

Excelsior!

April 2022

Whole No. 35 New Series



Figure 1. An 1878 cover cancelled with double-ringed, circular date-stamp and duplexed star in magenta from Blood's Depot. The cancel ties a 3-cent green Washington of 1873 (Scott 158).

Figure 2. Below, a map of part of northern Steuben County shows Blood's Depot, with postal routes.

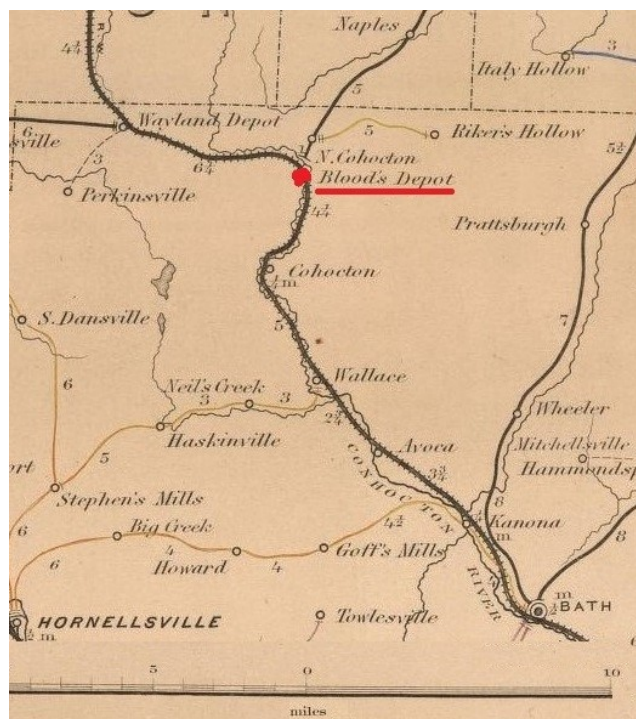
The Transient Pioneers of Blood's Depot

By Robert Conley

As a fancier of fancy cancels, I was intrigued to come across the cover shown [Figure 1] while browsing eBay recently. The double-ringed, circular date-stamp and duplexed star are not uncommon, but the solid strike in magenta, boldly contrasting with the 3-cent green adhesive, coupled with the odd town name, made me look twice. In the end, it was all too hard to ignore, and so, the cover has since been added to my collection. If only the magenta had been red – an apt color for Blood's Depot.

Before that accidental find, I had never heard of Blood's Depot. It seems very few people have heard of it. If one searches the internet for "Blood's Depot," or any variant thereof, you will find references mainly to blood-related subjects.

With some perseverance, an old blog eventually revealed itself, and it was fortunate that someone had posted just enough information to get me started. It turns out that this dead post office was in Steuben County, about four miles north of Cohocton, and is



now called Atlanta. A map from 1868 [Figure 2] shows the general area.



Excelsior!

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Robert Conley: Covers from Blood's Depot — a post office long discontinued — help tell the story of a community in Steuben County with its intriguing original name.
Cover, Page 5



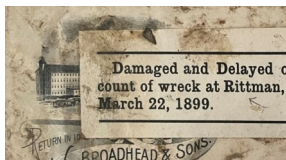
George DeKornfeld: A very busy cover sent in 1908 from a Syracuse manufacturer to France has many tales to tell.
Page 10



Daniel M. Knowles: An unusual cancellation was used for a short while in this Long Island town known for its connections to the whaling industry. **Page 3**



Mark Fonda: In 1897, a handsome all-over advertising cover made its way from New York City to the state's Southern Tier in just 11 hours. **Page 8**



Nancy Clark: A badly worn cover helps tell the story of a wreck, survival and a Western New York family's business interests. **Page 13**

Charles J. DiComo: Multiple markings on a stampless letter-sheet tell the tale of the cover that traveled from the U.S. to the U.K. **Page 20**



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Greetings all and happy spring!

I hope you will enjoy this edition of the Excelsior! We have six feature articles that are highlighted on this page. Aside from the obvious

topic of postal history, these articles explore – or at least touch on – several areas of interest, including major manufacturers of the Victorian Age, unusual cancellations and mail sent on journeys to Europe.

Also, Douglas Penwell offers some ramblings and reflections on Page 18, a stamp show schedule on Pages 17 and 19 and editor's comments on Page 19.

Jeff Stage, Editor



Figure 1. A letter posted with the “SAGHARBOUR.” in a dashed circle postmark from March 7, 1808 to Albany. It carries a mark for prepaid “17” cents for a letter traveling between 151 and 300 miles.

The ‘SAGHARBOUR.’ in Dashed Circle Postmark

By Daniel M. Knowles, MD

Well-struck handstamped postmarks on stampless covers from the scattered small towns that comprised Eastern Long Island in the early to mid-1800s are uncommon. Their rarity is not reflected by their valuations in the American Stampless Cover Catalog.

Sag Harbor was one of the original seven Suffolk County Long Island post offices established by the United States government on September 25, 1794.

Initially, the post office used the English spelling “Sag Harbour” to denote the town and manuscript postmarks were commonly employed.

Four different and distinctive handstamps were subsequently used by the Sag Harbor Post Office to postmark letters prior to the adoption of a circular date stamp in 1814, according to my unpublished census.

The earliest recorded and the least commonly encountered Sag Harbor handstamp is the 27-millimeter “SAGHARBOUR.” in dashed circle postmark.

I am aware of only three covers bearing this postmark. Two of those three are described and shown here. Both covers were previously illustrated in a 1988 issue of the Long Island Postal Historian, which was

published by the defunct Long Island Postal History Society. (Most copies of The Long Island Postal Historian journal are available on the society website at <https://www.esphs.org/journals/long-island-postal-history-society/>.)

The first edition of the American Stampless Cover Catalog (1971), edited by E.N. Sampson, lists a 27mm handstamped “Sag Harbour” in dotted circle postmark in brown ink used in 1808 and valued at \$20. Each subsequent edition of the ASCC has the identical listing, albeit with increasing valuations, suggesting that they are all based on a single cover discovered prior to 1971.

The cover illustrated here [Figure 1] is very likely that listing copy.

This cover was discovered by the late Fred Lightfoot when he observed it falling to the ground out of an old desk being moved out of a Sag Harbor house. He picked the cover up off the ground and retained it in his Long Island postal history collection for many years, according to my personal communication with Fred. He sold the cover to me in the late 1970s.

The cover is inscribed “Jeremiah Osborn 5 March

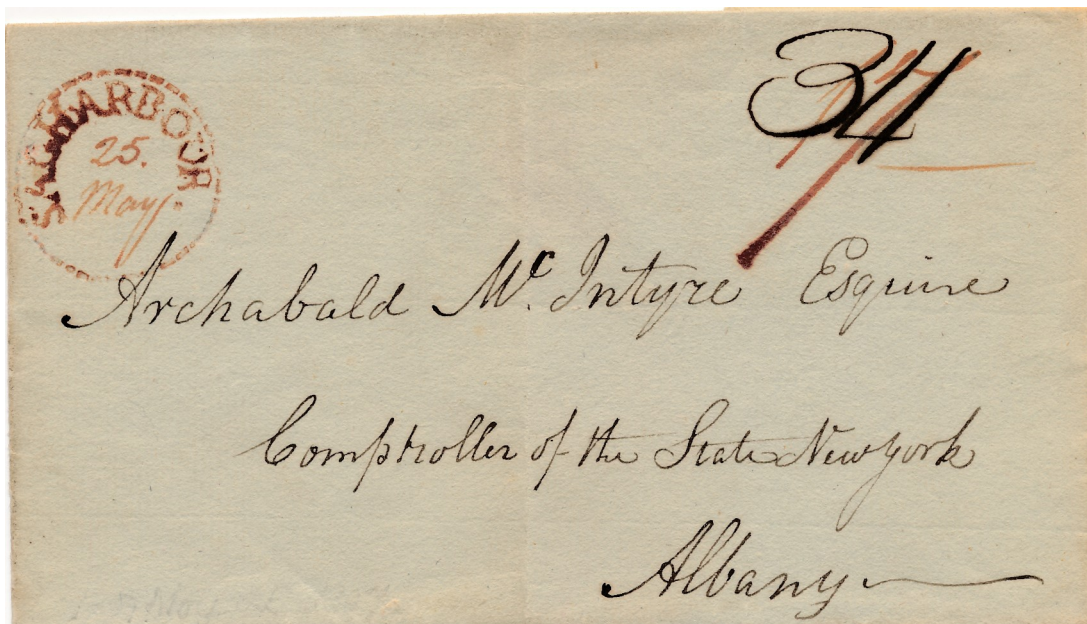


Figure 2. A letter posted with the “SAGHARBOUR.” in a dashed circle postmark on May 25, 1807 to Albany. The cover was sent unpaid, re-rated 34 cents, double the 17-cent rate, for a letter traveling between 151 and 300 miles.

1808.” It is a letter from Osborn and Hunting Miller to Albany Assemblyman Thomas Lester. The town name is enclosed in a dashed circle, not a dotted circle as erroneously described in the American Stampless Cover Catalog. It contains the manuscript date “7 Mar.” The cover bears an 8½ mm by 26½ mm handstamped “PAID” and is rated 17 cents in manuscript for a letter traveling between 151 and 300 miles per the Postal Act of March 2, 1799.

The handstamp “SAGHARBOUR.” in a dashed circle postmark, the handstamp “PAID” and the manuscript 17 are all in the same brown ink.

The second cover [Figure 2] is a folded letter sheet without contents that bears the identical 27mm “SAGHARBOUR.” in dashed circle postmark in the same brown ink. It contains the manuscript date “25 May.” Black ink docketing in a different hand on the reverse indicates that this cover was mailed in 1807, one year earlier than the catalog listing copy. The cover is addressed to Albany Assemblyman Archibald

McIntyre. The cover was appropriately rated at 17 cents in brown ink for a letter traveling between 151 and 300 miles. However, this folded letter sheet must have contained heavier contents, obligating the postmaster to re-rate the letter at “34” cents in black ink. The cover was sent unpaid.

We now know that the Sag Harbor Post Office employed this postmark during 1807 and 1808. This is the earliest recorded Sag Harbor handstamp postmark and is a candidate for the earliest known Suffolk County, Long Island handstamp postmark. This postmark was followed by the well-known handstamp “SAGHARBOR.” in oval postmark, which was in use between 1809 and 1812.

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- Knowles, D.M.: Cover Corner. Long Island Postal Historian. 12: 29

Double the Fun

Holidays are one of my collecting areas; even better if it overlaps postal history.

This stampless letter was mailed from Utica on July 4, 1840, and struck with a nice red oval postmark. Ten cents postage was paid, marked with a manu-

script 10, and off it went to H. Scott, Esq., of Cooperstown. The rate covered the single sheet rate of 31 to 80 miles.

I cannot make out the signature inside, but, interestingly the date-line is June 29 from Oswego. Another mystery to be solved.

—Jeff Stage



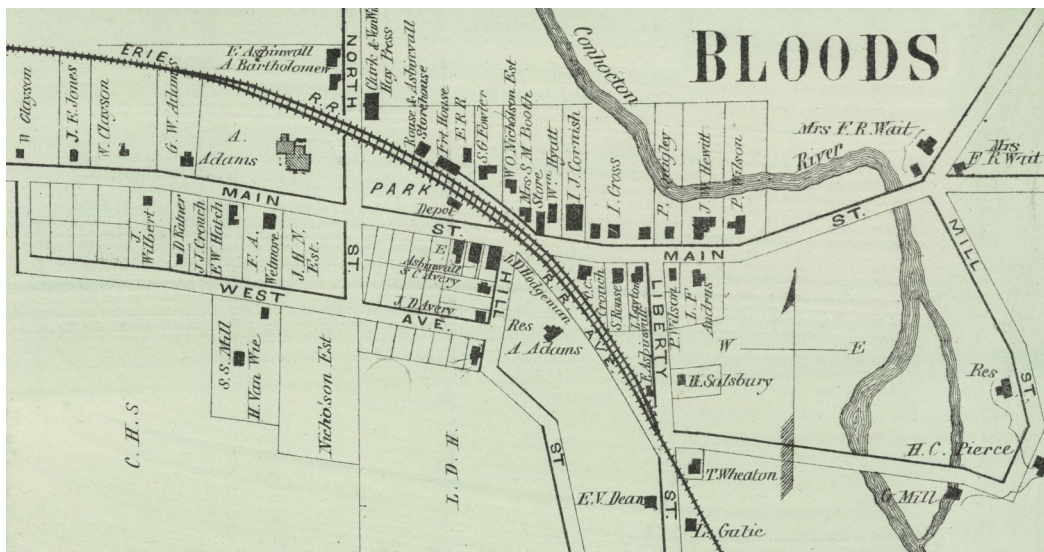


Figure 3. An 1873 map of the village of Bloods.

BLOOD'S, FROM COVER

The Blood's Depot (sometimes spelled without the apostrophe) Post Office was established on April 21, 1871.

With an annual salary of just \$12, the village attorney, Asa Adams, was its first postmaster. Reference to the map [Figure 3] show Postmaster Adams owned two large properties south of the railroad, which bisects the village. His home is at the right in the center in the relatively open plot, and his office, is to the west, just south of the railroad tracks. At that time, the village also supported a hotel, a dentist, a builder, a hardware store, a mill and three general merchants.

Dry goods dealer Dwight Hendryx took over the postmaster's job in May 1877 and is likely the person who handled the cover shown and affixed the cancellation. George W. Marter was appointed Blood's Depot's third postmaster in June 1885.

On April 29, 1889, 25-year-old William T. Cornish was put in charge. He operated out of his father's general store in the middle of town. On May 2, 1892, the post



Figure 4. Two later strikes of the same cancelling device used in Figure 1, but in purple.

office changed its name to Atlanta. Cornish continued as postmaster.

So, who founded the settlement and why did Blood's Depot change its name? The Blood family were very prolific breeders, and their line can be traced back to the earliest days of pre-Revolutionary Pepperell, Massachusetts. A large number of Blood descendants left Massachusetts around 1790 and many were early settlers in the town of Bath, about 25 miles southeast of Cohocton. Around 1820, many of those Bath-born Bloods moved north to Yates County to settle in Benton, but a few had a layover in the Cohocton area first, where Atlanta now lies.

A dozen or so cemeteries are in the vicinity of Blood's Depot, of which three contain Blood-family names. Those three cemeteries all opened for business between 1810 and 1820, and 10 people within the Blood family are known to be interred there, all perishing between 1821 and 1869. Two of the three cemeteries are still in operation – yet no one called Blood has been buried there since 1869.

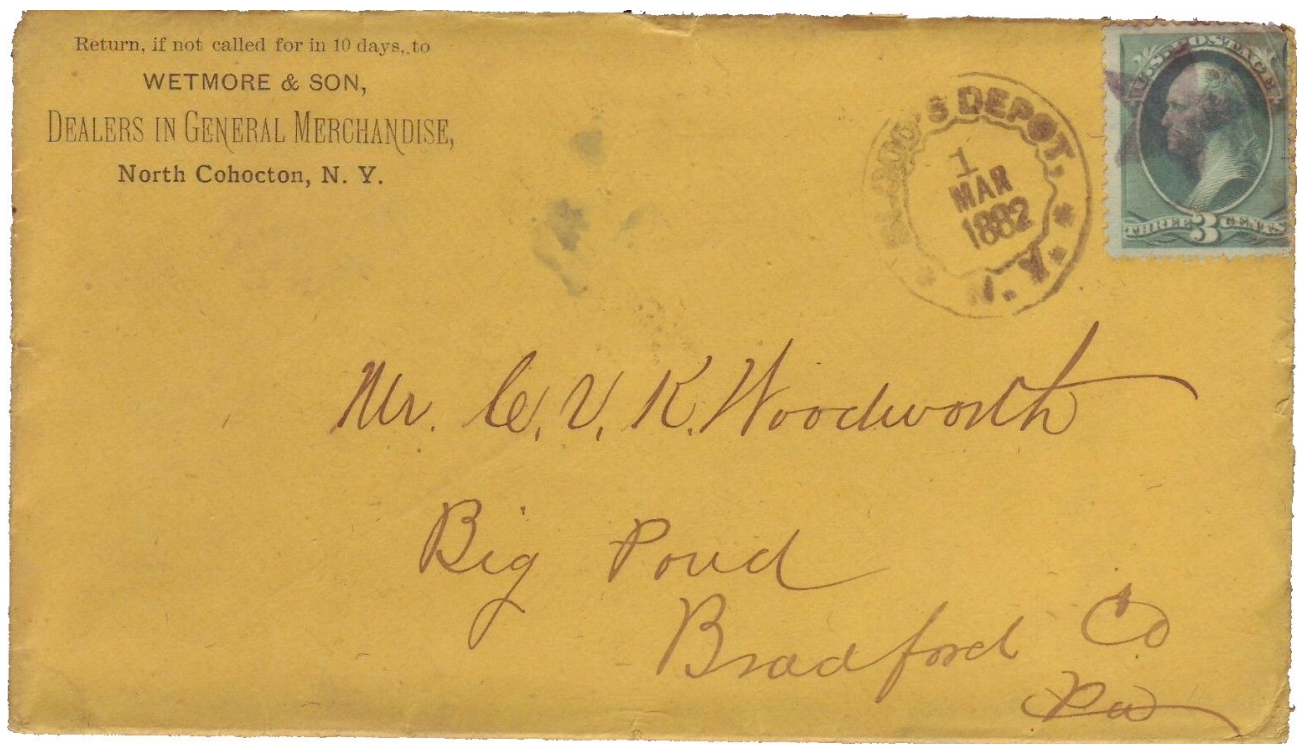


Figure 5. The wrong type of black ink has caused irreversible damage to the rubber, double-ringed circular datestamp.

The census and cemetery information would suggest the Bloods were some of the original settlers in the area, but all living traces of them had moved away by the 1870s.

Note, too, that the map in Figure 3, drawn in 1873, does not include any property owned by anyone called Blood. It is indeed ironic that when the post office opened in 1871, its namesake family had already left town!

For confirmation of all that, we need only to see the 1891 Steuben County Gazetteer, which lists Edward H. Blood as the only descendent connected with that part of the county. Blood was operating a harness-making busi-

ness, not in Blood's Depot, but in nearby North Cohocton – and his residence was in the town of Naples, about six miles farther north, in Ontario County. Is it any wonder then, by 1892, that the people in the village of Blood's Depot, had decided to do away with the



Figure 6. A replacement duplexed cancelling device suffered the same fate as its predecessor.

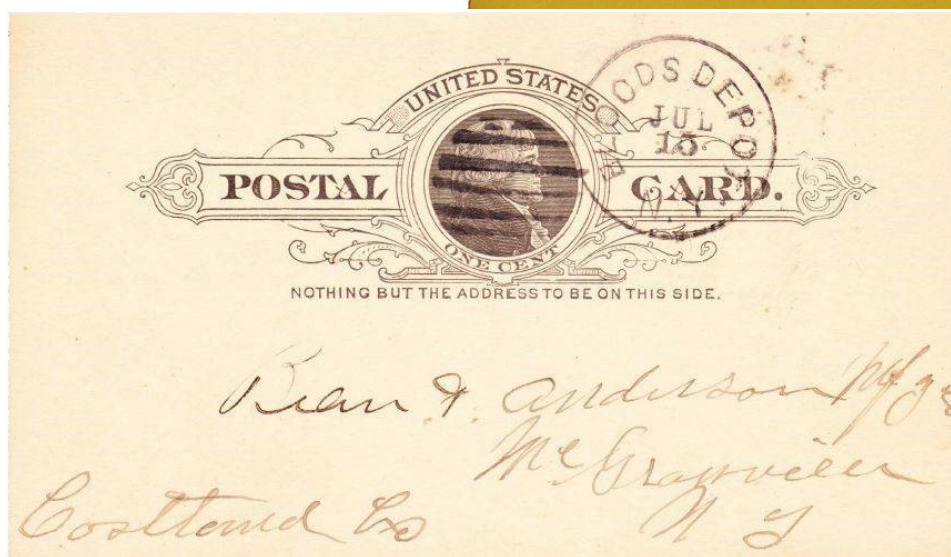


Figure 7. A non-duplexed circular datestamp and a hand-carved killer replaced the device shown in Figure 6.

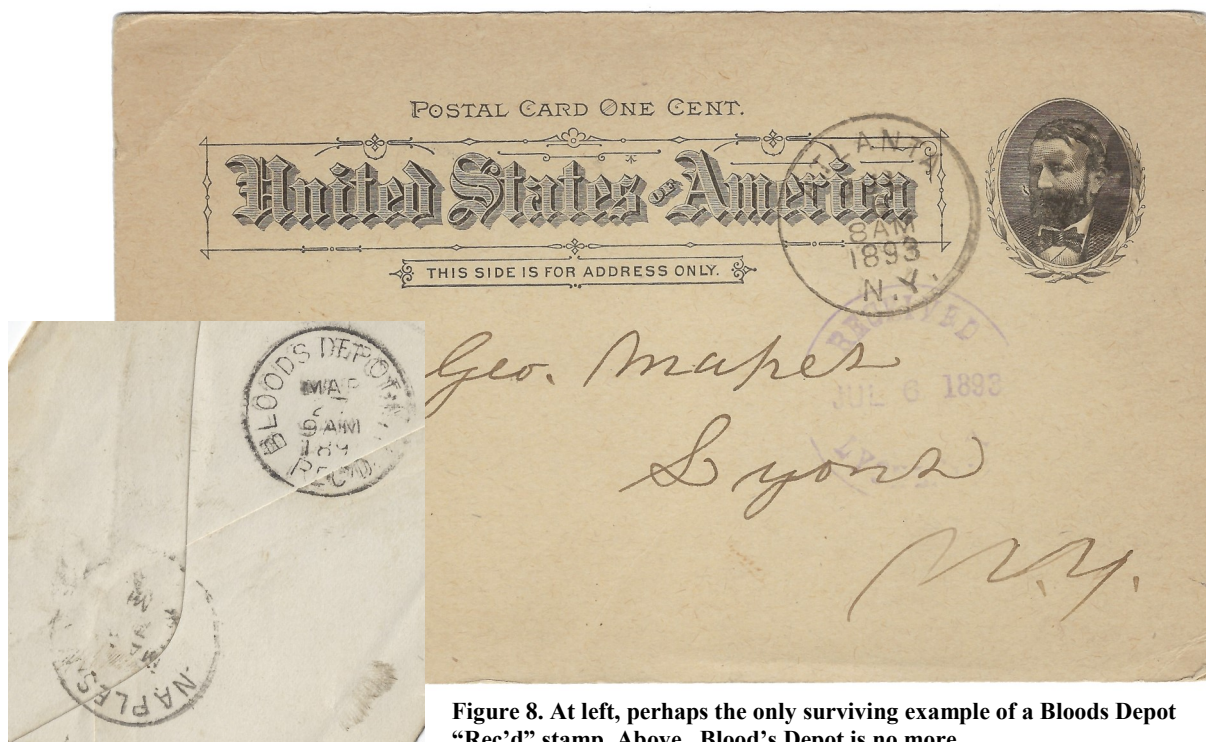


Figure 8. At left, perhaps the only surviving example of a Bloods Depot “Rec’d” stamp. Above, Blood’s Depot is no more.

Blood name? No one called Blood had lived there for more than 20 years.

As for the cancels used by the postmasters of Blood’s Depot, cancellations [Figure 4] show two more impressions of the duplexed star killer, from 1879 and 1881, struck not in magenta, but in purple.

A few months later, as seen on another cover [Figure 5], the rubber datestamp has been damaged by the erroneous use of oil-based printer’s ink, which is fine for metal handstamps, but not rubber.

A new cancel was in use by the summer of 1884, but the lesson learned in 1882 had been forgotten. A cover [Figure 6] shows another ink-damaged cancellation, this time duplexed to a negative star killer.

That mistake again was made with a third canceling device in just a handful of years [Figure 7], this one in 1890. Interestingly, this device was not duplexed, and hence would have been somewhat cheaper – a handmade killer, probably carved out of a wooden dowel – was applied separately. Perhaps, Postmaster Cornish knew the Blood’s Depot name was not going to be around for much longer and a new datestamp would soon be needed.

That was almost certainly the last circular datestamp ever used with the name Blood’s Depot. However, it should not be forgotten that even tiny Blood’s Depot might have had a receiving stamp – and it did! Shown [Figure 8] is part of the reverse of a cover mailed from New York City and bound for Naples,

with a Bloods Depot receiving mark.

It’s official! A postcard [Figure 8], cancelled a year after the old name was officially dropped, shows the Atlanta cancellation.

The Atlanta Post Office is still in operation to this day – ZIP code 14808. Perhaps if just one twig of the giant oak that is the Blood family tree had stuck around, the town would still be known as Bloods.

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Findagrave: www.findagrave.com/cemetery.

The Author: Robert Conley is a life-long philatelist who never stops evolving. His collections include Australia and states, Iceland, Hawaii, Newfoundland, U.S. state revenues and 19th century fancy cancels. A member of several societies, Robert edits four different quarterlies. This is his first article for ESPHS’s journal. He can be reached at uscceeditor@mail.com.



This beautiful all-over advertising cover from J.W. Fiske, an ornamental iron, bronze and zinc works manufacturer zipped from a New York City to the Elmira post office in just 11 hours in August 1897.

A QUICK TRIP

An 1897 Advertising Cover was Carried from NYC to Elmira in 11 Hours

By Mark Fonda

This ornate gray all-over advertising cover from J.W. Fiske Ornamental Iron, Bronze and Zinc Work in New York City is an example of the prolific Victorian artistic advertising era. It probably carried an intricately designed flier, like the examples shown in this article.

This cover traveled from New York City to Elmira in an amazing 11 hours on August 7, 1897, between noon and 11 p.m. Short-distance mail service in the late 19th century was far speedier than

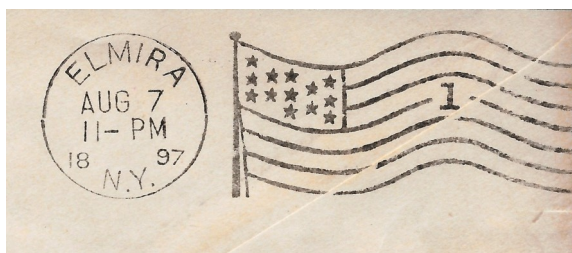
in modern times, or at least this cover would attest.

The cover carries either an 1894 or 1895 2-cent Washington stamp (probably a Scott 252 or 267) and is obliterated with a flag cancel.

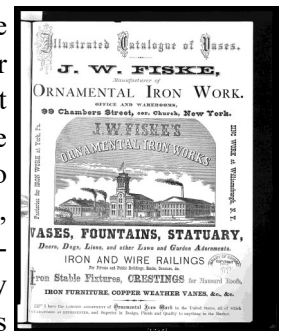
J.W. Fiske & Co. was the most prominent manufacturer of decorative cast iron and cast zinc in the second half of the 19th century. In addition to their wide range of fountains, statues, urns and cast-iron garden furniture, it provided many cast zinc Civil War memorials for small towns throughout the northern states. These were commonly painted to imitate bronze.

The entrepreneurial founder, Joseph Winn Fiske (May 22, 1832-October 20, 1903) outsourced the iron and zinc alloy foundry work and concentrated two aspects of the business – the firm's connections with modelers and customer relations.

Fiske was from a family with colonial roots from Chelmsford, Massachusetts and spent some years as a merchandiser in Melbourne, Australia, before return-



The reverse of the cover shows it arrived at the Elmira Post Office at 11 p.m. on the same day it was sent from New York City. At right, the cover of a c. 1875 trade catalog with a view of J.W. Fiske's Ornamental Iron Works. The catalog was printed by E.G. Trip. (Image courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.)



ing to the U.S. in 1857. He founded his business, at first (by 1862) in partnership with hardware man Thomas W. Brown in Boston and New York City by December 1863.

The phrase “and company” was dropped from the business in 1862. Fiske’s lavishly illustrated catalogs issued at brief intervals kept the firm in the public eye and also show art historians how casually design patents were infringed upon in the 19th century.

Fiske’s designs ranged from the naturalistic foliate that were the stock-in-trade of the mid-Victorian style to sculptures after the antique and neoclassical works of Antonio Canova or Bertel Thorvaldsen; suitable for park-like landscapes of estates and cemeteries with formal schemes. The Fiske company was also noted for its hammered copper weather vanes, produced in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

A typical Fiske fountain can be found on the grounds of the Smithsonian Horticultural Gardens. The foundation is 97 inches tall and about 36 inches wide. The three-tiered fountain consists of a base, pedestal and basins, according to the Smithsonian. The naturalism-style fountain, built in the latter half of the 19th century, has gradually increasing concentric bowls cast with leaves and raised on a leaf-cast base on an octagonal plinth.

Fiske’s great rival in the decorative cast iron field was that of the New York City firm of Jordan L. Mott’s – the J.L. Mott Iron Works.

Since the latter part of the 20th century, unmarked pieces of decorative cast iron of appropriate date are commonly attributed to J.W. Fiske. This added provenance to an unmarked item would certainly increase its value.

The company outsourced its iron and zinc alloy foundry work but worked closely with model creators and built a large client base. Fiske had an eye for what the public wanted and among the company’s products was a line of animal-shaped items, including deer, lions, eagles and dogs.

Among the items Fiske created was one known as “Morley’s Dog,” an icon in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Around 1870, James Morley, a Bethlehem Steel Co. executive, browsed the Fiske catalog and bought No. 271: “French Blood Hound, 3 feet 10 inches high, painted one coat \$180; bronzed \$195,” according to the Johnstown Flood Museum, as quoted in a 2003 article by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.



A cast-iron and zinc fountain made by J.W. Fisk Iron Works Company, of New York, in working order today at the Smithsonian Gardens in Washington, D.C. The fountain was recently restored thanks to the contribution of Narinder K. Keith and Rajinder K. Keith. The fountain was renamed to pay homage to the Keith family. (Image courtesy of Smithsonian Gardens, Horticultural Artifacts Collection.)

The statue was on the lawn of Morley’s estate when the Great Johnstown Flood of 1889 struck killing more than 2,200. The floodwaters also swept away the dog statue, which was later found on a pile of debris. In 1944, the statue was donated to the city.

One legend, which was reinforced in the Paul Newman movie “Slap Shot” (1977) says the statue depicts a real dog named Romey, who saved three lives, according to the Johnstown Area Heritage Society. There’s no truth to the story, but the dog has survived three major floods and the closing of the Bethlehem Steel (originally Cambria) plant in Johnstown. Made of zinc, the statue has recently been refurbished and repainted reddish-brown and for now is housed indoors.



The front of a cover – filled with markings – from a major manufacturer mailed in 1908 in Syracuse. The envelope (Scott U411, die I) has a 2-cent carmine George Washington imprint. Below, reverse of the cover.

You Can't Go Home Again. Or Can You?

By George F. DeKornfeld, DDS

Often seen as a somewhat pedestrian postal stationery entire, the 2-cent carmine George Washington government stamped envelope issue of 1907 in the following story went on quite the wild ride in 1908, leaving us with a plethora of markings and manuscript directives to enjoy as we unravel this cover's boomerang-like journey.

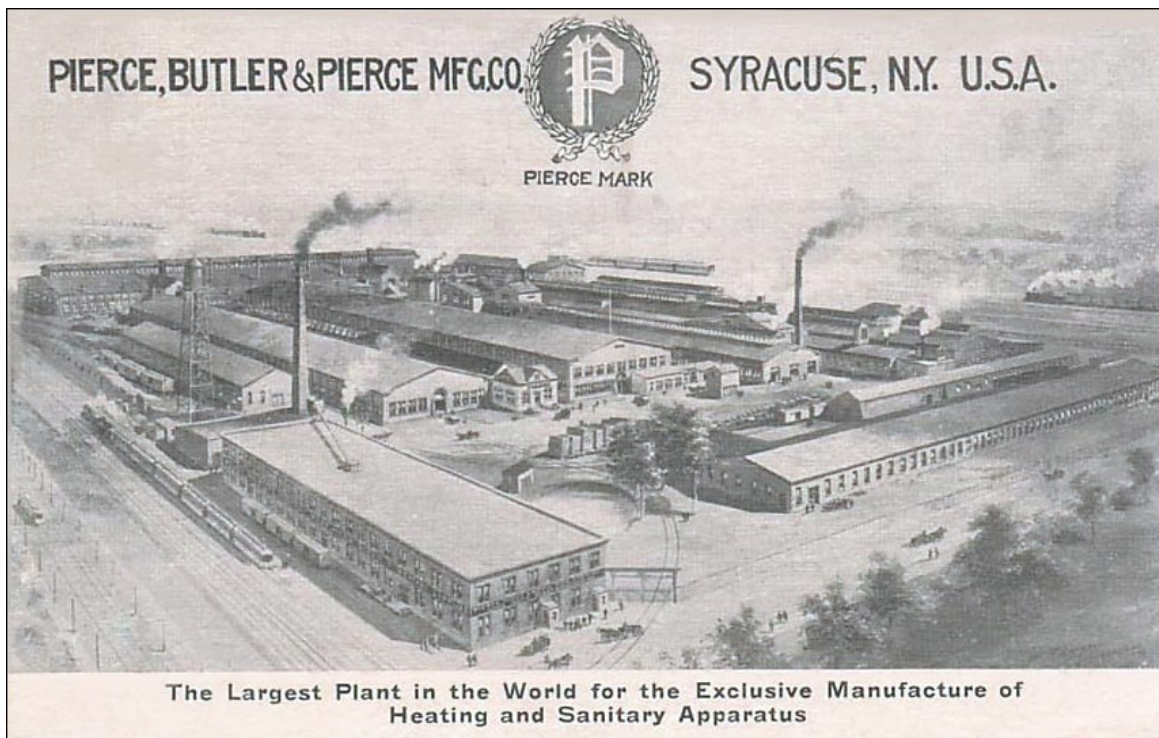


SYLVESTER P. PIERCE, *1893
MANUFACTURER AND MERCHANT
PIERCE, BUTLER & PIERCE MFG. CO.

In order to develop the full picture, let's start with a look at the cover's sender, the Pierce, Butler & Pierce Manufacturing Company of Syracuse, New York. It was founded in 1839 by Sylvester Phineas Pierce, who was born September 19, 1814, in Sauquoit, Oneida County, and passed away

November 5, 1893, in Syracuse.

Pierce's company manufactured heating equipment, such as boilers and radiators, as well as bathroom fixtures, while also acting as importers and jobbers of crockery, glass, plated ware, kerosene goods and pretty much all things hardware.



Above, the expansive Pierce, Butler & Pierce Manufacturing Company of Syracuse, c. 1900.
At right, William Kasson Pierce, the founder's son.



A view of the company's expansive manufacturing plant as it stood in 1900 is shown, as is a look at some of its bathroom fixtures in the 1904 advertisement shown.

Sylvester's son, William Kasson Pierce (born May 25, 1851, at Syracuse – died April 5, 1915, Washington, D.C.) served as president of the firm from 1893 to 1914, with this article's cover being mailed during his tenure.

The junior Pierce's demise in 1915 while visiting the nation's capital coincided with and was precipitated by, at least in part, by his company filing for bankruptcy protection and being placed under federal receivership. The New York Times reported on the situation in its issue of January 11, 1914. The Syracuse Herald newspaper edition of April 5, 1915, held the grim details of William K. Pierce's end:

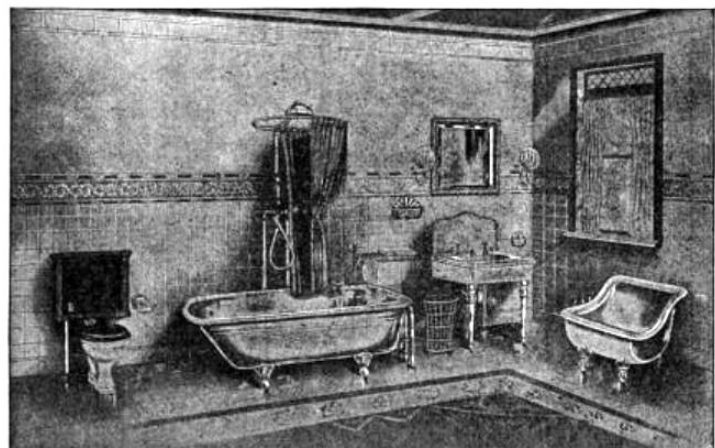
WILLIAM K. PIERCE SHOTS HIMSELF WHILE VISITING IN WASHINGTON **Sends Bullet Into His Brain During Fit of Melancholia**

WIFE FINDS HIS BODY

Former head of Pierce, Butler & Pierce Company
Had Been Mental Wreck Since Failure of Firm, Followed by Personal Bankruptcy

William K. Pierce, former head of the Pierce, Butler & Pierce Manufacturing company, committed suicide by shooting himself through the left temple at 9:30 o'clock this forenoon at the home of relatives in Washington, D.C.

He had suffered a severe attack of melancholia yesterday afternoon which had grown worse. He rose from his bed at 9:30 o'clock and went to the bathroom in the home of Maj. Charles Lynch, where



BATH ROOM SHOWING "PIERCE" SANITARY GOODS.

An advertisement shows some of the Pierce, Butler & Pierce products.

he was visiting with Mrs. Pierce, and shot himself.

A Nervous Wreck

Mr. Pierce had been a nervous wreck during the past year and a half, since the Pierce, Butler & Pierce company went into the hands of the receiver, and he himself became a bankrupt.

Accompanied by Mrs. Pierce, he had been visiting at the Lynch home for the past month.

Following the business troubles, he suffered a nervous breakdown from which he had failed to recover. For some time he had been under the care of Dr. W.C. DuBois of this city.

On the night of January 16th, the last time that he was treated by Dr. DuBois, he appeared to be in a serious condition, according to a statement made to-day by the physician.

In a letter to the physician last Friday, Mr. Pierce stated that he was feeling no better and asked that Dr. DuBois prepare a prescription for him. This the physician did, but it did not arrive until after Mr. Pierce had ended his life.

The death closely follows the demise of Thomas Wheatley, former vice president and treasurer of the firm, on March 27th, and is believed to have had a serious effect on Mr. Pierce's condition.

When the treatment given him in this city failed to improve his condition, Mr. Pierce and his wife went to Washington about a month ago. They were the guests of Mrs. Pierce's sister, the wife of Maj. Charles Lynch, in the Avondale apartments.

The Pierce, Butler & Pierce Manufacturing Company, at one time a \$5 million corporation and a serious player in the Syracuse business community, found itself in a death spiral and sadly ended up totally defunct by the early 1930s.

Whoever mailed this cover 6 ½ years before William Pierce's death either didn't realize that its intended destination was across The Pond and not in the continental United States, or that the UPU rate to Great Britain at the time ran 5 cents. After clearing the Syracuse Post Office, where the indicia was obliterated on September 12 by a Universal machine cancel, the short payment was indeed caught by the folks at the New York City Post Office, who applied the "T (Tax) N.Y., 30 centimes" double barrel marking indicating postage due of double the deficiency.

Once our cover made it to London, the deficiency was acknowledged by the British Post Office, which applied the rather large and hard to miss "3d F.B." (foreign branch) handstamp on the front, while in anticipation of collecting the amount owed, added the first two of several 'London-W' (west) circular handstamps, both dated September 21, onto the back.

The valiant attempts to get this letter delivered to Henry White are witnessed by the phrase "to go again," which appears twice in pencil, once at the curled fingers, the other at the tip of the extended digit of the pointing finger.

Each of these efforts are accompanied by an additional pair of datestamps, one applied on the way out and the second on its return to the London Post Office on September 22 and 23. All this effort, which included an address correction at some point during this process!

And all in vain, unfortunately. When the carrier finally caught up with the addressee, Henry, who had no interest in coughing up the thruppence due and promptly refused this piece of mail, the carrier ended up writing a purple "Refused" on the back to confirm this undoubt-

edly unappreciated turn in events. This resulted in the application of the next marking, a September 25 circular London "Returned L^R (Letter) Office" handstamp, also on the reverse.

The British post office had one last opportunity to add to the markings before sending this cover westward, back across the Atlantic, and did so on the envelope's bottom front, where we see a black "Postage Not Paid / W.D.O.," this, an acronym for the London West District Office.

Back on its native shores our envelope on October 24 found itself in Washington, D.C. at the U.S. Post Office Department's Foreign Division Unit (F.D.U.). This unit, responsible for dealing with refused foreign mail, added a splendidly struck magenta double circle "Dead Letter Office - F.D.U." handstamp on the back and at the same time, applied the magenta Pointing Hand to the front. With its index finger aimed menacingly at the cover's corner card, this marking has "Dead Letter Office / Washington, D.C." on its cuff and "Returned to / Writer / Collect / ___ cts.," the blank being filled in with a "6" by blue crayon.

Once home again, the Syracuse Post Office added a horizontal pair of precanceled 3-cent deep claret Postage Due issues of 1895 (Scott J40), indicating the fee having been paid by the Pierce, Butler and Pierce Manufacturing Company.

It was Thomas Wolfe who named his 1940s novel "You Can't Go Home Again." Who knows? Perhaps if he were a postal historian, he might have thought differently. As this cover showed us, you certainly can, although the greater satisfaction is found in the actual journey itself, a journey that is clearly a pleasure to unravel.

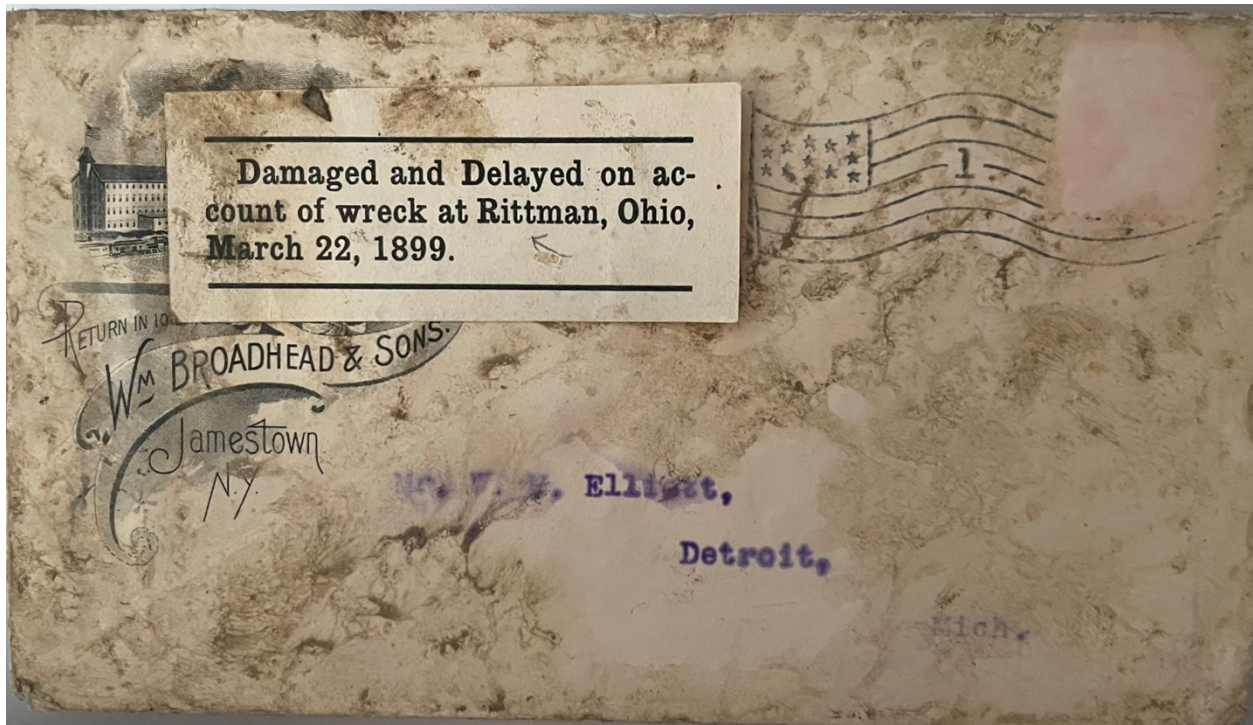


Figure 1. This cover, sent from Jamestown in 1899, shows evidence of submersion in Ohio's Styx River.

Survivor from the Wreck at Rittman, 1899

By Nancy B. Clark

The train wreck on March 22, 1899 made big news, even in Helena, Montana, carrying the Page 1 headline, "Jumped the Track."

The Erie Limited, a passenger train operated by the Erie Railroad, crashed about 10 miles west of Akron, Ohio when a drive-rod of the engine broke. The train jumped the track, throwing the engine, the baggage car, two sleepers and three other cars into a ditch.

The engineer, Wallace Logan, of Akron – the best engineer on the Erie line, said the Columbus Dispatch – was instantaneously killed. The fireman, Barney Ward, of Galion, was seriously injured. Several passengers sustained less serious injuries.

The following fall, several local people reported sightings of a ghostly train by the River Styx bridge. This phantom train wreck shook all who experienced it, recalling the horrors of the Erie Limited wreck the preceding March.

There are some who claim sudden fog and distracting noise, causing automobile accidents, are attributable to the phantom train, even today.

Rittman was no stranger to train wrecks. In 1888, an excursion train was run into by a Fast Freight. The Cleveland Leader of September 11, 1888, said, "An awful scene in a deep cut near Rittman Station ... Four Persons killed outright, three fatally hurt, and twenty seriously injured." No mail is recorded from this wreck, which is to be expected since it was an excursion.

The connecting rod of the engine broke and the train stopped in a deep cut of the bed. While awaiting repairs, Freight Train No. 37, which had been following this special train, "thundered down the heavy grade" and ran into the stopped excursion train.

In July of 1889, Miss Ina M. Tucker, 22, filed a lawsuit against the New York, Lake Erie & West-

HAUNTED.

River Styx Bridge.

**Fearful Sightings Witnessed
at the Place**

**Where Engineer Logan
Lost His Life.**

**Phantom Train Dashes Down
Steep Grade.**

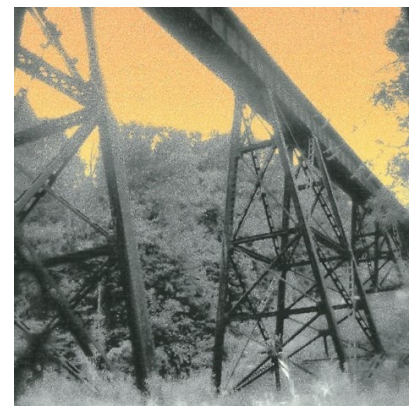
**Frightful Wreck Re-enacted Every
Night—Strange Story.**

The ill-fated train, on which Engineer Alex. W. Logan lost his life, is said to haunt the bridge over the River Styx near Rittman.

It was at this place that he went to his heroic death last spring. The frightful wreck caused great excitement in this city. There were a large number of Akron people on No. 5 that morning. Local citizens recall the circumstances surrounding the brave sacrifice made by Engineer Logan, whose steady nerve saved the passengers behind him.

Akron Daily Democrat, Oct. 28, 1899.

A more modern rendition of the crossing as the old Erie RR Bridge over the River Styx in Rittman as it currently stands. The Styx River Bridge in Medina (far right), often mistaken as the site of the Rittman wreck. It certainly is a more dramatic site.



ern and the New York, Pennsylvania & Ohio railroad companies for her injuries from this accident. She had both legs broken, one above the knee, the other below the knee, and was injured internally as well, and had a dislocated hip. She became an invalid, unable to walk without crutches and no longer able to continue her employment as a teacher.

Ten years later was the 1899 wreck of a regularly scheduled westbound fast train. The engine and baggage car went into the ditch at 7:45 a.m., a mile east of the depot. Some accounts say the passenger cars remained on the track, but most sources credit the fast actions of Logan resulting in far fewer injuries than the 1888 wreck. However, it was also reported that the five coaches, including two sleepers, went into the ditch as well.

Looking at the trestle bridge, I believe the report of all the coaches going into the “ditch” to be accurate. The track crosses the River Styx both in Rittman and in Medina, to the north. The bridges are often confused by ghost train hunters, but the newspaper accounts make it clear that the bridge is in Rittman.

Three passengers were injured: Mrs. Frank C. Wilson, of Cincinnati, with bruises and a broken leg; R. Reiter, of Skagaway, Alaska, who was bruised; and H. Little, of Akron, bruised and injured internally. One description said a side

rod of the engine broke.

The engineer applied the emergency brakes and attempted to slam the engine into reverse to keep the train from going off the trestle bridge over the western branch of Rocky River called River Styx. It ran 500 feet on the rails then toppled into the ditch. The train was traveling 60 miles per hour when the faulty rod gave way.

The railway mail clerks were Kears, Brown and Fields. When the wreck occurred, they were able to catch hold of the guard rail at the top of the car and were uninjured.

Settled in 1815, in the northeastern corner of Wayne County, Rittman grew through the rail system. Businesses beyond agriculture included the Wayne Salt Company. Rittman is currently more of a bedroom community for those who work in Akron, Cleveland and Medina.



Fred Rittman,
as drawn for
the Cleveland
Plain Dealer

My go-to resource for railroad disaster mail – “Railway Disaster Mail”– includes a marvelous description taken from The Mansfield (Ohio) News, with a headline of “Needs Laundering,”

which tells how the 14 pouches of mail were treated:

The local post office showed signs of wash day this morning. Letter mail was spread out on tables and other available space to dry. On some of the envelopes the addresses cannot be deciphered but the return address may be deciphered. Such letters, the address of which cannot be determined, will be returned to the sender. Three mail clerks, Poe, Casselman and Wood, are engaged in assorting the damaged mail at the local post office. A part of the mail on being dried and handled goes to pieces. This morning a letter fell apart and it was found that it contained a draft for \$1,000. The registered mail was brought here to the post office yesterday and re-enveloped. The mail which was held and can be identified will have a “sticker” placed on it ...

At this writing, the mail car was still on its side. Casselman was intended to be at the site when the car was raised, where he would take possession of any more discovered mail.

Rittman, located just to the southeast of Akron, was named for Fred Rittman, the treasurer of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which ran a line through town in 1871. He was also treasurer of the New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio Railroad (NY & PO RR), which

became the Erie. Its depot was at Elliott Street and Main Street. In 1885, after he left the railroad, he moved to Cleveland and became assistant cashier of the Bank of Commerce. In 1900, he accepted President William McKinley's offer to become second auditor of the War Department.

The Styx River, where the wreck occurred, is known today for its bluegill and bass fishing. The original bridge has been replaced with strong supports. The rails to trails program has repurposed original railroad grades along several routes into walking paths.

The Baltimore & Ohio Depot was at the junction of Main Street and Sterling Avenue. Rittman is the only town in the United States with this name. The town's previous name, "Arkona," was dropped because of its similarity to Akron. Other early names of the town included Ellio and New Prospect. The southern part of town was named Milton Station with a stop by the Atlantic & Great Western Railroad, which became the Erie Railroad. It is now County Line Trail, a rail to trail walkway where tracks once stood.

An 1897 map shows both depots and the way their lines intersected Main Street about two blocks apart.

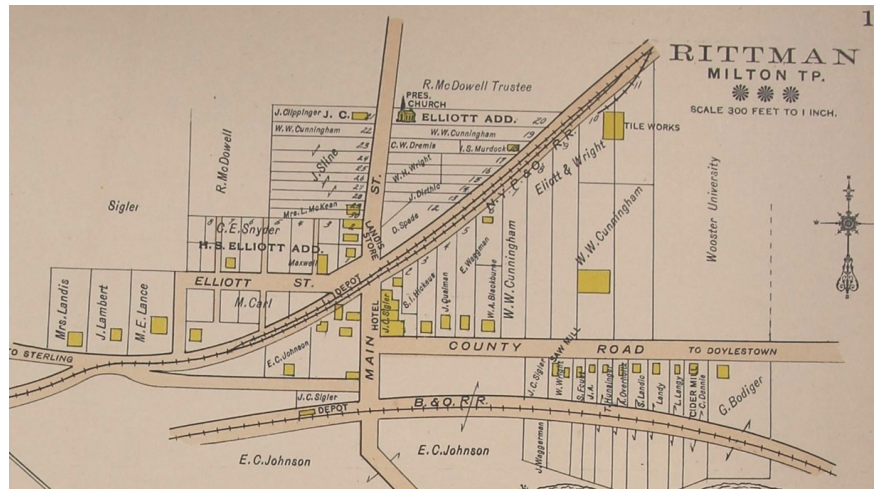
The Sender

William Broadhead, blacksmith, emigrated in 1843 at the age of 24 from Thornton, England. In 1845, he married Lucy Cobb (1825-1908), a native of Schroon Lake, New York, and began a family of six children.

Three boys – Sheldon Brady Broadhead (1846-1925), Harwood William Broadhead, who died at age 8 and Almet Norval Broadhead (1851-1925) – were followed by three girls, Mary Thetis Reynolds



Main Street, Rittman, Ohio, circa 1912. Below, a map of Rittman in 1897 shows both railroad depots.



(1855-1894), Stella Florine Broadhead (1859-1942) and Mertie Minutia Howard (1867-1957).

By the time Mertie Minutia was born, Broadhead's business had grown from being a cooper; to doing a joint business with Adam Cobb, his future father-in-law, producing sickles for cutting grass and hay; to owning and then selling an ax factory; to founding a fine quality men's clothing store. By the time he was 16, Sheldon was a partner.

William took his wife and

daughter, Mary, back to his hometown in England in 1872. He found his hometown had found new life and was thriving as part of a textile-producing region.

He brought that concept of quality textile production as an industry back to Jamestown. By December 1873, he was producing wool cloth at the Broadhead and Turner mill, then Jamestown Alpaca Mill. By 1875, he'd sold his half-interest in the Alpaca Mill and started his Broadhead & Sons Mill.

By 1881, his 15 mill buildings



The Erie Railroad Station in Rittman at the turn of the last century (left). Today (above) the building is a restaurant.



Vignette from a bill from dated January 12, 1894, shows a train leaving the Mills on the left, and William Broadhead on the right.

on Harrison Street had more than 1,000 employees and sold \$1 million worth of cloth goods yearly.

The letterhead of the William Broadhead & Sons Alpaca Mills in Jamestown, New York, cites William Broadhead, S.B. Broadhead and A.N. Broadhead as proprietors in 1894. The original building was built in 1873, when the business was called the Jamestown Alpaca Mills. Broadhead Worsted Mill was on East First Street.

The company later purchased Hall's Mill on Harrison Street, which became Jamestown Worsted Mill.

The trade card shown featuring an image of famed actress Lillie Langtry indicates Broadheads dealt in dress goods as well. This early celebrity endorsement is in company with Langtry's backing of Pear's Soap and Brown's Iron Bitters tonic. She is shown as her well-known role of Miss Hardcastle, the barmaid, in "She Stoops to Conquer," a role she played in 1883 in Haymarket Theatre in London.

Broadhead and his sons also invested in Jamestown's and Chautauqua's trolley systems, reaching both sides of the lake, and steamboat lines on Lake Chautauqua. Other interests were the Jamestown, Westfield & Northwestern Railroad (J.W.& N.W. RR), the West Ellicott Lakeview Rose Gardens, then the largest rose garden in the nation, Jamestown Light



The letterhead of the Broadhead Worsted Mills and a trade card featuring the actress Lillie Langtry.

and Power Company, the Jamestown Shale Paving company, which produced the bricks for many streets in Jamestown, and several land development projects.

The letter shown demonstrates the connections among the different companies. The elaborate letterhead of the Broadhead Worsted Mills was sent to a business in Canton, Ohio, noting the value of bricks produced by the Jamestown Shale Paving Company.

When William died in 1910, Sheldon, as accountant and finance director, and Almet, as president, continued the company until their deaths, just three months apart, in 1925.

Serviced with a Jamestown flag cancellation on March 21, 1899, the cover was addressed to Mr. F.W. Elliott, Detroit.

I have been unable to identify the recipient of the letter, though there are several individuals buried in both the Rittman Pioneer Memorial Cemetery as well as in nearby communities like

Wanted: Your knowledge, your interests, your articles. The Excelsior! needs all types of submissions. Share your passion, even if it's just about a single cover.

Contact the editor today at nyspostal@gmail.com.

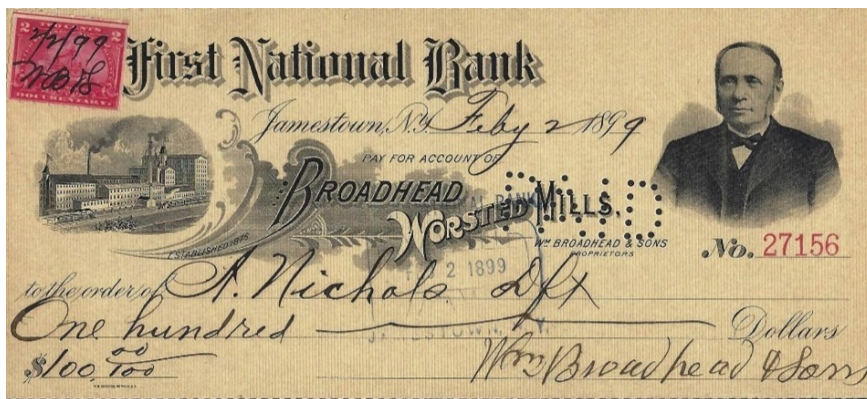


By lifting the label attached to the cover at the start of this article, you can see the Jamestown, New York flag cancel cleanly struck.

Below, a check from February 2, 1899, with the vignette of the mills and bearing a revenue tax stamp with the chief proprietor's initials as a cancel.

Wadsworth and Akron.

There also is a street named Elliott in Rittman, and there was a tile factory there run by the Elliott family. The New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio Railroad was cited in an Akron paper, the Summit County Journal, as producing a hollow tile that was being used efficaciously along their railroad bed to improve the line. Clearly, the Elliott family was at some point a big player in town, but by December 18, 1899, an inspection of the Elliott Wright Tile Compa-



ny in Rittman found serious issues. Unlike the Broadhead family, the Elliots' impact on Rittman was not long-lasting.

The postmarks indicate despite the wreck, there were only three days between sending and delivery. A remarkable feat, reflecting both attention to detail and dedication to getting the job done right.

The Author

Married to fellow philatelist Douglas N. Clark, Nancy B. Clark, a retired music teacher and church musician, is president of the American Philatelic Congress, the Mobile Post Office So-

ciety and BOSTON 2026, the United States' international stamp show held every 10 years. She is an international philatelic juror. In her spare time, she chairs the Barnstable Historical Commission on Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

Resources and Notes

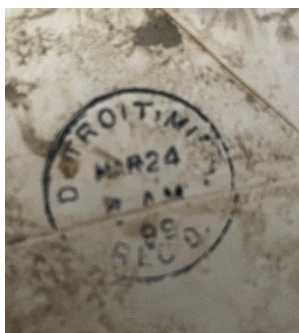
"Railway Disaster Mail," Robin Gwynn and Norman Hoggarth, The Stuart Rossiter Trust, ISBN 978-0-9545207-4-8.

The Mansfield News, Mansfield, Ohio, March 22-23, 1899.

Plain Dealer newspaper, December 29, 1900, Cleveland, Ohio.

Summit County Beacon, August 5, 1885, Vol. L, issue 1.

Annual Report of the Department of Inspection of Workshops and Factories, 1900, Governor, State of Ohio, Volume 17.



Received in Detroit two days after the Rittman wreck.

Shows of Note

(Courtesy American Philatelic Society)

Pennsylvania — April 22-23

WILPEX 2022, Wilkinsburg Stamp Club, Holiday Park Fire Hall, 415 Old Abres Creek Road, Pittsburgh.

Contact: Andy Novotny

Email: novoand@hotmail.com

Website: www.wilkinsburgstampclub.com

Vermont — April 23

Crossroads Postcard & Stamp Show #42, Upper Valley Stamp Club, Mid-Vermont Christian School Gym, 399 W. Gilson

Avenue, Quechee.

Contact: Joyce LaPointe

Email: lapointejvt@gmail.com

Website: https://uvstampclub.com/

New York — April 24

Albany Spring Stamp and Postal History Show, Fort Orange Stamp Club, Colonie Village Family Recreation Center, 3 Thunder Road, Colonie.

Contact: Thomas Auletta

Email: azusacollectibles@yahoo.com

Website: www.fortorangestampclub.org/

Massachusetts — April 29-May 1

Philatelic Show, Northeastern Fed. Of

Stamp Clubs, Boxboro Regency Hotel & Conference Center, 242 Adams Pl., Boxborough.

Contact: David Ball and Mark Butterline

Email: david.ball@philatelicshow.org;

mark.butterline@philatelicshow.org

Website: http://www.philatelicshow.org

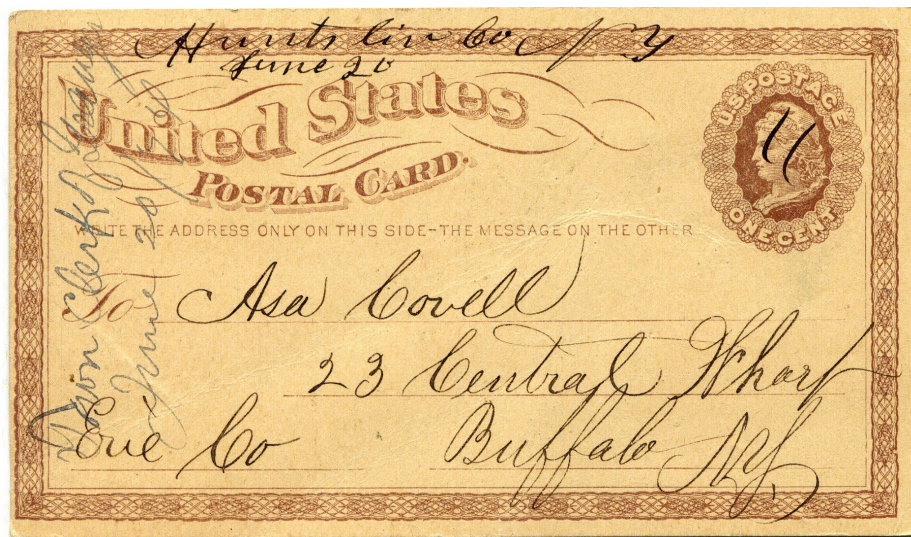
Pennsylvania — April 30

Lancopex 2022, Philatelic Society of Lancaster County, Farm & Home Center, 1383 Arcadia Road, Lancaster. *B*

Contact: Lou DiFelice

Email: loudifelice@gmail.com

SHOWS, Page 19



A 1-cent postal card (Scott UX3) with a manuscript cancellation from Hunt's Post Office in Livingston County was a new find in 2021.

Postal History Ramblings for the New Year

By Douglas Penwell

Last year saw several changes that led me to reflect on various things related to postal history.

First, it has been more than six years since finding a "new" town from Monroe, Livingston or Ontario counties. A manuscript county marking came along from the Hunt's Post Office in Livingston County, and a Civil War patriotic from Naples in Ontario County. Those were the most exciting things to be acquired all year. After collecting these three counties for almost 40 years, that is a bit of a disappointment.

Letter content has been a substitute for finding new towns, along with locating manuscript markings where only a handstamp marking is in the collection (and vice versa).

Civil War patriotics, advertising and other unusual items can sometimes make up for a lack of more desirable covers. No shows were attended all year, mostly due to Covid-19 and those considerations related to work hours and travel. There was a personal event in February that made travel very difficult until after early October. There are also many times when hiking is chosen over stamp shows.

When I started seriously collecting local postal history in the early 1980s most of the towns were known only from personal experiences when living in Rochester.

A good friend from East Rochester, Eugene Bauer, used to travel (thank you, Gene!) to various post offices in the vicinity when looking for older stamps still available for sale. As many members of this society can recall, older stamps could still be located until stocks were exhausted. What a thrill it was to find older commemoratives at one of those small towns!

Occasionally, something like a \$1 Airlift stamp would be found (but not often enough). The East

Rochester Post Office had most of the Liberty issue for sale (except for fractionals, domestic letter and postcard rates and the \$5 Hamilton). That was from 1972 to 1975 before leaving for the U.S. Air Force.

Unfortunately, most of the stamps that were prized in the early 1970s are now in low demand and are commonly bought and sold as "discount postage." There was a show several times a year at the Dome Arena in Henrietta, but older covers were an unknown area for this author at that time (and postal history material was available at the Dome Arena show).

In the 1980s, society member Richard Nunge sent along a manuscript 3-cent 1851 cover from Sweden, N.Y. That was the first example of any postmark encountered from that town (still remembered fondly more than 30 years later). Now, several stampless markings have been acquired and manuscript markings on 3-cent 1861 covers have been seen more than a dozen times. What once is regarded as scarce can turn out to be less so as time went by.

In the beginning, postcard shows were a great place to find material. Nowadays, many postcard dealers have checklists showing how scarce certain markings are. In the 1980s, such was not the case and nice finds could be made at these shows.

A separate album has been maintained for markings from the postcard era (ending about 1920). Slightly more than half a dozen markings are missing from the towns that operated from 1903 to 1920. Most of those missing were discontinued before the divided back postcard was officially authorized in 1907.

Postcard shows can still be much fun, as views from East Rochester are still collected. If you don't collect view cards from your hometown, this is rewarding.

What reflections can you write about concerning your postal history collection?

Web: <https://lcp-stamps.org/>

New York — May 20-21

ROPEX Stamp, Coin and Collectibles Show, Rochester Philatelic Association, The Mall at Greece Ridge (Storefront TBD), 271 Greece Ridge Center Drive, Rochester.

Contact: Tom Fortunato

Email: stampmf@gmail.com

Web: <http://rpastamps.org>

Ohio — June 10-11

Colopex, Columbus Philatelic Club, Doubletree Hilton Worthington, 175 Hutchinson Ave, Columbus. *WSP*

Contact: Van Siegling

Email: info@colopex.com

Website: www.colopex.com/

Pennsylvania: June 18-19

SCOPEX, Mount Nittany Philatelic Society, American Philatelic Society, 100 Match Factory Place, Bellefonte.

Contact: Don Heller

Email:

heller5720@yahoo.com

Maryland: September 2-4

BALPEX 2022, Baltimore Philatelic Society, Baltimore Hunt Valley Inn, 245 Shawan Rd., I-83 Exit 20 East, Hunt Valley. *WSP*

Contact: Carroll Browne

Email: carrollbrowne@aol.com

Website:

www.balpex.org

New Jersey: September 10

Clifton Fall 2022 Stamp Coin Cover Currency Postcard Collectables Show, Clifton Stamp Society, Clifton Community Recreation Center, 1232 Main Ave., Clifton.

Contact: Tom Stidl

Email: stidl@verizon.net

Website: www.clifton-stamp-society.org/

New York: October 2

Hilton Stamp Show & Philatelic Open House, Western Monroe Philatelic Society, Hilton Exempts Club, 135 South Ave., Hilton.

Contact: Dave Bombard

Email: dbombarl@rochester.rr.com

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

I hope everyone is enjoying this issue of the Excelsior! We have a nice diversity of articles as you can see, and I think I can say we all appreciate the authors who contributed.

That said, I want to encourage everyone to send us an article (the email address is nyspostal@gmail.com). It does not have to be a long and complex article; short is fine.

And, since I am admittedly a pure novice when it comes to postal history, I am pretty open to any article that tells some aspect of interesting philately connected to New York state. I KNOW you have some pretty neat stuff in your collections and the Excelsior! is the perfect place to share those items.

I have experience with helping collectors tell their stories – big and small. I want to hear from you.

That said, here is a simple list of Do's and Don'ts. I admit it's a little long, but these are truly simple suggestions.

Always feel free to send notes and explanations separate from your articles and images. They are helpful.

Here are some guidelines:

Send your article as a text document (I prefer Microsoft Word) with **NOTHING embedded**. That means do NOT send a PDF or image of your articles, and do NOT embed charts, images, photos or graphs of any kind in the document. They are pretty much unusable.

Send **images as separate files**. These should be high resolution at least 300 dpi; 600 dpi is better. Jpegs work well and I have had luck with TIFF format.

For contrast, most items would be best scanned against a dark background with at least a quarter inch space around.

Please write captions and feel free to use figure numbers (it helps for my organization!) But realize I may not use the figure numbers for the publication.

Just use plain Times New Roman for your text document. Do **NOT use** highlighting, colored type, boldface, fancy fonts. I just have to change them all.

I **won't** even consider working with a **PDF**, so don't bother.

If you are using some kind of a chart, feel free to make a sample and send it. But that text is likely not useable to me, so please send all of that text as a separate document.

Do not try to format your article (wrap text, do anything fancy). Just send text and images.

If you want to send a copy of your story and images all laid out as you like it, please do so. It's nice to see that, but realize that most times it will change.

If I need to make any significant changes (or suggested changes) I will let you know so we can chat about these before publication.

Do **NOT put any headers or footers** on your pages. They are annoying and difficult to work with and I just have to work around them and cuss all the while. As for style items, for MOST things, I use The Associated Press Stylebook and first spellings in Merriam-Webster.

IHA – so, please don't ... Oh, that means I HATE ACRONYMS. Most are not easily digested. (A few well-known ones are OK on second reference – U.S. FBI CIA USPS UPUM etc.).

Do NOT use mathematical symbols – things like =, +, <, etc. aren't helpful.

OK – here's a tough one. I am **NOT a fan of footnotes or endnotes**. First, if you do try to sneak these in, do NOT use Microsoft formatting - just put something like a (1) at the end of the sentence and you boldface that so I can see it.

Formatted footnotes are very difficult to work with. If you want to make a reference, just say so, journalistic style.

For example: The Post Office Department on August 1, 1958, raised the cost of postage for a 1-ounce letter from 3 cents to 4 cents. (1) OK – this is pretty simple and this one might not even call for ANY reference, BUT if we want to reference you could site the reference in the text as in "... 2 cents to 4 cents," according to the XXXXXXXXX. AND/OR just list that reference at the end of your article under "Resources."

Anything that slows the reader down — acronyms, symbols, footnotes) is bad.

COVER STORY



The folded lettersheet traveled in the spring of 1840 from Baltimore to New York City to England before arriving in Scotland. Below, the arrival stamp on the reverse.

Charles J. DiComo, PhD.

Here is an interesting international folded letter sent by ship just days prior to the start of the Penny Black era. In fact, while this cover was aboard a ship bound to the United Kingdom, the Penny Black – the

stamp that changed mass communication across the world – came into existence.

The cover – bound for Annan, Scotland, near Dumfriesshire – was written on April 1, 1840 in Baltimore, Maryland, and entered the mail the next day.

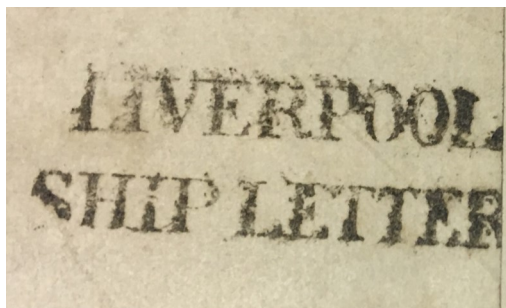
A postal clerk added the red circular datestamp at upper left of “BALTIMORE APR 2 MD,” along with the red “PAID” and “18¾ ” at upper right, indicating U.S. inland postage paid to New York City.

At the lower left, the sender added in manuscript, “Via New York packet of the 4th.”

When the letter reached New York, a clerk added the red circular datestamp of “NEW-YORK APL 3.” This is another case where “APL” was used for April instead of “APR.”

The cover was placed in the mails and carried by the Black Ball Line sailing packet Europe, under command of Capt. Marshall. On April 13, it departed New York.

The letter went on a 26-day transatlantic voyage. Toward the end of that journey the Penny Black – the world’s first official national postage stamp came into



being. Post offices began selling the stamp on May 1 and it went into formal use on May 6.

Three days later, on May 9, our letter from Baltimore arrived in Liverpool, where the clerk stamped “LIVERPOOL SHIP LETTER” on the re-

verse. An “8” – for the amount of postage due – was written in black by the clerk in Liverpool and shows on the front of the folded lettersheet at the center atop the red “PAID.”

From here, the letter jostled 140 miles via overland coach to Annan, Scotland, near Dumfriesshire, where the recipient paid 8 pence postage due.

The writer was Johns Messenger Holme (who sent his letter from 67 Lexington St., Baltimore, in care of Johns M. Daley, Esq.).

He writes to his Aunt Mrs. Oliver to discuss family business, moving from Philadelphia to Baltimore in February 1840 and the “Parks Gates” estate in Annan.

Annan Castle formed the original home of the “Brus” family, later known as the “Bruces,” lords of Annandale, which most famously produced Robert the Bruce (1274-1329).

It was at Annan in December 1332, nearly three years after Robert’s death, that supporters of Bruce’s son, King David II, overwhelmed Balliol’s forces to bring about the end of the first invasion of Scotland in the Second War of Scottish Independence.