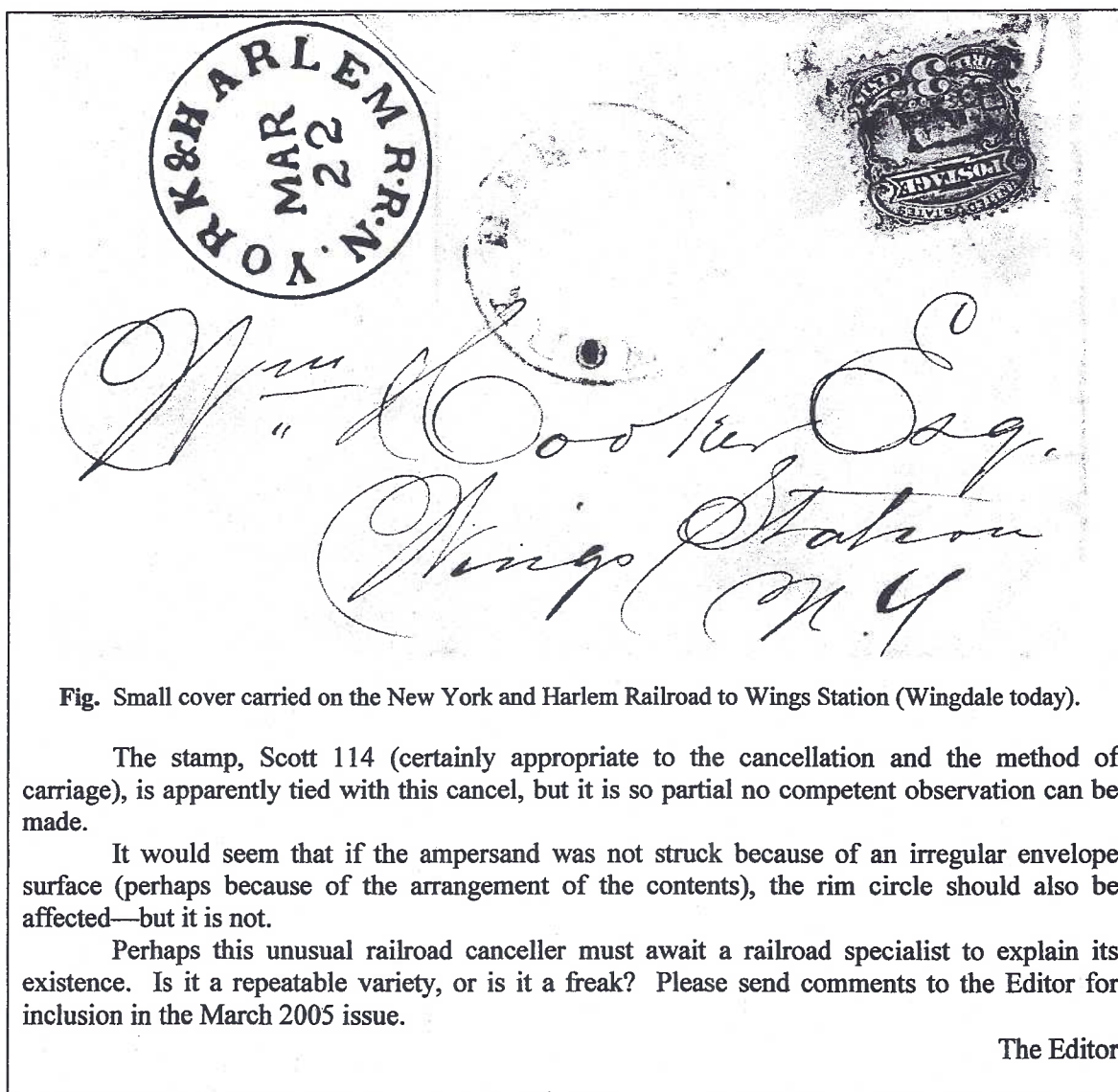


Fig. Small cover carried on the New York and Harlem Railroad to Wings Station (Wingdale today).

The stamp, Scott 114 (certainly appropriate to the cancellation and the method of carriage), is apparently tied with this cancel, but it is so partial no competent observation can be made.

It would seem that if the ampersand was not struck because of an irregular envelope surface (perhaps because of the arrangement of the contents), the rim circle should also be affected—but it is not.

Perhaps this unusual railroad canceller must await a railroad specialist to explain its existence. Is it a repeatable variety, or is it a freak? Please send comments to the Editor for inclusion in the March 2005 issue.

The Editor

The Cover Box (continued from page 17)

The enclosure indicates the letter was written in Gurnee, IL on Feb. 28, 1897. However, it was not cancelled until March 3, indicating the sender was travelling. The dispatching postmark tying Scott 255 is maddeningly only partially readable—"A...KILL"—a barred oval duplex with slug 1. (*The Editor requests assistance in identifying the post office.*) Addressed to "Mrs. Horatio Clark" in Leipzig, Germany, it bears a L(eipzig) 5 receiving cancel.

Apparently Mrs. Clark had travelled on and someone at the address wrote the Cobleskill forwarding address on it (in a distinct German hand). They then deposited the letter in the mailbox in front of the Leipzig 3 post office. From there it was removed and received the "**Aus dem Briefkasten**" marking. There is no Cobleskill receiving mark but a "New York/PAID ALL/C" duplex dated APR 1 is found on the reverse. One assumes the letter reached Mrs. Clark.

Postal Networks

Editor Drew Nicholson, in his gracious accompaniments to my article in the last (March 2004) number of *Excelsior!*, repeated my promise of an index to the postal routes in New York State (1837-41). He alluded to our participation in an upcoming conference (under the auspices of the Business History Association, in Le Creusot, France) on Networks. On both accounts, of the promise and of the participation, I have decided to withhold that index from publication until sometime in 2005.

The index is done and I would be delighted to transcribe its contents for a limited number of post offices for anyone who just can't wait to get started. I suspect, however, that there will not be a stampede to take advantage of this offer: John Lange aside, too few collectors will be motivated to quit the narrow limits of their current habits of collecting. So, on this account, I think I should devote some time to motivating such a 'breakout' in the practice of postal history, that the index might be received more as a scintillating critical mass, rather than as a sodden lump of data.

On the other account, too, there is more to be said. After having had our paper on postal networks accepted for presentation at Le Creusot, we discovered that there was a more specialized conference, solely upon European postal networks, scheduled the preceding week in Paris, hosted by the French Post Office (aka Groupe La Poste). For that we proposed a paper on the pneumatic postal system of Vienna which we had worked out more than 20 years ago and had that accepted as well. Our participation in the Paris conference (reported upon by Diane DeBlois in the *Postal History Journal*) which will appear at the same time as this does in the pages of *Excelsior!* both colored and amplified our contributions at Le Creusot.

In English, 'network' is a nebulous concept, nonetheless much invoked to express a distribution of effects while remaining uncommitted as to causes. From the Paris conference it is evident that the French regard postal matters more as a science than as a history and this is reflected in their use of the idea of networks. The word in French which is usually found in translation of the English 'network' – 'réseau' – is rather more active, like 'networking,' and less nebulous. Bruno Latour, whose *Science in Action* has been through several editions in English translation, therein wrote that "the word network indicates that resources are concentrated in a few places – the knots and nodes – which are connected with one another – the links and mesh ..." When Latour addressed the meeting in Le Creusot, he added another ingredient to this definition, akin to acknowledging the human dimension in science (that there must be an observer and that experimental results must be communicated) – that networks should be regarded as passionate. In postal terms – postal indicating a medium of communications – our attention is drawn through the post office to the meaning of the message: not as McLuhan would have had it "the medium is the message" but that our notion of network should entrain not only the system and the message but also the language and the conversations and other matters of context – that the idea of networks goes to the very core of human relations. Postal, thereby, may refer to a particular technology of communication, but it also must refer to a science of human community. How can networks be so pervasive?

The Internet has spawned much interest recently in the idea of the network and it was initially supposed that the well-developed mathematical notions of the random network could apply. For random nets, one starts with a set of nodes and then studies the connectivity and other formally defined properties as links are haphazardly allocated among the nodes. Small islands of related nodes grow until most and then all nodes are brought into the mesh. Some nodes may be connected but once, others may have links to five or more other nodes, but the average will have some intermediate level of connectivity to three or four sites. Such a random net may look very much like the map of post offices and post roads and, indeed, such a map may have motivated a certain dismissive attitude towards the postal system as, after all, a not very highly developed

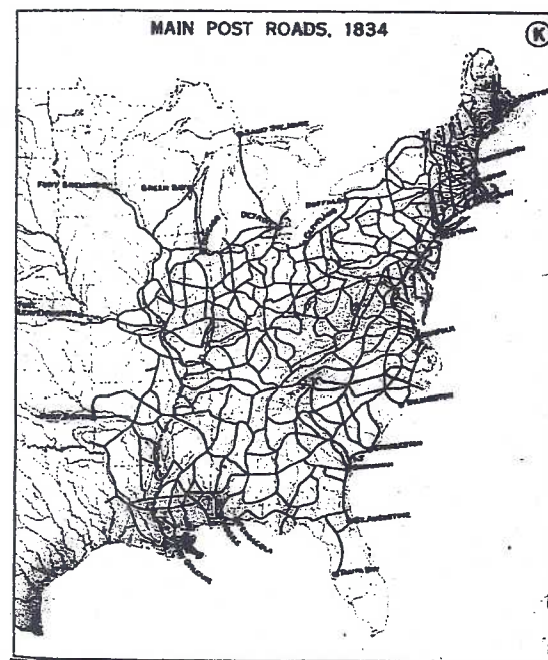
form of the random net, since new technologies permitted, on the average, more links than were permitted the postal system with its geographic limitations. All roads may have led to Rome but there were only a few gates by which one could pass through its walls.

The Internet, however, did not prove to be a random network. It was found that on the Internet there were a few very highly connected nodes (as measured, say, by the frequency of 'hits') while the vast number of sites remained relatively unvisited. Indeed it might even be impossible to surf from a particular site to vast numbers of others, and the most ambitious search engines, it is estimated, have mapped but 20 or 30% of the totality of the Net.

The careful reader may already have detected a certain lack of consistency between the analogy of a system of post offices and post roads as a random network and this picture of surfing the Internet. Why should the map of post roads (Figure 1) and post offices suffice to characterize the postal network without consideration of the number of letters (hits) passing among them?

If one wanted to make a rough estimate of the number of letters received in a particular post office one would go to the Official Registers which report postmasters' compensations. (This is especially true for the Stampless period when the majority of letters were paid for upon receipt and when the postmaster would figure his compensation as a percentage of such receipts.)

Fig. 1. A map of post offices and post roads (in this case "Main Post Roads, 1834" from Paullin *Atlas of Historical Geography of the United States*, 1932). It shows what appears to be a random network: few offices are connected by but a single road to the rest of the network; some post offices have as many as six or seven post roads; most are connected by but three or four post roads. The result is the same at all resolutions (magnifications) down to the detail of the smallest office.



It turns out that, on this basis, the vast number of post offices earned very little in the way of postal revenues while a few larger offices earned the bulk. This is similar to the Internet with the analogy being between postal revenues (converted to numbers of letters through division by the average postage paid) and hits.

A similar result is found if one concentrates on the number of mails rather than the number of letters received at a given post office in a given space of time. (Figure 2)

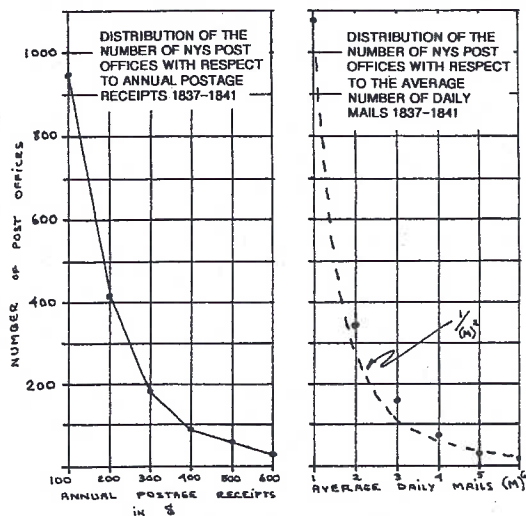


Fig. 2. The connectivity of post offices of New York State (1837-41), whether measured indirectly in terms of gross receipts or directly by the number of mails, shows that the vast majority of post offices generate less than \$100 in postal revenues per annum (even though the average may be two or three).

The overwhelming majority of post offices received less than one mail a day while a small number of offices received more; a few, many more.

Overall this picture has some profound implications. Between 1800 and 1860 when the number of post offices in the United States expanded more than 30 fold, from 903 to 28,498, the postal revenues expanded by the same product, such that before the Civil War the average postal revenue (per post office) remained \$275 per annum (give or take \$25). Did this mean that the average post office earned \$275 in postal revenues, a few more than that, a few less—a bell-shaped curve? Hardly. In New York State, for example, 80% of the post offices earned less than \$275.

Looking at the 'large picture,' at the map of offices and roads, and at the constant average postal revenues, one might be tempted to think of the postal system as a random network of average post offices. And one would be wrong. But not all inferences drawn upon the macroscopic scale would be so misleading. Another measure of the system, total miles of mail transportation, integrated from the length and frequency for the carriage of the mail on all the contracts, yields the equally surprising constant (before the Civil War) of 10 cents per mile. This, discounted by the postmasters commissions, does and truly represent the average rate of compensation for carrying the mail, say 7 cents per mile. And 7 cents per miles represents a fairly handsome remuneration for the average speed of something like 6 or 7 miles an hour that the schedules required: a post rider could earn almost as much in an hour as a laborer on the same road could earn in a day. Accordingly the postal system offered attractive employment and established a national basis for industrialized labor, especially so in the hinterlands where currency was scarce.

I would like to recall the postal shuttle in this context (from the article in the last number of *Excelsior!*). Practically all the postal contracts of New York State in the letting to commence a 4 year performance from 1 July 1837 specified a particular route from A to B and return, so that the intermediate offices would get visited twice for every performance of the route. Whatever benefit might accrue to having postal service would be visited twice as often upon the intermediate offices as upon the termini, something we will call the 'way benefit.' In this manner the intermediate offices were given a bonus, the hinterland was encouraged. In conjunction with the fact that smaller offices were vastly in the majority, and that with respect to the city center the country disproportionately felt the inducements of postal communication and the seductiveness of industrious labor the effect of the postal system was especially on behalf of the hinterlands. If they were to be drawn to the centers then the centers were to prosper, too. But the system favored those from outside who were drawn to the inside. The centers would prosper by the immigration, but the country had to feel the effects first.

But which place gets to be the center? There are perfectly good reasons for one place to emerge pre-eminent in the 'natural' course of events: think of a settlement at the mouth of a river enjoying and controlling the commerce of all settlements throughout the watershed. Or, think of a long coastline with numerous ports: it is the port in the center that enjoys the most frequent contact with all the other ports. It has the least distance to travel in order to make contact with all the rest; being the most visited in the way of contacts among all the rest. Geography can provide the template for the hierarchy of places. And in New York and New England especially there are an abundance of rivers which may provide not only the way but also the means (through water power) for a hierarchy of mercantile relations that would be indexed to the frequency of postal communication. In other words, no one needs to design such an outcome. And yet there is good reason to do so.

Although a river may effortlessly accumulate the waters of many branches to debouch the whole of its watershed at its mouth, it is more difficult to go in the opposite direction: indeed, the easiest way back to an upstream settlement may not take the course of the stream at all but strike off overland. Geography can be a mixed blessing in the message and reply of communication. It is in the schedule of transportation services that geography can be improved upon, and it is precisely in this way that we can see the improvements of intentional design among the postal route contracts for the four year lettings of New York State, service to commence 1 July 1837.

The numbered mail contracts are tabulated so that successive blocks correspond to successive generations of branches. And such an arrangement permits the scheduling of arrivals and departures of the postal shuttles at each end of the route so to facilitate through connections for the 'universal traveler' in both directions, 'upstream' and 'downstream.' One may send a letter with equal dispatch in either direction, the only difference (and a significant one when it comes to control) is that one may depart more frequently with such dispatch from the center than from the sticks.

The lesson in all of this is that postal history is not at all like stamp collecting, not just a matter of filling in the spaces. Each post office has an implicit relation to every other post office, not only because of geography – the roads – but also in matters of time – the schedule. And beyond such matters of means, there are also considerations of motive: what the letters themselves are about—the passion.

The index which will be published 'down the road' in these pages will be alphabetized by post office, each with a set of numbers. The mail contracts to which these numbers refer (and which have already been published in the *NYS Postal Route Gazetteer*, available from Subway) each give a direction and a schedule of the mail transportation between certain termini that permit a reconstruction for the opportunities of mail service from a particular office in question. This would permit, as John Lange has done, a reconstruction of the postal journey between all the offices within the state of New York. In some cases, letters may be exchanged between family members or friends separated by journeys or emigration. In other cases, the correspondents may have a commercial interest in common: a parallel interest in some third party or prospect; one subordinate to the other in the market; or related in the manufacture and the supply of raw materials. Each letter may be made unique in this respect, whatever the similarity of the postal markings, unique in date, unique in purpose, and unique in the way in which the letter reveals a portion of the postal network to account for the letter having been written in the first place. All this should be germane to the science (if not to the philately) of postal history. It should serve not only to enrich the reasons for collecting the postal markings of a certain town or county or state but also to help incorporate the collections of all postal historians into a larger project rather than reduce each to a common formula of filling in the spaces.

By Robert Dalton Harris
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Massena, N.Y. R.F.D. No. 1

A letter from W. M. Johnson, the First Assistant Postmaster in Washington, D.C. to Postmaster Melville Stearns announced the establishment of an R.F.D. route in Massena, N. Y. The contents of the letter contained a description of the R.F.D. route. Delivery service on this route was initiated on October 1, 1901. The first rural carrier was Orick M. Hosmer, a Civil War veteran—his daughter, Mrs. Carrie Reynolds, was his assistant carrier.

The cover shown in **Figure 1** is dated June 30, 1902, nine months after the R.F.D. service was initiated. There is a high probability that it was delivered by Hosmer or his daughter. (Hosmer served as carrier on this route for four years, nine months and twelve days; his successor was E. C. Hubbard). (see **Figure 7**) Only one route was established at this time. In this period of operation, the carriers were instructed to cancel all mail picked up on the route. The letter was addressed to Brasher Falls, N. Y. and received same day delivery!

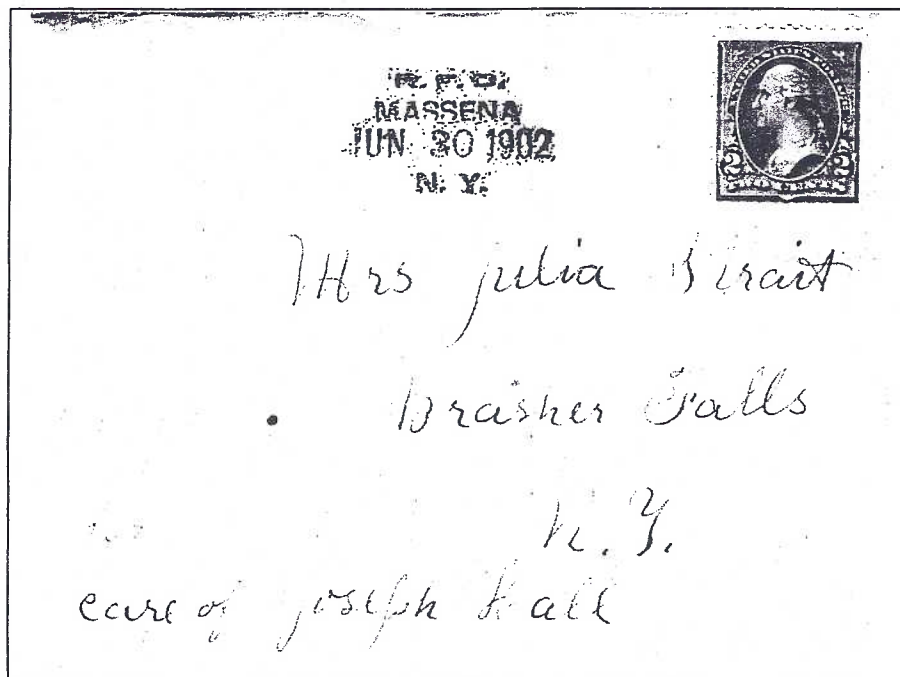


Fig. 1. "R.F.D./Massena/Jun 30 1902/N.Y (Richow Type 1, Route 1); cancel enhanced

An article describing the R.F.D. route was printed in the *Massena Observer* on Thursday, April 16, 1936. Part of the article and the entire letter received by Postmaster Dr. Stearns is found below.

"Salary Was to be \$500 Which Included Care of Horses—Orick M. Hosner Was First Carrier"

...The original letter written by First Assistant Postmaster Johnson to Postmaster Stearns is still kept on file at the local post office. The letter (order) states:

"You are hereby authorized to establish rural free delivery from your office to commence on Tuesday, October 1, 1901, with one carrier at a salary of \$500 per annum, including horse hire. The route to be followed as laid down by Special Agent T. A. Kittredge will be as follows: Beginning at the post office in Massena, said county and state, the carrier will go thence west to Town Line road 1 ¼ miles, thence northwest to River road 2 miles, thence west along River road to Coles Corner 10 miles, thence east to Massena post office 11 ¼, the length of route 24 ½ miles. Area covered 21 square miles, with 158 houses on route and population of 711. No changes must be made in the route as thus laid down unless by direct order from the department.

In connection with this service requisition has been made for five United States iron collection boxes which you will please have your rural carriers place at the following points: One at milk receiver building on Town Line road; one at Louisville Landing post office corner; one at Coles Corner; one at No. 4 school house corner; one at the Whiting school house corner.

You will please wire, collect, the department that you have started the service on the day designated so that there be no confusion in the accounts of the department, and report upon the progress from time to time."

[Editor's observation: Obviously Special Agent T. A. Kittredge was omniscient since the information he gathered for the U. S. Postal Department was considered so accurate and exact that it precluded any freedom of thought on the part of postmaster Stearns. The p. o. department hasn't changed in 103 years!]

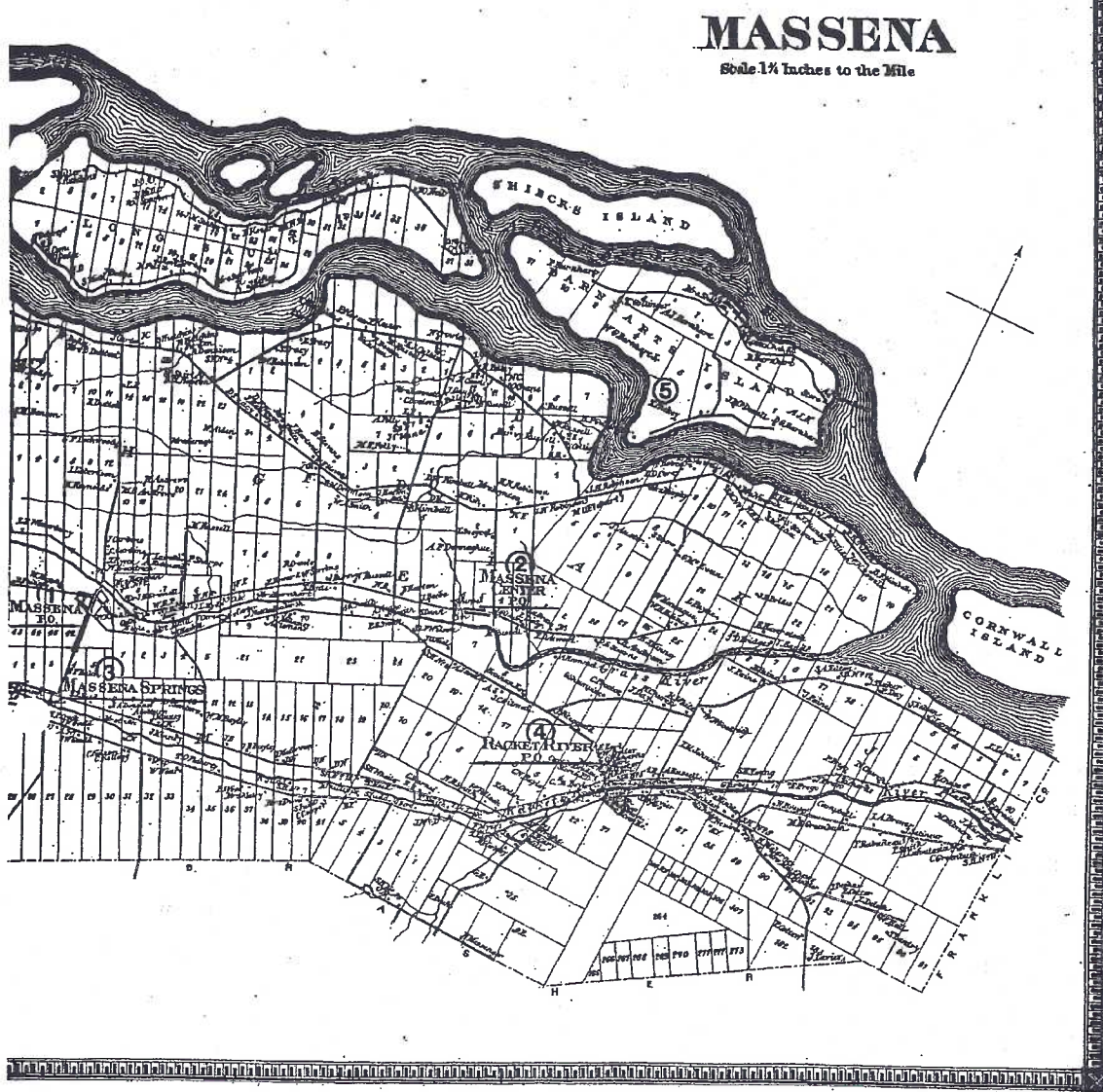
The R.F.D. route is shown on two contemporary maps (**Figures 3 and 4**). Both show the Massena/Louisville area before the Seaway was constructed. The key to the locations of the U. S. Postal Department iron collection boxes mentioned in the letter are listed at the base of the Louisville map (**Figure 4**). (The **Louisville Landing post office** was opened in 1850 and discontinued in 1917.)

The Massena post office was opened in 1811 and is still in operation today, 193 years later! The 1936 *Massena Observer* article referenced above contained a picture of the **Massena post office**, which is shown in **Figure 2**. Mentioned in the caption [*which may be too small to be clearly read; underlining of names by the Editor*] are James B. Kirkbride and Dr. Melvin Stearns. Photo was a gift of Lena Brittan, on loan from Town of Massena History Archives.



Fig. 2 Interior of Massena Post Office

Kirkbride, a Massena merchant was appointed postmaster by President Grover Cleveland on August 21, 1893. Dr. Melvin Stearns, as reported in the first paragraph, was the postmaster when the R.F.D. route was initiated. He was appointed postmaster by President William McKinley on



Massena Area Post Offices

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Massena Post Office, 1811-Present | 4. Racket River, 1830-1865 |
| 2. Massena Centre, 1851-1893 | Racket River, 1866-1870 |
| Massena Center, 1893-1919 | Racket River, 1870-1919 |
| 3. Massena Springs, 1867-1868 | 5. Barnharts, 1900-1905 |
| Massena Springs, 1892-1928 | Barnharts, 1906-1912 |

August 27, 1897, serving in that position until 1909.

The Massena Town Hall (Figure 5) was completed in 1904. During the first 6 years of Dr. Stearns tenure as postmaster, the post office was located in the telegraph office. However, after the Town Hall was completed the post office was moved there and remained for a number of years. As with many solidly built late Victorian- and Edwardian-era public buildings, it is still in use.

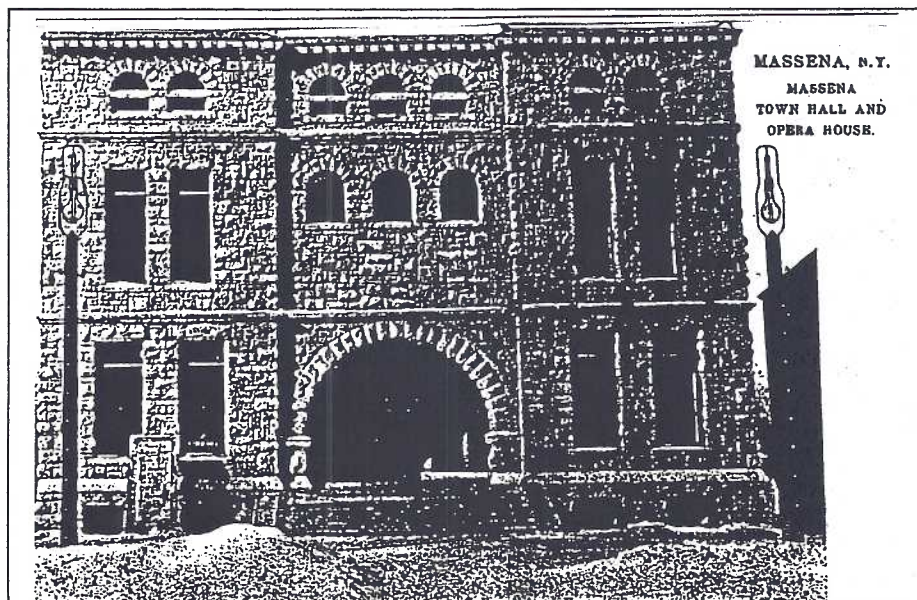


Fig. 5 Massena Town Hall and Opera House

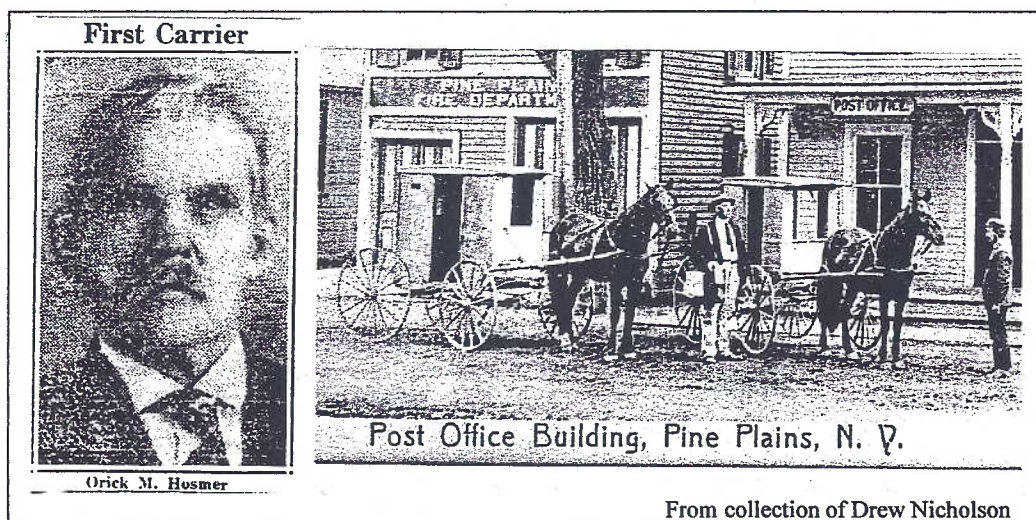


Fig. 6 Newspaper photo of Massena's first R.F.D. carrier, along with crop from contemporary (1907) view card illustrating typical R.F.D. mail wagons of the period.

The First Rural Carrier—Orick M. Hosmer (Figure 6), an article taken from the Massena Observer, April 16, 1936:

The Massena Observer published the following on October 3, 1901:

"There are about 100 families on the route and so far about 60 have agreed to accept the service. Up at Louisville Landing many of them prefer to keep their post office but it is understood that the post office there will be discontinued on January 1, 1902. *[Their complaints must have reached important ears since Louisville Landing remained open an additional 15 years! Ed]* When people get used to the free delivery service they will find it more convenient than the old system.

Mr. Hosmer well remembers that momentous day. He was accompanied on the route by his daughter, Mrs. Carrie Reynolds, who had been named as assistant carrier. They recall that it was a splendid day in the fall of the year and that every home they came to they could smell the odor of cooking cabbage.

In spite of his advanced age, Mr. Hosmer is in fairly good health. He has had a cold during the winter but nothing of a serious nature.

Mr. Hosmer was wounded by gunshot at Winchester, VA, while in the Civil War. The leg failed to respond to treatment and had to be amputated on October 21, 1864 at Jarvis Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland. Despite the handicap of the loss of his leg, Mr. Hosmer continued to lead an active life upon his return to Massena, where he has since lived. For fourteen years he was a lumberman and drove logs on the Grasse River in the days when this river was the scene of an annual log drive.

While serving as the first rural carrier out of Massena, Mr. Hosmer found a unique use for his artificial leg. He utilized the hollow portion of the leg to carry letters and valuable small packages. He died at the age of 93 and was the last surviving member of the Col. Hiram Anderson Post, Grand Army of the Republic, Massena, NY."

Addendum: Massena R.F.D. Receipt

Figure 7 is a receipt for a postal money order issued by E. C. Hubbard on his R.F.D. route. Hubbard was the successor to Orick Hosmer, the first carrier on Route 1.

No. _____ *March 27 1908*

RECEIPT OF RURAL CARRIER

For Amount with which to purchase a Postal Money Order from the Postmaster at the main office.

RECEIVED of *J. H. Wilson*
[Here write name of Remitter of the Order]

the sum of *Three* Dollars *12* Cents (*\$ 3 12*)

and in addition, *5* Cents (for the fee), for which I am to purchase a Money Order, to be drawn according to the Remitter's application therefor.

E. C. Hubbard Carrier

[ERASE ONE OR THE OTHER OF THESE LINES]

The Order is to be ~~Returned to the Remitter by the Carrier.~~
[Mailed by the carrier in the addressed envelope furnished him.]

On the back of the Application, the carrier will write over his own signature the number of this receipt, thus, "Carrier's Receipt No. _____" He will present the application and the money to the Postmaster, who will issue an Order according to the application, and will mail the receipt for the Order (detached from Advice) to the Remitter in official penalty envelope No. 1.

Fig. 7 Receipt for money order in amount of \$3.12 dated March 27, 1908.
Fee for the service was five cents.

References:

- Kay, John L. and Chester M. Smith. New York Postal History: The Post Offices and the First Postmasters from 1775 to 1980. American Philatelic Society, State College, PA (1982)
- The Massena Historical Society, Town of Massena Museum, 200 Orvis Street, Massena, N.Y. 13362. This was the source for the articles published in the *Massena Observer*, now known as the *Courier Observer*.
- *Massena Observer*, April 16, 1936
- Richow, Harold E. Encyclopedia of R.F.D. Cancels, Second Edition. La Posta Publications, Lake Oswego, OR.

Acknowledgements:

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NAVAL CANCELS AT POUGHKEEPSIE—AN UPDATE

An inquiry to the F.D. R. Library in Hyde Park has resulted in the following new information concerning the *U.S.S. Potomac*'s movements to and from the Poughkeepsie area that may have yielded postmarks. The Library could only provide information about the president's movements and not information that would be normally provided by the ship's log, which will need to await an inquiry to another government agency.

- Aug. 26 - Sept. 14, 1937—F.D.R. was at Hyde Park and boarded the *Potomac* on Sept. 2 and departed on Sept. 7. This is the same cruise to Long Island that was marked by the *U.S.S. Selfridge*'s cancel. No *Potomac* cancel has yet been observed.
- June 19 - 24, 1938—F. D. R. arrived at Hyde Park aboard the *Potomac* and departed by train. A June 22, 1938 cancel has been observed.
- Sept. 6 - 9, 1938—F.D.R. arrived by train. On Sept. 9, he took a short cruise then departed by train. Sept. 8 and 10 cancels have been observed.
- On or about May 1, 1939—Crown Prince Frederik of Denmark and Iceland arrived aboard the *Potomac*. He accompanied F.D.R. to the dedication ceremony of the new Rhinebeck post office. No *Potomac* cancel as yet observed.

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POUGHKEEPSIE, N.Y., CITY OF SCHOOLS

PART I:

VASSAR



"I wish to give one sex all the advantages too long monopolized by the other." This was the charge given by Matthew Vassar to the trustees of the newly organized women's college that would bear his name.

Matthew Vassar amassed most of his fortune brewing beer in Poughkeepsie. He was looking for a means of helping the community with a lasting gift. He had rejected joining his nephews in endowing a hospital, but was influenced by the Rev. Milo P. Jewett to establish an institution of higher learning for woman.

In 1861, Matthew Vassar presented the board of the Vassar Female College with a gift of \$408,000 and the deed to 200 acres of land to create a institution that has become renowned the world over.

Construction of the first building, Main, commenced in 1861 and was completed in 1865. It opened for classes on Sept. 26, 1865 with 353 students, 9 professors, and 20 teaching assistants.

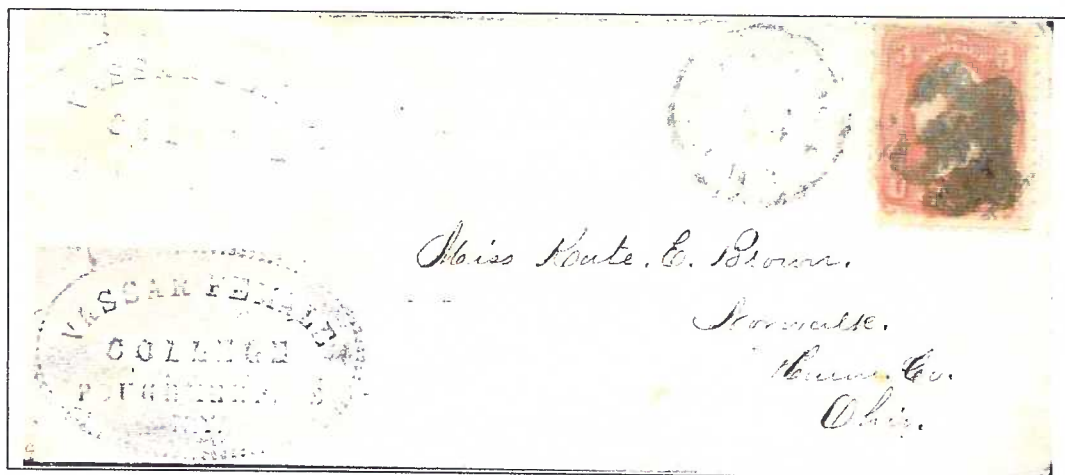


Fig. 1. A cover docketed Aug. 19, 1866 with the embossed "Vassar Female College" corner card. (A rubbing of the embossing is inserted at the lower left of the cover for clarity.)

Figure 1 shows a cover used less than one year after the college opened. "Female" was dropped from the name in 1867.

About two thirds of the applicants needed additional education to reach the high standards that the college maintained for admission. Because of this, a preparatory division was established that existed until 1890. By then, many private schools were offering curriculums aimed at admission to the college.



Fig. 2 Top and center -The college never used advertising covers, preferring to use a plain return address in the corner.

Bottom - Many educators incorporated their own return address with the college. (Cover from the collection of Drew Nicholson.

The author has several examples of covers sent from the college, but none are what could be termed advertising. The usual types are shown in **Figure 2**.

In 1887, Poughkeepsie Postmaster William Ketchem established a Sub-Station at the college. It was designated "Sub-Station #1". This was during a period when sub-stations were just beginning to appear around the country, and there was no set procedure to determine whether the station would be numbered or named.

Postal Bulletin 5401 of Nov. 15, 1897 directed:

The following classification of stations and sub-stations is hereby adopted:

All stations or sub-stations, as now designated, that receive and dispatch mail, either by carriers or through boxes and general delivery, will be known as stations and will be designated by letters or local names.

Sub-stations issue and pay money orders, register letters and parcels, sell postal supplies, but do not deliver mail, and will be designated by numbers.

Figure 3 shows a registered cover with a "Registered" marking that has been modified by the removal of "Sub" from the third line. Note the contradiction to the above directive.

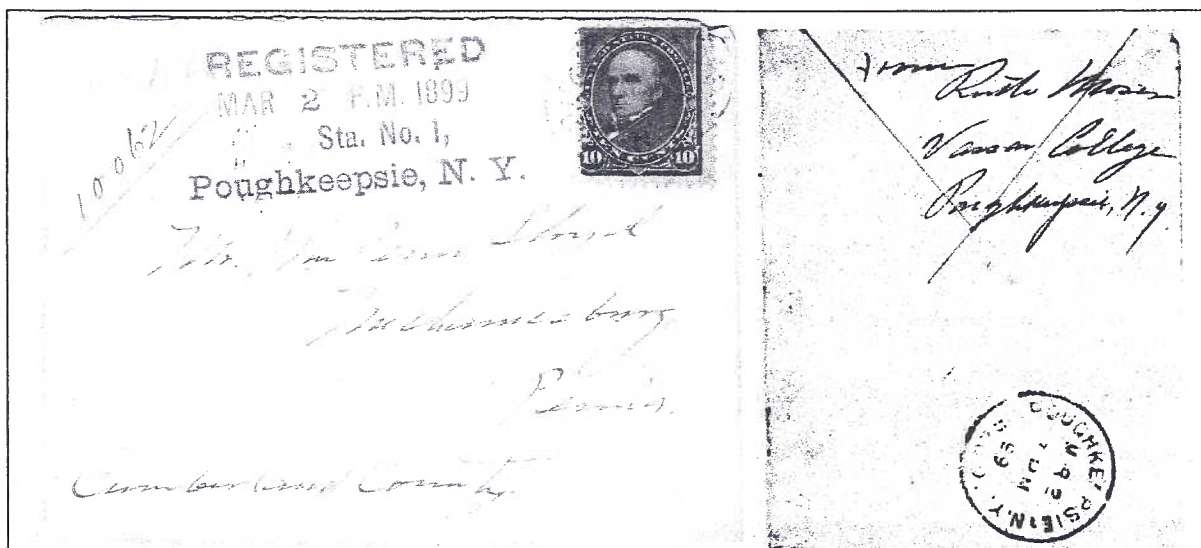


Fig 3: A registered cover from Vassar college Sta. 1 as confirmed by the return address on the back of the cover shown to the right. The Poughkeepsie receiving mark is dated Mar 2, 1899.

The following table, partially derived from New York Postal History by Smith & Kay, shows the designation changes of the postal facility located at the college:

Name	Est.	Disc.	Note
Sub Sta. 1	1887		
Sta. A (Vassar College) (Sta. Poughkeepsie)	Jan 1, 1909	Jul 1930	F: Sta. 1 (Vassar Col.)
Sta. A (Sta. Poughkeepsie, 12601)	Jul 1930	May 28, 1964	F: Sta. A (Vassar Col.)
Br. A (Br. Poughkeepsie, 12601)	May 28, 1964	Jun 1965	F: Sta. A (Sta. Poughkeepsie)
Br. A (Br. Poughkeepsie 12601)	Dec 7, 1976		
Receives its own ZIP code 12604	Jan 1, 1997		

The Arlington post office was established on May 1, 1882 and operated until May 15, 1926. It was closer to the college than Poughkeepsie but never directly serviced it. Many post cards of the college can be found postmarked from Arlington. An electric trolley line ran from the college into the city of Poughkeepsie travelling right past the Arlington post office. **Figure 4** shows a post card mailed in Arlington by a student and sent to Skanentiles, N.Y., wishing that her aunt could attend Commencement Day two days hence. Arlington was re-established as a branch of the Poughkeepsie post office with ZIP code 12603 on July 22, 1957. It is located about 500 feet from the campus.

According to an article in the *Poughkeepsie Journal* of February 9, 1997, more than 1,000 letters a day were being misdirected to post office boxes at the main post office because the college also used box numbers for its students. This resulted in the college receiving its own ZIP code (12604) in 1997.

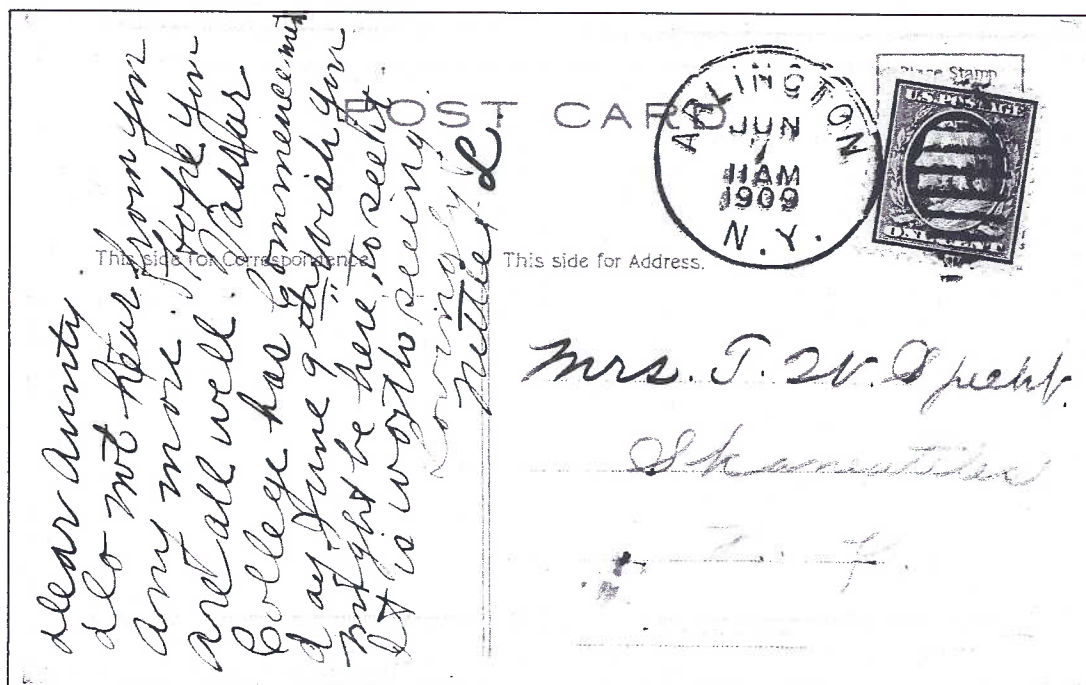


Fig. 4: A post card sent by a Vassar student from the Arlington post Office.

Many notable personages have been associated with the college. Samuel F. B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, who maintained a summer home in the area, was a charter trustee and instrumental in the creation of the college's art gallery. Franklin Delano Roosevelt served as a trustee from 1923 until his death in 1945. Eleanor Roosevelt visited many times; actress Meryl Streep graduated with the class of 1971. Poet Edna St. Vincent Millay (Class of 1917) was honored with a postage stamp in 1981 (Scott 1926). Maria Mitchell, who was personally sought after by Matthew Vassar, became Professor of Astronomy. She was self-taught but became renowned in the scientific community. The observatory was the second building erected on the campus.

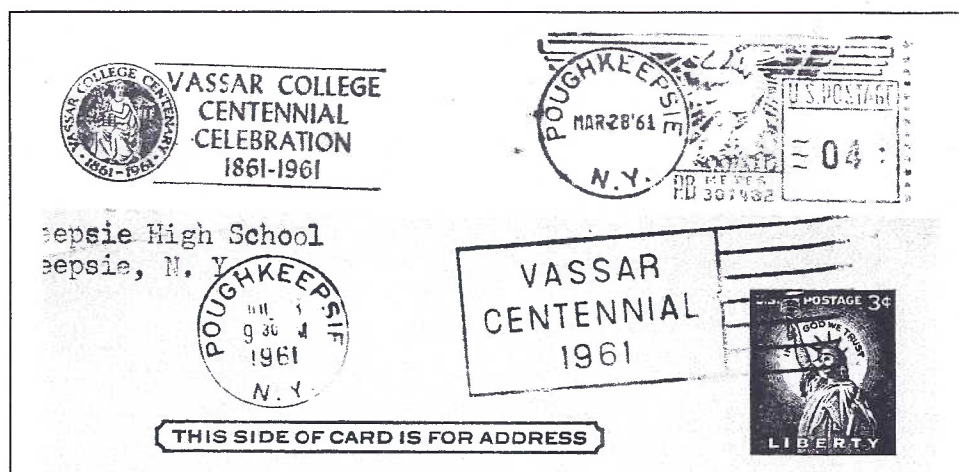


Fig. 5. Postal celebrations of Vassar College's centennial.
Top – Postage meter used by Western Printing and Litho. Co.
Bottom - Machine cancel used at Poughkeepsie.

The centennial of the college in 1961 was marked postally both by local businesses and the post office as illustrated in **Figure 5**.

Vassar remained an all girls' school until it went co-ed in 1969. However, there was a period following World War II when returning service men were admitted under the GI bill--their degrees were issued by the State University of New York as the college's charter forbade the issuance of degrees to men.

Sources:

Bruno & Daniels. Vassar College. Arcadia Publishing (2001). Majority of historical information taken from this source.

Kay, John L. and Chester M. Smith, Jr. New York Postal History: The Post Offices and First Postmasters from 1775 to 1980. American Philatelic Society (1982).

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NEW YORK STATE SPECIAL DELIVERY CLOCK CANCELS

Special delivery stamps, regulations and postal history have long fascinated me. Special delivery service commenced on October 1, 1885 and ended on June 6, 1997 (the last day of Pacific 97, the San Francisco International Show—Express mail finally did it in!)

One of the out of the way special delivery topics which intrigue me is the use of **clock-face receiving marking devices** for special delivery mail. (**Figure**) The first use of these devices on special delivery mail occurred in San Francisco, California and is known as early as December 19, 1885 (in my collection). Oakland, CA had a similar device used on its incoming mail as early as February 15, 1888. The Isograph Company, of Oakland, California manufactured the device. The company became part of IBM, and was absorbed into that company.

(continued on next page)

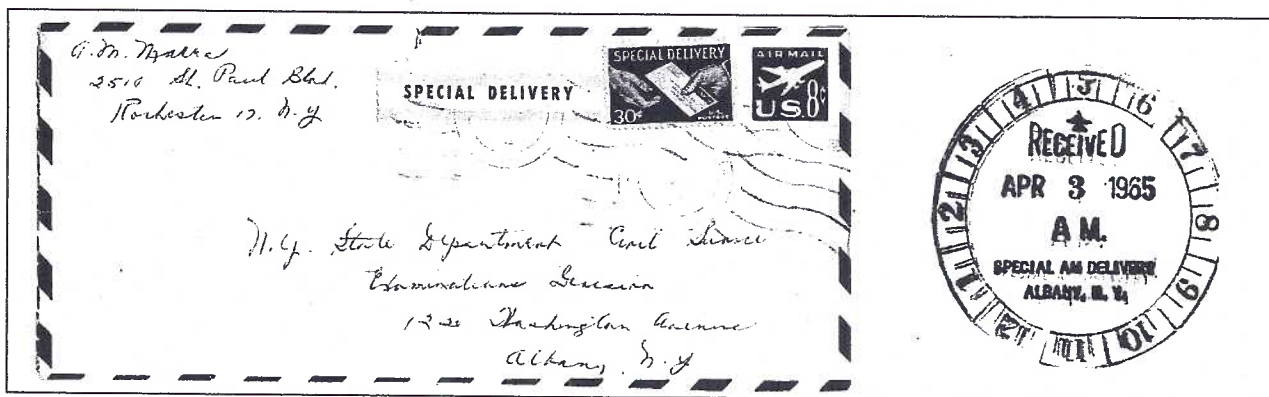


Figure Special delivery cover cancelled "Rochester, NY 64 1965/Ap 2 AM; crop at right shows the clock-face receiving marking in purple: "Special AM Delivery, Albany, N.Y."

Several New York cities also had such devices. Surprisingly, New York City did not; it had other markings and in a future article I will discuss some of them, especially the labels used on special delivery mail which could not be delivered on its special mission by the special delivery messenger.

My records indicate that Albany, New York had a clock-face device in 1965 but how much earlier and for what use period I know not. And Buffalo used a "clock" on the front of envelopes (while many of the devices appear only on the reverse) from at least November 7, 1902. This one was in blue; on August 30, 1914 there was one in purple on the reverse of an envelope. We also know that there were large "clocks" applied in blue from April 9, 1901, and with log numbers. I believe that the latest "clock" I record is July 4, 1929, a large "clock" in red, without log number (see the Harold B. Billian special delivery articles in the *Bureau Specialist*, 1955-1956, pg. 323.)

Brooklyn, N.Y. used one "clock" in blue on December 1, 1904 and one is known as late as May 13, 1931 in the Peltz Collection at Brown University Library. William Learned Law Peltz was a member of the Fort Orange Stamp Club (Albany) and other area stamp clubs—that is a story for another day, often told and even published.

I have been putting together a list of cities using "clocks" for years but not really concentrating on this material. I welcome photocopies of the front and back of covers from New York State cities or any other cities using these marvelous clock-face marking devices, at P. O. Box 91, Middletown, N.Y. 10940.

By Robert L. Markovits
Middletown, N. Y.

[We are pleased to present this short, but interesting article by Bob Markovits. Most of the readership is most likely aware that Bob is a world authority on many aspects of U.S. philately. Recently, he sold his multi-award winning collection of U.S. Departments; it was universally praised as the greatest collection ever formed of this extremely difficult area. Special delivery is an area that Bob has been studying and accumulating for a number of years. His interest in this area is worldwide. We look forward to his future article on the "other" special delivery markings of New York City. Editor]

COLUMBIA COUNTY CORNER

Introduction

My second article on the postal history of selected towns and villages in my home county of Columbia will visit **Copake**, **Copake Iron Works** and **Hillsdale**, with a very brief final stop in Rayville. As a reminder, all items illustrated here are of no immense book value; rather, they are items I enjoyed “discovering” and adding to my developing collection. I hope you will enjoy viewing my discoveries.

Copake

Copake is situated in the southeastern section of Columbia County, just a short ride north of my home in Ancramdale. Copake includes a town, a village and a six hundred-acre lake, all bearing the same name. (The name “Copake” is Native American in origin, and translated into English means “clear, deep water.”)

The area commonly known as Copake was separated from Taghkanic in 1824. The town was considered part of Livingston Manor until 1852 (an island in the middle Copake Lake, which has an area of approximately twenty acres, had been the home of several members of the Livingston family). (As an aside, Copake Lake has an incredible largemouth bass and panfish population; my son and I have been known to sit in our boat all day enjoying the country and the fishing, followed by the occasional fish fry!)

The Town of Copake was officially formed in 1824, with the post office being established on December 14, 1856; it is still in operation today. **Figure 1** shows an early cover, franked with Scott 65; the cancellation and the target killer are both struck in navy blue ink. **Figure 2** illustrates a cover bearing Scott 11 cancelled “Poughkeepsie/APR 3” (Bernadt Type 8); it originated in neighboring Dutchess County and was addressed to Copake. I have included it herein because of the manuscript notation at the top added at the Copake post office declaring the letter “Ford (as Forward) 3 cts unpaid.”



Fig. 2 (above). Manuscript notation at top declaring “Copake, NY/April 4/60} Ford 3cts./Unpaid”

Fig. 1 (below). 34 mm single-ring Copake CDS w/o year date and 18 mm. 4-ring target, both struck in blue.

Copake Iron Works

Copake Iron Works was formed around Lemuel & Sons Iron Works, which was established in 1845; the post office came into being on March 10, 1856. The village became known as Blaines Station beginning in 1860, but the post office retained the Copake Iron Works name until April 10, 1909, when it was re-designated as the Berkshire Pass post office. **Figure 3** is a picture post card of, coincidentally, Copake Lake, franked with a poorly centered Scott 300 cancelled “Copake Iron Works, May. 18, 1908”, and an Ancram receiving mark for the next day. Back then, as the message by Nellie implies, travel was not just a simple matter of hopping into one’s SUV for a drive north of a few miles—the mails were used to keep in touch with nearby friends and relatives as visiting was more difficult than it is today.

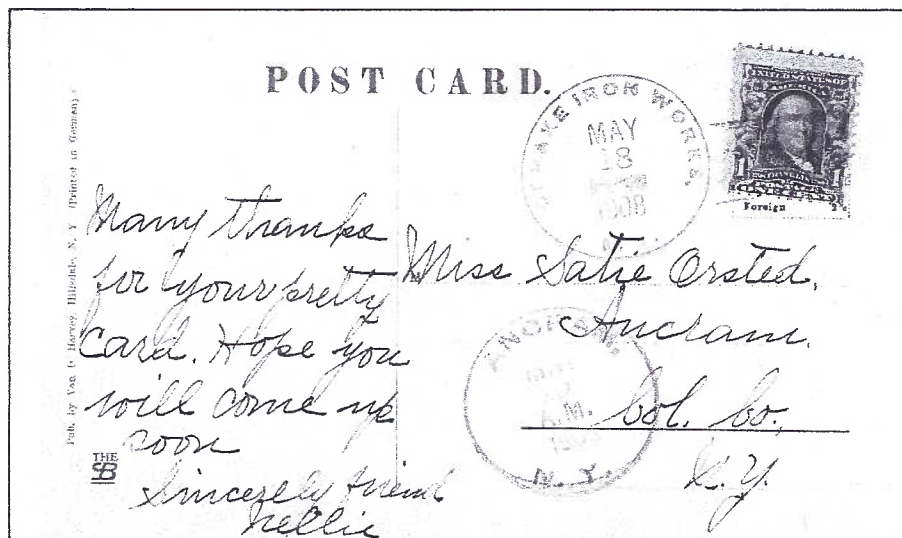


Fig. 3. “Copake Iron Works” Doane tying Scott 300 with rubber 30 mm Ancram CDS as a receiver.

Hillsdale

The village of Hillsdale was organized in 1788 and is located in the east-central section of Columbia County; in its history it has also been called “Nobletown.” The post office was established on December 14, 1797 and became one of the ten stops on the postal route between Hudson and Pittsfield, Massachusetts that was established under contract in 1837. The Hillsdale Post Office is still operating today.

Figure 4 presents an 1834 stampless folded letter sheet mailed in Hillsdale and addressed to New York City, with a manuscript “Paid 12 ½.” Manuscripts for Hillsdale have been reported used between 1805 and 1844. **Figure 5** is an example of a fancy killer, used on a cover in August of 1863.

Figure 6 illustrates an 1880 Hillsdale cover with the cancellation struck in magenta ink. The “**Star in circle**” killer is one of three types used by the post office; it was applied during Postmaster Joshua H. Buckley’s watch (he was Hillsdale’s fifth postmaster). The cover also has an Albany back stamp. **Figure 7** shows a cover from 1890 with an example of the “**H in Crescent**” killer; it bears an indistinct back stamp.



Fig. 6. Hillsdale duplex in purple with “Star in Circle” killer tying Scott #147; “Received Albany, NY” on reverse.



Fig. 7. Hillsdale duplex with “H in Crescent” killer tying Scott 147; faint “Brooklyn, NY” back stamp.

Rayville

Finally, there is the Rayville post office, which as far as designation/naming is concerned, is one of those "on-again-off-again" post offices. This post office came into being on February 24, 1874 through the re-designation of the "Rider's Mill" post office. In March of that same year, another re-designation created the "Greenbush" post office, only to once again be named "Rayville" on December 20, 1880. The Rayville name held until February 12, 1912, when the final name change resulted in it once again becoming "Rider's Mills."

Rayville is located in the northeastern part of Columbia County and was settled in 1800; it was named for Francis Ray, an early settler.

Figure 8 shows an Easter-theme post card struck with a Rayville Doane cancel dated April 6, 1912, a few weeks after the renaming. According to the auction house from which I purchased it (Jim Mehrer), it is the latest known use of the Rayville cancel.

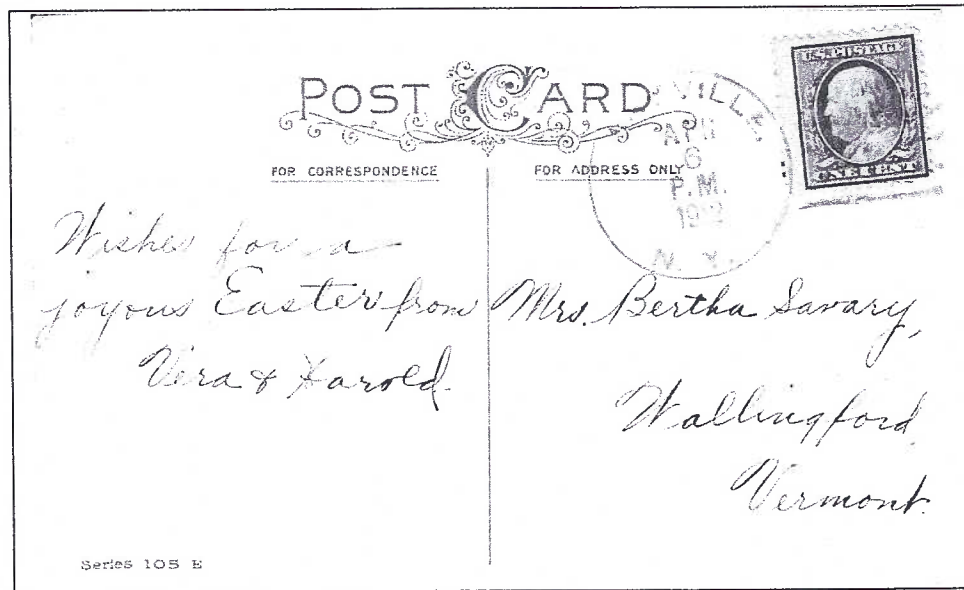


Fig. 8. Rayville Doane dated Apr/6/P.M.1912 tying Scott 374 to embossed Easter card.

Any suggestions, corrections and/or additions are requested. Updates will be included in future installments of the "Columbia County Corner."

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