

BULLETIN *of the Empire State*

Postal History Society

Volume 53 Number 4

December 2020

Due to the COVID 19 outbreak, many events have been cancelled. The web site from which this calendar has been drawn, iStampshows.com, has not shown any cancellations including shows scheduled for September to November. Please verify with organizers before heading out.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Bayside Stamp Show

Bayside, Queens, New York

Dec. 20, 2020, Jan 17, Feb. 21, Mar. 21, 2021

The Best Western Queens Gold Coast, 22033 Northern Blvd., Bayside, Queens, N.Y. 11361

Hours: 10-4:30. Info: Marilyn Nowak, Email: marilynnowak@verizon.net

Fort Orange Stamp Club

Colonie, New York

ALL SHOWS CANCELLED

Colonie Recreation Center, 3 Thunder Rd, Colonie, N.Y.

Hours: 10-3. Info George McGowan, (518) 479-4396, Email: geolotus2003@nycap.rr.com

Melville Coin, Stamp and Collectibles Show

Melville, New York

Catapano Engineering Hall, 585 Broadhallow Rd., Melville, N.Y. 11747

Hours: Sun. 8-2. Info: George Schultheis (516) 557-7096

Information obtained from iStampshows.com. Please verify before going.

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APS Affiliate #28

web site www.esphs.us

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BULLETIN DEADLINE

DEADLINE – The deadline for the March issue of the *BULLETIN* is **February 20th**. The editor is always looking for short (1/2 page, 1 page, 1 ½ page or 2 page) articles to fill spots in the *BULLETIN*. Submit to largin1@verizon.net. Larry Laliberte

Secretary's Membership Report

Deceased Members

Starkweather, Albert

December 2020

President's Message

The cooler weather has arrived, the leaves have fallen, and the aroma of baked sweets fills the air. And while the virus still plagues our daily lives and the hopes of a vaccine are not far off, we can turn to our amazing hobby for respite and relaxation.

I am pleased to report that our Society is strong. Membership has grown this past year; we expanded our website with new features and back issues of our journals, and stepped into the social media realm with the launch of our Empire State Postal History Society Facebook page – which since inception has received many posts, likes, and shares; with folks contacting us for information, research requests, etc. I am hopeful it will attract more members to our rolls.

I would personally like to thank our officers, board and membership for your ongoing trust in my leadership as President, now that I have served for nearly 18 months. I will continue to spread the word of the ESPHS and shine a light on our State's rich history and the postal history that it fashioned. I would also like to thank our Editors Larry and Jeff – who continue to publish stellar issues. It is with their leadership and articles from our members that will sustain both the *Excelsior* and the *Bulletin* into the future.

As we end the year, I would like to put out another call for back issues of the *Excelsior* and *Bulletin*. There is a gap in our online archive to fill and as before, please contact me directly so we can work out a process by which I can take receipt of the paper copies, scan and process to PDF, then upload and make available.

Finally, as we look to 2021 and a return to "normal", why not share a presentation, monograph or exhibit for posting on our website. Or better yet, pen an article or two on your favorite cover. All of the above shall ensure that our Society continues to grow, attract new members, and advance the knowledge of NYS postal history by means of educational and historical research.

Wishing a Happy Holidays to each of you and your families. Stay safe and well!

Charles J. DiComo, PhD | President, ESPHS

From the AFDCS:

The American First Day Cover Society is saddened to announce the passing of its Editor, Albert W. Starkweather, Jr., on Saturday, November 14, 2020, after a long illness, complicated by COVID-19. He was 81.

Starkweather had a long history in philatelic editing, including *Stamps* magazine, *Stamp Insider*, *The Philatelic Communicator*, *the Ceremonial*, and *Airpost Journal*. He took over editorial supervision for the AFDCS in 2015. His non-philatelic journalism career included the *Hartford Courant*, Thomson Newspapers (including redesigning the websites of the newspapers for Oswego, NY, Newburgh, NY and Kittanning, Pa.) and communications projects and consulting for major corporations such as Dow Corning and General Electric.

A native of northern New York State, Starkweather had lived for a number of years in the Tampa, Fla. Area.

EXCELSIOR! DEADLINE

The deadline for the **March 2021** issue of *EXCELSIOR!* is **mid-January** or earlier if possible.

As an incentive, submitting a one to four-page article will get you a one year extension on your membership and a five-page article will get you a two year extension. Just think – if you write regularly for *EXCELSIOR!*--you'll have the potential of earning free membership for life!...And think about how you will enrich yourself and others.

THIS MONTH'S BOOK SALE

200 Years of Cayuga County, NY Postal History

Edited by Charles H. Sweeting

1998, 346 pages Hardbound in burgundy cloth with gold stamping. Contains manuscript, straight-line, county and postmaster cancels, early air mail service, local FDC'S and philatelic notables.

Documentation is given for Postmaster appointments accompanied by pictures and comments about each. Site maps are included, as well as illustrations of mail used. Acid free 28 lb. paper is used.

List price \$40.00; Member price \$30.00. Plus postage (**10 in stock**)

To see all offerings, go to our web site at <http://esphs.us>

If you wish to purchase MORE THAN ONE COPY of a title, please contact the ESPHS Publications office: Drew Nicholson, Publications Chair, 18 Valley Drive, Pawling, NY 12564-1140 or e-mail at dan.ddn@comcast.net. We will work with you to achieve the best publication/shipping rate discount. Registered dealers are always welcome and receive the standard professional discount; a larger discount is made available to those dealers who are members of the ESPHS

My Grandfather was a NYC Postal Employee - Can the ESPHS Lend a Hand with more Details?

By Robert B. Bramwell and Charles J. DiComo, PhD

In July of 2020, a request for information arrived in my inbox via the Society's "Contact Us" webpage. It was from Helen Chaleski, who was searching for information on her grandfather, Casper J.S. Van Hoesen. He was born in New York City on June 5, 1877 and had a long career working for the U.S. Post Office. After sharing what she knew of his past life, I shared this "request for information" with our Officers and Board –an astute team of researchers and postal historians. Bob raised his hand and he and I took on the challenge. To our delight and Helen's, we were able to piece together the following story.

Since the early days of our federal government, Congress saw new members arrive at the start of each two-year session. Each member was provided a booklet identifying, among other things, every person working for the government anywhere in the world. Members of Congress wanted to know who

lived within their constituency, where they came from and how much they made. The booklet was called the *"Official Register Persons in the Civil, Military, and Naval Service of the United States, and List of Vessels"*, hereafter referred to as the O.R. (**Figure 1**). By the early days of the twentieth century, the information listed was reduced to the following key demographics: Name (Surname, First, Middle Initial), Place of Birth, Current Residence and Recent Earnings.

The search to identify Casper J.S. Van Hoesen began with the early 1900 biennial editions of the O.R. and continued through to 1909, where Mr. Van Hoesen was first mentioned on page 341 in Volume II, The Postal Service section (**Figure 2**). He is listed being born in New York State, currently living in the 18th District of New

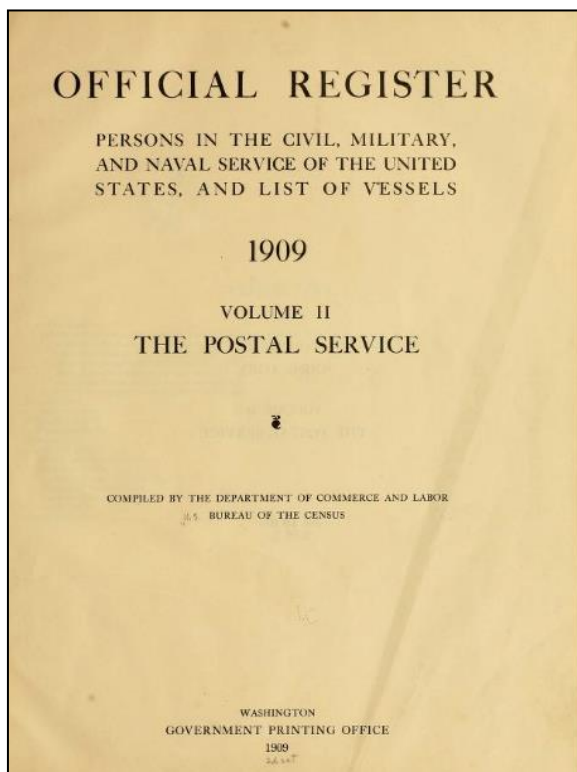


Figure 1: Face plate of the *Official Register*, 1909, Volume II, *The Postal Service*.

York with his most recent earnings of \$600, an entry level salary. The 18th District encompasses all of Orange and Putnam County, as well as parts of southern Dutchess County and northeastern Westchester

New York—Continued.

CLERKS—continued.

Utter, Jonathan M,	NY	11NY	NewYork	\$1200
Valentine, Chas F,	NY	8NY	NewYork	\$1200
Vance, Howard L,	NY	15NY	NewYork	\$1200
Vanderbeek, Galvin L R,	NJ	6NJ	Bergen	\$1200
Van Hoesen, Casper J S,	NY	18NY	NewYork	\$600
Van Hoesen, Jas G,	NY	17NY	NewYork	\$1100
Van Holland, Henry jr,	NY	6NY	Kings	\$900
Van Horn, Clarence C,	NJ	6NJ	Passaic	\$1200

County, including Newburgh, Beacon and Poughkeepsie.

A search of the 1911 O.R. listed Casper once more, this time showing that his earnings went up by 50% to \$900

Figure 2: Listing of Casper J.S. Van Hoesen from page 341 of the 1909 Official Register, Volume II, The Postal Service.

(**Figure 3**). We do not know what department

he worked in, but we do know that his job at the New York Post Office fell within a "white collar office worker" category known as "Clerk." One can be reasonably sure that in 1910 the raise was the result of a promotion.

Van Hoesen, Casper J S,	NY	18NY	NewYork	\$900
Van Hoesen, Jas G,	NY	17NY	NewYork	\$1200

Figure 3: Listing of Casper J.S. Van Hoesen from 1911 Official Register.

It is worth noting that Casper was 31 years old in 1908. Was \$600 a wage on which he could support a family? That is \$50 a month. With \$1 in 1908 being equivalent in buying power to \$28.25 today, that translates to \$16,950 in 2020 dollars. If they recognized a Poverty Line in 1909, \$600 might have been it, so the raise by 1911 to \$900 was vital to Casper and his family.

We know that 1909 O.R. is the first edition of the booklet in which Casper's name appears. The booklet had become a mammoth tome as the government increased in size, so the 1911 Edition was the last to include every single employee. It is at this point that we lose the ability to track Casper J.S. Van Hoesen's progress within the U.S. Post Office Department.

After relaying this information to Helen Chaleski, she and her family were very grateful for the information and was kind enough to share the memento in **Figure 4**.

Interestingly, listed below Casper in both volumes is a James G. Van Hoesen living in the 17th NY (and making \$500 more than Casper). Might they be related? Yes they were. James G. Van Hoesen was



Figure 4: Casper J.S. Van Hoesen with granddaughter Helen Chaleski and puppy, circa 1947.

Casper's brother - born Feb. 3, 1881. With Helen's agreement and encouragement, Bob dug deeper into editions of the O.R. and found that Casper's brother James had joined the New York Post Office in about 1900, at the age of 19, at the same \$600 starting salary as Casper received four years later. James

progressed in postal salary quickly, and we suspect in life as well since his record in the O.R. shows him living initially in the 14th NY District, but moving to a residence in the 17th District by 1905 when his annual salary had increased to \$800. Could he have married and needed a family-size home?

In summary, Casper J.S. Van Hoesen was born June 5, 1877 and has been identified in the 1909 and 1911 Official Registers as working as a Clerk for the U.S. Post Office Department while living in the 18th District. We were also able to identify his younger brother James G. Van Hoesen, also working as a Clerk at the New York Post Office in earlier Registers, but living in the close-by 17th District. The Society is delighted that Helen reached out to us. She relayed that her grandfather Casper was a dear and honorable man. We are so very pleased to have added a few more colorful leaves to the Van Hoesen family tree.

**SOME COVERS FROM THE VOLUMINOUS CORRESPONDENCE OF ECCENTRIC ATTY. @
LAW FROM NEWBURGH, NY. DARWIN WILLIAM ESMOND
(1845-JAN. 17, 1923).**

By Mark Fonda

Darwin Williams Esmond was a native of Newburgh, N.Y. and studied law in the Third Street area known as "Lawyer Row." Some of the older attorneys there remember his fastidious neatness even as a young man, when, in the discharge of his duties as a law clerk he swept off the sidewalk every morning attired in a blue checked romper suit to preserve as immaculate, his office and street garments. After being admitted to the practice at the bar, he made a remarkable reputation for the precise and complete methods adopted in the preparation of papers to be used either for records or for actions to be instituted in the courts.

Mr. William Venamee prepared a tribute to Esmond's worth in an article for the History of Orange County. It states "Darwin W. Esmond prepares his cases for trial more thoroughly than any lawyer I ever knew. His trial brief is comprehensive, elaborate and minute, even containing instructions in reference to cross-examination of the witnesses expected to be called by his opponent! Every case likely to be cited by his opponent is discussed! Every pitfall into which his opponent might seek to draw him (in) is pointed out and provided (a counter) against!..."

While still a young man, he began his legal practice at 52 Third Street (P.O. Box 574), Newburgh, N.Y.

The first cover and enclosure, **Figure 1**, in this article is a local Drop Letter bearing a U.S. Scott #112 sent from his 52 Third St. office on February 21st, 1870 containing a PROTEST NOTE

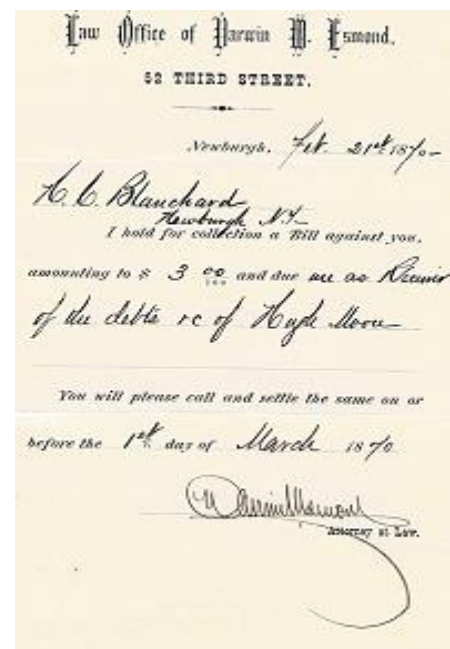


Figure 1: The cover and its enclosure at right.

demanding payment of a late debt owed him by the Receiver of the debts of Hugh Moore to be paid by H.C. Blanchard. Note the legal “sly” deception of delivery of this cover without usual corner card “ad” identifying Darwin W. Esmond and use of only Box 574 in return notification and expanded disguised handwriting technique to get H.C. Blanchard to accept delivery and end up obligated to pay the \$3.00 debt.

Note the meticulous detail outlined in tight script by Esmond in the enclosed protest note with flamboyant signature as opposed to expanded script on the cover.



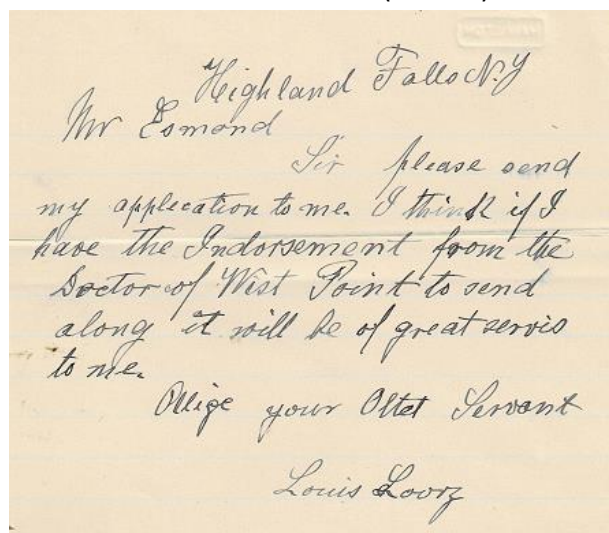
Figure 2: The cover mailed from Cornwall, Orange Co.

Our second cover, **Figure 2**, mailed from Cornwall (Orange Co.) N.Y. is franked with U.S. Scott #114 for postage, addressed to D.W. Esmond, No. 52 Third Street, Newburgh (Orange County), N.Y. The meticulous docketing of the cover is by the recognizable hand of Esmond.... Noting (from) Rev. E.W. Clark, March 15, '70 [just three weeks after the 1st cover] also NOTE: P.O. Box 574 is still legible on this cover at lower left.

The third cover, **Figure 3**, is franked with U.S. Scott #210 and has an intricate “Highland Falls Orange County, New York” CDS dated Dec 4 1885 and addressed to D.W. Esmond (Rooms) 1&2 Law



Figure 3: The cover from Highland Falls with its enclosure at right.



Building {at 49 Smith St.} Newburgh, Orange County, N.Y. Once again, the meticulous docketing on the cover is by the hand of Esmond noting that it is from Louis Looz, a German immigrant, and dated Dec. 4, 1885. Esmond’s hand is never faltering and tight, 15 years after the covers one and two in this article.

The enclosure is a short letter of interest from German immigrant Louis Loorz seeking an application (possibly involving his citizenship requirements) to be (qualified) from the doctor at West Point.

Esmond, in his years, became associated with fraternal organizations, not only the close student to his office duties. He was a 50 plus year member of the Highland Lodge, No. 65 I.O.O.F. and a 33 plus year member of the Masons Newburgh Lodge No. 302 F&AM. Throughout many years, few if any photos exist of Esmond or his wife, and none have been found in archives of the Newburgh Historical Society.

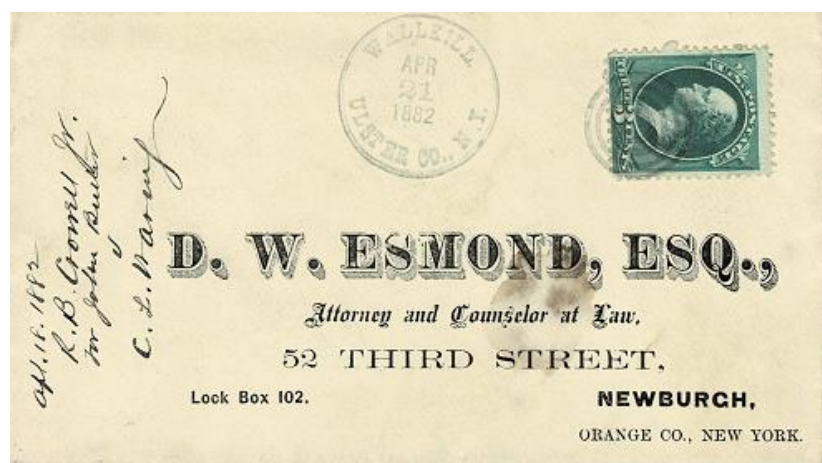
He also wrote for the Newburgh Journal...astronomy articles of laughable eccentric note (i.e.: Nov. 22, 1912 page 5) re: Lacerta – The Lizard.

When he realized his end was near, he filed strict instructions as to what his desires were concerning burial, asking no publicity on death! An odd request! He also requested that nothing be printed in the papers until the day of his funeral, that no flowers be rec'd or used at the casket, and that the casket being ready, his body be placed therein and the coffin closed, the services to be strictly private.

The well-loved and eccentric lawyer Darwin William Esmond did receive the considerations of mourning by his fellow attorneys of the Newburgh Bar Association in the Court House early on January 17th, 1923, the morning of his passing.

The author would like to acknowledge the assistance of Pat Favata, Librarian of The Historical Society of Newburgh Bay and the Highlands, and Heather H. Georghiou, Librarian at the Newburgh Free Library – Local History Room.

From the EDITOR'S COLLECTION



Shown, is a printed return envelope for D.W. Esmond, Esq. dated Apr 21, 1882 and mailed from Wallkill, N.Y. Note the “Lock Box 102” on the lower left of the cover. This probably a building with multiple tenants. The cover in Figure 3 which shows the address as “No 1 & 2 Law Building” suggests that.

"DOWN THE LINE"

By George McGowan

The phrase "down the line" came about with the introduction of the Rural Free Delivery system, introduced in the late 1890's and greatly expanded in the early 20th century. (See **Figure 1**, a postcard mailed in 1905). The story of home delivery is a fascinating one best reserved for another time.

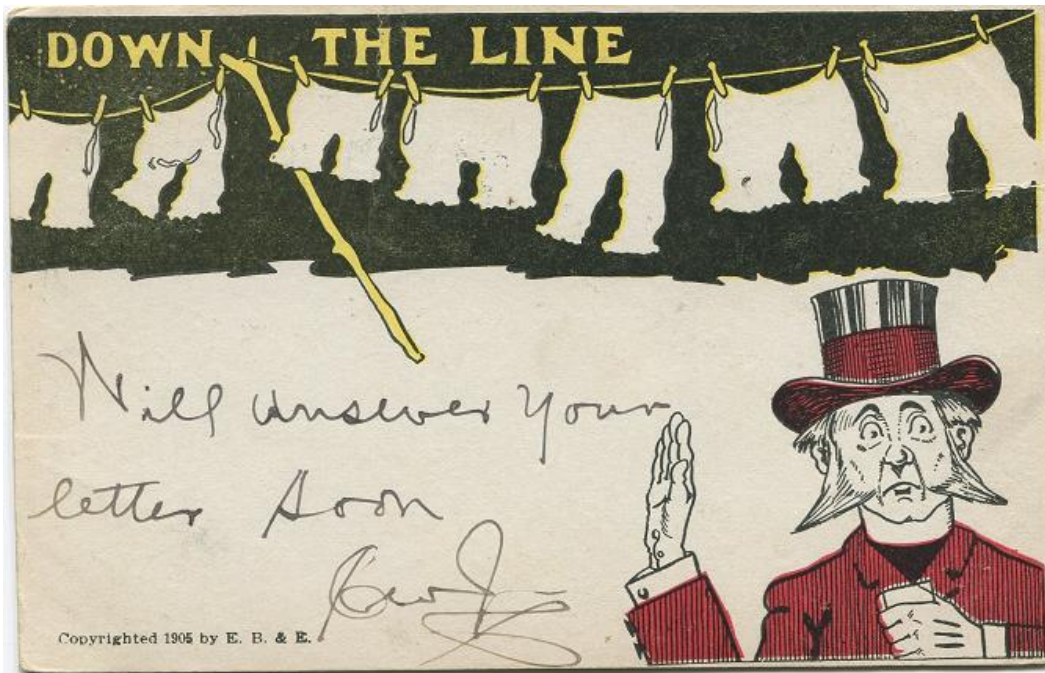


Figure 1: A cartoon post card playing on the term "Down the Line".

The idea is that, if a postal carrier picks up a card or letter addressed to someone on his route that he has not visited yet, it is delivered that day. If the carrier picks up a card or letter addressed to someone that he has already past, that item goes back to the post office to be canceled and delivered the next working day. In those times, a government postal card or a commercial postcard rate was one cent. In the days before many rural areas received electricity or phone service, this was a quick and inexpensive way to get a message to someone "down the line", and on the same day.

According to the U.S. postal service publication "The Rural Delivery Service" effective March 4, 1907: Section 122 of chapter 6, "Mail matter collected by carriers en route or received by one carrier from another which can, in regular course of service, be delivered in patrons' boxes by the receiving carriers prior to their return to the distributing offices, shall be so delivered after the stamps thereon by writing legibly across such stamps with an indelible pencil the date, the name of the distributing office, State, and number of route". A note here, the use of wax pencils came about after many route were issued canceling devices and ink pads so both can be found in use well into the 1920's and beyond.



The card in **Figure 2** is addressed to F M Rice, Down the line. This kind of address is easy to identify as a down the line item. Note the stamp cancel, not exactly according to postal regulations but very common for the period. In fact, you will find all sorts of combinations depending on the mood of the carrier.

Figure 2: Left. Addressed to "Down the Line".

Figure 3 is an interesting address, Miss Clara Rolfo. Next Box, RFD #5. Clara lives next door to Flora, although we don't know how far the next box might be.

Figure 3: Addressed to the "next box" down the line.



In **Figure 4** there are two clues that this is a down the line item. On the address side is the phrase "Please leave today" and in the message Florence wants Luella to know that she will be up tomorrow for Jessie's lesson.

Figure 4: The urgency of same day delivery.

In **Figure 5**, “Pa is feeling some better. Will you please tell Uncle Marti that he need not set up tonight” An obvious down the line item indicated by the message.

Figure 5: Another urgent down the line message.

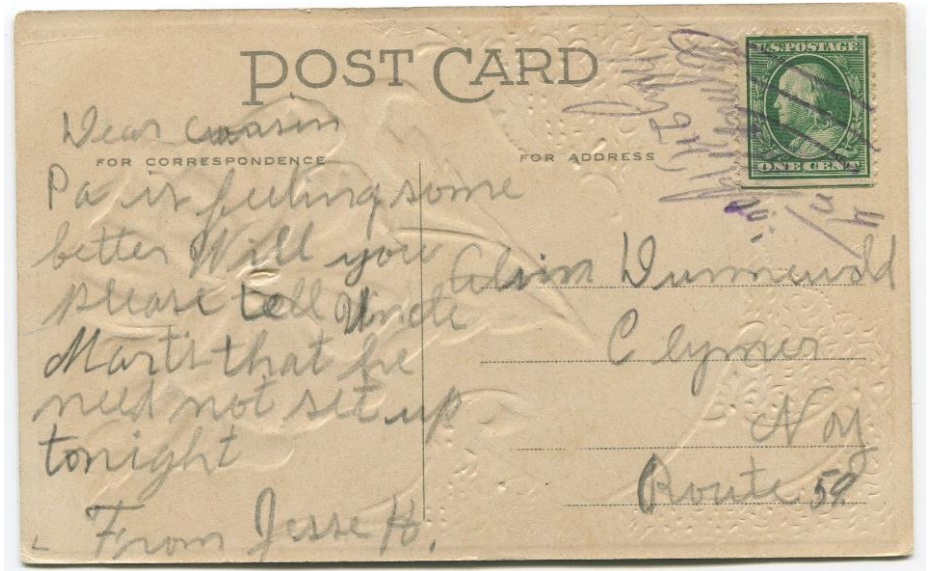


Figure 6: Undated but this would be urgent if it were in the dead of winter.

The message in **Figure 6** is very common in the time period. Friends and relatives would use the mail system to communicate simple requests like “I’m out of potatoes, please bring some over” or “Please come over we are harvesting tonight”. The message here reads “Please bring me a cord of wood tomorrow morning if possible. We are all out.”

Today if you want to send a card or a letter to your neighbor from your rural box, it is picked up, returned to your post office, sent to the regional sorting and canceling facility, returned to your post office, and then to your carrier to be delivered. On a good day this may take a day, many times it takes longer. More evidence that the postal service of long ago did an excellent job of getting you your mail in a timely period.

SOME “MODERN” HUDSON RIVER STEAMBOAT MAIL

Larry Laliberte

When one hears the term steamboat mail, one might think of the early to mid-19th century correspondence such as the one pictured in **Figure 1**. This letter was posted at New York in 1837 and was addressed to Poughkeepsie



Figure 1: A stamless cover from New York City to Poughkeepsie carried on a river steamer.

As the years progressed, railroads were built between New York and Albany. The first was the Harlem RR in 1848 followed by the Hudson River RR in 1852. Mail carriage was moved to the railroads as they provided year round service. According to Appletons' Railway and Steam Navigation Guide of June 1867, this trip took just under six hours with multiple departures a day.

The railroads were attractive for those passengers who were more concerned with speed. For those who wanted a more leisurely and scenic trip, a day on one of the many ships plying the river was made to order. These ships grew ever larger over the years and could make the voyage from New York to Albany or return in 10 hours.

This article will concentrate on the Hudson River Day Line which operated a fleet of ships that included the *Washington Irving*, *Robert Fulton*, *Hendrick Hudson*, *Albany*, *New York*, *Peter Stuyvesant*, and *Alexander Hamilton*. There were many other steamboat companies that operated from other cities on the river.

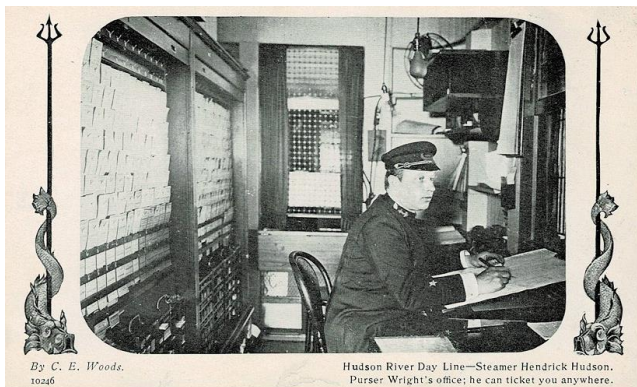


Figure 2: The Purser's office on the Hendrick Hudson.

of the ship's ports-of-call with tickets to their final destination. **Figure 2** is a post card showing the racks of tickets for use by Purser Wright in his office on the steamer Hendrick Hudson. These tickets would be validated with a ship's stamp. Upon request, the purser would apply that stamp to souvenir covers that will be illustrated later.

The Hudson River Day Line never had any mail contracts because it came into being in 1899. These ships were so large that they provided passengers with sitting rooms, salons and small libraries where they could write letters on stationery provided by the ship or jot a note on a post card that was purchased at the souvenir stand. An unofficial mail box was provided to collect these missives. It was the purser's duty to collect these and deposit them with the Post Office. Another duty of the Purser was to provide passenger who were continuing their trip beyond any

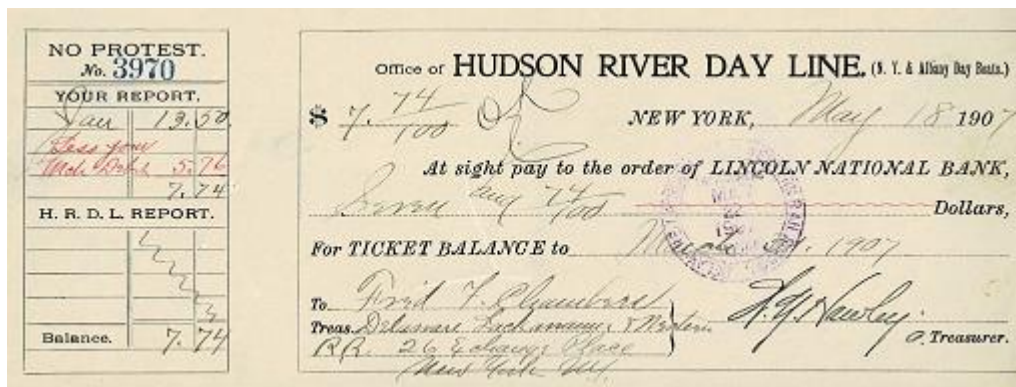


Figure 3: A check from the Hudson River Day Line to the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad for ticket sales.

Figure 3 shows a check written by the Office of the Hudson River Day Line for tickets issued for the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad and is dated May 18, 1907. The DL&W connection was accessed at Hoboken, N.J. via ferry from NYC.



Figure 4: The cover carried aboard the Alexander Hamilton.

Our first example is a cover with a hand drawn cachet, **Figure 4**. The Purser's stamp reads "HUDSON RIVER DAY LINE SEP 4 '35, C-STEAMER, ALEXANDER HAMILTON". This apparently was carried on a South bound voyage as indicated by the "New York, N.Y. 5, Sep 4, 11.30 PM 1935" cancel.

The Alexander Hamilton was built in 1924 by the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corp. of Sparrows Point, Maryland. She was 349'5" in length with a beam of 77' and a gross tonnage of 2367 tons. It could

carry 4,050 passengers. **Figure 5** is a post card view of the Alexander Hamilton leaving the dock at Poughkeepsie with the Mid-Hudson Bridge in the background.

Up next, is a Hudson River Day Line advertising cover with a Purser's stamp reading "HUDSON RIVER DAY LINE, JUL 21, '45, B-STEAMER, ROBERT FULTON" **Figure 6**. It is cancelled "Peekskill, N.Y., Sep 13, 12 M, 1945". Two trips? One can only guess at how this cover came about. It is definitely philatelic as it is sealed with no enclosure.



Figure 5: The Alexander Hamilton leaving Bear Mountain.



Figure 6: Cover carried aboard the Robert Fulton.

Our final cover, **Figure 8**, shows the Purser's mark reading "HUDSON RIVER, DAY LINE, JUL 18, 1946, STEAMER, HENDRICK HUDSON". It is postmarked Poughkeepsie, Jul 19, 7:30 AM 1946.



Figure 8: Purser's stamp from the Hendrick Hudson.

In 1949 the Hudson River Day Line was sold to a similarly named tour company that ran tour around New York City. At the time, four vessels were still operating but none were making the Albany to New York run. That had ceased at the end of the 1948 season

The Robert Fulton was built in 1909 by the New York Shipbuilding Co. at Camden N.J. She was 346' long with a beam of 76.2' and had a gross tonnage of 2168. She could carry 5,000 passengers. **Figure 7** is a post card showing the Robert Fulton.



Figure 7: The Robert Fulton cruising up the Hudson.

The Hendrick Hudson, **Figure 9**, was built in 1906 at the Marvel Shipyard in Newburgh, N.Y. She was 390' 6" with a beam of 82' and a gross tonnage of 2847 tons. She could carry 5,500 passengers.



Figure 9: A real photo post card taken on the day of the first trip of the Hendrick Hudson.