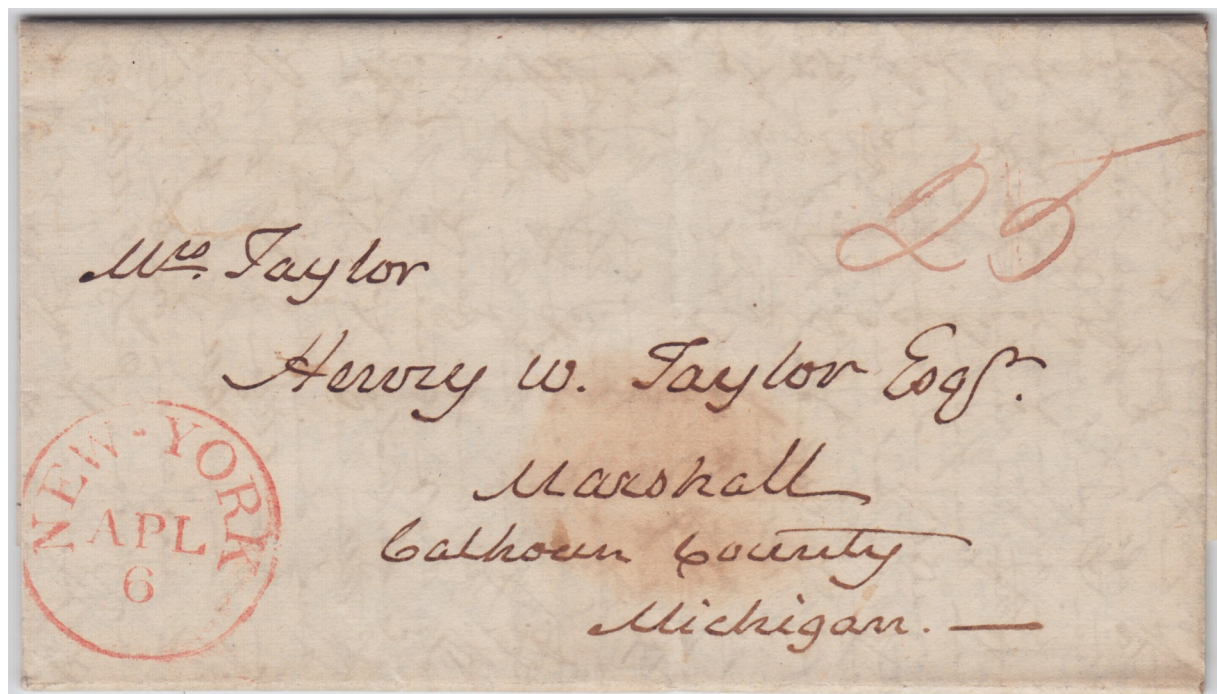


# Excelsior!

October 2022

Whole No. 36 New Series



A stampless letter mailed April 6, 1841 from New York City to Michigan has several interesting facets.

## Single Cover Shares Many Tales

By Charles J. DiComo, PhD

Though it looks somewhat innocuous at first glance, here is a somewhat wild and impressive piece from the stampless era with links to New York City, Canandaigua, Massachusetts and Michigan. It's amazing how a single piece can take us down so many paths.

So, let's unravel this piece of postal history.

The single-sheet folded letter entered the mail stream on April 6, 1841 in New York City. A postal clerk added the 27 millimeter red circular datestamp with an abbreviated month of "APL," instead of the more widely used "APR," for April. There is a manuscript "25" (cents) at top right to pay the U.S. inland rate



A black wax seal (coloring slightly enhanced) shows a sailing ship, very appropriate to come from a shipping merchant.  
for more than 400 miles.

The letter is addressed to Mrs. Taylor, in care of Henry W. Taylor, Esq., Marshall, Calhoun County, Michigan. It is sealed with a handsome black wax seal with an image

of a sailing vessel in the center and the business name of Masters & Markoe & Co. New York.

The letter writer, Thomas Masters – well, at least one of the letter writers – was a distinguished shipping merchant, hence the black-wax seal.

Masters & Markoe was a mercantile house that operated throughout the early 19th century, primarily involved with the importation of sugar from Santa Cruz (St. Croix). It operated in New York City from about 1825 to 1836, when the firm became Masters, Markoe & Co.

Thomas Masters and Francis Markoe were joined, at different times, by their sons, Samuel Caldwell Masters



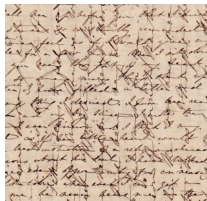
# Excelsior!

The Journal of the Empire State Postal History Society

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**Charles J. DiComo, PhD:** A cover filled with crazy crisscross writing and a very cool black wax seal has many tales to tell.

**Cover, Page 14**



**Charles J. DiComo, PhD and Terry Shaw, PhD:** Whoever heard of a post office being in service for just one day? A single cover tells the tale about this post office whose name is

linked to huge summer crowds but was once a quiet little ocean hideaway on Long Island. **Page 3**

**It's show time:** Itching to get out to a show or a bourse? There are several options in New York and surrounding states in the coming weeks. **Pages 13, 14**

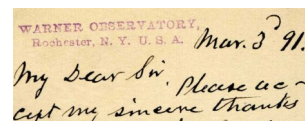
**Jeff Stage:** The end-of-year holidays are just around the corner so it's the right time to share a couple of interesting items from a Christmas collection. **Page 6**



**Martin H. Joyce:** Remember our nation's bicentennial celebration back in 1976? (Believe it or not, we're just four years from the our 250th!) Here's an article that shares much about a slew of bicenten-

nial postage stamps, though surprisingly, not one for an important New York site — West Point. **Page 7**

**Douglas Penwell:** This article links us to the heavens above as a postal card sent overseas was written by a native New Yorker who became a well-known astronomer who co-discovered a well-known comet. **Page 15**



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dated from January to June. For applications dated July to December terms are for 1 ½ years with a fee of \$30 (\$35 for non-U.S. addresses). Advertising is accepted. For ads, please contact the society secretary.

Describing condition defects is a bit tricky. The idea is to not write a novel describing the condition of a cover.

— Jim Forte, postal history dealer and researcher.

**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. See Page 16 for details.



High Hill Beach, Long Island, circa 1910 (above) and surf bathing at High Hill Beach, circa 1915 (below).

## A One-Day Wonder

Name of post office on Long Island became Jones Beach for a single day in 1932

By Charles J. DiComo, PhD  
and Terry Shaw, PhD

Jones Beach, New York today is a popular New York State Park in Nassau County that receives some 6 million visitors a year to its sandy beaches and other attractions.

Its location makes Jones Beach the busiest beach on the East Coast. Just 26 miles from the borough of Queens, or 38 miles to Manhattan's Central Park, Jones Beach's face to the Atlantic Ocean offers a convenient opportunity to escape the sweltering urban areas of Greater New York to relax in the sea air; that's if you can take the crowds.

This is a far cry from 90 years ago when the area off Long Island was more commonly known as High



Hill Beach and had some 80 mostly private cottages along its shores, as can be seen in the postcards shown.

But everything changed in 1939,

though, when urban planner Robert Moses, then chairman of the Long Island State Park Commission, bought this land and created Jones

Staff members pose in front of Savage's Hotel and Casino at High Hill Beach on this picture postcard, circa 1915. The resort community mostly had private summer cottages in the early 20th century.



Beach.

But let's go back to the early part of the 20th century. The beach did boast Savage's Hotel & Casino, and the area was known for being lax on prohibition laws. But the area remained a mostly hidden gem and with those sleepy summer cottages were enjoyed by a relatively few.

The mostly summertime residents were provided mail service from the High Hill Beach Post Office that opened in 1915. From 1919 to its closure in 1940 the post office was under the charge of Postmaster John Alder Haff, better known as "Jiggie." And then, for some unknown reason, a change was made.

In the May 5, 1932 edition of the Postal Bulletin, notice was given that the name of the High Hill Beach Post Office would be changed to Jones Beach effective June 1, 1932.

Similarly, the Official Postal Guide for 1932 lists Jones Beach as Post Office number 24717, a summer Post Office in Nassau County starting on June 1, 1932. This date was likely the scheduled opening for the summer seasonal post office as such locations



Ferry boat captain and Postmaster John "Jiggie" Alder Haff (1872-1954). From album of Paula Haff Fraziers Photos (Geni.com).

generally operated from June through September.

But not so fast, as again for reasons unknown the June 1, 1932 edition of The Postal Bulletin rescinded this action, reverting the name of the post office back to High Hill Beach. Thus, Jones Beach was the name of the Post Office for one day only -- June 1, 1932.

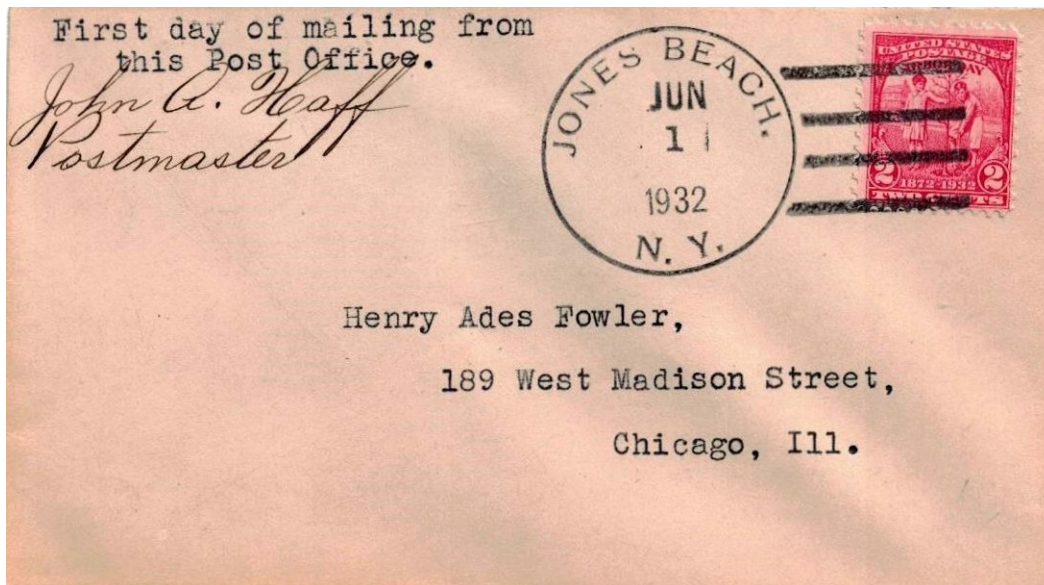
That the post office did provide services that day under its new name is documented by the cover shown at the top of Page 5 that was signed by Postmaster Haff. In his checklist of all known seasonal Post Offices, Smith lists the High Hill Beach Post Office, but not Jones Beach.

At present, this cover with its Jones Beach 4-bar cancel is the only mail sent from this Post Office that we have been able to document. Furthermore, we are unaware of any other Post Offices that, other than per-

haps for ceremonial purposes, only operated for a single day, although the seasonal Post Office in Tigiwon, Colorado apparently often operated

**Post Office Name Changed**  
(Rescind)  
**NEW YORK**  
High Hill Beach, Nassau County. The order appearing in Bulletin 15899 changing the name of this office to Jones Beach, effective June 1, 1932, has been rescinded.

Excerpt from the June 1, 1932 edition of The Postal Bulletin.



A first day and last day cover with a Jones Beach circular datestamp from June 1, 1932 and a four-bar cancellation tying a 1932 2-cent Arbor Day Issue (Scott 717). A notation at upper left corner states: "First day of mailing from this Post Office." And is signed, "John A. Haff, Postmaster."

for only a single day each year.

It seems that the recipient of this cover, Henry Ades Fowler, was likely the philatelist who in 1893 edited the first edition of the *Canadian Journal of Philately*. That he was still living in the 1930s is documented by a notation in the December 1948 edition of the *Journal of the British North American Philatelic Society*:

A new member of the Society is Henry Ades Fowler of Hartford, Mich. Mr. Fowler is an "old timer" and published the *Canadian Journal of Philately* and the *International Philatelist* as long ago as 1893. He is the only living charter member of the Toronto Stamp Collector's Club which was formed in 1892. Mr. Fowler has maintained his interest in stamps over the years and is continually adding to his stamp collection.

Census data confirms that a Henry Ades Fowler, who was born in Canada, did live in Chicago during this period.

And now for some speculation. Perhaps Mr. Fowler read the May 5, 1932 *Postal Bulletin* and noticed the change of name for this post office. Wanting a postmark from the new post office, he

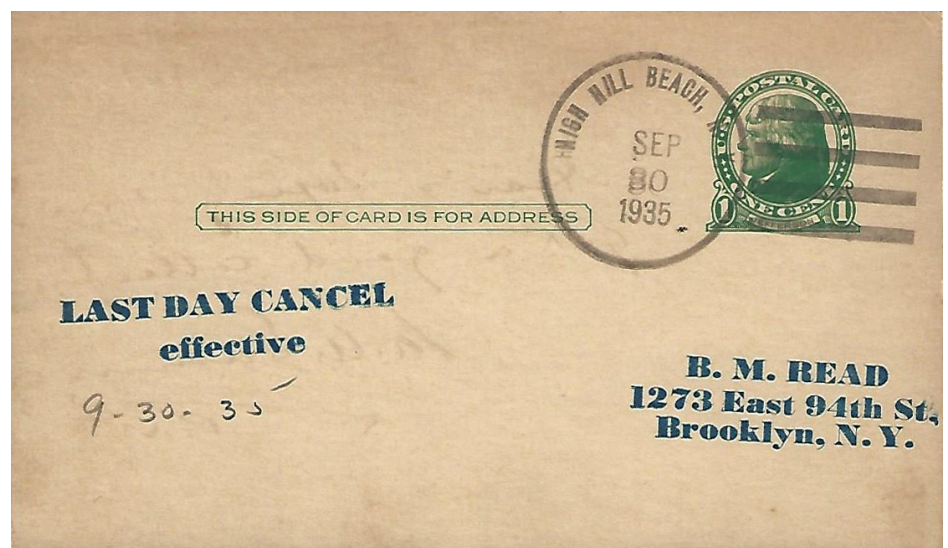
sent a letter to the listed postmaster with a pre-stamped cover enclosed and asked the postmaster to cancel the cover on the first day of operation for the post office under its new name. Collectors making such requests often asked the postmaster to sign the cover as well to document the first day cancel.

After its brief life as Jones Beach, this post office reverted back to High Hill Beach and continued to operate under this name until 1940, closing for good soon after creation of the Jones Beach State Park.

The final image shows a postcard that sent from the High Hill Beach Post Office on September 30, 1935. The "Last Day" auxiliary marking on the postcard reflects the seasonal closure of this summertime only post office.

If others have more information regarding the Jones Beach Post Office, please let us know.

#### Page 6: Authors' bios, acknowledgements, references.



A last-day-of-use postcard from the High Hill Beach Post Office, dated September 30, 1935. (Courtesy of Frank Braithwaite.)

## A Little Holiday Cheer

By Jeff Stage

One of my way-too-many areas I collect is Christmas. So here is a little holiday cheer from our own New York state, dated 90 years apart.

The first is a piece of regular mail postmarked Christmas Day 1863 from Buffalo.

Back then, Christmas was not a national holiday. I have read that postmasters had the option to be open. Obviously, the Buffalo postmaster thought it was important to open, thus we have this 5 ¼ inch by 2 ¾ inch envelope heading off to a woman in Brooklyn.

The other item is from the North Pole; not the real one, but the one near Lake Placid in the Adirondacks. The holiday theme park opened in 1949 and in 1953 was granted its status as a rural postal station, “effective Dec. 16, 1953,” according to the December 10 U.S. Postal Bulletin.



A pair of Christmas covers 90 years apart: At top, a first-time event cover from North Pole, N.Y. in 1953; and some regular mail postmarked Christmas Day 1863.

### Jones Beach Acknowledgements:

Members of the Empire State Postal History Society, especially Frank Braithwaite, Diane DeBlois, Tom Mazza, Gene DeSalvo, David Williams, Joel Harrington and John Schorn, who after Charles reached out via email with a “request for more information” on the Jones Beach cover, each supplied details which added color to the story.

### About the Authors

**Charles J. DiComo, PhD**, is a lifelong philatelist, postal historian and award-winning author. He enjoys researching, restoring, writing, publishing, and presenting on a broad array of philatelic and postal history topics. He is president of the Empire State Postal History Society; president of the Philatelic Society of Lancaster County (Pennsylvania); a life member of the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society and editor-in-chief of its newsletter, *The Chairman's Chatter*; on the board of the Pennsylvania Postal History Society and a 30-year-plus member of the American Philatelic Society. A native New Yorker, he currently resides in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, with his wife of 25 years, Kathleen, and their daughters, McKenna and Mia.

**Terry Shaw, PhD**, is a longtime mem-

ber, past president and auction manager for the Alaska Collectors Club, a group that specializes in the postal history of the state. He is also a past president of the Gastineau Philatelic Society in Juneau, Alaska and a 25-year-plus member of the American Philatelic Society. Now retired and living in central Oregon he is a charter member of the Central Oregon Postal Collective. In retirement, Terry enjoys selling stamps and covers on eBay, where is known as “AKPHL.”

### Resources

The Postal Bulletin, May 5, 1932, Vol. 53, Issue 15899, denoting the Post Office Name Change of High Hill Beach, Nassau County, NY to Jones Beach, NY, effective June 1, 1932 (last viewed April 19, 2022) [http://www.uspostalbulletins.com/PDF/Vol53\\_Issue15899\\_19320505.pdf#search=%2215899%22](http://www.uspostalbulletins.com/PDF/Vol53_Issue15899_19320505.pdf#search=%2215899%22).

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What about that name...High Hill?, by Fred Schwab (last viewed April 19, 2022) [http://www.highhillstriperclub.com/history\\_name.htm](http://www.highhillstriperclub.com/history_name.htm).

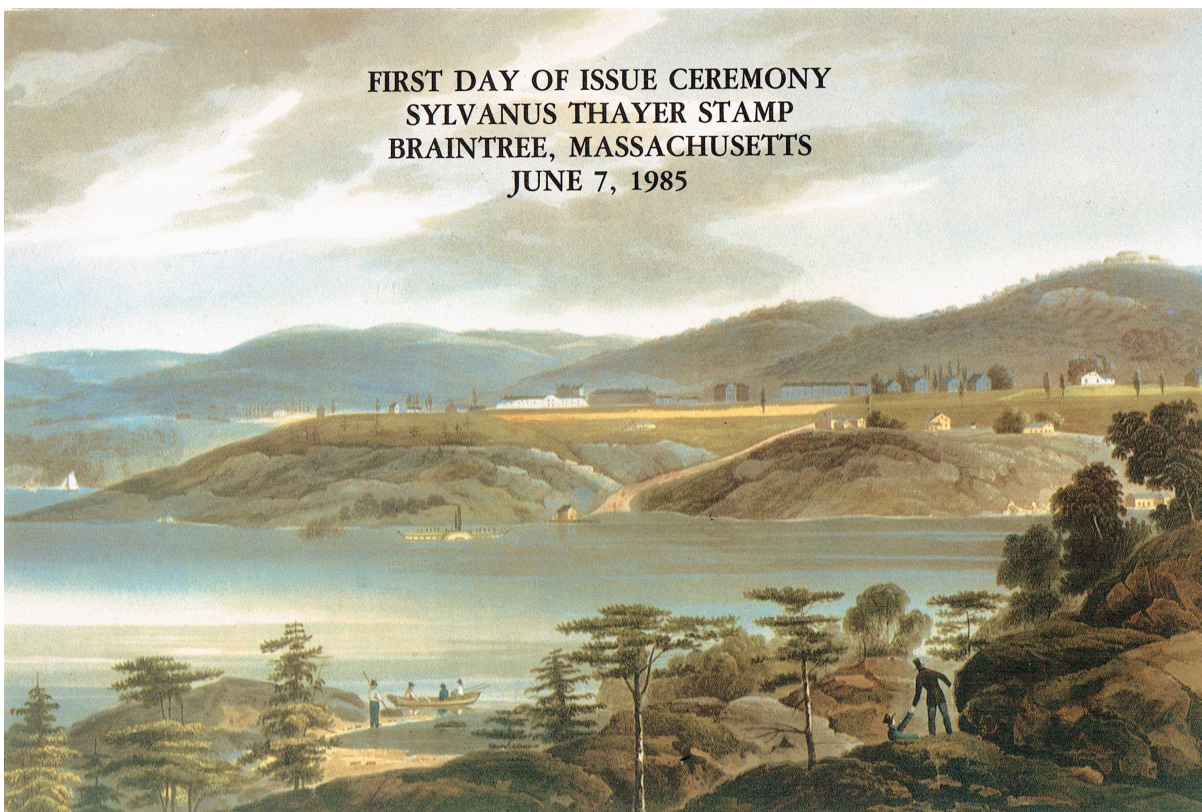
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**FIRST DAY OF ISSUE CEREMONY  
SYLVANUS THAYER STAMP  
BRAINTREE, MASSACHUSETTS  
JUNE 7, 1985**



An aquatint engraving from 1825-1835 showing a view of West Point from Constitution Island (foreground) attributed to John Hill from a painting by Guy Wall, courtesy of the U.S. Military Academy. This image was used on the front of the program for the formal dedication in 1985 of the Sylvanus Thayer postage stamp.

# The American Revolution Bicentennial

## ... and the West Point Stamp that Never Was

By Martin H. Joyce

In November 2020, while researching background material for “Postmarked West Point: A U.S. Postal History of West Point and its Graduates” in the online files of the National Postal Museum, I came across a folder titled Stamp Advisory Committee – West Point of the Hudson, dated July 23, 1973.

The description of the folder read, “West Point American Revolution Bicentennial committee recommends a commemorative stamp for the role West Point played in the American Revolution.”

What was this?

The only stamp honoring West Point up to that point was the 5-cent value in the 1936-37 Army-Navy series featuring the U.S. Military Academy. What was the “West Point American Revolution Bicentennial committee” and what happened to the request? An initial request to the National Postal Museum proved fruitless – the Covid lockdown did not allow staff access into the building.

However, I was assured that as soon as they were permitted back into the building they would process my request.

Ten months later I received an email from Baasil Wilder, the museum’s librarian (and a 1996 West Point graduate), with a PDF of the sole document included in the file: a letter dated July 23, 1973 from West Point Superintendent Lieutenant General William Knowlton (USMA 1943) to Postmaster General Elmer T. Klassen.

In the letter, Knowlton recommended that “the United States Postal Service issue a commemorative stamp on 10 June 1975 in recognition of the significant contribution that the fortifications located on Constitution Island and ‘the West Point of the Hudson’ made in defending the Hudson River and the Highlands during the American Revolution.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus began my investigation to determine the background behind the request, and what happened subsequently. Aided by staff at the West Point Library Archives, the story began to unfold.

Formal plans for celebrating America’s bicentennial began when Congress created the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission on July 4, 1966.

**WEST POINT, NEXT PAGE**

Though the Bicentennial celebration was initially planned as a single city exposition (Expo '76) in either Philadelphia or Boston, more than six years passed without a firm direction.

Eventually, Congress dissolved the commission in December 1973, and replaced it with the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, which was charged with encouraging and coordinating separate individual activities. In the meantime, numerous states and government organizations had already organized committees and plans to celebrate the Bicentennial.

The New York State American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, established in 1968, was among the early committees. In addition to “observances, ceremonies, and other activities to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of the American Revolution,” the commission broadened its role to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the creation of the state of New York (July 9, 1776).<sup>2</sup>

Two years later, in 1970, shortly after assuming the role of superintendent, Knowlton appointed his own West Point American Revolution Bicentennial Committee to begin planning a bicentennial program for West Point. Appropriately, the committee chair was Colonel Thomas E. Griess (USMA 1943), professor and head of the History Department. The History Department had only recently been established in 1969, and Griess was the first department head.<sup>3</sup> The committee’s goal was:

“... to examine and set in historical perspective our national origins, values and accomplishments, making the fruits of such examination available to the public



Figure 1. The Battle of Brooklyn (Scott 1003), issued December 10, 1951. Figure 2 (right). The Battle of White Plains (Scott 629), issued October 18, 1926.

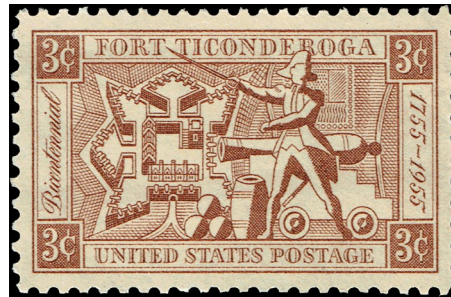


Figure 3. Bicentennial of Fort Ticonderoga (Scott 1071), issued September 18, 1955.

as practicable ... Largely by stressing the role of the Army and the significance of West Point in the American Revolution.”<sup>4</sup>

When the name “West Point” is mentioned today, it usually brings to mind the U.S. Military Academy. However, this institution was not founded until 1802, long after the American Revolution. In his letter to Klassen, Knowlton includes a detailed discussion of West Point’s Revolutionary War importance:

“ ‘The West Point of the Hudson’ as it was commonly referred to during the early part of the American Revolution, and Marteleur’s Rock (later to be known as Constitution Island) were singled out by Washington and other military and civilian leaders as key defensive positions primarily because of the Hudson River’s unusual channel at that location. Flowing southward, the river suddenly turns to the east for approximately a quarter of a mile, passing by Constitution Island on the left and West Point on the right. Once having negotiated these two landmarks the river again turns to



Figure 4. Burgoyne at Saratoga (Scott 644), based on “Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga” (c. 1822) by John Trumbull, issued August 3, 1927.

the south. Any ship attempting to sail north through this narrow channel must come to an almost complete standstill while adjusting its sails and fighting the river’s current and crosswinds. In negotiating this part of the river a ship is highly vulnerable to fortified gun positions located on Constitution Island or at West Point.

... The colonists also understood the importance of the Hudson River and its surrounding Highlands. As early as 25 May 1775, the Continental Congress, after extensive discussions on the subject, directed that the New York Provincial Congress determine suitable locations for fortifications in the Highlands for the expressed purpose of restricting river traffic. In compliance with that directive, the New York Provincial Congress on 30 May 1775 ordered Colonel James Clinton and Mr. Christopher Tappan to undertake the difficult task of locating proper sites ‘for erecting one or more fortifications’ in the Highlands area. On 10 June 1775, Clinton and Tappan submitted their proposal to the Provincial Congress and ‘recommended that a post capable of containing three hundred men [be] erected on [Marteleur’s Rock] and another on the west side [West



**Figure 5.** Remnants of the Great Chain on display at West Point, as seen in a 1901 stereoscope photograph. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress.)

Point] of said river to contain two-hundred men.’”<sup>5</sup>

These decisions by the Continental Congress occurred only weeks after the battles of Lexington and Concord.

Over the next two years, several significant battles took place near both ends of the Hudson River. In August 1776, the Battle of Brooklyn, the first military action between the British and Continental armies after the signing of the Declaration of Independence was issued on July 4, forced Washington to evacuate the western end of Long Island and cede the area to the British [Figure 1]. British General William Howe continued to pursue Washington and his troops, and caused Washington to retreat further following the Battle of White Plains in October 1776 [Figure 2].

In June 1777, British General John Burgoyne marched south from Quebec in what would become the Saratoga Campaign. Along the way, British troops successfully forced the Continental Army to abandon Fort Ticonderoga near the south end of Lake Champlain. Originally built by the French in 1755, Fort Ticonderoga had played a key role in the French and Indian Wars [Figure 3].

However, by August, Washington had reinforced General Horatio Gates’ Continental forces near Saratoga, along the Hudson River about 140 miles north of West Point. In the second of two battles



**Map of West Point, c. 1780.** This map shows the bottleneck for river traffic created by the successive 90-degree bends in the Hudson River at West Point. Fort Clinton (renamed from Fort Arnold) is near the center of the map, and Fort Putnam is situated on the higher ground on the lower left. The placement of the Great Chain can be seen from the bank of the river just north of Fort Clinton across to Constitution Island. (Courtesy the New York Public Library, Digital Collections.)

fought in September and October, Gates defeated the British forces. Burgoyne’s surrender is depicted in a well-known painting by American artist John Trumbull [Figure 4].

The strategic importance of the Hudson River was clear. Any substantial movement of the British army northward on could have a devastating effect. A significant undertaking to block the river included the construction of a large iron chain to be stretched across the Hudson River, initially at Fort Montgomery, several miles south of West Point, near the present-day Bear Mountain Bridge. Although this first effort failed, the tactic was deemed sound. In 1778, the “Great Chain,” supported by large log rafts, was stretched across the Hudson from West Point to Constitution Island [Map and Figure 5].

## WEST POINT, FROM PAGE 9

Additional defenses, largely designed by and constructed under the leadership of Polish-Lithuanian Col. Tadeusz Kościuszko, were completed in 1778-1779. The primary fortifications included Fort Arnold, overlooking the river, and Fort Putnam, situated to the west on higher ground allowing a view of the entire area. (Fort Arnold, named for General Benedict Arnold, was renamed Fort Clinton following Arnold's treason in 1780).

The area and the fortifications were considered of such importance that George Washington maintained his headquarters at West Point from July to November 1779.

In addition to the stamps shown here depicting New York-based battles and forts, others issued between 1925 and 1931 during the American Revolution sesquicentennial commemorated the battles of Lexington and Concord, Vermont's sesquicentennial (depicting the Battle of Bennington), the surrender of Fort Sackville to George Rogers Clark (near present-day Vincennes, Indiana), and Cornwallis' surrender at



Figure 6. American Revolution Bicentennial stamp (Scott No. 1432), issued July 4, 1971.



Figures 8 and 9. A first day cover for the Military Services Bicentennial stamps (Scott 1565-1568), and the Continental Army Uniform stamp (Scott 1565), issued July 4, 1975.

Yorktown. Furthermore, the Battle of Bunker Hill was commemorated with two stamps in 1959 and 1968.

The U.S. Postal Service – technically named so as of July 1, 1971 – was to play a key role in keeping the historical events of America's Revolution in front of the

public. On July 4, 1971, it issued the first in a series of stamps commemorating America's first 200 years, featuring the official emblem of the celebrations [Figure 6]. Over the next 12 years, concluding with the anniversary of the 1783 Treaty of Paris (ending the Revolutionary War) the USPS would release more than 100 stamps recognizing significant moments in history, famous individuals, and cultural themes related to our nation's birth.

Though the official request for a West Point stamp was submitted by Knowlton, the inspiration for the idea came from Captain Martin W. Andresen (USMA 1965), an instructor in the history Department<sup>6</sup> who was also a stamp collector.<sup>7</sup> As a historian, he likely was also someone who recognized

the educational impact that stamps commemorating historical events could have. Awareness of the earlier stamps depicting Revolutionary War activities may have led to a feeling of confidence among the committee regarding the request.

Hardly a week after sending his original request, Knowlton received a letter from Postmaster General Klassen dated July 31, 1973. It was a fairly standard response, stating, "Thousands of requests for commemorative stamps are received annually. Of course, only a limited number can be issued each year. ... This proposal will be presented to



Figure 7. West Point American Revolution Bicentennial Medallion. The design by West Point cartographer Edward J. Krasnoborski is based upon a map similar to the one shown in this article.

the [Citizens' Stamp Advisory] Committee. You can be sure it will be given the member's very careful study when the 1975 stamp program is developed."<sup>8</sup>

Ironically, Stevan Dohanos, design coordinator for the advisory committee at that time, had also created a variety of essays for the 1937 West Point stamp in the Army-Navy series.

Meanwhile, in August 1973, in addition to the West Point American Revolution Bicentennial Committee, Knowlton authorized the creation of a formal Bicentennial Office under the supervision of his deputy chief of staff for Operations. Lt. Col. John H. Bradley (USMA 1958), an assistant professor in the department of history, was appointed director of bicentennial activities. In this capacity he could act with authority on behalf of the academy in matters concerning the bicentennial.<sup>9</sup>

The groups' efforts focused largely on restoring the Revolutionary War fortifications at West Point – particularly Fort Putnam – as well as educational and historical research activities. Besides pursuing a postage stamp, commemorative activities included issuing a bronze, bicentennial medalion to be sold by the Association of Graduates (West Point's alumni organization) as a fundraiser [Figure 7].

Nearly a year and a half later, in a meeting with Bradley, Andresen reviewed discussions that he had had

with USPS personnel regarding a West Point stamp. The USPS had made the decision not to create a stamp featuring West Point, but instead would issue a block of four stamps recognizing all four of the Revolutionary War armed services. Though the USPS indicated that they would be willing to consider issuing these stamps at West Point, this did not happen.<sup>10</sup>

In a Postal Bulletin dated May 29, 1975, the USPS



**Figure 10.** Several American Bicentennial commemoratives show masterwork paintings. From the top, showing "The Dawn of Liberty" (1886) by Henry Sandham (1842-1910), issued April 19, 1975 (Scott 1563); "Herkimer at Oriskany" (1901) by Frederick Coffay Yohn (1875-1933), issued August 6, 1977 (Scott 1722); and, showing the 1777 battle, "Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga" (c. 1822), by John Trumbull (1756-1843). The stamp (Scott 1728) was issued October 7, 1977.

announced that it would issue four Military Services Uniforms Bicentennial commemorative stamps on July 4, 1975 in Washington, D.C. The block of four designs depicts uniforms worn by the Continental Army, Navy, Marines and American Militia during the Revolutionary War [Figure 8].<sup>11</sup> Although other bicentennial stamps had been issued from 1972 to 1974, the Military Services Uniforms stamps were the first of many bicentennial stamps to be issued with a military theme.

Ironically, the uniforms depicted in the issue date from 1779, and not 1775. In March 1779, the Continental Congress authorized George Washington to take action on uniforms. On October 2, 1779, Washington issued a General Order that fixed blue as the color for all branches of the service and all state regiments in the Continental Army (with different colors of facing for the states). The figure shown in the Continental Army stamp is wearing the colors of the lower Mid-Atlantic States [Figure 9].<sup>12</sup>

Nearly three months earlier, the USPS issued a stamp on April 19, 1975, featuring the painting "The Dawn of Liberty" by Henri Sandham, to mark the 200th anniversary of the battles of Lexington and Concord [Figure 10]. This design became the format for a series of stamps that would commemorate Revolutionary War battles, including New York state battles in Oriskany [Figure 10] and Saratoga [Figure 10], as well as those

in Trenton, Princeton and Yorktown.

A similar design for a West Point stamp may have looked like the one shown [Figure 11], depicting Fort Clinton on the left and Constitution Island near the center.

Why didn't the USPS choose to issue a West Point stamp?

Given the large number of bicentennial stamps that were issued, West Point's Bicentennial Committee was likely disappointed with this outcome. However, unless documentation can be found covering the discussions which may have occurred in the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee, the specific reasons for its decision will remain unknown.

However, an examination of each of the actual stamps depicting battles shows very clearly that each stamp commemorated a specific, significant battle or event that marked a turning point in the Revolutionary War.

West Point's strong, strategic defensive fortifications may have prevented such an event from happening. Because the British chose not to sail up the Hudson River, we will never know if the Great Chain and the overlooking gun emplacements at Fort Clinton and Fort Putnam would have resulted in the crucial defeat for which they were designed.

The USPS focused on decisive events, and for which there existed remarkable historical paintings. Such a decisive event never occurred at West Point, and based upon the author's research, there are no paintings of West Point depicting powerful military images from the period.

Perhaps the most notable – and notorious – event that did take place at West Point during the Revolutionary period occurred September 21-25, 1780.

On September 21, 1780, General Benedict Arnold, commander of West Point at the time, met with British Major John Andre to discuss handing West Point over to the British. The treason was uncovered two days later



Figure 11. A painting by Pierre L'Enfant – “Encampment of the Revolutionary Army on the Hudson River” (1782) – would appear on the author's concept for West Point American Revolution stamp.

Figure 12. This commemorative cover from Fleetwood marks the 200th anniversary of Benedict Arnold's treason at West Point. (Image courtesy of Brig. Gen. (ret) Mitchell Zais.)



Below, Figure 13. The 200th Anniversary of the U.S. Military Academy (Scott 3560), issued March 16, 2002.

when Andre was apprehended, and on September 25, 1780 Arnold defected to the British. The British made Arnold a Brigadier General with an annual pension of £360, and a lump sum of more than £6,000.

The U.S. Postal Service criteria for determining the eligibility of subjects for postage stamps states that stamps are intended to commemorate “... positive contributions to American life, history, culture and environment; therefore, negative occurrences and disasters will not be commemorated on U.S. postage stamps.”<sup>13</sup>

Though Benedict Arnold's treason clearly falls into the latter category, commemorative cover makers noted the bicentennial of Arnold's treason with special cachets and West Point hand-stamped postmarks [Figure 12].



For the Military Academy's own bicentennial celebration in 2002, the USPS released a stamp at West Point featuring the academy's coat of arms [Figure 13]. There is little likelihood of future stamps being issued to commemorate notable events at West Point other than similar anniversaries, as the stamp selection criteria specifically states, “Stamps for the major service academies will be considered on a case-by-case basis for 50-year anniversaries (or multiples thereof).”<sup>14</sup>

Today, West Point remains the longest continually operating military post in the United States. Although it

## Upcoming Stamp Bourses and Shows

(Courtesy American Philatelic Society)

### Pennsylvania October 15

Gettypex 2022, Blue and Gray Stamp Club, Gettysburg Fire Company, 35 North Stratton Street, Gettysburg.

**Contact:** Dwight L. Monn

**Email:** dmonn@pa.net

### New York October 16

Albany Spring Stamp and Postal History Show, Fort Orange Stamp Club, American Legion, 4 Everett Road, Albany.

**Contact:** Thomas Auletta

**Email:** azusacollectibles@yahoo.com

**Website:** www.fortorangestampclub.org/

### New York October 21-22

STEPEX 2022, Elmira Stamp Club and Mr. Stampman, American Legion Post, South 45 Olcott Road, Big Flats.

**Contact:** Wayne Nyre

**Email:** mrstampman1489@yahoo.com

### Connecticut October 23

Fourth Sunday Stamp Show, New Haven Philatelic Society, Annex Y.M.A Club, 554 Woodward Ave, New Haven.

**Contact:** Jesse Williams

**Email:** redgyphon@gmail.com

**Website:** http://nhps1914.com/

### Pennsylvania October 29

Eastern PA Stamp Show (EPASS), Allentown Philatelic Society, EPASS, 4550 Old Packhouse Road, Schnecksville.

**Contact:** Bill Harris

**Email:** wthiii3@rcn.com

**Website:** http://aps-lv-stamps.org

### Massachusetts October 29-30

Walpex, North East Federation of Stamp Clubs, Boxboro Regency, 242 Adams Place, Boxboro.

**Contact:** Norman Shufrin

**Email:** normshu@verizon.net

**Website:** https://www.walpex.org/

### Pennsylvania November 4-6

Aerophilately 2022, American Air Mail Society, American Philatelic

Society, and Daniel F. Kelleher Auctions, American Philatelic Center, 100 Match Factory Place, Bellefonte.

**Contact:** Stephen Reinhard, Show Chairman

**Email:** stephenreinhard42@gmail.com

**Website:** http://

www.americanairmailssociety.org

### New Jersey November 5

MSC Monthly Bourse, Merchantville Stamp Club, Martin Luther Chapel School Gym, 4100 Terrace Ave, Pennsauken.

**Contact:** Carol Anne Visalli

**Email:** cavisalli@yahoo.com

**Website:** https://

www.merchantvillestampclub.org/

### Pennsylvania November 5

Reading Stamp Show, Reading Stamp Collectors Club, Leesport Farmers Market, 312 Gernant's Church Road, Leesport.

**Contact:** David H. Hunt

**Email:** dhhunt@ptd.net

SHOWS, PAGE 14

## WEST POINT, FROM PAGE 12

gained its foothold in history during the American Revolution, it has earned its permanent place in history as our nation's finest leadership institution. As Douglas MacArthur said in his farewell address to the Corps of Cadets in 1962:

"Yours is the profession of arms, the will to win, the sure knowledge that in war there is no substitute for victory, that if you lose, the Nation will be destroyed ... For a century and a half you have defended, guarded and protected its hallowed traditions of liberty and freedom, of right and justice ... the very obsession of your public service must be Duty, Honor, Country."<sup>15</sup>

**THE AUTHOR.** Martin (Jay) Joyce is a 1974 graduate of the United States Military Academy. He is the author of *Postmarked West Point: A US Postal History of West Point and its Graduates*, and a variety of philatelic journal articles focused on West Point graduates and the

Military Academy. He specializes in philatelic material related to the U.S. Service Academies.

1. William A. Knowlton to Elmer T. Klassen, July 23, 1973, National Postal Museum Library, Third Assistant Postmaster General Files, Folder # 06-02-36, "West Point of the Hudson".

2. New York State American Revolution Bicentennial Commission Agency History Record. New York State Archives. WorldCat record id: 78125304 <https://snaccooperative.org/ark:/99166/w6z64mcg>.

3. "History of the Department of History," <https://www.westpoint.edu/academics/academic-departments/history/about>. Though history had long been taught at the Academy, it had focused largely on military history, and had been part of one department or another over the years.

4. William A. Knowlton, "Superintendent's Letter," *ASSEMBLY*, XXXI, no. 3 (December 1972): inside front cover.

5. Knowlton Letter to Elmer T. Klassen.

6. John H. Bradley, Memorandum "Commemorative Postage Stamp," January 7, 1975, U.S. Military Academy Library Archives and Special Collections.

7. Martin W. Andresen, email to author, November 21, 2021.

8. Elmer T. Klassen to William A. Knowlton, July 31, 1973, U.S. Military Academy Library Archives and Special Collections.

9. "Bicentennial Programs," *ASSEMBLY*, XXXIII, no. 1 (June 1974): 26.

10. Bradley Memorandum.

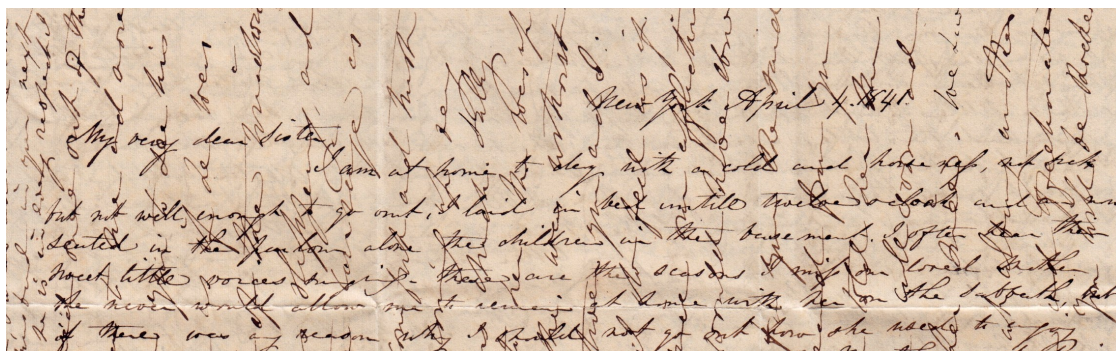
11. "10-Cent Military Services Bicentennial Commemorative Stamps," *USPS Bulletin* PB 21038, May 29, 1975, 1.

12. Samuel A. Tower, "Fighting Men of the Revolution," *The New York Times*, June 8, 1975, 36-37, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1975/06/08/105334682.html?pageNumber=144>.

13. Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee, "Stamp Subject Selection Criteria," <https://about.usps.com/who/csac/#criteria>.

14. Ibid. (Author's note: A stamp marking the 150th anniversary of the U.S. Naval Academy (Annapolis) was issued in 1995, and a stamp marking the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Air Force Academy was issued in 2004.)

15. Douglas MacArthur, "Duty, Honor, Country," Address to the West Point Corps of Cadets, May 12, 1962, <https://www.westpointaog.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=2229>.



A detail (left) from the letter below shows the crisscross writing. Below left, portrait of Henry W. Taylor (Courtesy of NY Courts).

## CRISSCROSS, FROM COVER

and Francis Markoe Jr., and by Jeremiah Wilbur, a son-in-law of Masters. The firm of Masters, Markoe & Co. continued until 1846, when it became Markoe, Wilbur & Scott.

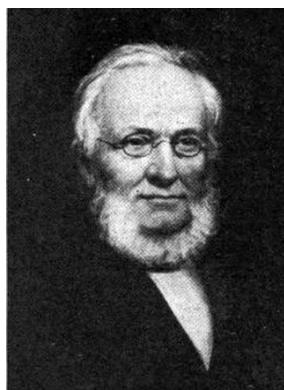
Upon unfolding the lettersheet we find an expansive use of crisscross writing to help cover every inch of paper. Every additional page in a letter added weight, and costs.

Criss-cross writing may have driven some folks mad, but this is how frugal people saved money before cost-savings postage measures were introduced on July 1, 1851.

The letter was mostly written by Thomas Masters and another – the writing is in two different hands – in a crisscross pattern, using as much of paper as possible. Details included are about family, business and looking around Orange and Dutchess counties to purchase a farm, etc. The letter-writer started on April 4, and ended on April 6, when it was posted.

Research led to all sorts of background material about those in this correspondence.

On the recipient side, there is Henry Wyllys Taylor (February 2, 1796-



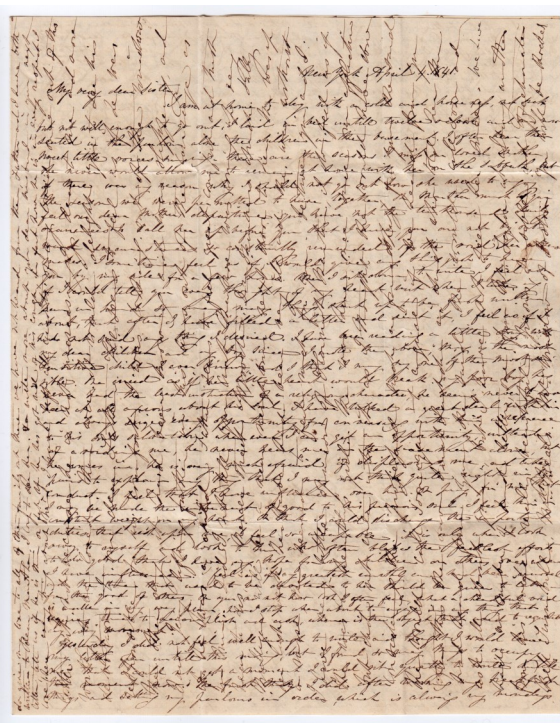
December 17, 1888), who was born in Deerfield, Massachusetts, to the Rev. John Taylor and Elizabeth Terry. After graduating from Yale University, he was admitted to the bar in 1819 and a year later

he opened his own law office in Canandaigua, New York, where he became a prominent attorney and judge.

In 1832, Taylor married Martha Caldwell Masters, the daughter of Thomas Masters and Isabella Caldwell. Henry Taylor was elected to the New York State Assembly annually from 1837 to 1840. Taylor and his family moved west in 1840 and lived in Marshall, Michigan until 1847. Taylor was elected to the Michigan Senate in 1846.

The Taylor family returned to Canandaigua around 1848 and Henry Taylor served as a justice of the New York State Supreme Court from 1856 to 1860. In 1869, he received an honorary law degree from his alma mater, Yale.

**Resource:** William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.



## SHOWS, FROM PAGE 13

### Pennsylvania November 5-6

Pittrex 2022, Philatelic Society of Pittsburgh, South Fayette Fire Hall, 661 Millers Run Road, Bridgeville.

**Contact:** Bryan Gross

**Email:** maxaugust@aol.com

**Website:** [https://](https://www.pittsburghstampclub.org/)

[www.pittsburghstampclub.org/](https://www.pittsburghstampclub.org/)

### New York November 19

Syracuse Stamp Show, Holiday Inn (formerly Maple Wood Inn) 400 Seventh North St., Liverpool (off Exit 36 of NYS Thruway, I-90)

Features dealers to buy, sell, or trade stamps. Door prizes, free admission and parking.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**Contact:** <http://syracusestampclub.org/syracuse-stamp-show/>

### New York November 19

Autumn Stamp Festival, Buffalo Stamp Club, The Knights Hall, 2735 Union Road, Cheektowaga.

**Contact:** Alan Davis

**Email:** ddavis504@roadrunner.com

**Website:** <https://buffalostampclub.org/>

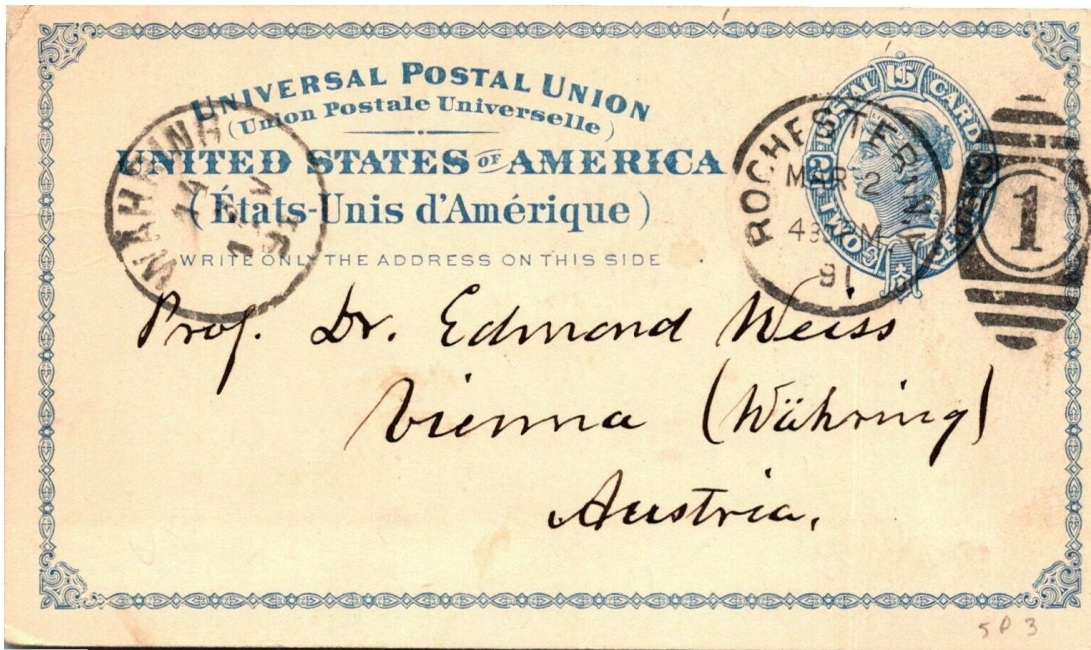


Figure 1. A mention of “comets” in an online marketplace for this postal card (Scott UX6) got the author’s attention. The card is addressed to Austria and bears a Rochester numeral duplex cancellation dated March 2, 1891. The handstamp on the card came late in the era when the Rochester Post Office used handstamps. The card is signed by astronomer Lewis Swift.

# An Astronomical Find

Close look at postcard from 1891 links us to the heavens

By Douglas Penwell

In previous articles, this writer has alluded to and mentioned dilemmas associated with having an advanced collection (regardless of specialty).

New items become increasingly difficult to locate and usually also increase in price. Having specialized in the Rochester area from a geographic perspective meant finding other things to collect.

In the early 1980s, when the collec-

tion began in earnest, it was a goal to find Scott numbers up to the Small Banknote issues (1890-1893) on cover. It is surprising how many stamps on cover are still absent from the collection.

It is always pleasant to acquire a “new” town (that is, a postmark from a post office that has not been seen previously). As an alternative, a manuscript town marking from a post office previously only acquired as a handstamp cancellation or a

handstamp from a town where a manuscript had been collected.

Alas, these possibilities become increasingly difficult as time goes by. This brings us to “the next best thing,” which in this case is historical content.

A recent item on eBay mentioned comets [Figure 1]. It is a postal card (UX6) addressed to Austria and bears a Rochester numeral duplex cancellation dated March 2, 1891.

Rochester used more than 20 different circular datestamps after the 1820s (Rochester was one of several towns, including Buffalo, Rome and Utica, to feature the use of oval datestamps in the stampless period).

The handstamp era ended in late 1891 when Rochester transitioned to the use of machine postmarking devices. (The example featured in this article is from March 1891.)

The signer of the message is Lewis Swift. For readers not familiar with many named comets (outside of Halley’s comet), comet Swift-Tuttle was discovered by two different individuals in July 1862.



Figure 2. Commercial cover from H.H. Warner, astronomer Lewis Swift’s patron.

ASTRONOMICAL, PAGE 16

The first of these astronomers was Lewis Swift. Comet Swift-Tuttle has made several appearances since that time; the next apparition will be in July 2126.

Swift was born in 1820 in the Monroe County community of Clarkson just north of Brockport and lived there for most of his life.

To fund his astronomical work, H.H. Warner became a patron. Warner was a seller of patent medicines after being in the safe business and sold Warner's Safe Remedies in 1889 (the names are coincidental – Warner's first company was safes for storing valuables and the next was related to the safety of the product).

Due to bad investments, Warner lost his fortune in the financial panic of 1893 and could no longer support Swift. An illustrated advertising cover from 1910 shows a basic design that was used from the 1880s onward [Figure 2]. Notice the use of Warner's Safe Cure at left.

After the loss of this support, Swift in 1894 moved his telescope to Mount Lowe in California. The Warner Observatory cost \$100,000 in 1883. You can see the violet-colored heading for the observatory on the message side of the card [Figure 3]. The building was demolished in 1931.

The text of the message is clear except for a term referring to one astronomer's name and nebulae (question marks added for these) and reads as follows:

Mar 3d 91  
My Dear Sir:

Please accept my sincere thanks for a copy of Argelanders Southern Zones. I have his D.M. but I was deficient in catalogues of stars – of the equator.

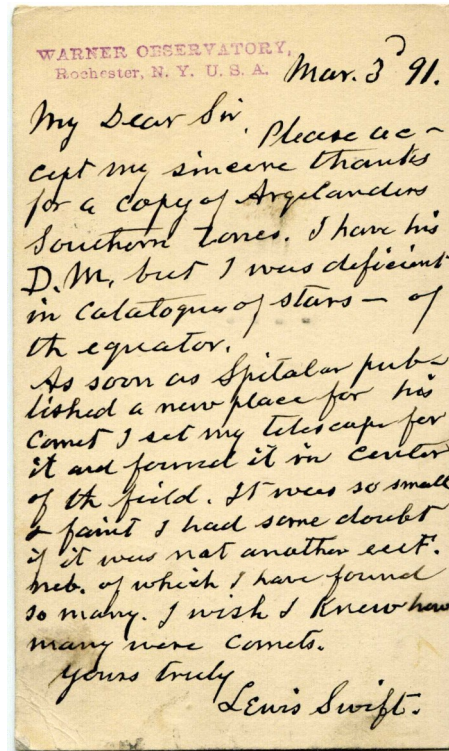


Figure 3. The message side of the card shown on Page 15.

As soon as Spitaler published a new place for his comet I set my telescope for it and found it in center of the field. It was so small & faint I had some doubt if it was not another ???F. neb. of which I have found so many. I wish I knew how many were comets.

Yours truly  
Lewis Swift

Comet Swift-Tuttle is on an orbit inclined slightly from the plane of the planets in our solar system and has an orbital period of 133 years. The last apparition was in 1992 and the next one is scheduled for 2126.

The annual Perseid meteor shower in August is due to particle debris left over from past appearances of the comet. The author encourages anyone with an interest in comets or astronomy to review the material available online, beginning with the Wikipedia article for this particular comet.

## Wanted: Your articles

Greetings everyone. I hope you are enjoying this latest edition of Excelsior! It was (mostly) a pleasure to put it together for you and I thank society President Charlie DiComo for helping out so much in regard to contributing and proofreading.

Speaking of contributing, that is the subject here today. I reached into the desk drawer labeled "Excelsior! Articles" and only found cracker crumbs, a paper clips, a few glassines and my favorite tongs. HELP!

Now is the time that you can be heard. Now is the time you can tell us all about that fabulous New York state cover you picked up for pittance 20 years ago. What about that special cover with the 111 postal markings (most from New York, of course) that is so dang crazy?

You get it — it's time to share..

Don't let all the fussy guidelines I noted in the April 2022 edition scare you off. Basically, I just need text on a document, some high-resolution images and a reasonably well-told tale. I can help with things like grammar, style and organization. Just pretend you are telling your club about something and instead share it with us. (OK, and maybe look at the tips on Page 19 of the April 2022 issue.)

You have plenty of time to pull it altogether. Our next edition will be April 2023, which means Charlie and I will put the journal together in March. If you circle Feb. 15 on your calendar, we should be able to make it work!

Any questions or if you want to chat about ideas? Contact me at [center-stage98@yahoo.com](mailto:center-stage98@yahoo.com) to let me know something is on the way; when it is done, send everything to the society email at [nyspostal@gmail.com](mailto:nyspostal@gmail.com).