



## The Journal of the Empire State Postal History Society

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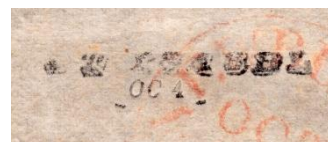
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# EXCELSIOR!

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

Don't forget to submit articles for publication in future issues of *Excelsior!*. Deadline for the March issue is February 1, while the deadline for the September issue is August 1.

Also, if you have back issues of the *Bulletin* or *Excelsior!* please let our webmaster know, as we are trying to have all back issues of these publications on the website. We are also interested in other older postal history materials that would be of interest to our website readers. Contact Charles DiComo for details.

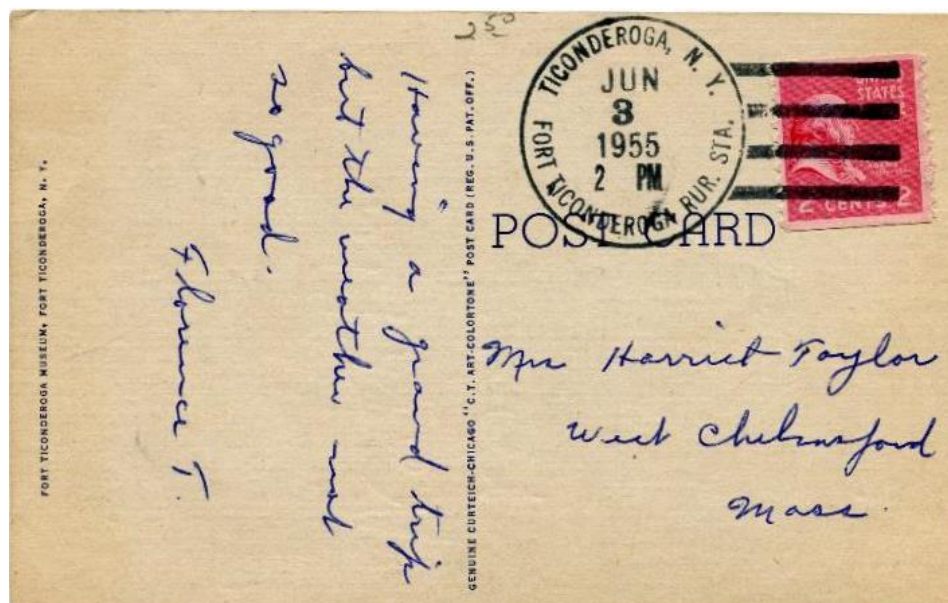
## NEW YORK RURAL STATIONS

By: George McGowan



**Figure 1.** A real photo postcard of the Taconic Lake Rural Station located in a store.

Rural Stations first appeared during the early days of the RFD system. If we review the genesis of the RFD program --before the civil war-- everyone went to their post office to get their mail. In the mid 1860s an idea emerged that it would be better for a postal worker to deliver to 200 customers than to have 200 people coming each day to the post office. Thus began city delivery in thirteen major cities. When rural customers asked for the same service, the answer was always "it would cost far too much." It took over 30 years, with a lot of public pressure before a rural delivery plan was tested in West Virginia. Tests proved quite successful and the system grew exponentially.

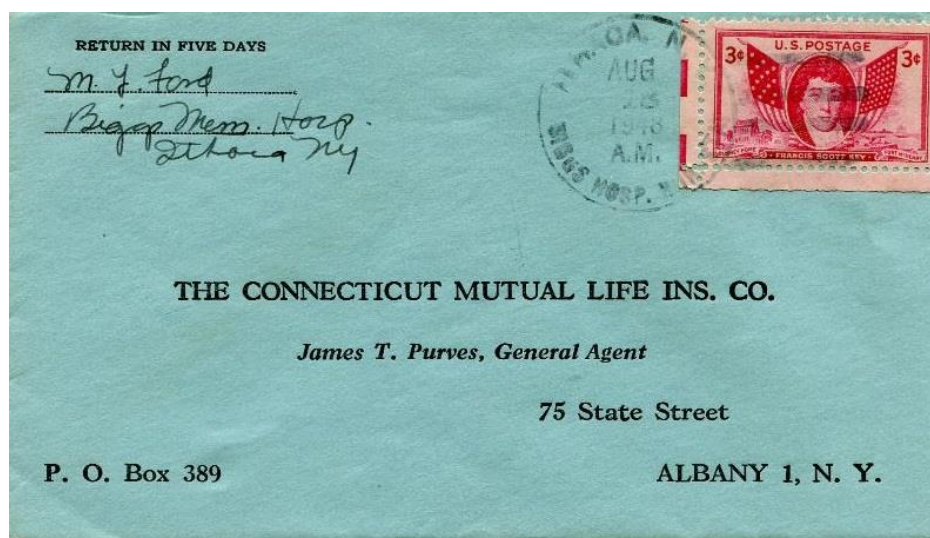


**Figure 2.** A postcard which pictured Fort Ticonderoga mailed at the rural station.



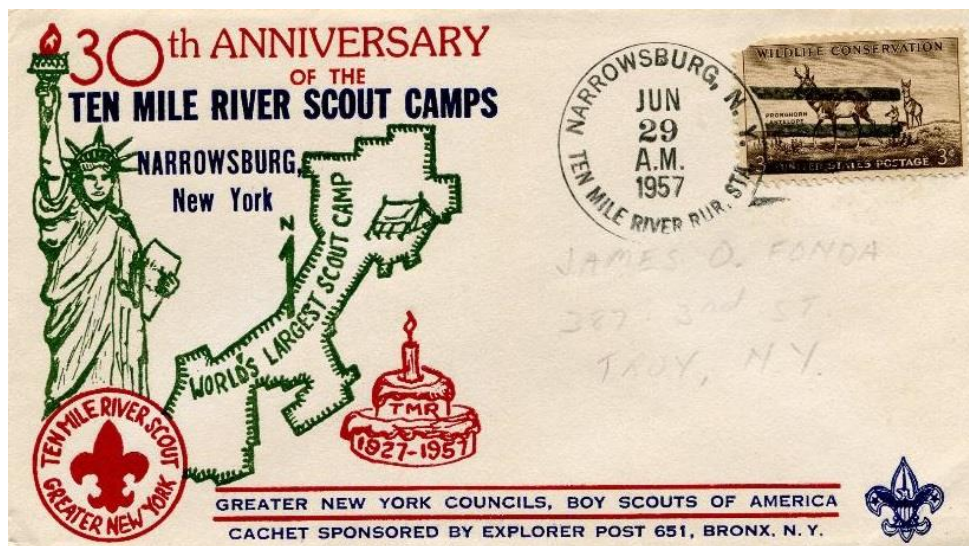
But what about the cost? The answer was to close thousands of smaller post offices that were no longer needed as the carrier could perform most postal services. This period was also a time when the postal service was obsessed with better performance, speedy first-class delivery, special delivery and the implementation of parcel post. The rural station was another attempt at better service. Occasionally a post office that was closed became a rural station, no doubt with less hours and less staff, without a postmaster, and almost always becoming a contract office. In New York we find that tourist attractions like Fort Ticonderoga had a rural station as seen in **Figure 2**.

Hospitals, like Briggs in Ithaca, Homer in Oneonta, and Tuberculosis Hospital at Mt. Morris had a station. A cover from the Briggs Hospital Station is seen in **Figure 3**.



**Figure 3.** An insurance letter mailed at the Briggs Hospital Rural Station.

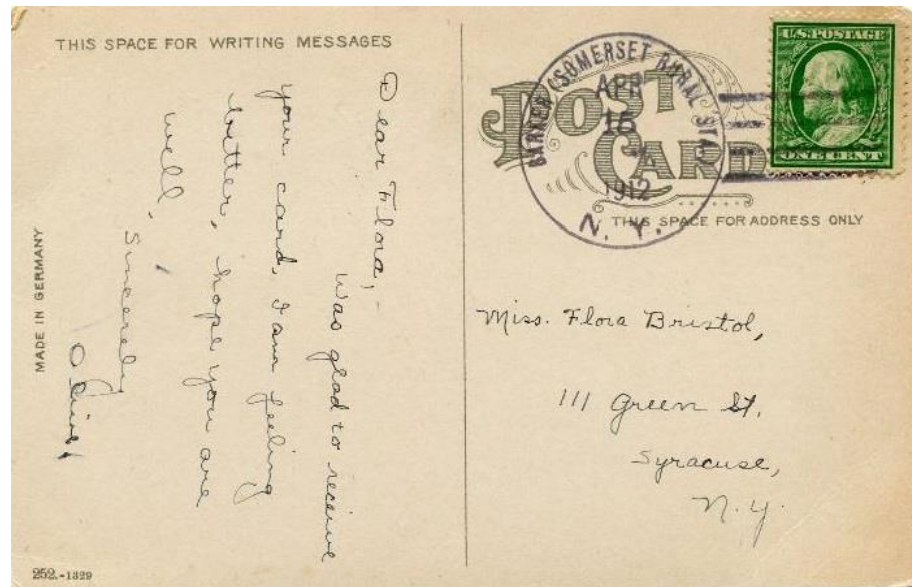
Summer only service was provided by a station at places like Glenburnie in Putnam Station, Glen Island at Bolton Landing and Higgins Bay at Lake Pleasant. As seen in **Figure 4**, Ten Mile Run Rural Station serviced a boy scout camp, summers only, in Narrowsburg.



**Figure 4.** A 30th anniversary commemorative cover mailed from a summer camp rural station.

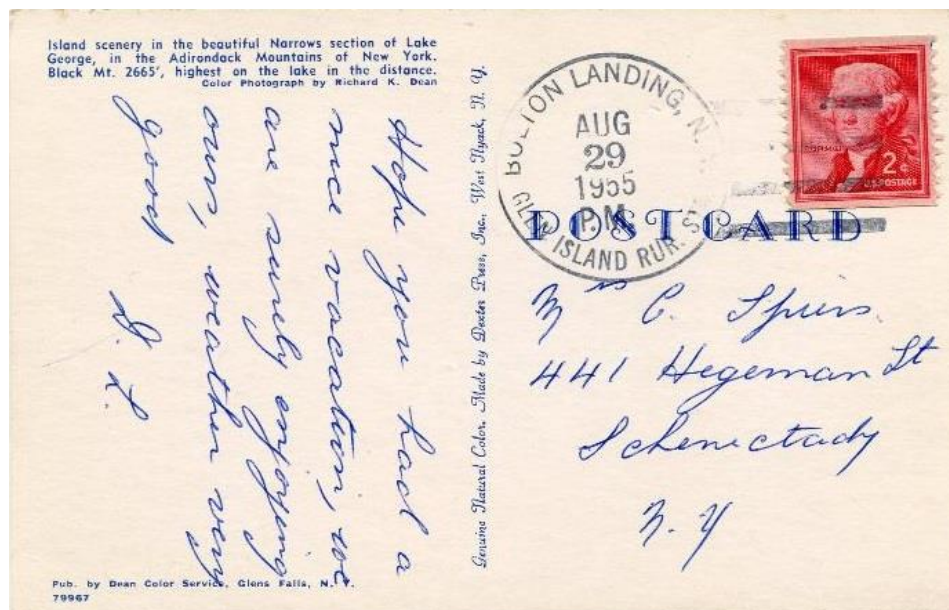
At sometime around 1974-75, the name Rural Station was dropped. For example, Samsonville Rural Station became a contract post office, (CPO) of Shokan. Rural stations became stations, and rural branches became branches.

The earliest NY Rural Stations that I have seen are Somerset Rural Station in Barker, (Niagara) established January 8, 1907, an example of which is seen in **Figure 5**, and Columbus RS (Sherburne) established Jan 1, 1908.



**Figure 5.** A 1912 postcard mailed at the Somerset Rural Station.

According to Postal Bulletin #19748 (6/10/54) the Glen Island Rural Station (Warren) was established July 1, 1954 for the period of July 1<sup>st</sup> to September 7<sup>th</sup> of each year. An example from 1955 is seen in **Figure 6**.



**Figure 6.** A postcard mailed at the Glen Island Rural Station Aug 29, 1955.

In a recent edition of *La Posta*, (2nd quarter, 2019) the editor delineates the current Postal Service nomenclature for our topic.

***Independent Post Office***, a post office with its own postmaster.

***Station***, a subordinate postal facility, administered by a local post office and postmaster, located within the corporate, or postal delivery, limits of the municipality for which the main post office is named.

***Branch***, a subordinate postal facility, administered by a local post office and postmaster, located beyond the corporate limits of the municipality for which the main post office is named.

*Stations and branches can be classified, or contract.*

*Classified offices are staffed by U.S. Postal Service employees.*

*Contract operations are run under a contract with a private entity, often as part of another business, and staffed by private staff.*

In Dr. Paul Abajian's book, *Vermont Postal History: The Branches, Stations, & CPO'S of the Green Mountain State*, he notes that sometime around 1908 "Stations" were offices located within the city/town limits of the main office and "Branches" were offices located outside the city/town limits of the main office.

In an interview with Dr. Abajian regarding this subject, he stated, "The postal service, like all businesses was always trying to increase its customer base, and would open a new post office wherever there was a small population center, thus north, south, east, west, center, falls, springs, station, etc. Each office would have a postmaster and more often than not, they would be in a store, newspaper office, lawyer's office, etc. There was no mail delivery of course. As years went on, offices were opened as rural stations in locations where populations were transient, such as in hotel lobbies, summer camps, ski lodges, etc. but without a postmaster. These offices didn't usually deliver mail, they sold stamps and collected mail to be sent to the main office as a convenience to their people. When RFD was started, it became apparent that many post offices could be closed and lower the overall expenses of having a post office and a postmaster. The postmaster was usually upset at this, as were many of their customers. As for the postmaster, it was a great loss of income as salary, rental space, and foot traffic in their establishment. The customers were also upset that some stores went out of business. Some of these offices became rural stations, only selling stamps and accepting mail, but no delivery. A few had boxes. To the postal service, this was a cost savings as the bottom line."

The study of rural stations is a difficult one. Most are not listed by Smith & Kay or Helbock. Most of their details, such as opening and closing dates, are found by scanning the postal bulletins. This article is not the end of the story, it is only the beginning. For example, we don't know how many rural stations were operated in New York State. Location, staffing, and times of operations are often a mystery.

I respectfully ask that if anyone can add to this initial attempt at sorting out the topic of rural stations, or if you have in your collections any rural station cancels that are not listed here, please contact me. ([geolotus2003@nycap.rr.com](mailto:geolotus2003@nycap.rr.com)).

The author has some data on established dates and discontinued dates of many of these entries which are available to the reader. Rural station cancels are more difficult to find than most regular post office cancels by their very nature, thus making this study challenging. The following is a list of all New York rural stations known to the author.

# **CURRENT LIST OF NEW YORK RURAL STATIONS**

<b>RURAL STATION</b>	<b>POST OFFICE</b>	<b>COUNTY</b>
Alligerville	High Falls	Ulster
Babcock Lake	Petersburg	Rensselaer
Bangor	North Bangor	Franklin
Biggs Hospital	Ithaca	Tompkins
Blue Ridge	Schroon Lake	Essex
Brighton	Tonawanda	Erie
Center Berlin	Berlin	Rensselaer
Columbus	Sherburne	Chenango
Conifer	Tupper Lake	St. Lawrence
Edinburg	Northville	Fulton
Floyd	Rome	Oneida
Ft. Ticonderoga	Ticonderoga	Essex
Fraser	Delhi	Delaware
Glenburnie	Putnam Station	Washington
Glen Island	Bolton Landing	Warren
Hawkeye	Au Sable Forks	Essex
Higgins Bay	Lake Pleasant	Hamilton
Homer Folks Hospital	Oneonta	Otsego
Hudson River State Hospital	Poughkeepsie	Dutchess
Kelsey	Hancock	Delaware
Lake Delta Area	Rome	Oneida
Lake James	Angola	Erie
Massawepie	Tupper Lake	Saint Lawrence
Mariaville	Delanson	Schenectady
Merriewold	Monticello	Sullivan
Morley	Canton	Saint Lawrence
Mount Pleasant	Mount Temper	Ulster
Mountain View	Owls Head	Franklin
Otter Lake	Forestport	Oneida
Pilot Knob	Kattskill Bay	Warren
Point Vivian	Alexandria Bay	Jefferson
Pryor Heights	Perrysburg	Cattaraugus
River Road	Tonawanda	Erie
Rossie	Hammond	Saint Lawrence
Saint Huberts	Keene Valley	Essex
Saint Remy	Kingston	Ulster
Samsonville	Krumville	Ulster
Somerset	Barker	Niagara
South Hartford	Hartford	Washington
Spragueville	Gouverneur	Saint Lawrence
Stanwix Heights	Rome	Oneida
Standish	Lyon Mountain	Clinton
Taconic Lake	Petersburg	Rensselaer
Ten Mile River	Narrowsburg	Sullivan
Tuberculosis Hospital	Mount Morris	Livingston
Vassar College	Poughkeepsie	Dutchess
Ushers	Round Lake	Saratoga
Vernon Center	Vernon	Oneida
White Creek	Eagle Bridge	Rensselaer
White Feathers	Onchiota	Franklin
Wilton	Mount McGregor	Saratoga
Wilton	Saratoga Springs	Saratoga



## ***AN UNUSUAL COVER FROM WEBSTER, NEW YORK***

**By: Douglas Penwell**

First, a brief history. Webster is a small town on the shore of Lake Ontario and is approximately 12 miles east of Rochester. It is easily accessed along NY State Route 104, which runs from the western suburbs of Rochester (Greece) through the city and is a major transportation corridor in western NY. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, it was called the Ridge Road.

Webster began as part of the Town of Penfield, and as it was in the north part of the town, the post office was established as North Penfield (while still a part of Ontario County). The reason for the name change to Webster is of historical interest. The citizens of the town went to Rochester to hear Daniel Webster give a speech in 1840. It has been recorded that they were so impressed that they changed the name of the town. In 1844, the town of West Penfield followed suit and changed to West Webster.



The cover seen above, has a machine cancel dated 1920 that is tying a 10-cent Special Delivery stamp and a common Washington definitive of the period. You don't have to look too closely to see that the Special Delivery stamp is on a cut piece of blue paper, and that the 2-cent Washington is affixed over a partial 2-cent circular die insignia from a piece of postal stationery. What happened here?

It can only be speculated that the Special Delivery stamp was used first on the same piece of postal stationery that the indicia came from. Either the cover was used previously, or the sender made a mistake of some kind and cut out the indicia and the Special Delivery stamp to use again.

Judging by the cancels here, the indicia was not accepted for postage, but the Special Delivery stamp was. This explains the use of the 2-cent Washington definitive pasted over the postal stationery indicia. There was little chance that this cover could have passed unnoticed, due to the service that Special Delivery pays for. While there are examples of postal stationery indicia "getting through," this one did not.

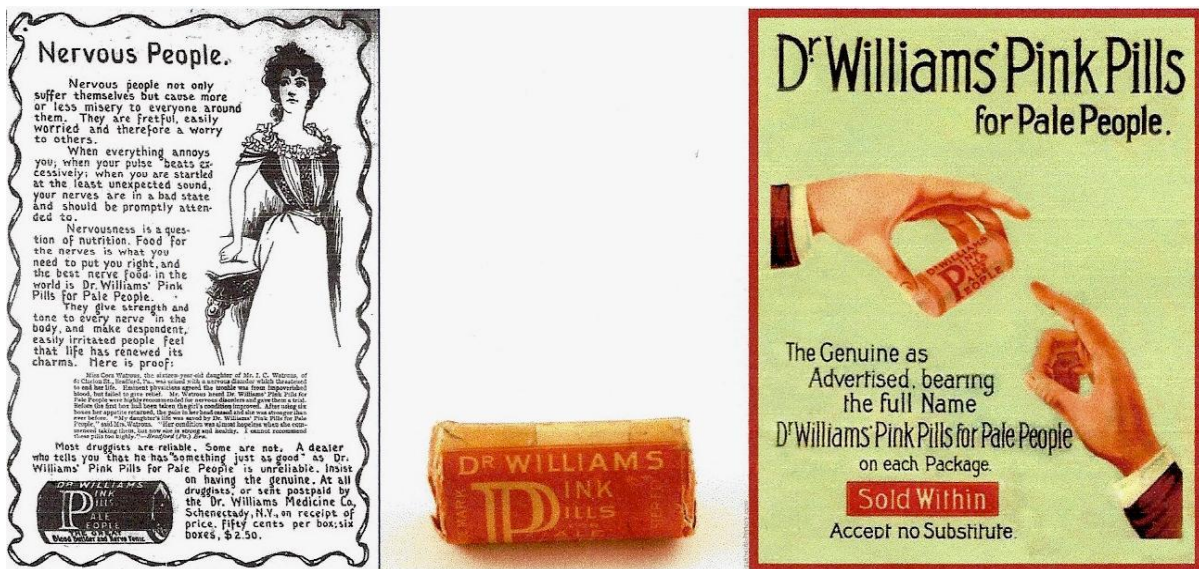
Doug Penwell may be reached at [doupenwell@mail.com](mailto:doupenwell@mail.com).



**DR. WILLIAMS MEDICINE COMPANY**  
**Franchise Marketing in Spanish-America**  
**By: Bob Bramwell**

One of the most successful of the 19<sup>th</sup> century quack “patent medicine” purveyors of record was the Dr. Williams Medicine Company, whose most important – if not only – product was given the catchy name Pink Pills for Pale People by its original formulator, Canadian Doctor William Jackson. Doctor Jackson sold the rights to his product for a pittance in 1890 to George Taylor Fulford, a Canadian aristocrat already in the patent medicine business. Fulford quickly made an alliance with American Willis T. Hanson, himself a well-known “drug packer” experienced in patent medicines. Fulford and Hanson established the Dr. Williams Medicine Company at Schenectady, N.Y. in 1890. At its height, that company distributed Pink Pills for Pale People in as many as 85 countries worldwide. These facts are drawn from my 2010 article introducing the Dr. Williams Medicine Company.<sup>1</sup> Almost 10 years later and with more Dr. Williams Medicine Company postal history material available, I’m pleased to return to this story.

It was not a time in 1890 when a couple of guys could go around the world and create brick and mortar presences in major cities to sell Pink Pills for Pale People at 50 cents per box. In fact, the business of “patent medicine” was nothing more than dressing up “home remedies” with catchy names in the era when illness was attributed to “the humors” and medical doctors were called Sawbones for a reason. What was new was the practice we now call “franchising”. Find respected people, enthuse them with the prospect of making a good living, and provide them with the necessary resources: a reliable supply of Dr. Williams Medicine Company Pink Pills for Pale People, advertising material in the appropriate language and sales support from Head Office.<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 1.** Typical “miracle cure” testimonial advertisement inserted in U.S. newspapers by the Dr. Williams Medicine Company; this from page 3 of *Bradford Era* issue of March 3, 1899. By the 1920s a Dr. Williams magazine ad counted on eye-candy to make quick impact on readers.

Operating in the United States, the British Empire and other places with broad use of the same language, newspapers and later colorful magazines, were an effective way to attract public attention to the sales message. **Figure 1** shows both a typical advertisement published by the Dr. Williams Medicine Company in newspapers during the 1890's and a full-color magazine ad from the 1920's. The newspaper ad contains a testimonial of miraculous cure ascribed to a Mr. I.C. Watrous of Bradford, Pa., praising Pink Pills for Pale People and reported by Bradford's newspaper, the *Bradford Era*. I checked, and this ad did appear in that newspaper over a span of years in the 1890's.

While the advertisements seen in the U.S. convey clearly that the Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People were sold through druggists or by pre-paid order from the company, the postal history of the Dr. Williams Medicine Company in my collection does not include any domestic material. Rather, it is made up of empty envelopes originating in Mexico, Colombia and other South American countries and covers with content addressed to individuals in Central and South American countries that were returned to Schenectady as undelivered mail. This returned material makes it clear that Dr. Williams Medicine Company operated as a franchisor throughout Central and South America, communicating in Spanish or Portuguese as appropriate to the European language superimposed on the many native languages between 1492 and 1830.

The Dr. Williams Medicine Company most likely placed ads in the widely circulated newspapers of Spanish-American countries (including Portuguese-speaking Brazil) as it did in the U.S. and England. We will see direct evidence shortly that people wishing to buy Pink Pills were directed to a nearby franchisee. That evidence also demonstrates that the Dr. Williams Medicine Company acted as a direct medical and lifestyle advisor to customers of those franchisees. A Dr. Williams Medicine Company form-letter postmarked Schenectady, October 11, 1898 (**Figure 2**), shows two relevant things about the company's practices. This letter was sent to Zacarias Gomes de Abila at Salamanca, Guanajuato State, Mexico. Marked on the reverse *No reclamada*, it obviously was not picked up by Señor Abila so was returned (*Devuelta*) on December 6<sup>th</sup> and received back in Schenectady on December 12<sup>th</sup>.

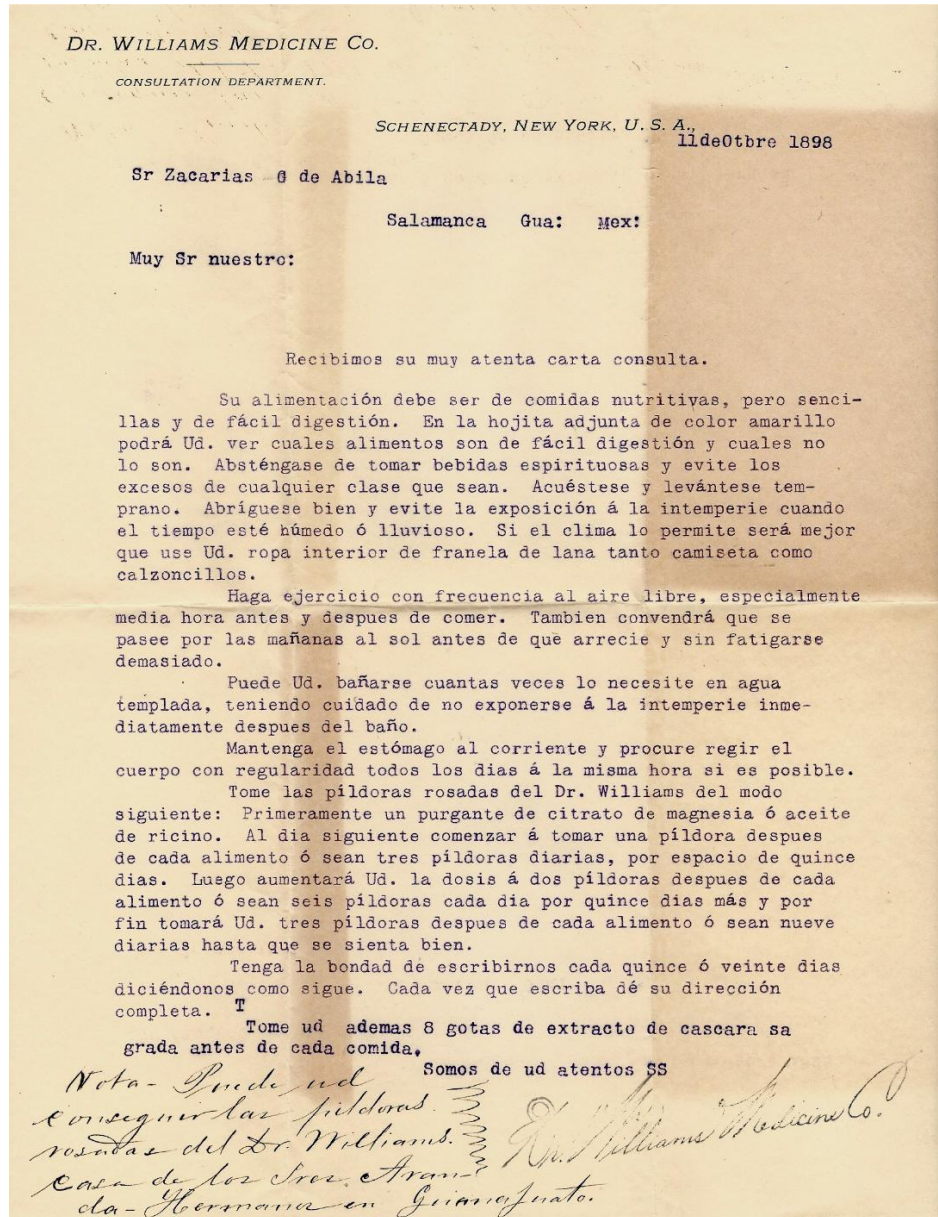


**Figure 2.** Example of a letter sent from the Spanish-American Department of Dr. Williams Medicine Company of Schenectady to an individual at Salamanca, Mexico. That person did not claim the letter from the Salamanca Post Office within the required time period, so it was returned intact to Schenectady.



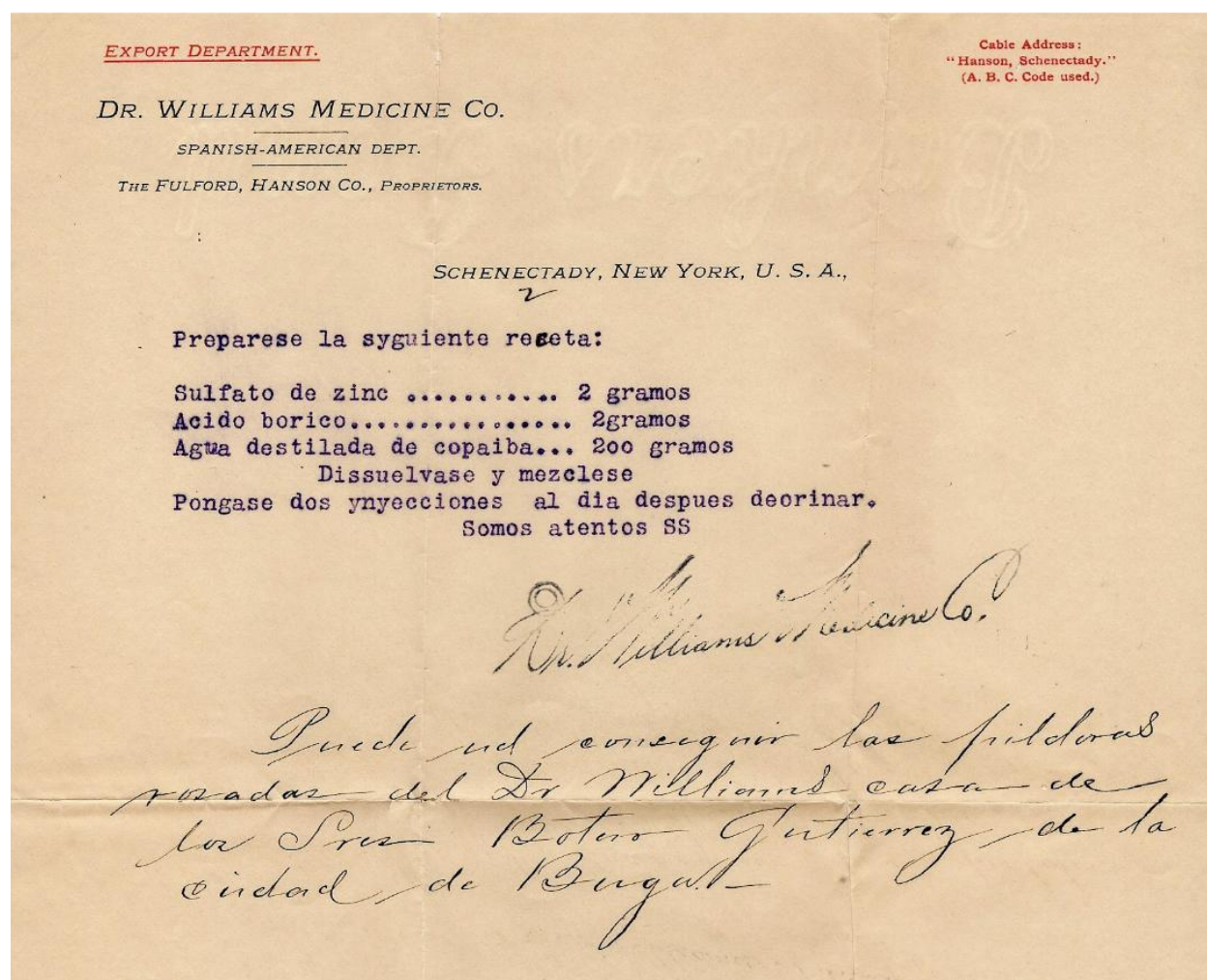
The first question might be: Why did the Dr. Williams Medicine Company send this letter to Mr. Abila? With its contents remaining in the returned letter we can answer that question. This letter, which turns out to be typical of the other unclaimed letters returned to Schenectady, was sent by Dr. Williams' Consultation Department in response to an inquiry about where Pink Pills could be obtained; it also contains a recommendation that Mr. Abila take 8 drops of ground seashell (*extracto de cascara sa grada*) before each meal (see **Figure 3** below). From this one letter we learn that Dr. Williams Medicine Company had, at that time, a franchisee in the 35-mile-distant town of Guanajuato and a direct "medical consulting" relationship with at least that one individual in Salamanca, Mexico.

**Figure 3.** Copy of the letter sent by Dr. Williams Medicine Company of Schenectady to Zacarias Abila at Salamanca, Mexico. This is a form letter reinforcing lifestyle advice and how to integrate Pink Pills into daily meals. The ending handwritten note provides Mr. Abila the name and location of the Dr. Williams Medicine Co. franchisee. The note reads *Puede ud. conseguir las pildoras rosadas del Dr Williams casa de los Srs. Aranda -da- Hermanos en Guanajuato.*<sup>3</sup>



My collection contains another example of this dual-purpose communication. It is an undated sheet headed *EXPORT DEPARTMENT* bearing a medical recipe with no explanation of its purpose (**Figure 4**), but it also has a handwritten note which reads in English "You may

obtain pink pills of Dr. Williams [at the business place] of Botero Gutierrez of the city of Buga” (an ancient town in Colombia). Comparing the wording and handwriting on this sheet with **Figure 3**, I believe that the same person wrote both notes.



**Figure 4.** Undated letter sheet of the Dr. Williams Medicine Company Export Department of the Spanish-American Department. The ending handwritten note provides the name and location of a Dr. Williams Medicine Company franchisee in Colombia.

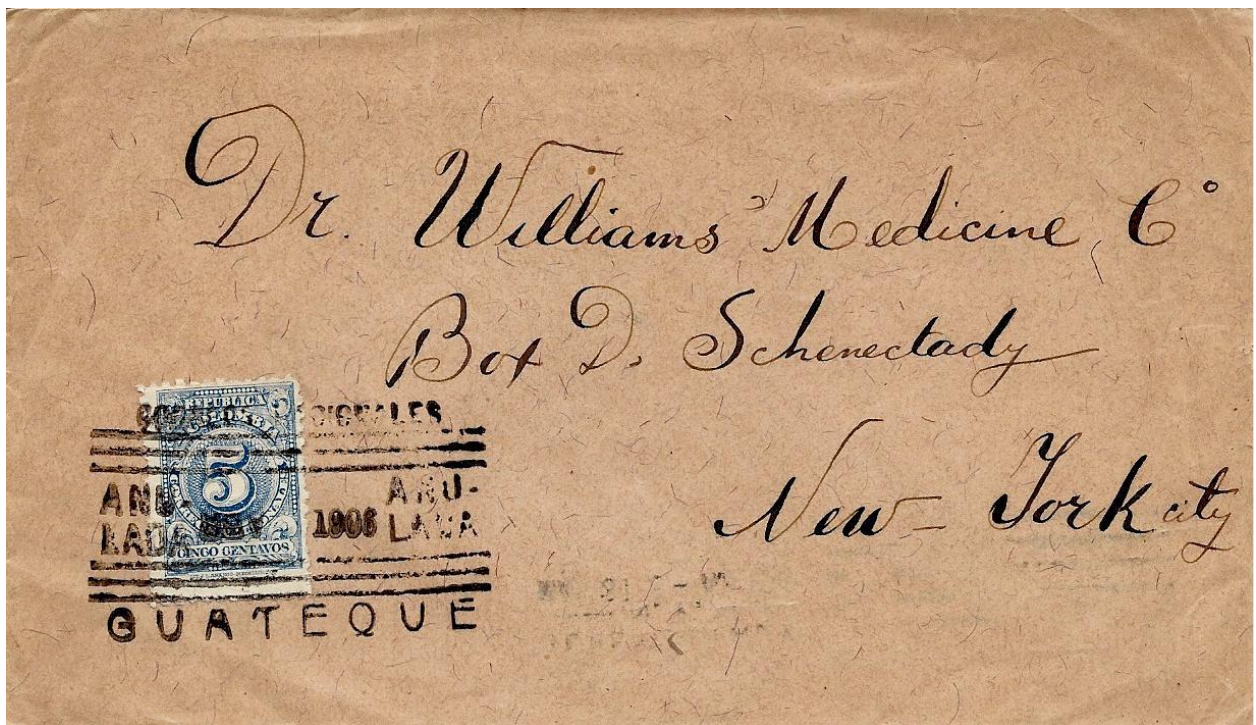
This confirmation that Dr. Williams Medicine Company used local franchisees throughout its Spanish-American market explains only one aspect of their business model. The existence of a so-named Export Department in addition to a Consulting Department within the Spanish-American Department suggests that they may have shipped Pink Pills directly to customers of their franchisees when it was more expedient than expecting individuals to travel to a franchisee. The last sentence in the **Figure 3** form letter is a clue that maintaining a contact list was a company objective: *Cada ves que escribe dé su dirección* “Each time you write [to us], give your complete address.”

Recalling that Dr. Williams’ entry to the Spanish-American market may go back to the early 1890s, we should see letters being written to Schenectady from a lot of countries. My Dr. Williams Medicine Company collection has five covers originating in towns that are, or were,



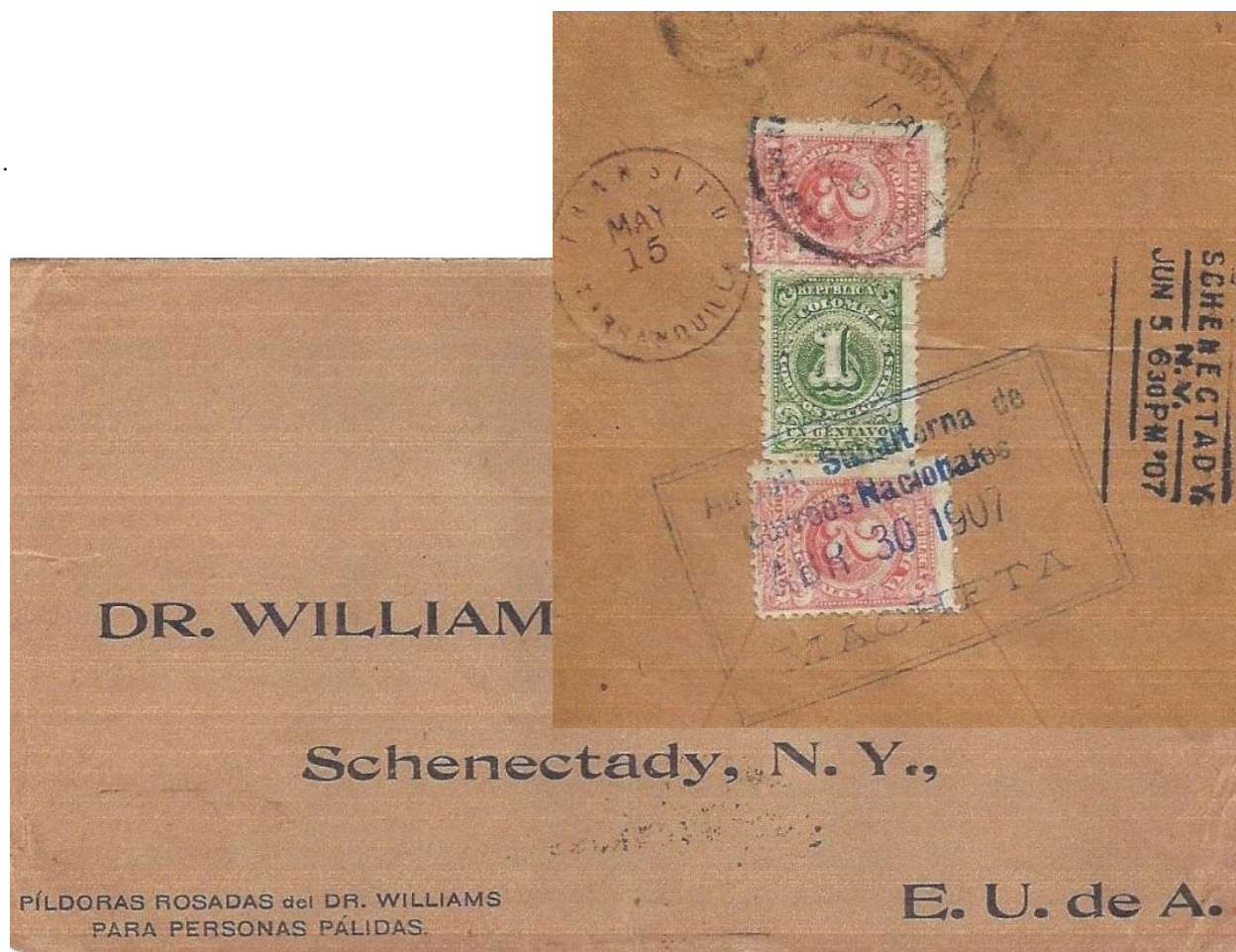
part of Spanish America. Unfortunately, whatever contents they had when sent have been removed. Furthermore, none of them bear the writer's name or address. But they do have postmarks, from which we learn where the writer was and when.

Sometime in April 1906 the cover shown in **Figure 5** was mailed from Guateque, Boyacá Department, Colombia to Dr. Williams Medicine Company at Schenectady. It arrived there May 31<sup>st</sup> having transited through Barranquilla. Today, Guateque is a city of 7,000 in a Department of 1.2 million people, so probably a small town then as now. Recorded history identifies the Muisca people as its native population. Spanish missionaries arrived in the area in 1556. The area attracted Spanish domination due to gold that was being mined there. In the 1890s, what would have attracted the Dr. Williams Medicine Company to Guateque? By 1906 perhaps all it took was one person and a local post office. If it was that simple, Guateque clearly had what it took.



**Figure 5.** Letter from Guateque, Colombia in April 1906 to the Dr. Williams Medicine Company at Post Office Box D. Lettered boxes may have been set aside for the largest companies in Schenectady, such as Thomas Edison's General Electric Company.

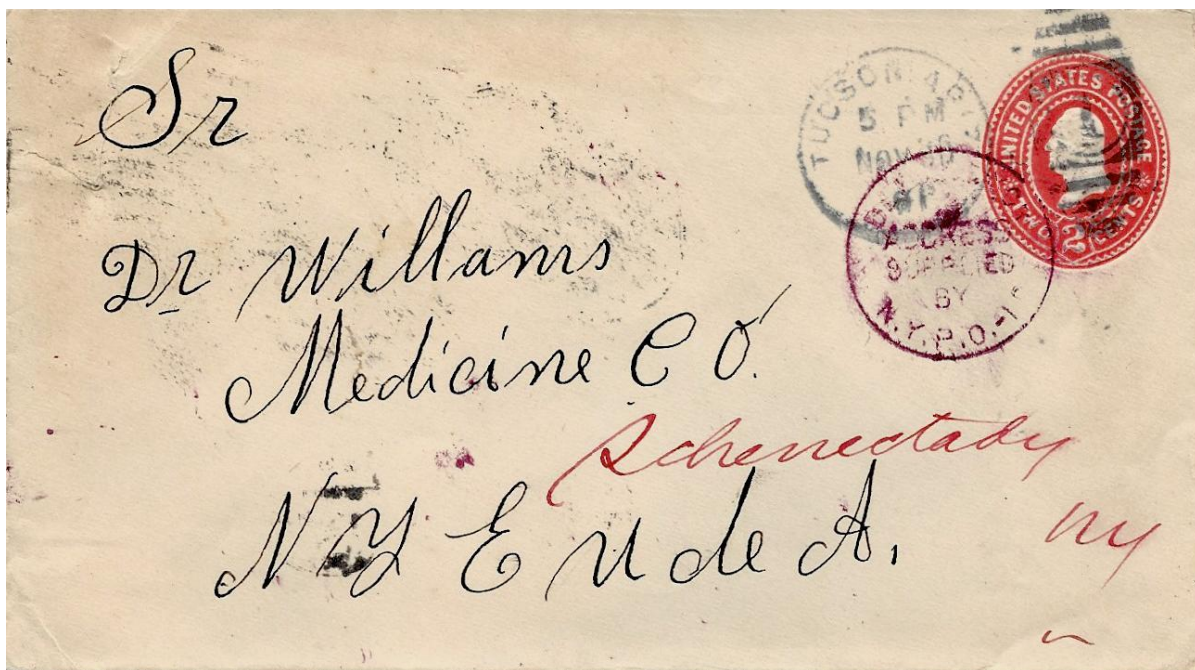
On April 30, 1907 the cover shown in **Figure 6** was mailed from Machetá, Cundinamarca Department, Columbia to Dr. Williams Medicine Company in the pre-addressed envelope provided in a previous mailing to the writer. This mailing also transited through Barranquilla and was received in Schenectady on June 5<sup>th</sup>. Machetá is a city of 6,000 today and has a farming economy as it did in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as part of the Muisca people's lands. "Machetá" in the Muisca tongue means *your honorable farmfields*. Finding Machetá on the map of Colombia produced an interesting coincidence: Guateque is no more than 10 miles east of Machetá on Colombia Highway 56 as it snakes through the *planalto* about a mile above sea level. I can't help wondering: "Did these two pill-takers visit the same franchisee?"



**Figure 6.** Pre-addressed return envelope provided by Dr. Williams Medicine Company originating from Machetá, Colombia on April 30, 1907 that arrived in Schenectady June 5<sup>th</sup>. It was another way of advertising Pink Pills for Pale People to postal workers and anyone else who saw the envelope.

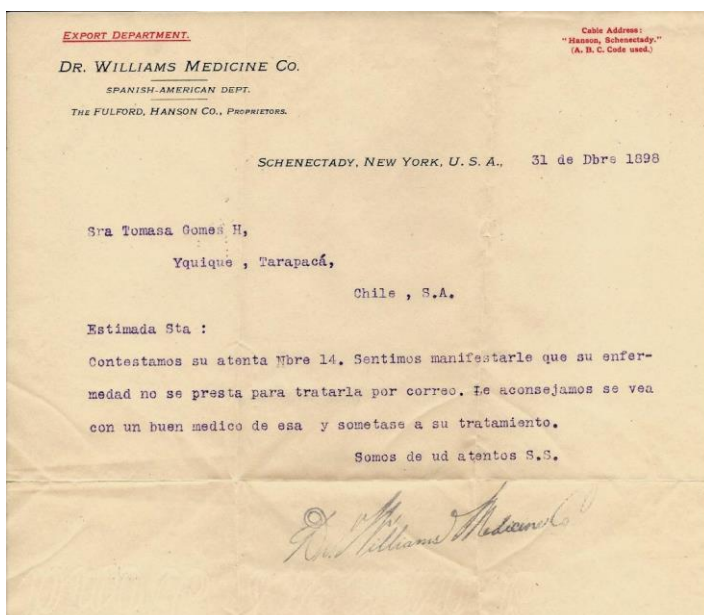
One final incoming piece of mail (**Figure 7**) to the Dr. Williams head office is worth a look. Postmarked *TUCSON ARIZ Nov 30 1901*, 11 years before statehood, this cover is coming from a place that supported Mexican civilian populations since about 1700. Once the Gadsden Purchase took effect in 1854, Tucson was less than 20 miles north of the U.S. border with Mexico. It is reasonable to think that many of those families, with their farms, ranches and businesses, chose to remain where they were. Among them could well have been a Dr. Williams Medicine Company franchisee, but I'm betting this letter was written by a customer. It was shepherded in the right direction by the New York Post Office.





**Figure 7.** U79 stamped envelope originating November 30, 1901 from Tucson, Arizona, during its territorial status. Language styling shows cultural attachment to Mexico, two generations after the Gadsden Purchase.

Empty covers can be frustrating. Fortunately, I have one returned letter with content that provides a good example of the relationship Dr. Williams Medicine Company tried to maintain with its customers. It is a personal letter (**Figure 8**) written to Señora Tomasa Gomez-H. of Yquique, Chile, and probably a troubling surprise when it came back unclaimed to Schenectady. In English the content would read: “Dear Madam: We answer your [welcome letter of] November 14. We are sorry to say that your illness does not lend itself to being treated by mail. We advise you to see a good doctor and submit to that treatment. We await hearing from you.”



**Figure 8.** Personal letter written December 31, 1898 to Mrs. Tomasa Gomez addressing the inability of Dr. Williams Medicine Company to treat her condition from Schenectady and advising local medical attention.

The letter mailed from Yquique on November 14, 1898 by Mrs. Gomez probably arrived in Schenectady around Christmas. Its content was evaluated, and the outgoing letter was delivered to the Schenectady post office on New Year's Eve day. Now for the bad news. The envelope was not delivered to, or claimed by, Mrs. Gomez. The letter that left Schenectady on December 31, 1898 did not return until October 31, 1899. Why it was in transit so long is a mystery. Markings (see **Figure 9**) show that the piece arrived at Yquique January 30, 1899 and "was in" Valparaiso July 5, 1899. Could Chilean postal processing allow three months waiting for a letter to be claimed as late as 1899?



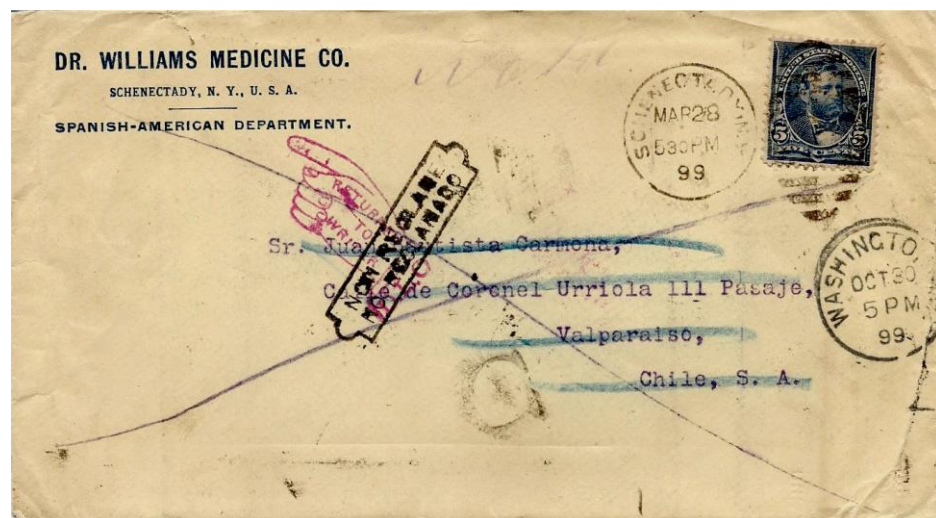
**Figure 9.** Front of December 31, 1898 envelope showing *NON RECLAME* and *REBUT* markings with Dead Letter Office pointing hand *Returned To Sender*. Reverse shows Yquique, Chile receipt mark (far right), July 5, 1899 Valparaiso stamp (on Yquique stamp), violet *DEAD LETTER OFFICE OCT 30 1899* receipt and October 31, 1899 Schenectady, N.Y. stamp.

On October 30, 1899 the returned letter arrived at the General Post Office Dead Letter Office. It was immediately sent to Schenectady. Once again there is a gap of three to four months to ponder, but for the Consultation Department there was a period of ten months between sending their important advice to a customer and realizing the effort was to no avail. Perhaps that was an ordinary part of daily life when relying on the postal services of the world.

I have one more Chilean example of an unclaimed letter to a Dr. Williams customer unable to be found (**Figure 10**), this time in Valparaiso itself. It will explain some of the mystery.

**Figure 10.**

An unclaimed letter dated March 28, 1899 and addressed to a Chilean "patient." It was returned to Dr. Williams Medicine Co. It arrived in Schenectady the same day that the letter seen in **Figure 9** arrived.





The cover in **Figure 11**, mailed March 28, 1899 by Dr. Williams Medicine Company to Juan Bautista Carmona, was marked on the reverse with the Valparaíso *RECEPCION* stamp dated May 4 '99. Like the cover to Yquique, inbound transit time was about a month. A second Valparaíso marking is subscripted *POSTE RESTANTE* and dated May 9 '99 and further labeled *CORRESPONDENCIA SOBRANTE* which somewhat ominously means "Surplus Correspondence." From this we learn, first, that the addressee either did not come forward or was known by Carrier #4 to no longer live at Colonel Urriola Street. Second, we learn that *Correos Nacionales de Chile* allowed just five days to get a letter delivered. After that it was held, to be returned to sender.

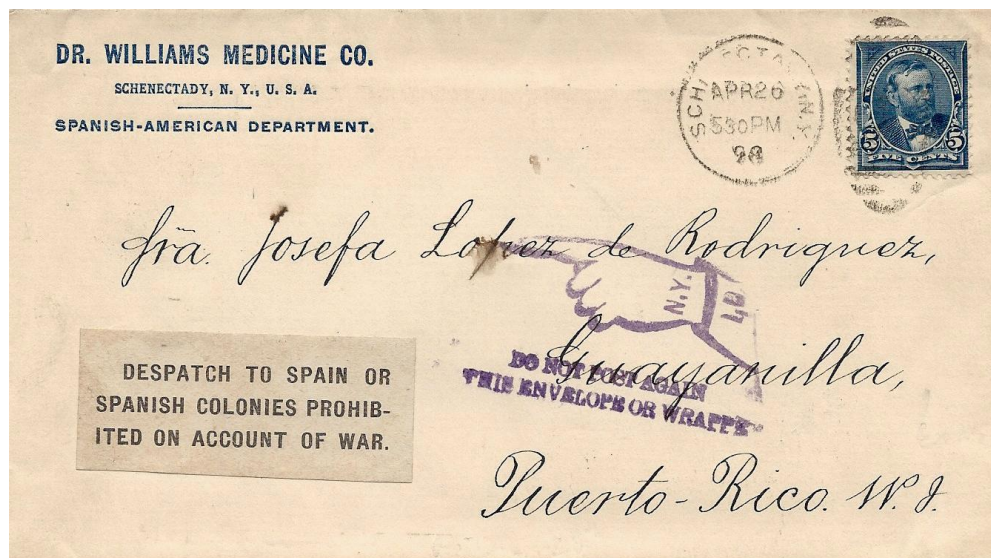


**Figure 11.** Reverse of the Carmona cover shows four markings that demonstrate its travel from reception in Valparaíso to arrival back in Schenectady, N.Y.

Now look at the other two markings on this reverse! In brilliant violet is the Dead Letter Office input marking dated October 30, 1899; the other is Schenectady's backstamp of 9-AM Oct 31, 1899. Without question, two letters unclaimed in Chile months apart came home to roost in Schenectady in the same mail bag. This was probably not a coincidence, but with this unclaimed letter set for return to the U.S. in May and showing up in late October we have five months to explain. One other thing we know is that Consular mail from Valparaíso originating in the 1850s could cross the Isthmus and be carried to New York City by contract mail steamer in two months. Why four or five months now? I have no answer. Could it be that Chile did not have the budget for shipping mail by sea to all the UPU member countries that the U.S. had?

One last Dr. Williams letter that came back undelivered will close this story. The letter, seen in **Figure 12**, looks almost exactly like the others we've seen, franked with the iconic 5 cent blue Grant issued March 8, 1898 and cancelled with Schenectady's 25mm CDS duplexed on a pie plate. Postmarked April 26, 1898, and addressed to Señora Josefa Lopez de Rodriguez at Guayanilla, Puerto Rico W.I., it was typical of Dr. Williams Medicine Company correspondence in that it contained the usual mimeographed form-letter. But this letter was not returned because Sra. Josefa could not be found. It was returned because war with Spain had been declared the previous day. The Foreign Mail Department of the New York Post Office, likely operating under telegraphed instruction from the Department of State, applied the *Despatch Prohibited* label found on this piece, the *Pointing Hand*, and the hand stamp instructing against using the envelope again.

**Figure 12.** This letter, postmarked Schenectady, N.Y. April 26, 1898, was returned by the New York Post Office to Schenectady due to the declaration of war with Spain by Congress the prior day. The sender was instructed not to resend the envelope as it had been stamped with the *Return to Sender* pointing hand.



Imagine the chaos this caused within the Dr. Williams Medicine Company Spanish-American Department when this cover was retrieved from the contents of its Post Office Box on April 29, 1898 while the newspapers of the world were full of headlines. A business so dependent on use of global mails shut down overnight! Fortunately for Dr. Williams Medicine Company, its franchisees and customers, that war was pretty much settled on July 1, 1898 on San Juan Hill. As shown by covers in this story, the Spanish-American Department was back in business no later than October of the same year, without even changing its stationery.

1. The Dr. Williams Medicine Company and its cast of characters were introduced in the *September 2010 Excelsior!* on pages 18-23, which is available on the Empire State Postal History Society website: (<http://www.esphs.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/EXCELSIOR-2010-09-Whole-No.-15-NS.pdf>).

2. Founded in 1890, Dr. Williams Medicine Company was preceded only by Isaac Singer's Sewing Machine Company as a business franchisor (1850s) and certainly the first to build a global base of franchisees.

3. The mimeograph stencil copier was invented in 1884 by Albert Blake Dick. In 1885 Thomas Edison – not yet relocated to Schenectady, N.Y. – sold patents for his version of the device to A. B. Dick. The typewriter, made commercially available in 1878 by collective efforts of Sholes, Hall, Glidden and Soule, together with the creation of the electric pen by Thomas Edison were largely responsible for industrialization of business communications.

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***FROM THE FRONT LINES: LT. COL. WILLIAM G. BELKNAP'S FIRST  
HAND ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE OF MONTERREY DURING THE  
MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR IN 1846.***

**By Charles J. DiComo, PhD**

This article shall paint a picture of the last days of the battle for the city of Monterrey during the Mexican-American War drawn from a first hand account written at the front lines by Lt. Colonel William Goldsmith Belknap (**Figure 1**) while he was serving as Inspector General at Camp Monterrey under the command of General Zachary Taylor in September of 1846.

The Mexican-American War (1846-1848) marked the first U.S. armed conflict chiefly fought on foreign soil. It pitted a politically divided and militarily unprepared Mexico against the expansionist-minded administration of U.S. President James K. Polk, who believed the United States had a “manifest destiny” to spread across the continent to the Pacific Ocean. A border skirmish along the Rio Grande started off the fighting on 25 April 1846 and on 13 May 1846 Congress declared war, despite opposition from some northern lawmakers. No official declaration of war ever came from Mexico and at that time only ~75,000 Mexican citizens lived north of the Rio Grande. U.S. forces were able to conquer these lands with minimal resistance, and advanced across Mexico and the disputed territories over the next two years. On 2 February 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed and when the dust cleared Mexico had lost about one-third of its territory, including nearly all of present-day California, Utah, Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico.



**Figure 1.** William G. Belknap (1794 - 1851), U.S. Army Brigadier General.<sup>1</sup>

William Goldsmith Belknap (7 Sept. 1794 – 10 Nov. 1851) was a career soldier in the United States Army, was brevetted three times for service in three wars, served as Brigadier General, and served as commandant at Fort Gibson, Fort Washita, and Fort Smith.<sup>2</sup> Belknap was born in Newburgh, New York to Samuel Belknap, Jr. and Mary Goldsmith. In 1821, he married Ann Clark (1801-1858) in Keokuk, Iowa and they had four children: Anna Mary



(1821-1893); Clara Belknap Wolcott (1824-1906); William Worth Belknap (1829-1890) and Frederick Augustus (1832-1832), who died in infancy.

Belknap was a lieutenant in the War of 1812 where he served with great distinction; became captain on 1 Feb. 1822; brevet major on 1 Feb. 1832; major on 31 Jan. 1842; and was brevetted lieutenant colonel on 15 Mar. 1842 for his services in the Second Seminole War in Florida. In 1828, Captain Belknap assisted in establishing Fort Leavenworth in Kansas. Belknap acted as inspector general at the Battle of Monterrey, became lieutenant colonel 26 Sep. 1847, and was brevetted brigadier general on 23 Feb. 1847 for services at the Battle of Buena Vista.

Belknap was involved in several battles during the Mexican-American War. One occurred during the Rio Grande campaign in May 1846. The Mexicans had just beaten back an American cavalry charge against their emplaced artillery at Resaca de la Palma, Texas on the eastern banks of the Rio Grande. General Taylor ordered Belknap, who was then commanding the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, to advance one regiment from the guard of the train and lead his 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry into action. Belknap sprang forward, seized a standard from a Mexican ensign, rallied his troops and engaged in hand-to-hand combat. His men then “split” the enemy lines and drove them from the field.



**Figure 2.** Gold-mounted cane, “split Mexican stick”, engraved **Resaca de la Palma 9<sup>th</sup> MAY 1846.**

The battle proved an overwhelming victory for the American forces and for this Belknap received the brevet of colonel for gallantry. **Figure 2** is a cane, referred to as the “split Mexican stick”, from the staff of the Mexican standard captured by Belknap on 9 May 1846 at Resaca de la Palma. William had this sent to his family friend and prominent Newburgh resident, Samuel Watkins Eager in New York to have it gold-mounted.<sup>3</sup>

So grateful were the citizens of Newburgh for his military service, that on 27 June 1846 a meeting was held at the Orange Hotel by a select committee of townspeople, including his



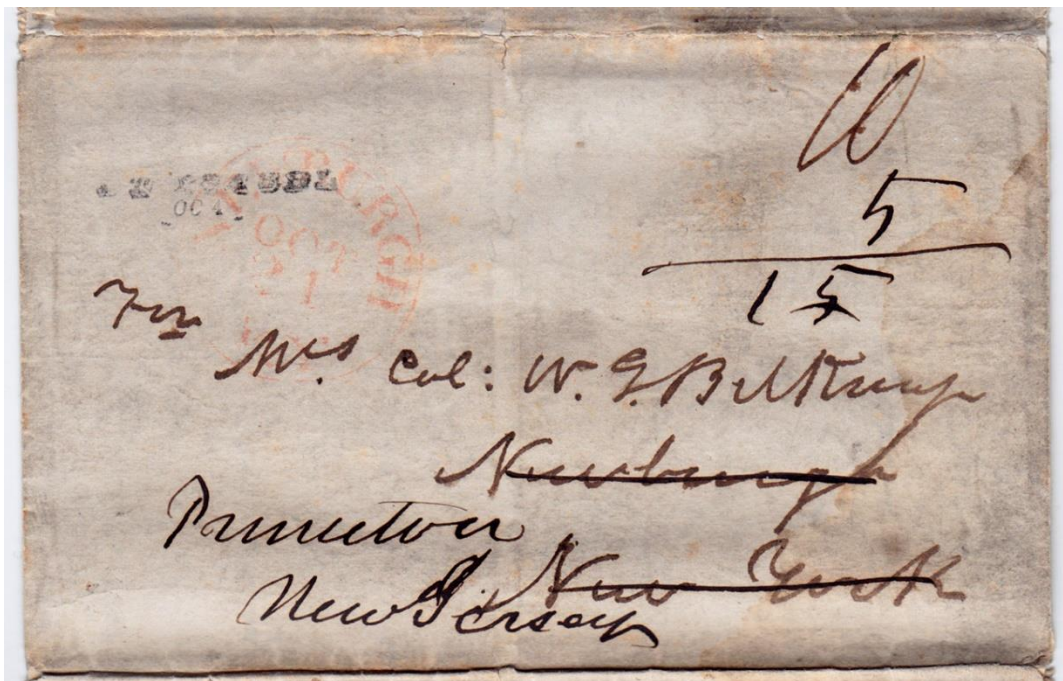
friend Samuel W. Eagers, to determine how they would honor him.<sup>4</sup> After much discussion and a unanimous vote, it was resolved that the Trustees of the Village of Newburgh would procure a Sword with a value of \$350 be made for presentation of, on which were the following inscriptions below.

On the blade:

*“Fort Eric, August 15, 1814; Palo Alto, May 8, 1846; Resaca de la Palma, May 9, 1846”*

On the scabbard:

*“Presented by citizens of Newburgh, his native place, to Col. Wm. G. Belknap, U.S.A.”*



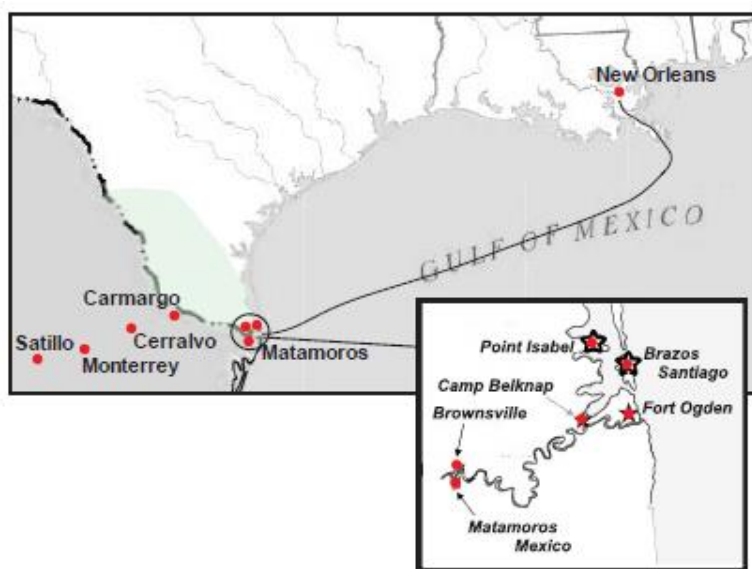
**Figure 3.** 1846 SFL from Camp Monterrey, Mexico to Newburgh, New York. Letter was carried by military transport overland to provisional P.O. at Point Isabel, Texas, where it entered the mails, traveled via military vessel to New Orleans, LA where it was distributed for delivery to Newburgh, NY.

And now on to the primary focus of this article, the stampless folded letter (SFL) illustrated in **Figure 3**. I was fortunate to acquire this in a random box of un-cataloged stampless postal history at the Reading Stamp Collectors Club Annual Stamp Show in Leesport, PA. Upon opening the folded letter, I was delighted to discover it contained contents, was datelined September 24, 1846, and had been written by Belknap while he was stationed at Camp Monterrey during the last days of the battle for the city.

On the obverse, the SFL is addressed to “Mrs. Col: W.G. Belknap, Newburgh, New York”, his wife Ann Clark Belknap. It also shows the “Newburgh New York” crossed out and

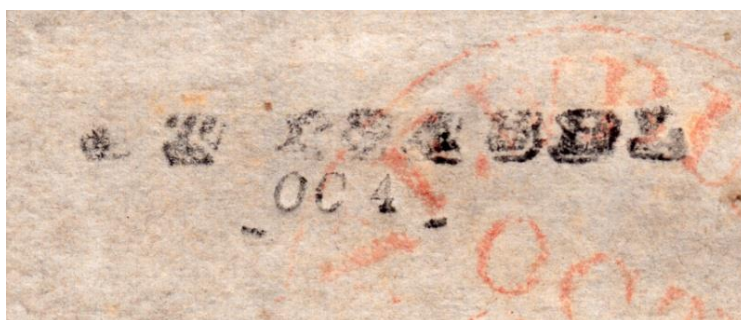
“*Princeton New Jersey*” added at lower left, as well as two handstamps and three manuscript rate markings. I shall describe these features in the subsequent sections.

Armed Forces mail being sent from the front lines in Mexico headed for the United States was carried by military transport to points in southwest Texas. By May of 1846 in response to the military build-up in this region, the New Orleans postmaster dispatched Henry Levy, one of his distribution clerks to Point Isabel, TX. His job was to set up a provisional Post Office and facilitate the transportation of the mails to the U.S. Troops on the Rio Grande (**Figure 4**). It was here that the SFL entered the mails, where Levy struck the letter with the faint black “**PT. ISABEL OC 4**” handstamp and wrote a manuscript “10”, as a rate stamp had not yet been introduced. The 10¢ denoted the U.S. inland rate from New Orleans, LA to Newburgh, NY, a distance of >300 miles.



**Figure 4.** Map of the Gulf of Mexico, SW Texas and NE Mexico. Point Isabel (now called Port Isabel) is located just north of Camp Belknap and Fort Ogden, which sits on the mouth of the Rio Grande.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 5** is an enlargement of the 2-line Type I Point Isabel, TX handstamp. This device was in use for only ~3 weeks (16 Sept. – 22 Oct. 1846) and was removed from service due to rapid degradation. Most examples are very indistinct with illegible dates. This example clearly shows the month/day “**OC 4**” for October 4. I am pleased to announce that after corresponding with noted Texas postal historians Mark Bankchik and Vince King, this is a new find that can be added to the census, of which there are fewer than 10 examples known.

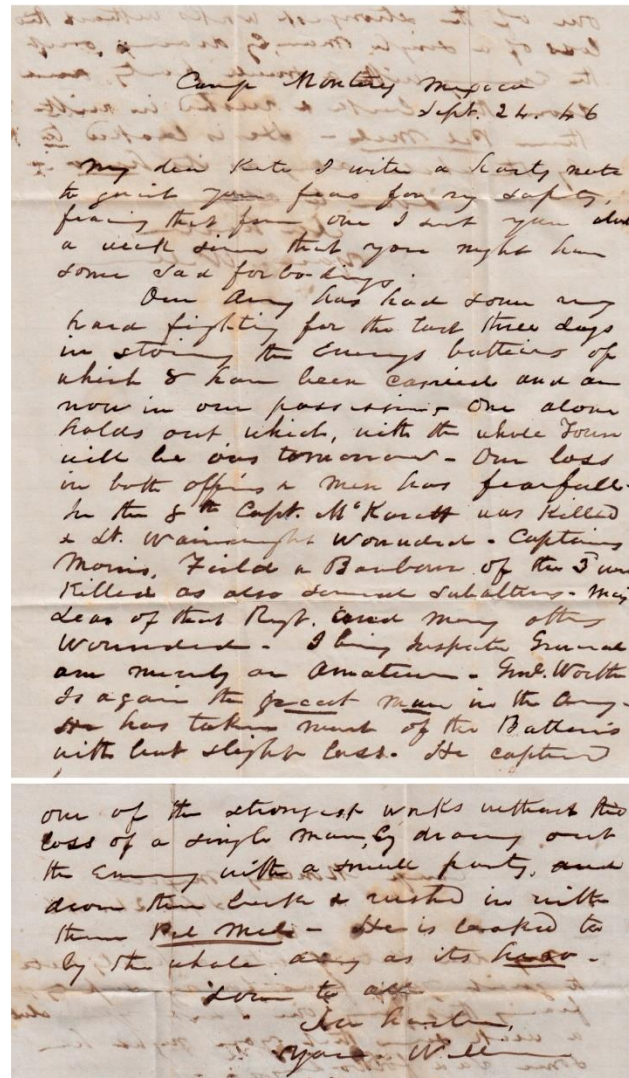


**Figure 5.** Enlargement of the 2-line Type I Point Isabel, TX handstamp “**PT. ISABEL OC 4**”.

From Point Isabel the letter traveled via military transport vessel to New Orleans, LA where it was distributed for delivery to New York. After a 17 day overseas journey, the letter arrived in Newburgh, NY. While the letter has no indication it was advertised, the clerk must have been aware that Mrs. Belknap was not in the city to pick up her mail at the P.O. and knew where she was residing. He proceeded to cancel the letter with a red “**NEWBURGH OCT 21 NY**” circular date stamp, crossed out “*Newburgh, New York*” with a single black line and re-addressed the letter at lower left to “*Princeton, New Jersey*”. He then added a manuscript “5” (the forwarding fee), along with an underline and total of “15” cents due upon arrival. It is most likely that Mrs. Belknap was visiting her son William Worth Belknap who was attending Princeton University (graduate of 1848). He would go on to be a lawyer, soldier in the Union Army (achieving rank of Major General), government administrator in Iowa, and the 30<sup>th</sup> United States Secretary of War under President Ulysses S. Grant.<sup>6</sup>

Mrs. Belknap no doubt was relieved to receive any letter from her husband, a lifelong military man who served in numerous conflicts, and was now very much involved in the Mexican-American War. **Figure 6** illustrates the two-page letter datelined “*Camp Monterey [sic] Mexico Sept. 24, 46*”. While William’s letter is brief, its contents are detailed and compelling, which the translation shall reveal.

**Figure 6.** The 2-page letter William wrote to his wife Ann from Camp Monterrey on 24 September 1846 during the last days of the battle while serving as Inspector General under the command of Gen. Zachary Taylor.





Belknap was an educated, career soldier who exhibited the typical penmanship and writing style for the period. Decoding his letter was not as difficult as one might consider. What follows is the literal translation.

*Camp Monterey [sic] Mexico*

*Sept. 24. 46*

*My dear [Kate] I write a hasty note to you with your fear for my safety. Fearing this for one I write you about a week since that you might have some sad forebodings.*

*Our Army has had some very hard fighting for the last three days in storming the Enemys [sic] batteries of which 8 have been ca[rried] and are now in our possessions – one alone holds out, which, with the whole Town will be ours tomorrow – Our loss in both officers and men was fearfull [sic]. In the 8th Capt. McKavitt was killed & Lt. Wainwright wounded. Captains Morris, Field, & Barbour of the 3 were killed as also several subalterns – [illegible words] of that Regmt. And many others wounded. I being Inspector General am merely an Amateur.*

*Genl. Worth is again the front man in the Army. He has taken much of the Batteries with but slight loss. He captured one of the strongest works without the loss of a single man, by drawing out the enemy with a small party and drew them back & rushed in with them Pel Mel [sic] – He is looked to by the whole Army as its Hero.*

*Love to all  
In Haste,  
Your William*

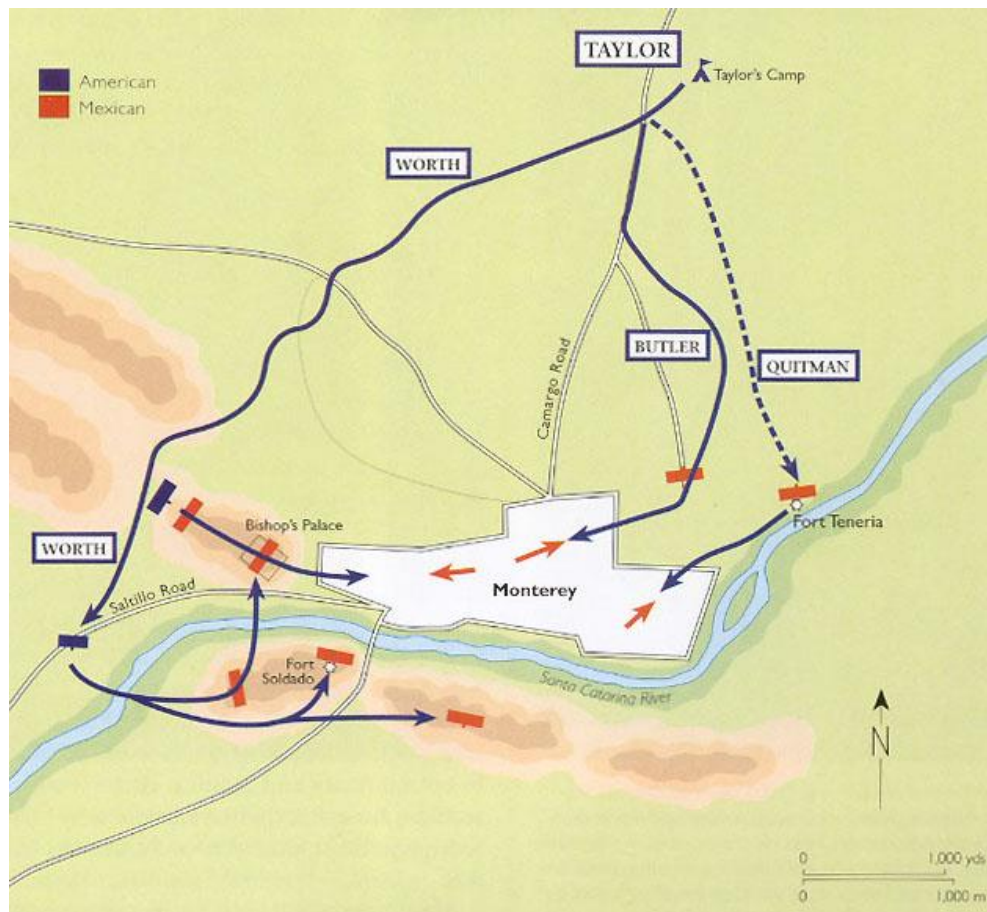
This “hasty note” and stark details from the front lines while the battle for Monterrey was still raging reminds us of the harsh reality of war. William opens by endeavoring to dispel his wife’s concern for his safety, having only written her a week earlier, presumably telling her of the impending march on Monterrey (**Figure 7**).



**Figure 7.** General Worth’s Division Marches on Monterrey from the West.<sup>7</sup>



The Battle for Monterrey commenced on 21 September pitting ~6200 U.S. Troops against ~7300 Mexican Troops. Under the command of General Zachary Taylor, Generals William J. Worth, William O. Butler, and John A. Quitman led divisions that marched on Monterrey city that was being fortified by General Pedro de Ampudia and the Mexican Army of the North (**Figure 8**). After 4 days of intense fighting the U.S. Troops were victorious. On 24 September General Ampudia decided to negotiate with General Taylor. This led to a two-month armistice in return for the surrender of the city. The Mexican Army was then allowed to march from the city from 26 to 28 September with their personal arms. In the end, this hard fought battle led to numerous casualties and losses on both sides; 488 on the American and 367 on the Mexican.



**Figure 8.** Map of the Battle of Monterrey showing American and Mexican Troop advances.<sup>8</sup>

William does not hold back in sharing his experiences with his wife. He details the fighting and taking of the enemies batteries; mentioning by name the dead (Captains McKavitt, Morris, Field and Barbour) and wounded (Lieutenant Wainwright), along with the “*many others wounded*” of the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment. Even though a career Army soldier having fought in multiple wars, being wounded in a sortie in 1814, and engaging in hand-to-hand combat a few months earlier at Resaca de la Palma, he admittedly tells his wife after experiencing this clash “*I being Inspector General am merely an Amateur.*”

William ends his letter to Ann by giving deference to General Worth for his heroics in capturing numerous batteries and much of Monterrey city with “*slight loss,*” even leading a

small party headlong, or “*Pel Mel*,” to draw out the enemy. I think it is safe to say that the Belknap family would have been relieved to learn that he survived such an intense battle, during which well over 800 lives were lost.

Following the Mexican-American War, General Belknap commanded his regiment and the garrison of Fort Gibson, Oklahoma in the Cherokee Nation from 14 December 1848 to 7 May 1850. He devoted himself greatly to secure the welfare of the Cherokees. In May 1851, he was ordered into Upper Texas to keep the Indian tribes within their lines. He died near Preston, TX of typhoid dysentery on 10 November 1851 engaged in scouting a location for a military post to protect California-bound emigrants and settlers moving to Texas while *en route* from the Brazos River to Fort Washita, Indian Territory.<sup>9</sup> He was buried temporarily at Fort Washita, south of the Red River according to the *Fort Belknap Post*.

After General Belknap’s death, his wife Ann, accompanied by her daughters Anna and Clara, traveled to join her only son William W. Belknap, who was serving as a government administrator in Keokuk, Iowa, and make it her home. She passed on 7 December 1858 and her obituary extols her life as “*the wife of a gallant and distinguished soldier – the late Brig. Gen. William G. Belknap*,” who came with her husband “*to the then far west more than a third of a century ago to lead a frontier life*,”<sup>10</sup> This is a reference to the period between 1827 and 1828 when then Capt. Belknap was ordered to establish a military post on the Missouri with the name of Fort Leavenworth.

Ann had been far removed from the comforts and refinements to which she had been accustomed in her early life in Newburgh. It was only in the last few years of her life spent in Keokuk with her children did she experience calm and enjoyment. It was fitting then when in 1872 their son William W. had his fathers remains brought back to Keokuk and reburied in the Oakland Cemetery nearby Ann. (Figure 9).



**Figure 9.** Headstone of Brigadier General William Goldsmith Belknap, Oakland Cemetery, Keokuk, IA.<sup>11</sup>

In closing, Brigadier General William Goldsmith Belknap, a native of Newburgh, NY, was a highly decorated, career soldier in the United States Army, serving his country until his untimely death in 1851. This article portrays William's first hand account in his 1846-dated letter to his wife Ann of the last days of the battle for the city of Monterrey during the Mexican-American War. We are fortunate that this postal history artifact has survived and that I was able to recount this brief snapshot of his storied life with our readers.

### Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Mark Bankchik and Vince King for sharing their knowledge and exhibits<sup>12, 13</sup> of the postal history of Texas, Point Isabel and the provisional Post Offices during the Mexican-American War. I would also like to thank my daughter McKenna R. DiComo for assisting in the translation of the letter. Any error and/or omission is the author's responsibility. He can be reached at [charlesdicomo@gmail.com](mailto:charlesdicomo@gmail.com).

### References

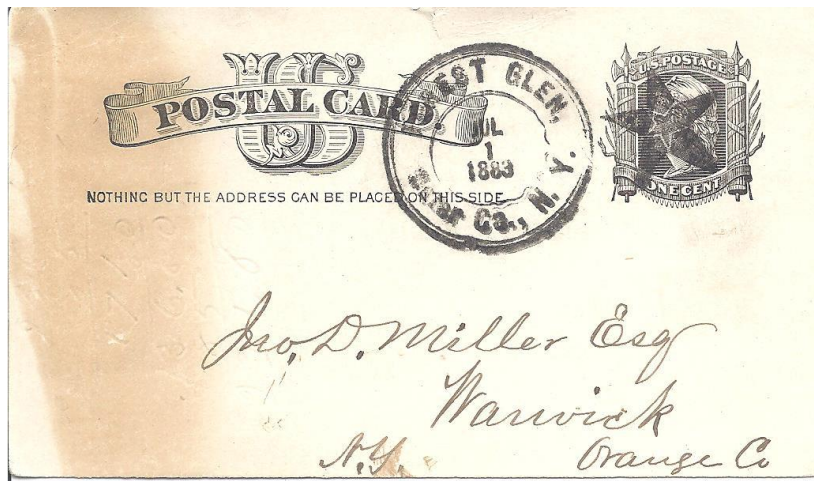
1. Image [William Goldsworth Belknap (1794-1851) (US Army Brigadier General).jpg], taken from a painting in the Washington Headquarters State Historic Site, Newburgh, New York. Donated to the museum by Thomas Bangs Thorpe, and most likely painted by him. Available from U.S. Library of Congress's Prints & Photographs division, digital ID 2004666583.
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6. Biography of William Worth Belknap, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William W. Belknap](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_W._Belknap) (last viewed 27 July 2019).
7. Image [mex-war13.gif] available from [www.latinamericanstudies.org/mex-war/mex-war13.gif](http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/mex-war/mex-war13.gif) (last viewed 27 July 2019).
8. Image [map-monterey-1847.jpg] available from [www.latinamericanstudies.org/mex-war/map-monterey-1847.jpg](http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/mex-war/map-monterey-1847.jpg) (last viewed 27 July 2019).
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10. "*Annual Obituary Notices of Eminent Persons who have died in the United States for 1858*", by Hon. Nathan Crosby, Boston: John P Jewett and Company, 1859.
11. Image [129812572\_1422504994] available from [www.findagrave.com/memorial/129812572/william-goldsmith-belknap](http://www.findagrave.com/memorial/129812572/william-goldsmith-belknap) (last viewed 27 July 2019).
12. "*United States Intervention in Mexico: 1846-1848 (Mexican-American War)*," Mark Banchik, as received by The Exhibition Photocopy Committee, U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, Inc., June 2006: 129 pages.
13. "*Under Six Flags, Expanding the Mail Service in Texas 1801-1865*," Vince King, 2013: 80-page Exhibit.



## TWO NEW STAR CANCEL DISCOVERIES

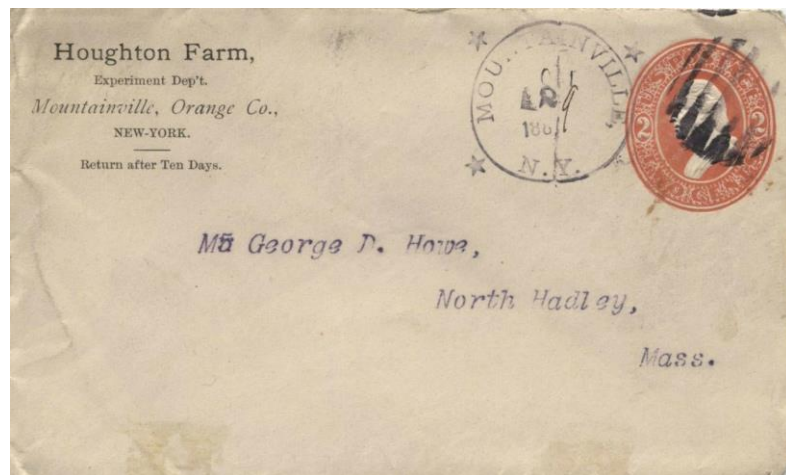
By: David E. Williams

Two recent finds on eBay have resulted in new additions to the New York State star cancel database that I maintain for the ESPHS. This database includes and expands the listings presented in Dave Proulx's 1987 edition of *Star Cancellations Of New York State*.



**Figure 1.** A Type 16 star on a postal card bearing a FOREST GLEN / Ulster Co., N. Y. double circle date stamp (DCDS) dated July 1, 1883.

**Figure 2** shows an entirely new star type. Proulx's original work illustrated 70 different types. Since its publication, I have discovered an additional 19 new ones, this one being Type 89. This cancellation will now be classified as **Mountainville 87\_89**, since it is from 1887. This cover was purchased from well-known APS member and dealer Matthew Liebson.



**Figure 2.** New star type from Mountainville (Orange County), N.Y. shows a group of four stars surrounding the circular date stamp.

While some dealers consider that they just have covers to be sold, those of us on a mission to expand our knowledge of certain aspects of New York postal history see diamonds, and our eyes light up with that next new discovery! As always, I welcome fellow members to send me scans, eBay links, etc. of any star cancels from our great state. Who knows, the next one I receive may just become another new entry in the star cancel database.

David Williams may be reached at [davidinindiana@aol.com](mailto:davidinindiana@aol.com).

## ***TWO DIFFERENT 5 RATE MARKINGS FROM DANSVILLE, N.Y.***

**By: Douglas Penwell**

In a previous article, various areas of collecting, including topics, were considered. One of those areas is rate markings. Once a collection has advanced to a certain point, it might become necessary to consider items that may, at first, appear to be duplicates. One of these areas for collecting is the progression and variation of rate markings used from a particular post office.

An introduction about rates is in order here. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, there existed long periods when postal rates were comparatively stable. One of these periods was 1816 to 1845, when the multi-tiered rates existed based on number of sheets of paper and the distance the letter traveled. Due to the influence of the Independent Mails in the latter part of this period, the rates were reduced in 1845 to a simpler 2-tiered structure of 5 and 10 cents. Three other lengthy stable rate periods were 1851 to 1883 (3 cents), 1883 to 1932, with the exception of World War 1, (2 cents), and 1932 to 1958 (3 cents).

The 1845 rates were in effect until 1851 when the second issue of United States adhesives were released. If one collects postal markings from towns in a specific geographic area, the larger towns are likely to have used handstamped rate markings. Two such examples from Dansville, N.Y. are the subject of this article.

Some post offices acquired rate markings very early in this period; Congress having passed the law in March of 1845, taking effect that July. This writer has not encountered any letter content about the 1845 rates, or the corresponding Private Express Statutes that made it illegal for a private company to carry First Class mail matter. Undoubtedly, postmasters were notified, and some took advantage of the opportunity to obtain 5 and 10 cent rate marking devices in advance of the effective date. First day of rate covers are generally prized, and there are many examples surviving that demonstrate that postmasters had these rate markings prior to July 1, 1845. It must be noted however, that the majority of offices would have used manuscript to indicate rates as was usual prior to 1845. The simplification into two rates made it more practical to use handstamp rate devices.



**Figure 1.** Dansville, N.Y. 5-cent marking from 1845.

Two covers that illustrate one of the 1845 rates are from Dansville, N.Y. Dansville is in southern Livingston County. Although it is not a large town by modern standards, it was large enough to generate a large volume and a corresponding amount of surviving mail. There are no examples of handstamp rates from Dansville prior to 1845. The stampless folded letter in **Figure 1** bears a red circular date stamp (CDS) and a red 5-cent rate marking from 1845. Please note the style of the CDS. **Figure 2** shows another stampless folded letter, this one is from 1847. It bears an identical CDS as seen on the first cover, but a different 5-cent rate marking. Not only is it remarkable that the same office obtained a second 5-cent rate marking in so short a period (less than 14 months), but it is also unlikely that the Post Office Department supplied this newer rate marking (of course, we don't absolutely know). Post offices doing a certain level of business would have been supplied with date stamps, but there is no evidence that they were supplied with rate markings. If we compare this situation with the use of attached rate devices, we may draw certain conclusions. Dozens of New York State post offices used attached rate markings beginning just after 1830. The majority of these are found without the rates as the physical structure of these devices resulted in the rate portion breaking in use.



**Figure 2.** Dansville, N.Y. 5-cent marking from 1847.

As analysis of the CDS on the two covers here indicates, these cancels were made of durable steel. Due to the variability of hand struck impressions, it is frequently difficult to distinguish between device wear and a hastily applied cancel. There can also be seasonal variations related to the condition of ink – possibly more watered in summer months and less so in winter. Other variables including the type of CDS (size, shape, placement of date slugs) and the color of ink might have been additional factors. These variations certainly could result in the same marking being measured differently or in the conclusion that they were different. The close dates of usage in this case, supports the idea that this is the same CDS. While it is possible that two identical date stamps were in use at Dansville in this period, these stampless folded letters illustrate that rate markings were changed in a very short period. While this type of distinction may not motivate most collectors to obtain a second cover, it is worthy of note from the perspective of the study of the postal history of any given town.



Another reason to pay close scrutiny to rate markings would be to compare similar rate markings from different post offices to determine if they came from the same supplier. The attached rate markings mentioned previously in this article have been documented and cataloged from several states in the Northeast. The number of post offices that used handstamp rate markings during the 1845 to 1851 rate period is very large and would tend to be prohibitive for such a similar study. It is, however, suggestive of an approach to the analysis of rate markings and other markings applied to covers.

Until the advent of postal adhesives and expansion of postal services requiring the use of different stamps, postal markings have primacy and will always be the main reason to differentiate postal artifacts from the stampless era. My apologies to those who prize letter content, certainly a critically important collecting subject (especially from a geographic perspective). Such content from small towns could be said to be much more important than postal markings. History books from the United States typically do not feature events of interest to the state or local historian. Perhaps a future article can be used to illustrate history – one such treatment could be a review of the book *The Burned Over District* by Whitney Cross (suggested reading for all N.Y. State postal historians).

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## For Members – Annual ESPHS Author’s Award and APS Recognition

At the beginning of each calendar year, ESPHS members will be given the opportunity to vote for the best article to appear in the previous year’s issues of our *Excelsior!* and *Bulletin* journals. **Ballots listing all eligible articles will be included with our annual dues mailing and as these come with stamped, addressed return envelopes**, voting will be a snap! Articles appearing in 2019 will constitute our first award cycle, with voting to take place in early 2020.

The winning author will receive a personalized ESPHS Author’s Award and will have their article published on the American Philatelic Society’s “Philatelic Articles of Distinction” archive on the APS website. \*

So, come on! Let’s make this a both fun and competitive undertaking while also allowing for the sharing of our collecting interests and the educating of our fellow members with some new facets of New York State Postal History. In other words, keep our Society vibrant by participating and start writing!!

If you have any questions or suggestions, please don’t hesitate to contact me.  
George DeKornfeld, ESPHS Awards Chair, APS liaison [docgfd@twc.com](mailto:docgfd@twc.com).

\*Permission to be published on the APS website will need to be given by the winning author (we will provide the form); the current archive can be found at [www.stamps.org/Articles-of-Distinction](http://www.stamps.org/Articles-of-Distinction).

## COVER OF THE ISSUE

By: David E. Williams

Seen here is a nice example of a registered cover from a fairly small post office in Broome County, New York. Of course, one of the things that makes it even more special is the solo use of the 10 cent Columbian issue of 1893 (Scott #237). The cover bears a black 30mm circular date stamp of Maine, N.Y. dated May 16, 1893 and a black target killer on the stamp. Another nice feature of this cover is the fancy corner card of Henry E. Delano, a dealer in various goods and notions. According to the map in the *Plat Book of Broome County*, Henry was still operating his general store in 1908.



Since this was a registered letter, the Maine postmaster wrote, in pencil, the notation *Reg 29/29*, which meant that this was the 29<sup>th</sup> registered piece of mail sent from that post office during the current reporting period. Whether this was the entire year to date, or the current quarter (April 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>) we don't know. Given that the population of Maine was fairly small (2,129 in 1880), it could represent the entire year.

The letter was mailed to Butler Brothers, 495-497 Broadway, New York City. Upon arrival at the New York City post office, the letter received the purple 86123 registration marking before being delivered to the business. It also received the *NYC Station U Registered Mail* marking dated 5/17/93 (seen here enlarged). This marking is listed in the New Herst & Sampson Catalog as being used in the 1890s. A penciled note appears on the back of the envelope designating this marking as *B-172*, which may be a Cole-type designation from another resource, but this is unverified at this time.



As a side note, Butler Brothers, founded in 1877, was a wholesaler of department store merchandise and was one of the first mail-order catalog companies in the United States. In 1927 the firm launched a string of franchised variety stores under the name Ben Franklin Stores, and in the 1930's the firm launched Federated Stores.