

# Excelsior!

October 2023

Whole No. 38 New Series

**Figure 1.** A view of the New York State Fair in 1915. Events included agricultural promotion and judging, speeches, races, entertainment and amusements, such as the big wheel.



## Step Right Up and Explore Our Oldest State Fair

By Jeff Stage

My hometown of Syracuse, New York is not considered a travel destination, but it certainly has its notable benchmarks in business, history, education and personalities of all sorts.

Salt was the area's first industry dating back to 1797 and having its heyday in the 19th century, thus providing Syracuse's nickname as the Salt City. Typewriters, candles, Stickley furniture, Syracuse China, automotive parts and Carrier air conditioning are among the major industries that followed. Everything got bigger and grander when the Erie Canal cut through town 200 years ago.

And, there are deep roots. The Onondaga people, for whom our county is named, are part of the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) Confederacy, and have lived on this land since the 12th century.

The longest-running touchstone for Central New Yorkers is the New York State Fair (**Figure 1**).

The Fair's history and importance can be traced through philately, much of it on postcards, but also via advertising covers and special postal cancellations. Following, I offer some Fair history and its philately.

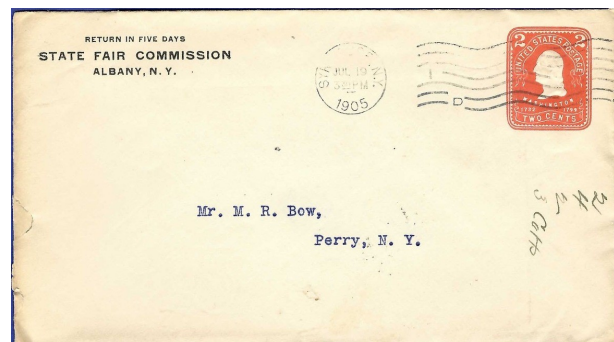
The Fair's first sponsor was the New York State Agricultural Society, founded in 1832 by a group of farmers, state legislators and others to promote agricultural improvement and local fairs.

Because Syracuse is near the center of the state – and had transportation links via the Erie Canal, coach roads and railroads – the society designated the then-village of 11,000 to host the nation's first State Fair on September 29 and 30 (a Wednesday and Thursday), 1841. Experts say as many as 15,000 visitors – many from the agricultural industries – visited that inaugural fair.

From 1842, the fair rotated among 11 cities, including New York City, Albany and Rochester.

By 1849, the second time Syracuse hosted, the fair remained with a focus on agriculture, but was embracing wider offerings, including speakers, a formal ball, demonstrations of new technology and just plain fun. A couple

STATE FAIR, PAGE 5



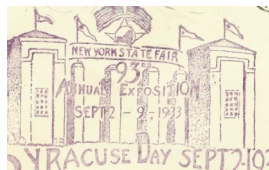
**Figure 2.** A cover sent from the State Fair Commission in 1905.



# Excelsior!

The Journal of the Empire State Postal History Society

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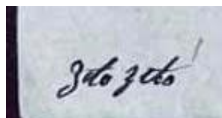


**Jeff Stage:** Postcards and covers connected with the New York State Fair — the country's oldest state fair — make for an eclectic mix in a specialized area that focuses on good times. **Cover, Page 3**

**Jim Peterson:** The author shows a survivor that was damaged in a mail room fire aboard a ship helps tell a tale. **Page 3**



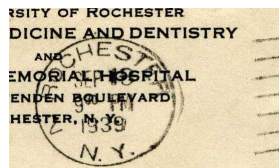
**It's show time:** Itching to get out to a show or a bourse? There are several options. **Page 2**



**Charles J. DiComo, PhD:** A stampless lettersheet written in 1840 and bound from Pennsylvania to Germany makes stops in New York and France.

The author makes sense of the numerous markings; well most of them. **Page 10**

**Douglas Penwell:** The author's interest in items from a specific city led him to a cover that looks pretty innocuous but offers a nice little story. **Page 12**



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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.

## STAMP SHOWS

(Courtesy American Philatelic Society)

### New York, October 14

OLEXPEX 2023, Olean Stamp Club, Bethany Lutheran Church, 6 Leo Moss Drive, Olean. **Contact:** John L. Leszak  
**Email:** oleanstampshow@yahoo.com

### New York, October 15

Albany Fall Stamp & Postcard Show, Fort Orange Stamp Club, American Legion Hall, Joseph E. Zaloga Post 1520, 4

Everett Road. Ext., Albany. **Contact:** Mike Krug; majkstamps@gmail.com

**Web:** http://www.fortorangestampclub.org/

### Pennsylvania, October 20-21

UNEXPO, American Philatelic Center, 100 Match Factory Place, Bellefonte.

**Contact:** Greg Galletti  
**Email:** unstampz1@gmail.com

**Website:** http://www.unpi.com/

### New York, October 20-21

Stepex 23, Elmira Stamp Club, Ameri-

can Legion, 45 South Olcott Road, Big Flats. **Contact:** Wayne Nyre

**Email:** mrstampman14891@yahoo.com

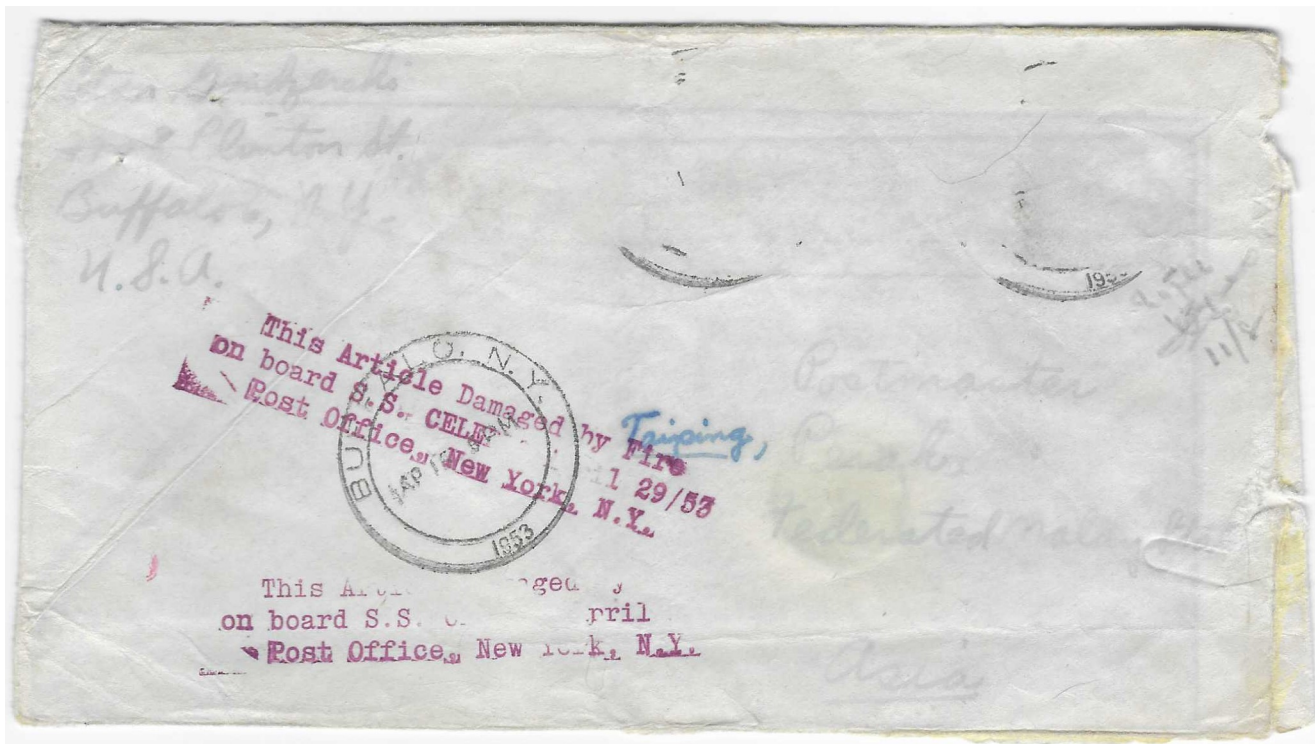
### New York, November 18

Autumn Stamp Festival, Buffalo Stamp Club, The Knights Events Center, 2735 Union Road, Cheektowaga. \*B\*

**Contact:** Alan Davis

**Email:** ddavis504@roadrunner.com

**Website:** www.buffalostampclub.org



This cover with a “Damaged by Fire” auxiliary marking and missing stamps was damaged in 1953 by a fire inside a ship’s mailroom. Of the 295 bags of mail onboard, 25 were destroyed and 18 were damaged by water.

## ‘Damaged by Fire’

Cover bound for Malaysia survived mailroom fire aboard ship in 1953

By Jim Peterson

The cover shown has an unusual marking that reads, “This Article Damaged by Fire/ on board S.S. CELEBES, April 29/53/ Post Office New York, N.Y.”

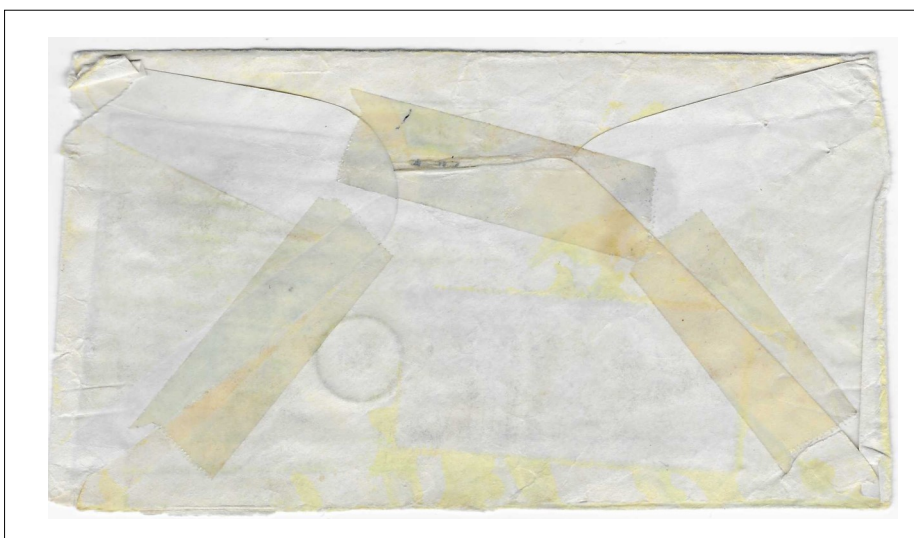
ter at Taiping, Perak, Federated Malay States, Asia. The letter, no longer present, was written in the same bluish ink and apparently bled enough to show the paper folds.

**CELEBES, PAGE 4**

The damage from the water hoses that extinguished the fire is very obvious. It appears two, or possibly three, stamps were on the original cover as indicated by the faint, partial circular datestamp strikes at the top.

The date on the complete Buffalo CDS near the center appears to read “AP 16 (or 6) 6PM.”

I’m not sure of the sender’s name at the top, other than Stan, an uncertain street number on Clinton Street in Buffalo.



The cover is addressed to the postmas-

**The reverse side of the cover damaged aboard the DMV Celebes.**

## CELEBES, FROM PAGE 3

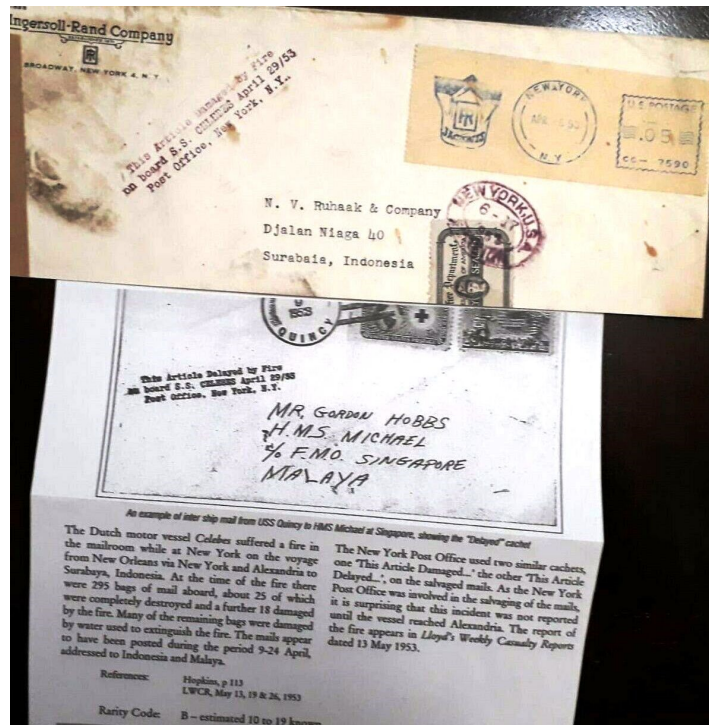
The cover was opened at the bottom, but there is tape on all the folds on the back.

When the back is held to the light there are some lines of writing discernible, but illegible. I'm not sure what caused the small dark circle to the right of the complete circular datestamp. It is more noticeable from the back. I also can't explain why Taiping is not as faded as the rest of the address.

The Dutch Motor Vessel Celebes sustained a fire in the mailroom while at New York on a voyage from New Orleans via New York and Alexandria to Surabaya, Indonesia.

At the time of the fire there were 295 bags of mail on board, 25 of which were destroyed and a further 18 damaged by water used to extinguish the fire. The items appear to have been posted during the period April 9 to the April 24 addressed to Indonesia and Malaya.

The New York Post Office used two similar cachets; "This article damaged..." and "This article delayed..." on salvaged mails. As the New York Post Office was involved in the salvaging of the mails, it is surprising that this incident was not reported until the vessel reached Alexandria.



Examples of damaged covers from the Celebes found on

The report of the fire appears in *Lloyd's Weekly Casualty Reports* dated May 13, 1953.

## Seeks help regarding old P.O.

(The following was a request for help submitted to the society.)

My name is Alan Weiss, and my wife and I are in contract to purchase the Lexington Hotel in Lexington, Greene County, and its related parcels and structures, which include the old post office.

We would like to rehabilitate and re-open the hotel, and rehabilitate the old post office and convert it into a commercial storefront.

We are trying to determine the historical significance of the old post office, but are having difficulty finding adequate information.

Any information you can provide would be greatly appreciated. My email is alanweiss55@gmail.com.



## EDITOR'S NOTE—JEFF STAGE

Greetings and happy fall!

As you can see by the image here the society fared well in the annual literature competition judging at the Great American Stamp Show. Our publications – *Excelsior* and *The Bulletin* – received 80 points and a large vermeil award. Good for us!

One note that the judge made stated that more citations should be included when necessary. I agree, but I think these can easily be added as resources – NOT footnotes.

I am probably at odds with some over footnotes, but, in general, footnotes tend to slow readers down. Think about magazines such as *Smithsonian*. Footnotes are rarely, if ever, found there.

But, we DO want your resources. You can note a resource in the text – such as, "according to the book *Fundamentals of Philately*" – and in



a resource list at the end of the article, include a more thorough description, such as:

"Printing Problems and Varieties" chapter, pp 150-151, *Fundamentals of Philately* (1990), by L.N. Williams, Consolidated Business Forms, Lock Haven, Pennsylvania.

Thank you and I look forward to seeing your next article.

## STATE FAIR, FROM PAGE 1

of Erie Canal workers constructed a 50-foot-high big-wheel ride of oak and iron with wooden bucket cars that lifted thrilled fairgoers to a birds-eye view of the site. This was 44 years before Ferris erected his Chicago Wheel at the World's Columbian Exposition.

The agricultural society felt financial strain from constantly moving the Fair and finally asked the state government to pitch in. The state in 1889 purchased 100 acres just outside the western edge Syracuse and the Fair settled in Syracuse permanently in 1890. Syracuse's central location in the state again had much to do with the decision. The state started running the Fair in 1899 and in 1900 created an 11-member commission to permanently oversee the annual event (**Figure 2**).

The fairgrounds eventually grew to today's 375-acre site adjacent, plenty of versatile space for the fairgrounds to hold the State Fair and more than 300 non-fair events annually.

Despite the cost-savings measure of permanently locating the State Fair in Syracuse in 1900, financial strains remained. Organizers worried about failure. As the fairgrounds was not yet properly electrified, the Fair did not host nighttime events.

The solution was a group of outsiders – the Mystique Krewe – who not only likely saved the Fair but also created some of the event's most intriguing philatelic items.

"The eleven highly successful Ka-Noo-No Karnivals, held between 1905 and 1917, are an important part of our history, especially with regard to the New York State Fair," states an article from the Onondaga Historical Association.

In brief, the article notes that "in 1903, the Fair was a daytime-only event and the predominant mode of transportation was horse and buggy, so it was a major effort to travel all the way to Syracuse just for the Fair. Spearheaded by the Chamber of Commerce, the community's leaders determined that evening entertainments might draw people to Syracuse and



**Figure 3.** Patrons line the street awaiting a parade along a lit up Salina Street in downtown Syracuse during the Ka-noo-no Karnival. The post-card is dated 1913.

keep them here to go to the Fair the next day."

This led to the Mystique Krewe, which fashioned itself after Mardi Gras events in New Orleans, to offer 11 succeeding years (none in 1913 and 1914) of the Ka-Noo-No Karnival, which offered electrified nighttime spectacles, mostly parades with floats, music and homages to historical events (**Figure 3**).

A 1910 cover (**Figure 4**) shows the image of a costumed indigenous individual at the left and the Erie Canal moving past City Hall at upper right.

On the back, there's marketing hype for the event to present

"Night Turned Into Day," "Beautiful Costumes" and a "Parade of Historical Floats."

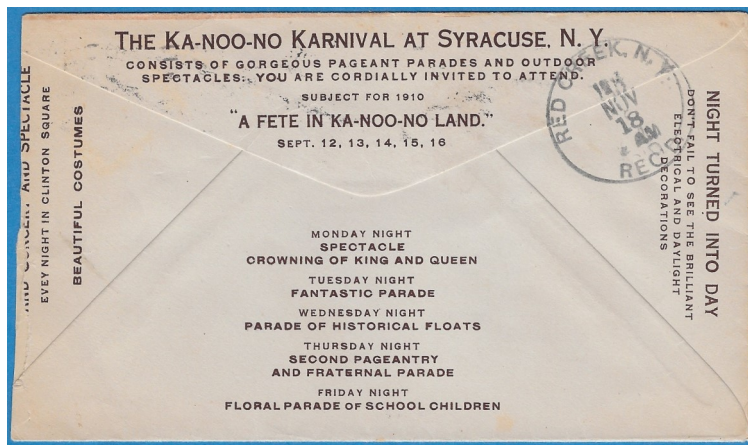
The Ka-Noo-No Karnival ended after 1917, but at that point "the State Fair was doing well, and automobiles allowed people to come for the Fair and the evening show and still get home to sleep in their own beds," the historical association story said.

Expansion and improvements in grounds and buildings over the decades spurred growth. In 1908, the first structure in a \$2 million long-term building plan was erected. Many more followed in the next two decades.

The Syracuse-based Onondaga Litholite Co. printed an advertising card showing a contemporary construction scene in the early 20th century at the Fair (**Figure 5**).

The company noted it created "all" of the stonework seen at the fairgrounds. A company book from 1925 noted its work at churches, schools, banks, cemeteries, public buildings and pri-

STATE FAIR, FROM PAGE 5



**Figure 4.** A 1910 envelope promotes the Ka-noo-no Karnival on front and back.

**Figure 5. The Onondaga Litholite Co. used an advertising card to promote its business of creating stone pillars and other architectural stonework.**



get their pictures taken.” I am still looking for a postcard showing the new gate.

Whether you were a visitor a century ago or today, crowds could be reasonable or maddening (**Figure 9**). A card from 1910 labeled “A Busy Day at the Fair” shows a congested gathering of visitors. Another postcard I have was mailed September 11, 1913 to Pittston, Pennsylvania and was written by an unsigned patron who states, “Have spent a half a day at the Fair and have not seen much but people.”

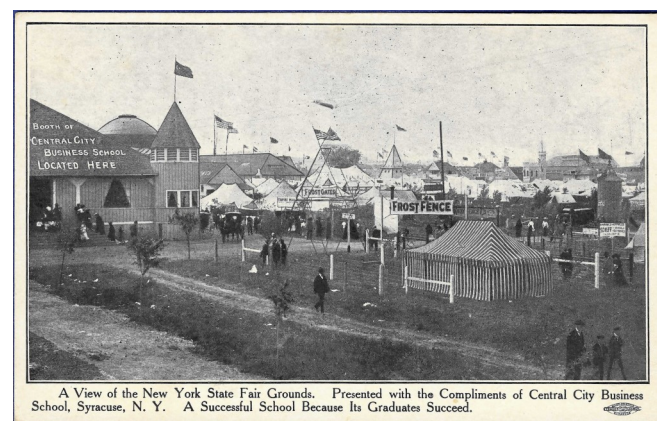
The annual event endures as the New York State Fair, but has seen many alternative names over the decades for both the event and the site.

In 1938, the Fair acquired a new name, the New York State Agricultural and Industrial Exposition, which reflected closer ties to a leading industry. In 1962, the Fair changed its name to the New York State Exposition, but by 1967 it was back to the New York State Fair.

In 1972, the name was the New York State Super Fair (**Figure 10**). For the past several decades the Fair marketing calls the event the “Great New York State Fair,” though formally it remains the New York State Fair.

Statewide agriculture remains an important focus with judging of everything from cows, pigs and crops to homemade cooking and floral and table-setting exhibits.

And, a visit is filled with diversity. Where else in one day can you hold a just-hatched baby chick, gawk at the butter sculpture and a 25-foot-high sand sculpture, pet sheep, enjoy traditional dancing from clans of the Haudenosaunee, groove to free concerts (my long list includes Sonny and Cher, Don McLean, Joan Jett and Charlie Daniels), and finally, slurp 25-cent chocolate milk from the Milk Bar?



**Figure 7. The Central City Business School was among the many businesses that promoted themselves via the State Fair.**



**Figure 6. Above, a view of the fairgrounds’ main courtyard today is not much different as that shown on this postcard from the early 20th century.**

STATE FAIR, FROM PAGE 5

ate residences across the Northeast.

Onondaga Litholite’s stonework, as well as other builders’ work, remains visible today and a time-traveler from the early 20th century would be very familiar with much of the fairgrounds (**Figure 6**).

Like the Onondaga Litholite Co., many businesses took advantage over the decades to link their businesses to the Fair. Over the decades, many types of businesses, such as the Fair’s agricultural base to schools, linked their marketing to the Fair. (**Figure 7**).

An early gate to enter and exit the fairgrounds left an impression (**Figure 8**). The long-standing Carriage Entrance was meant to invoke a mood of entering a grand old European city, fair or park. Someone in 1933 – perhaps the Syracuse Stamp Club – created covers in at least two colors showing the grand gate. That type of gate finally gave way to simple turnstiles within a simple structure for much of the last 60 years or so.

In 2016, though, part of a \$50 million fairground renovation project resulted in a new \$2.5 million front gate reminiscent of that Carriage Entrance of bygone days. “The front gate is going to be like Disney’s main gate or the castle at Disney,” said the Fair director in 2016 as the structure was completed. “It’s going to be where people



**Figure 8.** A postcard from the early 1900s shows the State Fair's Carriage Entrance. In 1933, the New York State Fair celebrated its 93rd year. Someone created covers that celebrate the fairgrounds' iconic gate. The cachet was created in at least two colors, purple and green.



The Fair started with a strong focus on agriculture and remains so. When you say New York most people think about Manhattan and the other boroughs of New York City.

But agriculture is a \$3.6 billion industry in the state, according to the state Department of Agriculture and Markets.

The state has more than 35,000 farms, 7.8 million acres of farm-

land and places among national leaders in several products, including milk and cottage cheese, apples, cabbage, grapes, wine and maple syrup. The Fair has dedicated much space to agriculture over the decades (**Figure 11**).

Aside from the top-name entertainers who have performed at the Fair, the event has often attracted top state and national officials.

Visitors have included Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt,

Bobby Kennedy, Bill and Hillary Clinton. Most state governors – including the likes of Theodore and Franklin D. Roosevelt and Nelson Rockefeller – have visited the Fair on Governors Day (**Figure 12**).

Fair officials early on knew that a racetrack – one that accommodated horses, and then vehicles – would be an important draw to the fairgrounds.

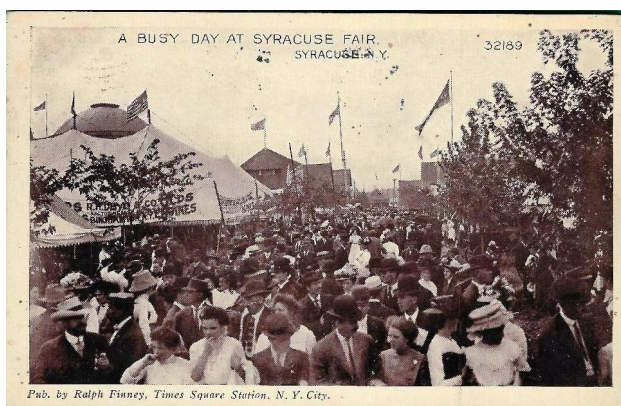
A dirt track was vital to the Fair and attracted various types of horse racing in the 1800s. Eventually, the fairgrounds was noted as a home to harness racing, not thoroughbreds or quarter horses.

The state legislature in 1900 appropriated \$10,000 for the construction of the Syracuse Mile racetrack at the fairgrounds.

The track and its grandstand were shared by horses, race cars and entertainers, including the Beach Boys, Donny and Marie Osmond, Tina Turner and Reba McEntire, who in 1992 gave an inspired a capella performance after torrential rains prevented her band from playing.

In 1903, legendary auto racer Barney Oldfield drove his “Baby Bullet” at an average of more than 60 mph a lap to win the first auto race at the fair.

STATE FAIR, PAGE 8



**Figure 9.** This postcard mailed in 1910 is titled “A Busy Day at Syracuse Fair.” The card was published by Ralph Finney, Times Square Station.



**Figure 10.** Marketing the Fair has seen the event called different names. In 1972, it was the New York State Super Fair. For many decades the Fair has been marketed as the “Great New York State Fair.”



**Figure 11.** From Day 1, the promotion of state agriculture – as shown in this fairgrounds scene from the early 20th century – has been a prime focus of the Fair.

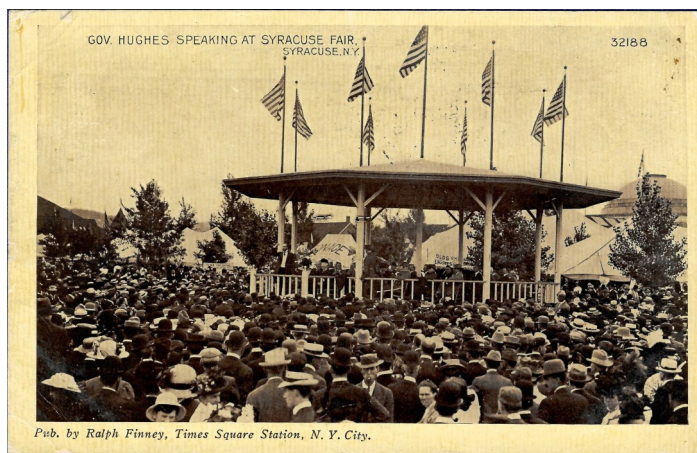
#### STATE FAIR, FROM PAGE 7

The Fair track was considered so good among the horse set (**Figure 13**) that the first Hambletonian Stakes – the Kentucky Derby of harness racing (trotters) – was held there in 1926. Guy McKinney (that’s the horse) won and famed New York City Mayor Jimmy Walker came up to present the cup.

One of the most famous, and maybe the wealthiest, persons to ever visit the fair was Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt (1877-1915), the great-grandson of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt.

Alfred Vanderbilt was an avid horseman who enjoyed fox hunts and driving coaches and carriages, often while perfectly coiffed in top hat and tails.

A postcard with a September 11, 1907 postmark (**Figure 14**) shows the “Vanderbilt Party leaving the New York State Fairgrounds, Syracuse.” It appears Alfred



**Figure 12.** Charles Evans Hughes visited the New York State Fair during his term as governor, 1907-1910. Hughes went on to be 11th chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, 1930-1941.

holds the reins as a man at the rear bugles so I think this is an “arrival,” not a departure as the card states.

Vanderbilt died a noble and tragic death at the age of 37.

He, a friend and a valet were traveling to an international horse show in England on the RMS *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915 when the ship was torpedoed by a German U-boat off the coast of Ireland. Vanderbilt and his party helped children into lifeboats as the doomed ship quickly took on water and sank in 18 minutes.

Witnesses said the wealthy New Yorker gave his life jacket to a woman and her infant child, both of whom were among the 764 survivors. Vanderbilt and 1,197 others perished.

So, is there any actual mail out there posted to or from the State Fair? After all, it’s been around since 1841, 21 years



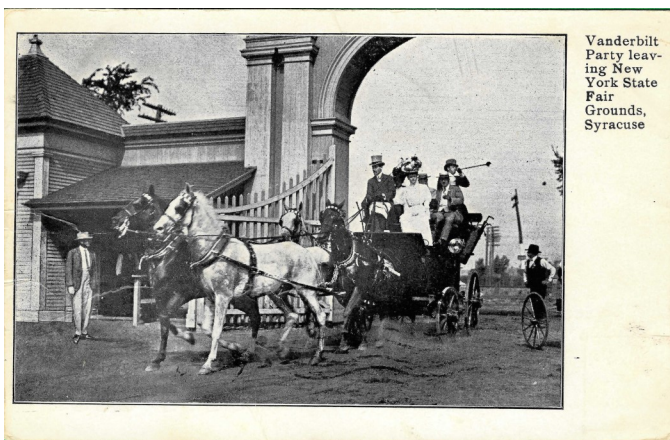
**Figure 13.** Harness racing was a popular activity for many decades at the New York State Fair. This handsome advertising cover from 1909 shows three sulks racing down the Fair’s homestretch in front of the grandstand.

after Syracuse gained its first post office.

The main Syracuse Post Office placed a mobile postal unit (a trailer adapted to postal needs) at the Fair for a couple of years in the late 1980s, or so.

The trailer demonstrated this temporary facility that could be moved to locales that had suddenly lost its post office to factors such as fire or bad weather. The visit to the Fair allowed me to create a couple of philatelic Fair items (**Figure 15**).

In 1990, the coincidental issuance of



**Figure 14.** The Vanderbilt party, above, arrives at the New York State Fair in the early 1900s. Vanderbilt was one of the country's wealthiest men and a regular at the New York State Fair's driving shows and competitions. Although the card says the party is "leaving," the fanfare and background implies an arrival.



Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, in formal dress (Courtesy Library of Congress).

the first Circus Wagon stamp at the Empex Stamp Show in Syracuse allowed me to obtain a joint Empex/Fair cover (Figure 16).

Today, even though the fairgrounds operates throughout the year, there are no mailboxes on site. I wonder if there ever was an actual post office on the fairgrounds where mail was processed? That remains a mys-

tery and allows me to continue the hunt.

Even though I have lived most of my life in greater Syracuse, it's only been a few years since I started collecting New York State Fair philately, but it's a blast. I recommend anyone looking for a new collecting area to try checking out an event of some type.

## Resources

The Lusitania Resource: <https://www.rmslusitania.info/people/saloon/alfred-vanderbilt/>.

"One of the US's richest men among victims of Lusitania," by Ronan McGreevy, *The Irish Times*, May 4, 2015. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/one-of-the-us-s-richest-men-among-victims-of-lusitania-1.2198792>.

Wikipedia: RMS *Lusitania*; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS\\_Lusitania#Sinking](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS_Lusitania#Sinking).

Onondaga Cut Cast Stone, Onondaga Litholite Co., Syracuse digitized to Internet Archive with funding from Columbia University Libraries - <https://archive.org/details/onondagacutcasts00onon/page/6/mode/2up>.

"You're Not Going to Recognize the New York State Fair," by

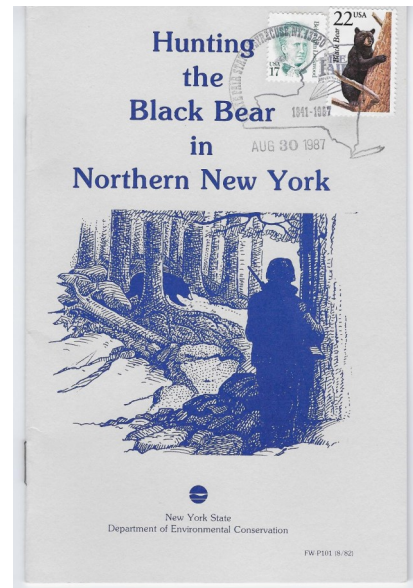
Mike McAndrew, June 22, 2016, Syracuse.com.

"How the Mystique Krewe's Ka-Noo-No Karnivals Kept the State Fair in Syracuse," Onondaga Historical Association, <https://www.cnyhistory.org/2016/08/ka-noo-no-karnivals/>.

New York State Fair website, <https://nysfair.ny.gov/about/>. "History of the New York State Fair," Classic New York History.com, <https://classicnewyorkhistory.com/history-of-the-great-new-york-state-fair/>.

*Empire Showcase, A History of the New York State Fair* (1985), by Henry W. Schramm. North Country Books, Inc., Utica, NY.

*State Fair Stories, The Days and People of the New York State Fair* (2005), by Judith LaManna Rivette. Oh, How Upstate Enterprises, Liverpool, N.Y.

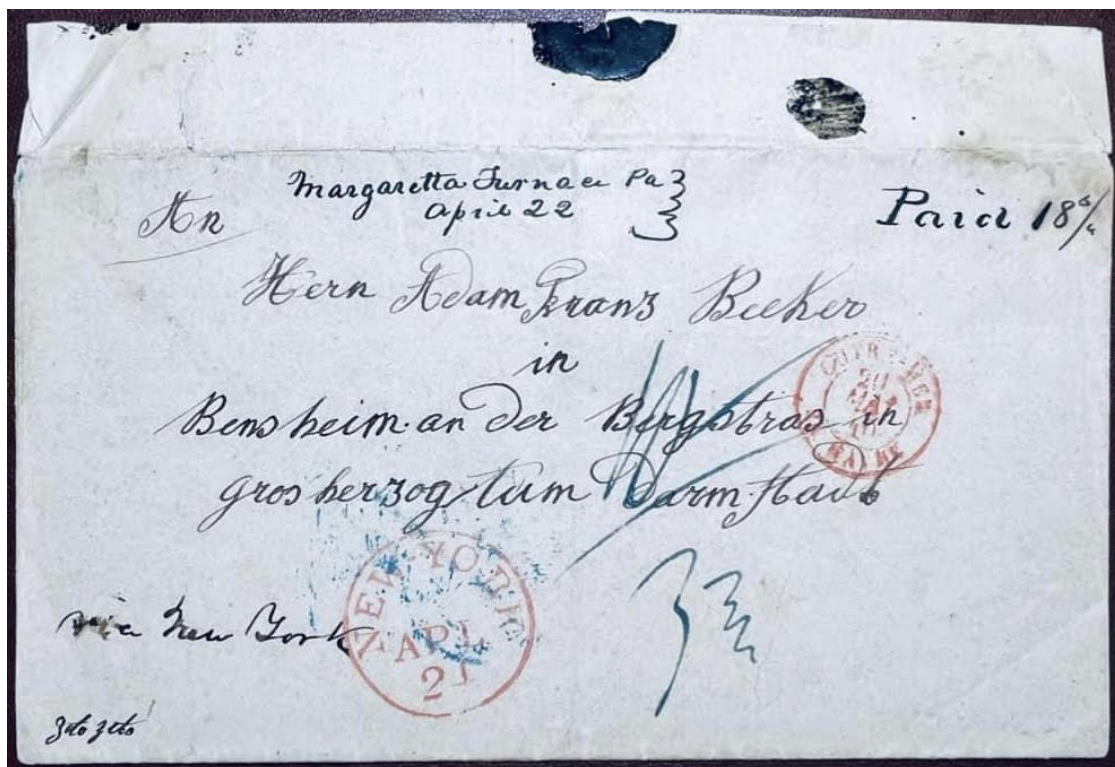


**Figure 15.** The author created a cover featuring the 1986 U.S. Black Bear stamp on a Guide to Hunting the Black Bear pamphlet in 1987 when the Syracuse Post Office placed its emergency trailer at the Fairgrounds. A 1988 pictorial cancellation is similar to that from the previous year but notes New York state's bicentennial.



**Figure 16.** In 1990, the Federation of New York Philatelic Societies sponsored a stamp show which saw the formal release of the 5-cent Circus Wagon stamp. The show was held at the same time as the New York State Fair, which prompted a nice opportunity to create a cover featuring the show, the stamp and the Fair.

The front of a stampless letter-sheet sent from Pennsylvania to Germany, by way of New York City and France.



## What's It All About?

Dissecting a foreign-bound stampless cover and its markings and rates

By Charles J. DiComo, PhD

Shown here is a folded letter with contents to Darmstadt, Hessen, Germany 1840, which was first posted at Margaretta Furnace, York County, Pennsylvania.

The letter traveled to New York City, then by Le Havre, France by the sailing vessel Louis Phillippe, before moving by train to Paris, on to Strasbourg, north through Baden, to Hessen territory, and finally to Bensheim, Darmstadt.

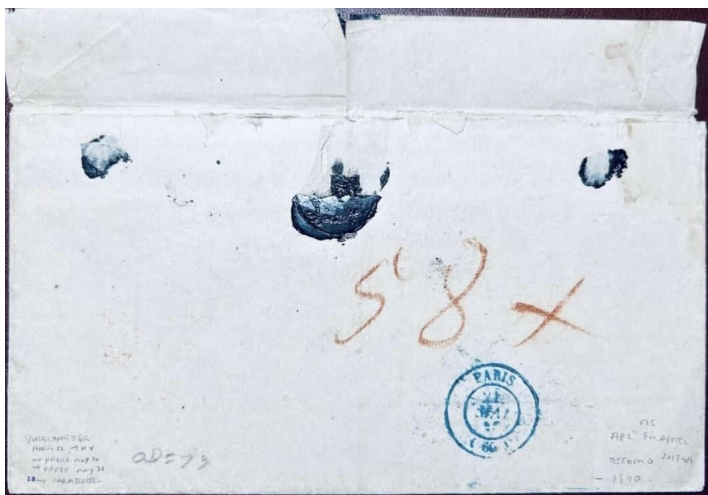
Wow, what a journey! Following is my full diagnosis. This is a rare use from Margaretta Furnace, where annually 1,100 tons of iron were produced for about 20 years until the production ended in 1843.

This cover entered the mail on April 22, 1840. It has a black manuscript marking of "Margaretta Furnace Pa April 22" and a manuscript "Paid 18 3/4." The rate covered the U.S. inland rate of 150 to 400 miles, which would have gotten the letter to New York City.

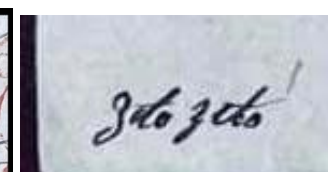
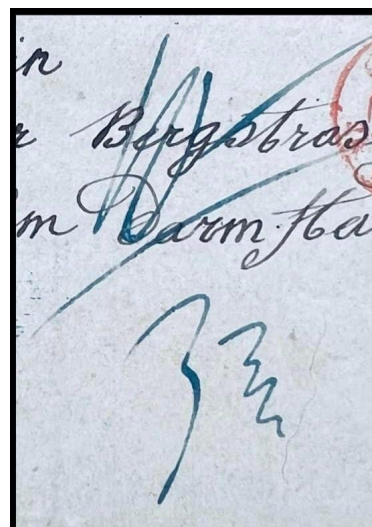
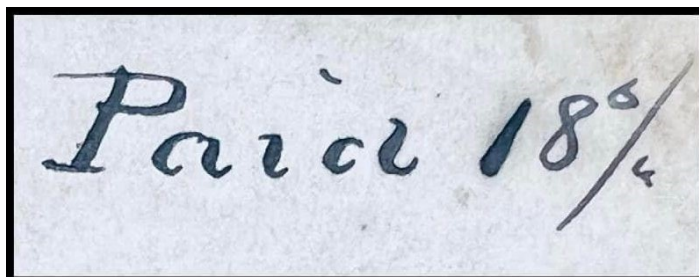
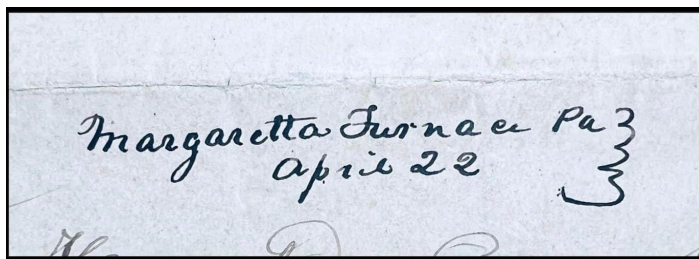
The cover was received April 24 at New York City, which is shown on the front via the scarce "APL" abbreviation for April instead of the standard "APR."



Close-ups of the cover's cancellation marks.



The reverse of the cover from Pennsylvania to Germany shows the remnants of a black wax seal.



Close-ups of some of the writing on the cover, including the rate and the date and place of origin.

The letter was placed in a mail bag carried by Havre Line on the sailing packet Louis Phillippe, which departed April 24 from New York City and arrived on May 20 in Le Havre. There, the red-orange double-circle handstamp of “OUTRE-MER LE HAVRE 20 MAI 40” was applied.

The cover then traveled by railroad to Paris, with the blue double-circle “PARIS 21 MAI 40 (60)” handstamp applied. The journey continued to Strasbourg, then north to Bensheim in Darmstadt.

The black rate marking on the obverse is “10 $\frac{3}{4}$ ” (or “10 $\frac{1}{2}$  $\frac{3}{4}$ ”) for a total of 13 $\frac{3}{4}$  (or 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ ) silbergroschen, which is in the currency of the North Thurn & Taxis. (Silbergroschen was a denomination used in Prussia and other northern German states at the time.)

The letter was carried by the Thurn & Taxis Post from Paris to the German state of Hesse-Darmstadt.

Most likely, the 10 (or 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ ) silbergroschen was for 8 (or 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ ) silbergroschen to France and 2 silbergroschen for Prussian transit. The other 3 $\frac{1}{4}$  silbergroschen was for Baden transit.

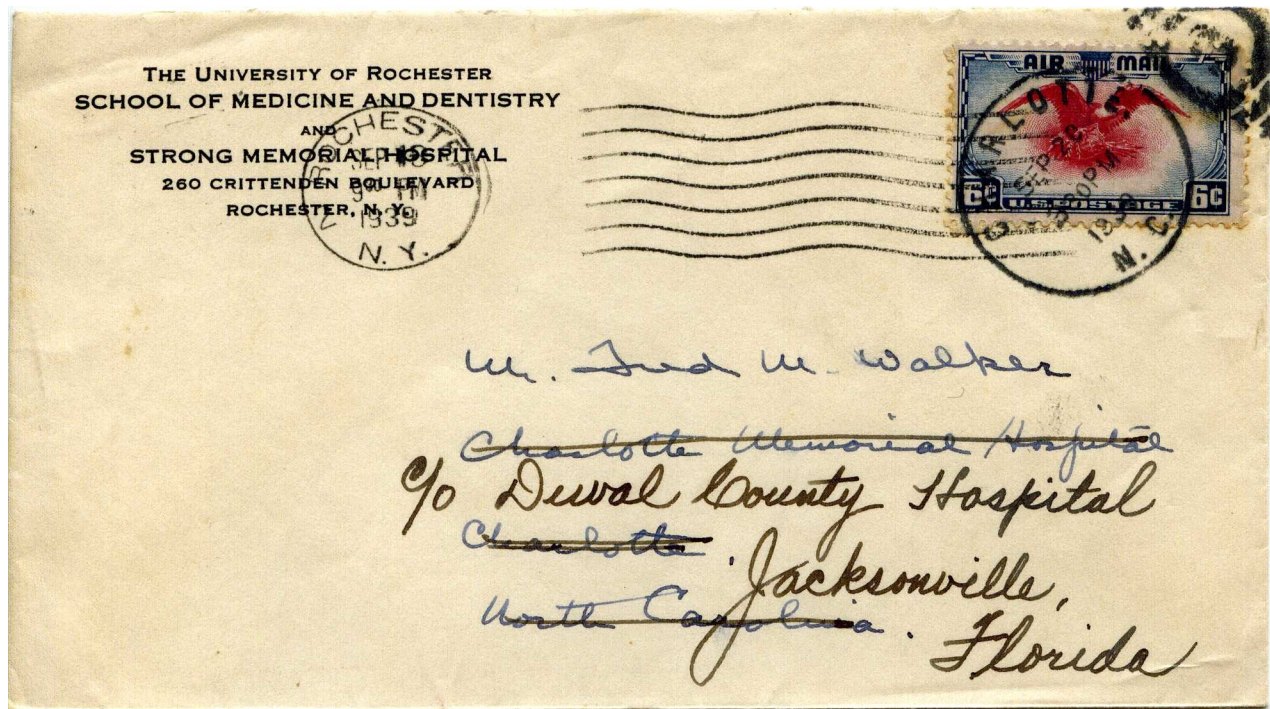


A postcard dated 1910 showing Bensheim, Germany. (Courtesy of Subin's Postcard Shop, <https://www.postcard-shop.de/en/>).

The 13 $\frac{3}{4}$  (or 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ ) silbergroschen converts to 48 (or 50) kreuzer, which means that an additional 10 (or 8) kreuzer was collected in Darmstadt (possible local Hessen fee). The red crayon “58x” on reverse equals 58 kreuzer (probably total postage due by recipient).

The cover is addressed to Mr. Herr Adam Franz Becker in Bensheim an der Bergstrasse in Grosherzogtum Darmstadt and was sent (at lower left) “via New York” and, with manuscript markings of “zito, zito” at bottom left (I am unsure what these mean). There are no contents, but there are the remnants of a black wax seal.

**Note:** Richard Winter and Dwayne Littauer provided expert insight on the rating of French sailing ships to Germany. Richard does not have a similar cover to compare and confirms this is “unique.”



This cover was sent in 1939 from Rochester to Florida, where it was forwarded. The cover shows a 6-cent Eagle Holding Shield, Olive Branch and Arrows airmail stamp (Scott C23) issued in 1938.

## FUN WITH CHEAP COVERS

(... or how to keep cooler in the Phoenix summer heat)

By Douglas Penwell

In various articles, the difficulty of finding “new” towns has been lamented. This struggle continues and every town and county collector probably has that “holy grail” cover that they would like to find. In the meantime, the desire for acquisition prompts us to pick up some items that might be considered less exciting.

When I began accumulating Rochester covers in the early 1980s, trips back home from Las Vegas at that time included stops at various stamp shops and local dealers. A number of items were purchased at these locations and also at ROPEX in Rochester.

Some of the covers were complex postal history and some were not. A stampless cover addressed to Rochester, “Monro” County, is still recalled. These days, the internet is a major source of material for almost everyone. Such a cover is shown here.

This cover features an 8-cent U.S. airmail stamp of 1938 and has a corner card for the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry.

It is addressed to Charlotte, N.C. (as an aside, there are

two towns in Monroe County that have significant differences in how they are pronounced). One of these towns is Charlotte, which has the last syllable emphasized. The other one is Chili, with long I’s, and not pronounced as if it were the food.

The cover was forwarded to Florida and another cancel was struck at Charlotte. Evidently the postmaster or postal clerk there didn’t think the airmail stamp was adequately cancelled and applied the numeral duplex right on the stamp. There are no backstamps on this envelope.

From this era, many collectors favor National Airmail Week (NAMW) covers. These were cancelled at many small towns (with and without airports) during May 1938, which was the 20th anniversary of the first official U.S. government airmail flights in 1918.

This is also the period for the debut of the C23 airmail issue. Many of these covers have locally applied cachets, something that should be considered by those devoted to material from the geographic area of their specialty.

**The author:** Doug Penwell grew up in East Rochester and is a U.S. Air Force veteran who lives in Phoenix, Arizona and works with information technology.