

Excelsior!

October 2025

Whole No. 42 New Series

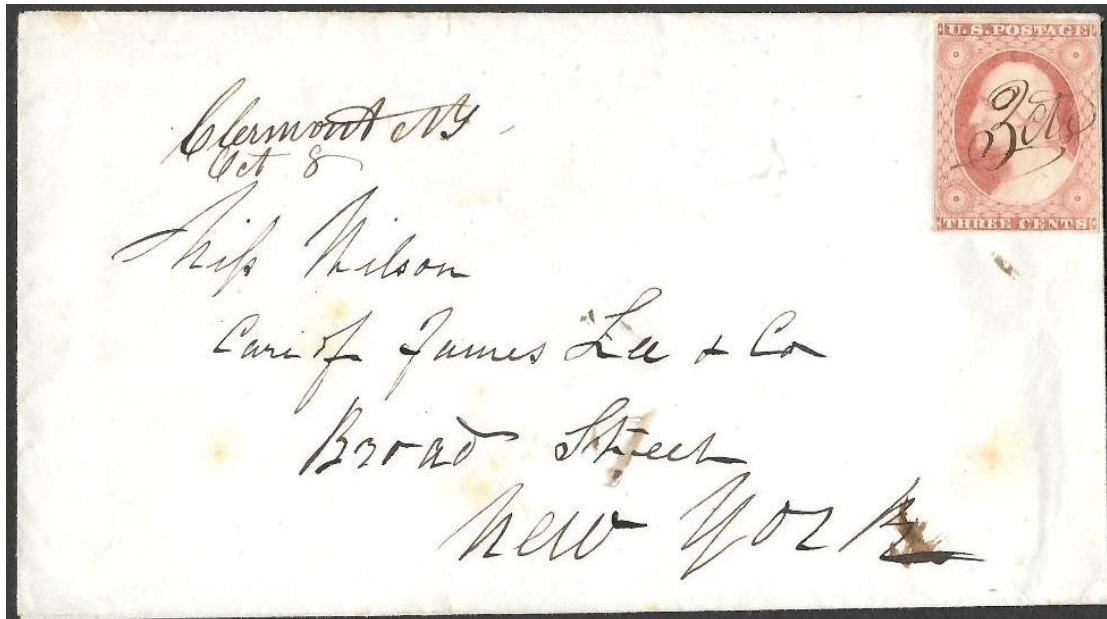


Figure 2. A cover mailed in the mid-19th century from Clermont to a New York City firm involved with printing and book publishing.

You Can't Go Home Again

By George DeKornfeld

These words of wisdom were coined by American author Thomas Clayton Wolfe (Figure 1), from the National Archives) and served as the title of his final novel, published posthumously in 1940 by his editor, Edward Aswell, of the publishing house Harper & Brothers.

Wolfe's novel is based upon the idea that the past is the past, it cannot be fully recaptured, nor can there be a return to previous circumstances, especially once significant changes have occurred. I would guess that most of us would lean toward agreeing with the adage from Wolfe (1900-1938). That said, I would also suspect that most of us would agree with another truism, to wit, that there's an exception to every rule.

When I lived in Ancramdale, I ate, drank, and breathed all things Columbia County. I collected as



Figure 1. Thomas Wolfe (Courtesy the National Archives).

much postal history as I could get my hands on, wrote articles about them, and even managed to put together an exhibit on the marcophily of the county seat, the city of Hudson.

And then I moved. I found myself in Hobart, another equally small, rural village, this one located in Delaware County and nestled comfortably within the Catskill Mountains. Suddenly, there was new, fertile philatelic ground to explore, and I found myself now vacuuming up all things Delaware, my penchant for collecting Columbia County having been pretty much shelved by virtue of my new location. I simply stopped looking.

So, returning to our original premise, can one really go home again? Well, as it pertains to postal history, we're about to find out!

Within the matter of a single month, three philatelic troublemakers, err, philatelic friends, pointed me in the direction of covers that they had each come across, supplying me with the information required should I determine that I couldn't go on living without purchasing them. So, of course, I had to check them all out as it seemed the only polite and proper thing to do (ahem).



Excelsior!

The Journal of the Empire State Postal History Society

Contact: ESPHS
P.O. Box 482
E. Schodack, NY 12063-0482
www.esphs.org; www.esphs.us
www.facebook.com/
EmpireStatePostalHistorySociety

Dr. George DeKornfeld: New discoveries finds our author finds he is still drawn to his former home in Columbia County. **Cover, Page 8.**

Charles J. DiComo, PhD: Mountaintop resort offered a respite worthy of a pastorale sonata. **Page 3.**

Douglas Penwell: So, you have a nice cover except for one part is a bit rough. Should you clean it up? **Page 7.**

Jeff Stage: An entertaining and somewhat squirrely cover touches on crime and official police business. **Page 12.**

Jeff Stage: Covers bring together hotels, promotions and Chicago's (?) Sultan of Swat. **Pages 13.**

Douglas Penwell: A stamp dealer who serviced a major U.S. stamp release in 1932 may have been responsible for many of the issue's special cancellations. **Page 16.**

The journal is published April and October by the Empire State Postal History Society. Articles for the Excelsior! are solicited and remain the property of the authors and the ESPHS. Please contact the editor and the author to inquire about reprint rights or for use in another publication.

Excelsior! Contact: nyspostal@gmail.com

Editor: Jeff Stage, 215 Westminster Ave., Syracuse, NY 13210; centerstage98@yahoo.com

Bulletin: Lawrence Laliberte, 15 Sunset Hill Court, (biannually) Carmel, NY 10512-5027; lawrencelaliberte426@gmail.com.

Webmaster and

Editorial Proofreader: Charles J. DiComo, PhD
Charlesdicomo@gmail.com

Society Officers

President: Charles J. DiComo, PhD ('25)
1298 Hammock Way, Lancaster, PA 17601
Charlesdicomo@gmail.com

Vice President: David Przepiora ('25)
1505 Emery Road, E. Aurora, NY 14052
djprez@hotmail.com

Secretary: George McGowan ('26)
Box 482, E. Schodack, NY 12063
geolotus2003@nycap.rr.com

Treasurer: Dr. George DeKornfeld ('26)
1014 Clove Road, Hobart, NY 13788
dogfd@twc.com

Board of Directors: Steve Kennedy ('25), Jeff Stage ('25), Brian Levy ('24), John Cali ('25), Heather Sweeting ('26), Bob Bramwell ('26).

Membership in the ESPHS: Write to the secretary at the heading address or print and mail the application found on the society website. Dues are \$20 per year (\$25 for non-U.S. addresses), for applications

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.

SHOWS

Pennsylvania: October 12; Dec. 20-21
K2 Lancaster Stamp Show, K2 Stamps, Farm and Home Center, 1383 Arcadia Road, Lancaster. **Contact:** Kevin Kellman. **Email:** k2stamps@gmail.com. **Website:** https://k2stamps.wixsite.com/k2collectiblestamps/schedule

New Jersey: Oct. 18; Dec. 20
Burlington Masons Lodge Stamp Show, Merchantville Stamp Club, Burlington Lodge 32 F&AM, 2308 Burlington-Mt. Holly Road, Burlington. **Contact:** Ryan Terlecky. **Email:** rterlecky@hotmail.com **Web:** www.merchantvillestampclub.org

New York: October 19
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. **Email:** majkstamps@gmail.com. **Website:** https://www.fortorangestampclub.org/.

Connecticut Oct. 26; Nov. 23
Fourth Sunday Stamp Show, New Haven Philatelic Society, Annex Y.M.C.A Club, 554 Woodward Ave., New Haven. **Contact:** Jesse Williams. **Email:** redgyphon@gmail.com. **Website:** http://www.nhps1914.com

New Jersey: November 22
Burlington Masons Lodge Stamp Show, Merchantville Stamp Club, Burlington Lodge 32 F&AM, 2308 Burlington-Mt. Holly Road, Burlington. **Contact:** Ryan Terlecky. **Email:** rterlecky@hotmail.com. **Website:** https://www.merchantvillestampclub.org/.

New York: November 22
Autumn Stamp Festival, Buffalo Stamp Club, The Knights Event Center, 2735 Union Road, Cheektowaga. **Contact:** Alan Davis. **Email:** ddavis504@roadrunner.com. **Website:** http://buffalostampclub.org/.

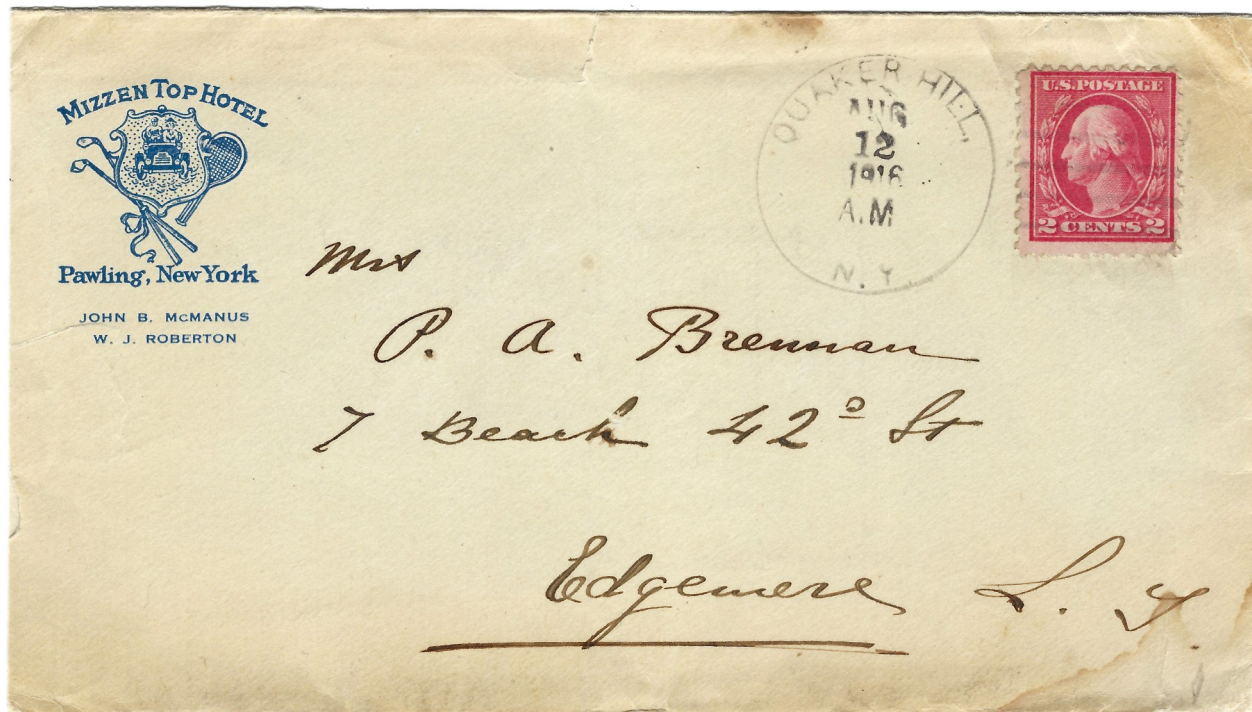


Figure 1. A cover dated 1916 mailed from the Mizzen Top Hotel on Quaker Hill in Pawling, New York, to Mrs. P.A. Brennan in Edgemere, Long Island. John B. McManus and W.J. Robertson are the proprietors.

Enjoying ‘Adagio Tempo’ at the Mizzen Top

Italian Composer Pietro A. Yon
Visits Quaker Hill in Pawling

By Charles J. DiComo, PhD

Let’s take a trip to the Mizzen Top Hotel on Quaker Hill in Pawling, New York via the envelope shown (Figure 1), which I recently acquired for my Pawling and Dutchess County studies.

This envelope, imprinted with the hotel’s corner card in blue, was written by the famous Italian-born organist and composer, Pietro A. Yon (Figure 2).

The letter entered the mail stream on the morning of August 12, 1916 from the Quaker Hill Post Office, where a 2-cent Washington stamp was affixed to pay the domestic first class letter rate.

The envelope is addressed to Mrs. P.A. Brennan, 7 Beach 42nd St. in Edgemere, L.I. (Long Island), and contains a two-page letter dated August 11, 1916 on hotel stationery. The letter (Figure 3, Page 4) was written by Pietro. He writes:

My Dear Mrs. Brennan,

I am having a good adagio tempo [translated as “slow time”] here in Pawling and the only sports I like are: mangiare, bere [translated as “eating, drinking”] and golf (ten minutes of flirt in the evening). I do feel very

well but I play the piano and the organ like a real street-Italian player. I would be very glad to take few lessons back before beginning the season!! Five minute octaves?! I am dead after one minute!

Many thanks for your sympathy for my little troubles and I shall promise not to work myself to death – Signor (!) Castantino (?) sends you and Dr. Brennan his very best regards and I send twice as many.

As ever very sincerely yours,
Pietro A. Yon



Figure 2. Musician Pietro A. Yon at the console of a Casavant Frères organ, New York City in 1919.

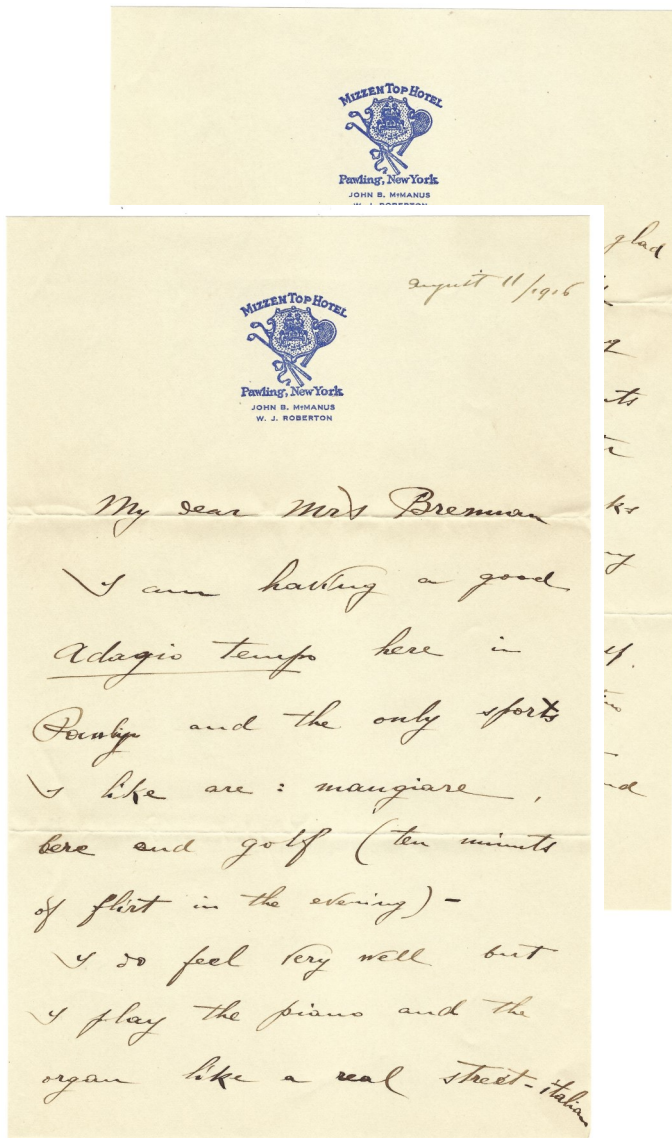


Figure 3. A two-page letter, on Mizzen Top Hotel stationery, written by Pietro A. Yon to Mrs. Brennan discussing his adagio tempo (or “slow time”) at the Hotel while mangiare, bere (eating, drinking), golf and 10 minutes of flirt in the evening.

MIZZEN TOP, FROM PAGE 3

To my delight, this cover also contained a receipt for organ lessons, given by none other than Maestro Yon to Mrs. Brennan. It is dated July 1, 1916, and addressed at 853 Carnegie Hall in New York (City) and is on Pietro’s personalized receipt. Mrs. Brennan must have enjoyed learning from the maestro, as she partook in eight piano and organ lessons from May 25 to June 20, 1916, for which Pietro was paid \$24 (Figure 4).

Let us travel back to the Mizzen Top Hotel via early 1900 picture postcards and what would have drawn Pietro, and many other visitors, to this bucolic southern Berkshires location on Quaker Hill (Figures 5 and 6).

The following excerpt from a 2019 newspaper article in the Poughkeepsie Journal details the hotel’s history, eventual closure and unfortunate demolition.

In 1880, construction began on the Mizzen-Top Hotel atop Quaker Hill in Pawling, NY. It was conceived & financed by one of Pawling’s most successful businessmen, Albert J. Akin, who in 1849 founded the Pawling Bank & is credited with bringing the Harlem Railroad to the community. He invested most of the structure’s \$100,000 cost.

Architect J.A. Wood oversaw the hotel’s design & construction on land that boasted spectacular views of the Harlem Valley. The hotel had porches on three sides & stood 1,300 feet above sea level — on clear days guests could see as far as Lake Mahopac. The three-story hotel was built of wood & was 260 ft. in length.

It had 145 rooms, 128 of which were used as guest accommodations, and offered a variety of activities, such as a billiard room, bowling alley and horseback riding. Telegraph service was available on-site, with which guests could communicate with NYC.

While some guest rooms featured hardwood floors, most were covered with fine Brussels carpeting and complemented with black walnut furniture. The hotel staged a grand opening in June 1881 and quickly became a desired destination for getaways.

Hotel servants used a separate building consisting of 16 rooms. When guest reservations escalated at the hotel, a series of cottages were erected in close proximity to the main building to accommodate overflow. There was also a livery stable built on the hotel grounds, which along with a separate carriage house provided quarters for 40 horses and carriages, as well as rooms to house grooms and livery attendants.

MIZZEN TOP, PAGE 6

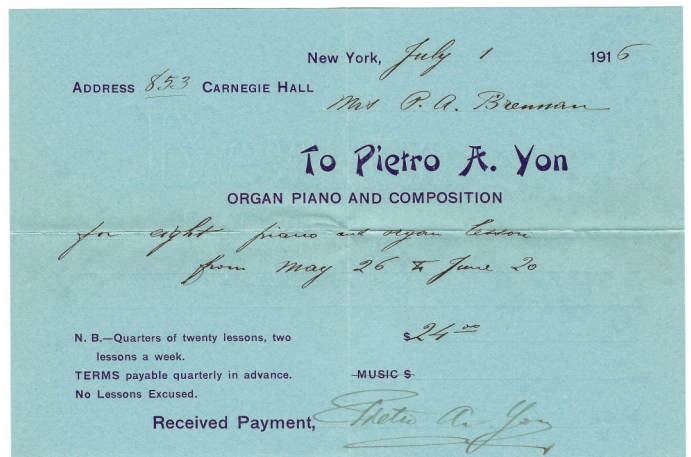


Figure 4. A receipt for payment dated July 1, 1916 in the amount of \$24, signed by Pietro A. Yon to Mrs. Brennan for eight piano and organ lessons.



Figure 5. Postcards from the early 1900s depict the 145-room Mizzen Top Hotel and some of the grounds, including tennis courts. Hotel construction began in 1880 and it drew clients until early in the Great Depression, when it closed. The main building was demolished in 1932.

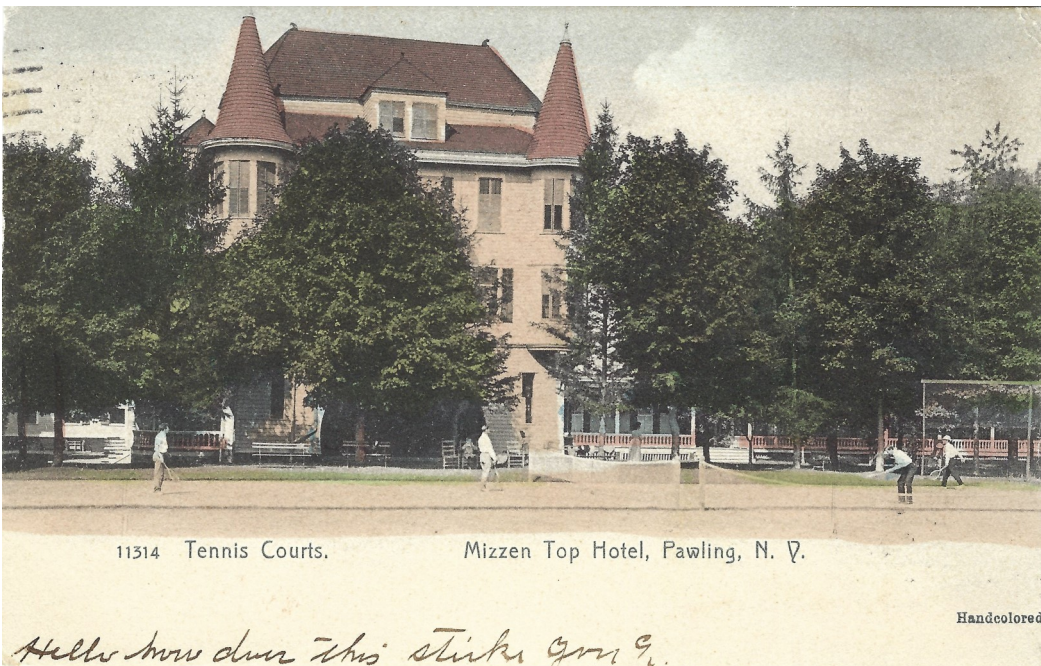
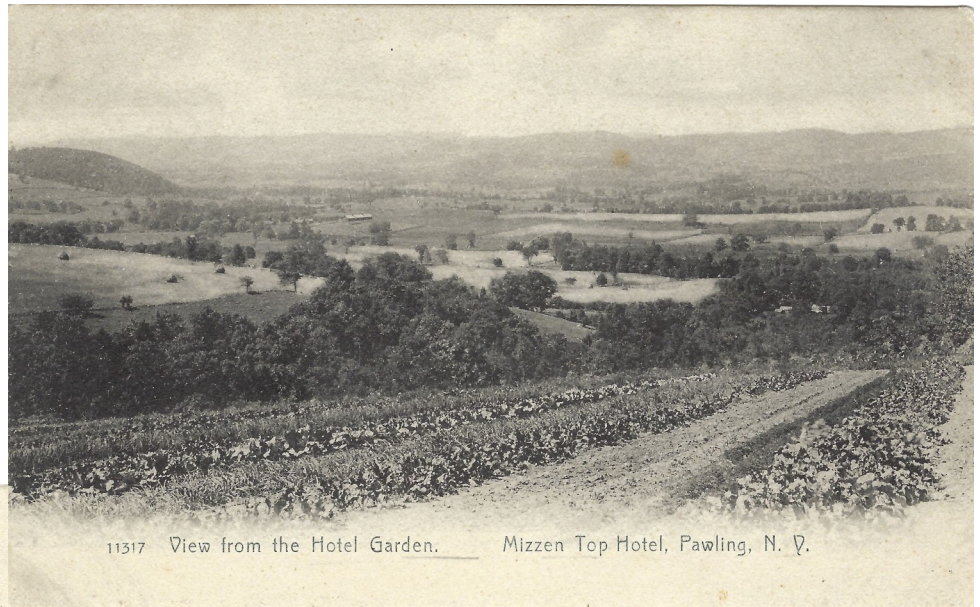


Figure 6. Postcards from the early 1900s emanating from the Mizzen Top Hotel, note the Pawling Mountains, surrounding countryside and the hotel's golf course.



MIZZEN TOP, FROM PAGE 4

Among the officers appointed to oversee the hotel operation was its President, John B. Dutcher, who owned his own lodging establishment – Dutcher House – in the village, about 3 miles away. Guests traveling north on the railroad would be greeted at the Pawling train station and transported to the top of Quaker Hill and the hotel by horse & carriage.

The unusual name of the hotel was credited to Admiral John Lorimer Worden, commander of the Civil War ship Monitor & later superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. Having spent summers on Quaker Hill & eventually marrying Olivia Toffey, daughter of a prominent Pawling resident, Worden was said to have taken in the breathtaking views from the hotel property & aptly named it Mizzen-Top, after one of the highest points on a ship, the mizzen mast.

Despite its quality and first-class attributes, the hotel struggled to sustain a profit. When the cost to maintain the hotel became an issue, its trustees closed it permanently and demolished the building in 1932.

I am always on the search for Pawling-related material and this postal history survivor and enclosures captures the essence of what drew visitors in the early 1900s to the comfort and amenities in Pawling, the same area where my Sicilian family and I enjoyed mangiare, bere and adagio tempo for more than a decade.

Resources

The 1919 photo of Pietro A. Yon at the console of Casavant Frères organ, Op. 184 (1903) is credited to Underwood & Underwood Studios, New York, New York. It is in the public domain at the following link: www.commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2077808.

“Pawling’s Mizzen-Top Hotel Once Stood 1,300 Feet Above Sea Level,” by Anthony P. Musso, special to Poughkeepsie Journal, January 19, 2019.

A Question Of Condition

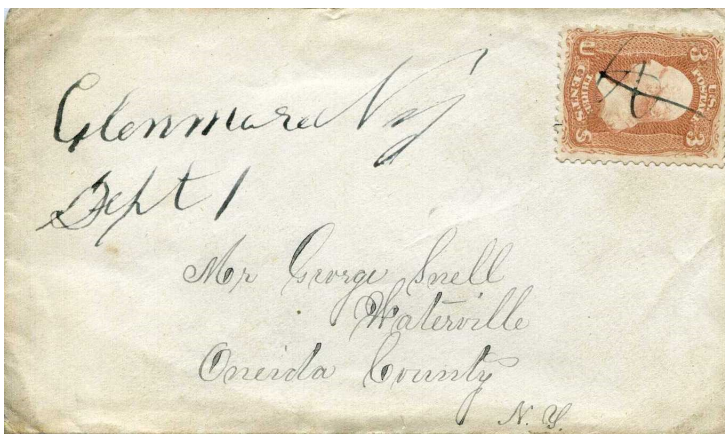
By Douglas Penwell

When purchasing a cover, sometimes condition is of secondary importance. Perhaps a cancellation, letter content or advertising makes defects less critical. In these cases, there can be many such considerations, the first of which is to wait for a better copy or purchase the item while waiting for a better example. As anyone who has collected for any length of time knows, a better example may or may not have survived, or it might not turn up in a reasonable amount of time.

One common defect is an uneven or rough edge resulting from an envelope being opened too hastily. The recipient may have been anxious for some news or just was impatient. A farmer in the field may have his mail brought to him with no means of cutting open the envelope handy. These items, evidence from the lifetime of other human beings, were not sent or saved for us.

Can you imagine someone reading your mail? Would you take offense? How long do you save letters? Even in the case of letters saved by your family, did you tear the stamps off when you were a junior collector? Would your family member have let you read their mail? Probably not. Given that most stamp collectors want used stamps when starting out, younger people are usually not trusted with (intimate) letter contents.

The cover shown, with a manuscript from sender and cancel from Glenmore, is franked with a 3-cent rose Washington stamp of 1861 (Scott 65). Glenmore in Oneida County had a post office from 1851 to 1926. It is addressed to another Oneida County resident, George



A mid-1800s roughly opened cover as it was purchased and a digitally cropped version. Which might better serve a collection or an exhibit?

Snell, of Waterville. The letter is not present, and the cover was opened roughly at right.

This item was purchased inexpensively on eBay. It is unknown whether the condition was a factor in the lack of competition. This writer at first considered reducing the cover – basically, trimming it – to “improve” the appearance. On second thought, that typical practice was not followed. The writing of this article was the primary reason.

Would you reduce this cover if it was “destined” for your collection? Why or why not? Do you consider that a legitimate practice? What do you think when you see a cover like this? One thing to consider is that the rough edge at right is not too bad for this particular example.

The conclusion is, once an action like a reduction is done, it can-

not be undone. Think before you cut or act. Of course, gluing a stamp back on (or to prevent it from falling off) is something else entirely. Another good example is repairing small tears or returning a backflap to the location where it started. These can be thought of as “legitimate” actions (restoring an artifact back to the condition it originated in, or as close as possible).

Postscript

During late 2024 and early 2025, a major holding of New York state stampless covers was sold on eBay. These were sold by a seller in New Hampshire, and the lots went to various buyers. If you purchased some of these, please check the manuscript publications for new towns. It would also be helpful to check for earlier or later dates. Please forward this data (or that from other sources) to your manuscript checklist editor at this address: dougpenwell@Mail.com.



Figure 3. A view of 19th-century Broad Street, New York City.

YOU CAN'T, FROM PAGE 1

As you may have guessed, all three ended up finding a place both in my heart as well as in my unexpectedly rekindled Columbia County collection. The first of these is quite honestly not exactly earth-moving in its contributions to the study of postal history, so let's consider it to be just the appetizer for our philatelic buffet.

Originating in the town of Clermont, located in the southwest corner of the county, this cover was mailed to James Lee & Company on Broad Street in Manhattan (**Figure 2**). The only thing Google's AI was able to dredge up regarding this New York City business was: "James Lee and Company was a notable firm located on Broad Street in New York City during the 1850s. This company was involved in various business activities, contributing to the bustling commercial scene of the time." Well, yawn, thank you very little Google AI!

In other ways, I was able to dig up that Lee & Co. was involved in book publishing, as well as serving as a general printing enterprise. To add a little seasoning to our appetizer, a photograph (**Figure 3**) brings us a period view of Broad Street that con-

firms AI's contention that there was indeed some "bustling" going on there at the time.

As for the town of Clermont, its name was derived from the French for "clear mountain" and was the title given to one of the huge properties owned by the über-wealthy Livingston family of New York, an estate of 13,000 acres divided from the Livingston Manor in 1728, eventually becoming the town itself.

Clermont marked the northernmost incursion by British troops sailing up the Hudson River during the American Revolution and was burned by them, along with the city of Kingston, during 1777. The town was also the port of registry for Fulton and Livingston's steamboat, originally christened the North River and renamed Clermont (**Figure 4**). The Clermont Post Office was established in 1791 and was discontinued in 1957.

So, why this cover?

The unusual cancellation is what immediately caught my eye. Generally speaking, many collectors shun the typical pen cancels found on stamps from this era, the vast majority of these being of the hurriedly scribbled "X" variety often applied at post offices that didn't yet have access to any cancelling devices.

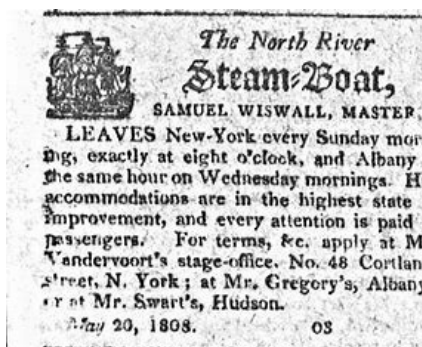


Figure 4. An advertisement placed in the Hudson Bee, 1808.



Figure 5. A close-up of the 3-cent stamp (Scott 11A) and pen cancel on the first cover shown in this article.

This appears to be the case here as the post office name also appears in manuscript (in their defense, some of these manuscript markings, especially those applied with a nice, broad italic tip, can be quite attractive and easily find their way into my collection). Here, the postmaster or a clerk actually took the time to pen an ornate, underlined "3 cts" for a cancel, with enough visual appeal to get my tail wagging (**Figure 5**). This pen cancel was applied onto a dull red 3-cent George Washington issue of 1851, Scott 11A, plated 84L2L.

Hopefully with our appetites now whetted, we move on to our entrée (**Figure 6**). By comparison, this dish is considerably more complex than was our appetizer, this the result of the coming together of a handful of different ingredients, each adding its own essence to this cover making for a very tasty philatelic repast indeed!

Franked by a 3-cent rose George Washington issue of 1861, this cover began its journey in the city of Hudson, New York on January 24, 1867. (For you historians, Hudson, founded in 1783, was chartered as a city in 1785, the first city chartered after the Declaration of Independence.)

The stamp is tied to the envelope by a couple of poorly struck target killers typical for this era, these being accompanied by a 29-millimeter double-circle datestamp, part of a duplex device recorded as having been used by the Hudson Post Office between 1863 and 1867. (See sidebar, next page.)

If one looks just to the right of the

datestamp, one can see a small section of its target killer partner, so presumably after applying the datestamp, the Hudson clerk simply rotated the duplex cancelling device and took a couple of whacks at the stamp, cancelling it with only the target portion.

Coincidentally (not to mention serendipitously for its visual appeal), the corner card is also of a double circle design, here embossed into the upper left of the envelope. It tells us that the sender was from the office of Beale & Benton / Counsellors at Law / Hudson, Col. Co., N.Y. (Figure 7). The 1869 Hudson Business Directory lists Beale & Benton (C.L. Beale and Warren C. Benton), as lawyers, with their office located at 249 Warren Street, the thoroughfare known to hold this city's core business district.

Attorney Charles Lewis Beale (March 5, 1824-January 30, 1899) was born in Canaan, Columbia County. He attended Union College in Schenectady, graduating in 1844 and was admitted to the bar in 1849 (Figure 8). Beale started practicing law in Kinderhook in 1851 and was elected to the 36th Congress as a representative of New York's 12th Congressional District from 1859 to 1861. Failing to get reelected to a second term, Beale resumed practicing law, this time in Hudson between 1866 and 1890, our cover having been mailed during the early portion of his tenure there.

Warren Benton, on the other hand, remains a mystery as no amount of internet searching came up with any more information on him other than what the cover has already told us, his being a partner of the law firm, with Boyd's Business Directory for the City of Hudson, 1869-70, providing confirmation.

Our addressee, Ambrose Ostrander, has only a limited connection with Columbia County. He was born in Spencertown (a hamlet in the town of Austerlitz located on the eastern side



Figure 6. A very busy cover sent in 1867 from Hudson to New York City. It is franked a 3-cent rose George Washington issue of 1861 (Scott 65).

of the county and to where this letter was addressed) on February 21, 1841. He was educated at the Spencertown Academy, which at the time was a college geared toward training educators. He began teaching at the age of 20 (so, in 1861) and was likely still doing so when this cover was sent to him.

Ostrander aspired to become a minister but didn't achieve this goal until later in life. In 1870, he took a teaching position in Michigan and then in 1871, one in LaPlata, Missouri.

YOU CAN'T, PAGE 9



Figure 7. The embossed corner card (Image digitally manipulated for visual effect).

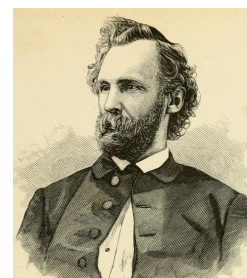


Figure 8. Engraving of Charles Lewis Beale, from a photo by Francis Forshew, of Hudson. (Courtesy History of Columbia County, New York).

Hudson's Cancelling Device

The Post Office Department began issuing the type of device seen on the cover shown in Figure 6 to post offices in 1859. Manufactured by Edmund Hoole, of Brooklyn, these were supplied either to the Post Office Department under contract or purchased directly by those post offices not eligible to receive such devices, such as those offices with gross annual receipts of less than \$100.

By 1861, the Hudson post office's gross receipts had already topped \$7,500 so its device was supplied by the federal department. A smaller double circle datestamp version with a diameter of 26.5mm is known used at Hudson between 1861 and 1868.

Bonus: The author's previous census had the larger device (29mm) in use at Hudson between 1863 and 1866; the surfacing of this cover extended that range into 1867!

YOU CAN'T, FROM PAGE 8

Switching gears, he moved to Bloomfield, Iowa in 1875 to enter the mercantile trade and then to Wiota, Iowa, where he continued in general merchandising, got married, and finally fulfilled his dream of becoming a Methodist Episcopal minister.

In 1903, Ostrander moved his ministry to Hood River, Oregon, where he died on February 8, 1926.

It appears Ostrander wasn't at Spencertown to receive his letter, so the town name was crossed out and replaced by "New York," where the cover was then forwarded to, surprisingly, lacking any additional address information. Presumably, a forwarding request had been left by Ambrose at the Spencertown post office.

Written at the top left we see, "Rec'd from Spencertown Jan. 26, 1867," two days after the letter originally entered the mail stream, and most likely penned by a clerk in New York City to track progress. The post office in Manhattan had no luck finding Ostrander as evidenced by the black "Cannot be Found" straight-line handstamp and accompanying "New York Post Office / Advertised" oval handstamp dated February 2 showing that the post office tried for one week to locate the addressee before resorting to advertising it in the



Figure 9. A detail from the reverse of the cover to Ambrose Ostrander shown in Figure 6.

SEC. 288. When any writer of a letter on which the postage is prepaid shall indorse in writing or in print upon the outside thereof his name and address, with a request that the same be returned to him if not called for or delivered within any number of days, (not to exceed thirty days,) any such letter shall not be advertised nor treated as a dead letter at the office addressed, but shall be returned as requested, charged with the proper postage at the prepaid rate, to be collected on the return delivery; and if not then delivered, shall be treated as a dead letter. (b) [And when any letter bearing a request for its return to the writer, in case of its non-delivery, shall have been so returned to the office at which it was originally mailed, then, and in that case, it shall be obligatory upon the person to whom such letter has been returned to receive the same, and to pay therefor the postage specified by this section; and in default of said writer to receive and pay for the letter so returned, he shall be subject to a penalty of ten dollars, to be recovered in any court of competent jurisdiction.]

Ibid. § 28.
Return of letters when requested by the writers.

Penalty in case of refusal to receive them.

Figure 10. An excerpt from the 1866 Postal Laws & Regulations.

local newspaper.

The reverse (Figure 9) shows a poorly struck, black New York City circular datestamp dated March 5, the date the cover was most likely returned to Hudson, made possible due to its embossed corner card and in spite of the fact that no return request instruction was included.

Before July 17, 1868, non-request return addresses did not allow return of undeliverable mail to writers. However, there is no indication that this letter ended up in the Dead Letter Office. Also, there is no indication that a fee was charged for its return, seemingly going against then-current regulations. Shown (Figure 10) is a screenshot of the relevant section of the U.S. Post Office Department's 1866 Postal Laws & Regulations, Chapter XV).

Finally, for our dessert, we have a cover that also originated at Hudson, ending up in Clermont in 1863 (Figure 11). The common British term for "dessert" is "sweet," a particularly appropriate description for this, our postal history closer as, borrowing from the immortal words of Jackie Gleason "How sweet it is!"

Chartered on April 23, 1823, the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company carried anthracite coal mined in northeastern Pennsylvania to the Hudson River, where it would then be barged down to New York City. Toward that end, this company built the Delaware and Hudson Canal, breaking ground in July 1825 and opening for business during October 1828.

This 108-mile-long waterway

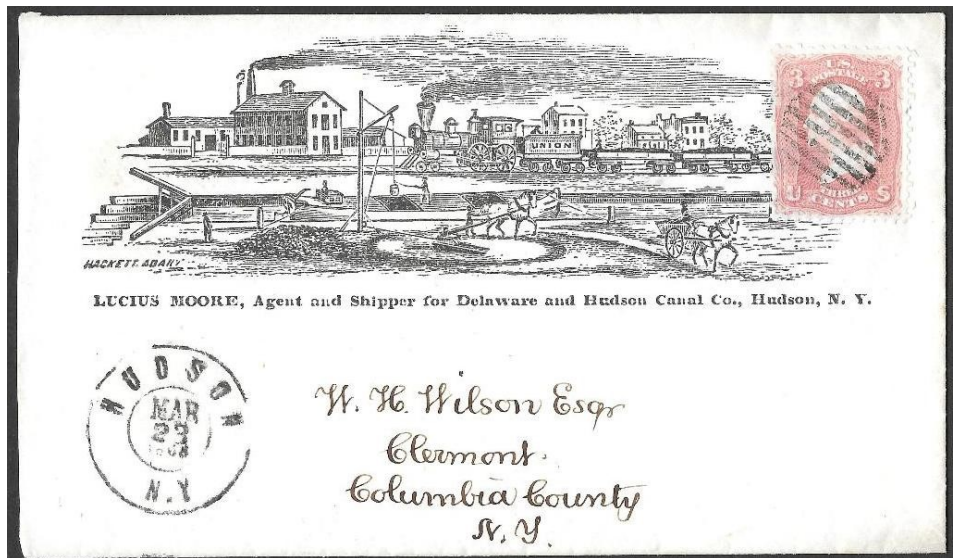


Figure 11. This sweet cover bearing a 3-cent rose Washington stamp of 1861 (Scott 65) was sent March 23, 1863, to Clermont and carries a clear double-circle cancellation from Hudson.

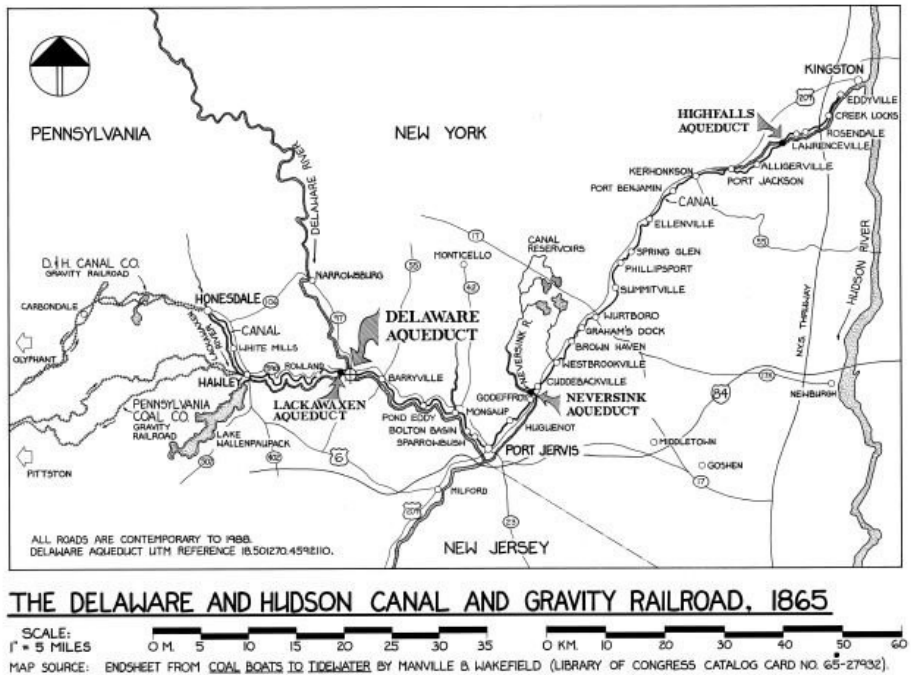


Figure 12. A period map shows the Delaware and Hudson Canal.

ran between Honesdale, Pennsylvania and Kingston, New York, opening the area for comparatively less complicated commerce than any prior overland routes had permitted. Next, they built the Delaware and Hudson Gravity Railroad, which moved coal from the mines in Carbondale, Pennsylvania and the Moosic Mountains over to

the canal at Honesdale. Becoming operational in 1829, this was one of the first gravity railways in the country (Figure 12).

Notice that our envelope's splendid engraving includes some of the methods used to move anthracite coal, including the train, a widely popular subject when found on any illustrated piece of postal history or bit of ephemera. Note, too, the name "Hackett, Abany [sic]" inscribed at the scene's lower left.

B.J. Hackett was the owner of a patent agency located at 44 State Street in Albany which dealt with the construction and design aspects of steam engines, factories, mills, and machinery in general. His services not only covered engineering and construction but also extended to graphic design work (Figure 13). Specifically, he offered wood engraving services for producing detailed illustrations of buildings and machinery, one example of which, as we've seen, graces our envelope's front (the humor in the irony of "Albany" having been misspelled did not go unnoticed!).

The 1861 Washington stamp af-

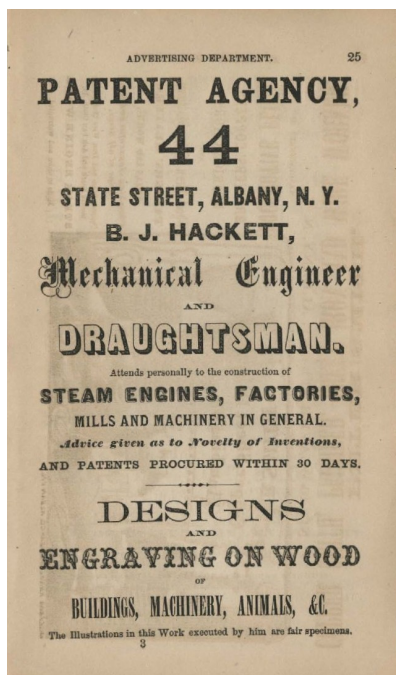


Figure 13. B.J. Hackett's patent agency in Albany offered engineering work as well as fine industrial wood engraving.

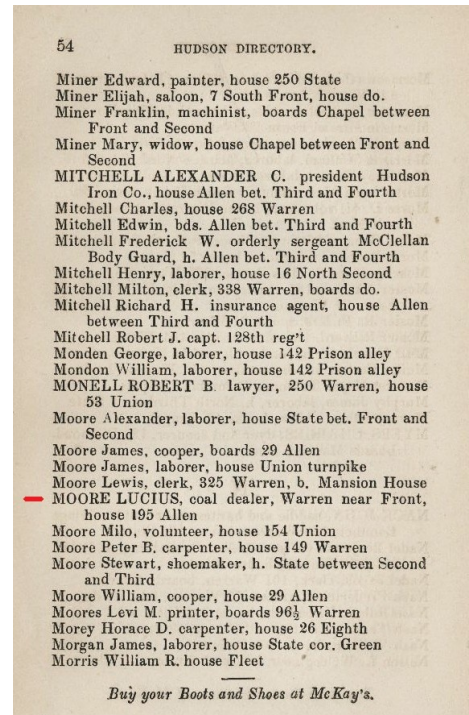


Figure 14. The Hudson City Directory for 1862-1863 includes a listing for Lucius Moore.

fixed to this cover was cancelled by one of the relatively common 7-bars-in-circle killers from this era and our double circle datestamp is the smaller of the two versions, sporting a diameter of 26.5mm (my census showing these having been in use by the Hudson P.O. from 1861 to 1868). Both markings were applied by a simplex device.

Little information is available on the sender of this cover, "Lucius Moore, Agent and Shipper for Delaware and Hudson Canal Co., Hudson, N.Y." much beyond what this printed return address itself supplies.

The internet provided that Moore was born February 1, 1827, in Leverett, Massachusetts, and passed away on March 24, 1903 in Hudson. He was buried in the City Cemetery. He married Phoebe Ann Jenkins of Hudson during 1850 and they ended up having four children (one boy and three girls). The New York Digital Collections' Hudson City Directory for 1862-1863, lists Moore as a coal dealer on Warren Street (Figure 14).

YOU CAN'T, PAGE 12

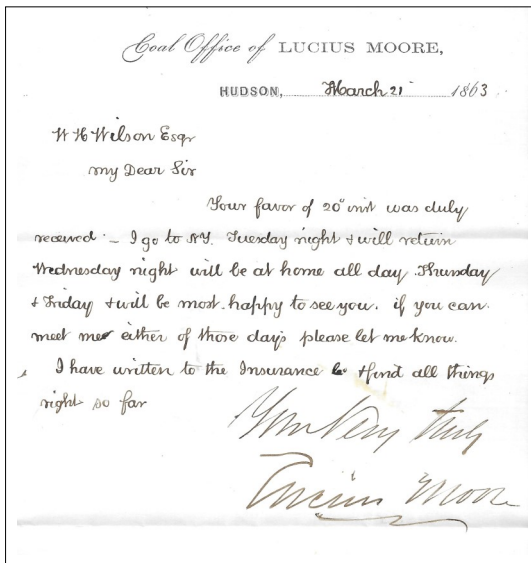


Figure 15. The top part of a one-page letter from the Coal Office of Lucius Moore is a correspondence with William H. Wilson.

YOU CAN'T, FROM PAGE 11

It's a pity that the single sheet of the cover's contents (Figure 15) doesn't share the same engraved scene for its letterhead as found upon its cover, but I'm grateful just for it having survived at all as so often is not the case. The comparatively spartan heading simply reads, "Coal Office of LUCIUS MOORE" and is helpfully datelined 1863 (the exact year date in the double-circle datestamp possibly having been misinterpreted to be 1868 due to smudging).

The cover's addressee, William H. Wilson, an attorney, came from a rather important Clermont family that was heavily involved with the Livingston family and land estate. Moore wrote to Wilson about getting togeth-

er, also mentioning an insurance matter. As an aside, Wilson's father (who shared the same first name), was a physician and judge who also served as the first postmaster for the town of Clermont.

There's no wiping the smile from my face having been fortunate enough to become the temporary curator of this, and the other two, additions to my Columbia County holdings.

It turns out that regardless of my current living arrangements, yes, one actually can go home again! We close with one final adage, this one compliments of John Hill Hewitt and his 1844 poem, the title of which says it all: "Tis Home Where'er the Heart Is."

Resources

"History of Columbia County, New York" (1878), by Franklin Ellis. Printed photo by Francis Forshew, of Hudson, New York. Public domain at "Charles Lewis Beale, Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=23881836>.

1884 Biographies, History of Cass County, Iowa; Iowa Biographies Project. <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~iabiog/cass/hc1884/hc1884.htm>.

U.S. Post Office Department's 1866 Postal Laws & Regulations, Chapter XV.

Hudson City Directory, 1862-1863. Hudson Area Association Library. New York Heritage Digital Collections.

William Wilson family papers, New York Public Library Archives, archives.nypl.org.

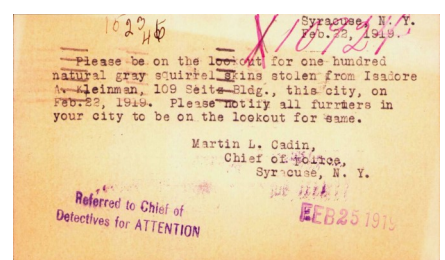
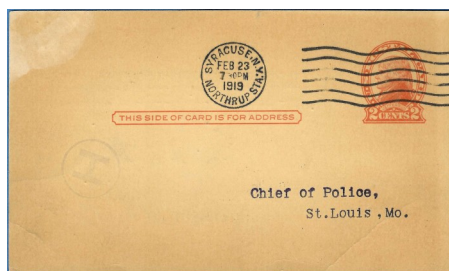
Car 54: Be on the lookout ... for squirrel pelts!

By Jeff Stage

Sometimes, we like our covers because they're just – well – entertaining. And, as I always love a mystery, I am sharing one that tells of an unsolved crime.

Our unsolved case is told via the standard 2-cent prestamped postal card shown (5 ½ inches by 3 ¼ inches) sent February 23, 1919 via the Northrup Station in Syracuse.

The card – with a six wavy lines cancellation and an H within a circle marking on the front – was sent by Martin L. Cadin, Syracuse's chief of



The front and back of a postal card (Scott UX29) mailed in 1919 from the Syracuse police chief to the St. Louis police chief requesting help in a case of stolen squirrel pelts. There is a lightly stamped capital H within a circle on the front.

police and addressed simply to "Chief of Police, St. Louis, Mo."

Here's the message, dated Feb. 22, 1919:

Please be on the lookout for one hundred natural gray squirrel skins stolen from Isadore A. Kleinman, 109 Seitz Bldg., this city, on

Feb. 22, 1919. Please notify all furriers in your city to be on the lookout for same.

Internal St. Louis Police Department receiving marks indicate the card was received Feb. 25 and referred to the chief of detectives.

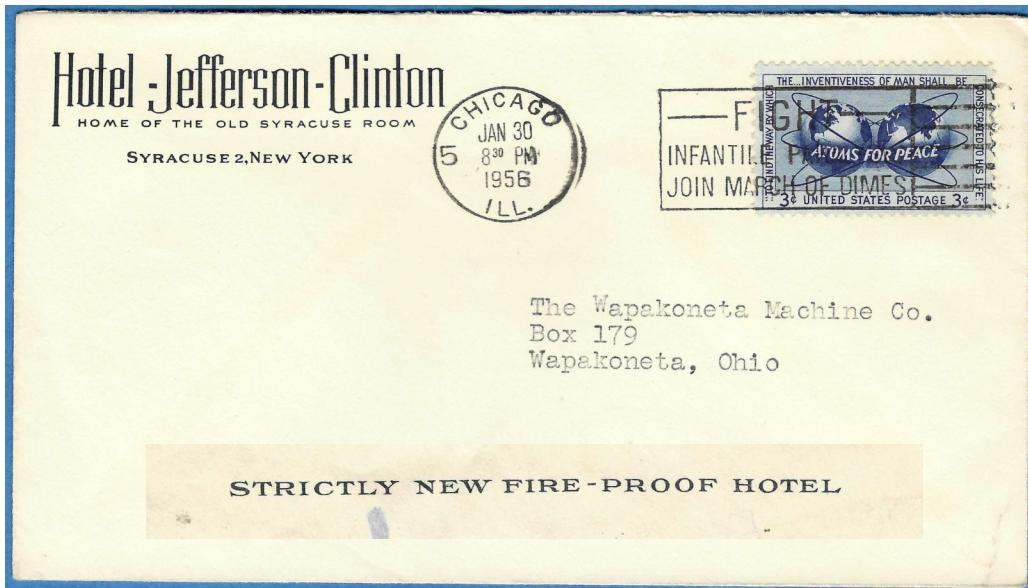


Figure 1. A cover corner card advertised the Hotel Jefferson-Clinton. The cover was apparently hand-carried away and mailed from Chicago in 1956. The inset at bottom shows the reverse of an earlier cover from the hotel, which notes it was a “strictly new fire proof hotel.” (We’re unsure how the adverb “strictly” helps the concept, but the hotel to this day has not burned.)

The Great Bambino ... of Chicago?

By Jeff Stage

For me, the best part of our hobby is checking the details of an item, which can lead to more facts and tidbits; some philatelic, some historic, some just plain interesting. Of course, plenty of those searches that spring forth from a unique cancellation, auxiliary marking, or address turn deadly dull. On occasion, though, you come across little treasures, or at least something that adds another chapter (or at least a page or two) to your philatelic holdings.

Such is the case with this tale.

Being a near lifelong resident of the Syracuse area in Onondaga County, I naturally collect and accumulate a lot of philatelic material linked to Syracuse. Like many of you, I suppose, I gather material from local hotels and motels, many of them long

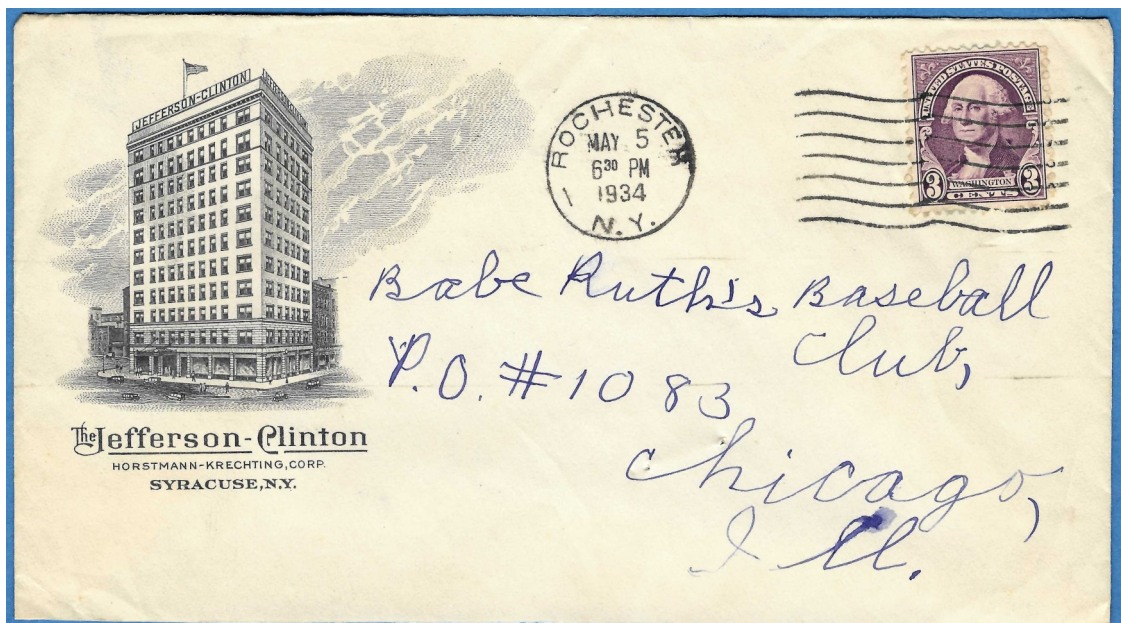
gone. They’re relatively numerous because most such establishments offered guests free writing paper and envelopes, often showing logos, or at least names and addresses of the lodgings.

I was searching for Syracuse hotel material in an online marketplace when I came across a cover for the Jefferson-Clinton Hotel in downtown Syracuse. The hotel at the intersection of Jefferson and Clinton streets downtown, was built in 1927 at a cost of about \$500,000 (Figure 1).

The 10-story hotel eventually fell on hard times, was known as the Dome Hotel for many years, and was closed from 1986 to 2001. Luckily, it was saved, modernized and turned into a well-managed and establishment now managed by Best Western.

BAMBINO, PAGE 14

Figure 2. An advertising envelope earlier than the 1950s version shown was available to hotel guests in 1934. This envelope also was carried away from Syracuse and mailed from Rochester and post-marked May 5, 1934. The manuscript is likely that of a child.



The building is on the National Register of Historic Places.

But the latest cover I found from the Jefferson-Clinton was much earlier, in 1934, just seven years after it opened. It was not very pricey, so I grabbed it (Figure 2). Not only was this cover from a Syracuse hotel, but it also had the oddity of a postmark from Rochester, 90 miles to our west.

Then, it was even a bit more interesting in that it is addressed – in what appears to be a child’s handwriting – to “Babe Ruth’s baseball club.” So, the Yankees? Nope, in Chicago, of all places (more on that in a moment).

If I commit to buy one thing from a dealer, I like to see if he or she has other items I might like. In this case, MORE hotel covers showed up. No more from Central New York, but several addressed to the Babe Ruth Baseball Club ... in Chicago! I bought a couple more (Figure 3).

The 1934 season was an important one in Ruth lore. Ruth, who started as a pitcher for the Boston Red Sox in 1914, of course, had his greatest success as the Bronx Bomber with the Yankees. He was traded to New York after the 1919 season and played in the Bronx through 1934, playing primarily in the outfield and first base.

Ruth turned 39 before the 1934 season, which was his last as a Yankee. He agreed to a massive salary cut, from \$52,000 to \$35,000. Ruth hit 22 homers and had a .288 batting average. In 1935, he played in just 28 games for the Boston Braves before retiring, having hit a then-



Figure 3. Another cover, this one from a hotel in South Bend, Indiana, received an August 12, 1934 cancellation in Chicago. This one was mailed simply to “Babe Ruth,” and not the “baseball club.” Perhaps the letter writer hoped to reach the slugger himself.

monstrous total of 714 home runs in his career.

But never was Ruth a part of a baseball club in Chicago, which was implied by these new covers! During and after his career, Ruth – probably the world’s most famous athlete – had many endorsement deals, including those with

Wheaties cereal, White Owl cigars, ESSO, Girl Scout cookies, Mrs. Sherlock’s bread, Old Gold cigarettes, Babe Ruth gum and Louisville Slugger bats, according to the Pop History Dig website (<https://pophistorydig.com/topics/tag/babe-ruth-advertising/>).

In 1934, Ruth also endorsed

Figure 4. An ad from a 1934 newspaper the Joe Pastor grocery (second ad down in first column.) Aside from the great bargains (26 cents for a pound of butter), the top of the ad shows a profile drawing of Babe Ruth and a great offer: Join my ‘baseball club’ and win baseball, a fielder’s glove, or a trip to New York or Chicago.

the Quaker Oats Ask Me Trivia Game, which offered Q and A cards about baseball through a mail-in offer. There were 26 cards in the game, with each posing two questions and answers about baseball. Sample question: What is the greatest number of innings pitched by one player over a season? Answer: Edward A. Walsh pitched 464 innings in 1908 pitching for the Chicago Americans. Ruth had several endorsements with Quaker over the years.

Advertisements I found online appear to have linked a “Babe Ruth’s baseball club” promotion with Quaker’s Puffed Rice and Puffed Wheat cereals.

One such ad appeared in a newspaper of May 25, 1934 (Figure 4).

The ad shows from The News-Herald offers specials from the Joe Pastor grocery (second ad down in first column.) Aside from the great grocery bargains (26 cents for a pound of butter; 25-pound sack of pure cane sugar for \$1.25), the top of the ad shows a profile drawing of Babe Ruth with a quote, “Join my ‘baseball club’ and win a baseball, a fielder’s glove, or a trip to New York or Chicago.”

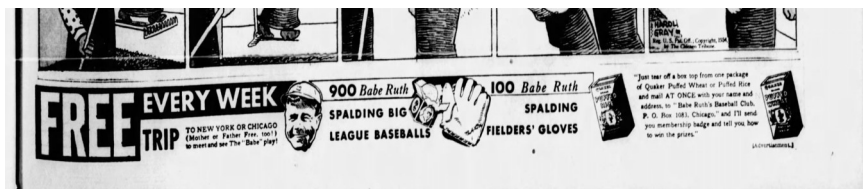


Figure 5. An advertisement (closeup) that strips across the bottom of the comics page of the June 17, 1934 edition of Philadelphia Inquirer advertises promotions through the Babe Ruth Baseball Club.

A bit more of internet sleuthing makes me believe that Joe Pastor’s grocery store (or stores) was most likely in either Oil City or Franklin, which are about eight miles apart in Venango County, northwestern Pennsylvania. This theory would coincide with the ads, news stories and radio schedule found on this page.

Another ad I found appeared at the bottom of a Sunday comics page in the June 17, 1934 edition of The Philadelphia Inquirer (Figure 5). The ad hails:

FREE EVERY WEEK Trip to New York or Chicago (Mother or Father free too!) to meet and see the Babe play! 900 Bath Ruth Spalding Big League Baseballs. 100 Babe Ruth Spalding Fielders’ Gloves.

Just tear off a box top from one package of Quaker Puffed Wheat or Puffed Rice and mail AT ONCE with your name and address, to ‘Babe Ruth’s Baseball Club, P.O. Box 1083, Chicago,’ and I’ll send membership badge and tell you, how you to win the prizes. (Advertisement)

I have been unable to find anything that states how many local members of Babe Ruth’s baseball club or who may have won those weekly trips to see the Sultan of Swat. More sleuthing lies ahead.

But I feel lucky to find the Syracuse cover linked to Babe Ruth, well at least one of his many promotions. Aside from Syracuse items, I also collect the topic of baseball so it’s like I just swept a doubleheader.

SQUIRRELS, FROM PAGE 12

Considering the message, I have to think that this was likely one of scores of similar cards sent to police jurisdictions across the country. (If not, why would this be sent just to St. Louis?)

As the crime occurred just the day before this card, according to this message, Chief Cadin and his staff must have worked quickly and diligently to mail out an unknown, but probably many, such postal cards. Remember, no printers or copiers in 1919.

I wondered several things. How valuable were squirrel pelts in the day? How much was squirrel used in clothing at that time? Were they ever recovered? Who snatched them?

Of course, animal furs were used by humans for clothing for thousands of years. Squirrels seem kind of small, though, and I only ever recall hearing about squirrel skin hats.

The Anchorage Museum website offers the following about the historical use of squirrel pelts: The

seemingly insignificant squirrel was a primary source of fur for clothing year-round. Squirrel skins were both abundant and ideal for use as outer and inner garments, their small size and irregular shapes allowing for great flexibility to create well fitted clothing.

I could not find many historical specifics online, but sources indicated that squirrel was on the low end of the fur market in the early 20th century in the U.S. and an AI report referred to a 1926 New York Times article that reported nearly 346,000 squirrel skins were sold at an auction, suggesting they were traded in high volume. Another post I saw indicated squirrel skins were used for glove linings.

As for Mr. Kleinman, I did not find much other than he was born in 1875, died in 1922, and was married to Minnie (1878-1926). They are buried together in Frumah Packard Cemetery in Syracuse.

Oh, and I am going squirrely over that circled H on the cover ... what does that mean?

Douglas Penwell sent along these interesting images – a first day cover at the special delivery rate and an advertisement – for the George Washington Bicentennial Birthday stamps, a set of a dozen stamps in as many values issued January 1, 1932.

Although the official first day was in Washington, D.C. (thousands of people showed up on New Year's Day to buy stamps and get covers serviced), there are unofficial January 1 covers known from other places, including New York City.

Stamp dealer Y. Souren, of New York City, who took out ads in several philatelic outlets to sell serviced covers, may have been responsible for getting stamps to places outside Washington, D.C. to obtain those special postmarks.

Penwell said the cover included this clipping (an ad) about "Stamps and Their Condition." (A couple excerpts

New York City 571 Lexington Avenue Y. SOUREN CO.
STAMPS AND THEIR CONDITION

Stamps are variously described according to their condition. This is a factor governed by many circumstances, some of which are, of course, far beyond the control of stamp dealers and collectors since they are resultant from printing office procedure.

In the issuance of nineteenth century stamps, governments were hardly at all concerned with the condition of the specimens. If they were legible, forgers-proof, and durable, they were, apparently, all right. The governments had but one object in mind when they issued stamps, namely, the use of them in the payment of certain fixed charges for letters and packages which were sent through the mails.

The science of philately came and gradually worked out systems whereby such collecting might be most effectively carried on.

Certain standards regarding the condition of stamps came to be recognized, and it was found that very few stamps met the requirements of these standards. Of an issue of a thousand stamps, not a hundred might be perfect, while the other hundred were admirable examples of philatelic quality. In other words, those hundred stamps met the specifications as to what a well-centered, nicely perforated stamp should be. These that were so approved were considered as a standard of excellence. All other stamps were either good, average or fair, according to the manner in which they compared with the standards conceived by discerning collectors. It is true that the standards themselves changed as collecting developed, but it is likewise true that the standards became more and more rigid.

The comparatively few fine specimens of nineteenth century stamps comprise the small group of today's philatelic prizes. If not always the rarities. Since we know that, due to inefficient methods of printing and lax inspection, there are few nineteenth century items whose condition can be described as being superb, we prize those few when we chance upon them. Other stamps are judged in comparison. Because there are so few such items, the discerning collector is more likely to wish to obtain them. It is but a trait of human nature to want that which is least likely to be had.

A very appreciable difference of opinion exists among collectors regarding the condition of stamps. Many there are who are not too particular about such things. They perhaps are guided by the theory that half a loaf is better than none—in other words, they had rather have a poorly conditioned specimen than none at all. This thought may be admissible when one is purchasing copies of rarities which are interesting for purposes of study. But from the standpoint of the ultimate worth of a collection, this is a poor consideration indeed. In the minds of many collectors it is better to have a vacancy in the album than to ruin the general effect of perfection by the inclusion of even one item that does not "measure up" in all respects to the standard set by the others whose condition is excellent in every way.

Though it is sometimes difficult to know just where to draw the line, so imperceptible as it is, often, there is a difference between irregularity and poor condition.

Such outstanding irregularities as, for example, an inverted centre or errors in printing so that "pence" is rendered "pennce" are not to be considered under the heading "condition". None but a fool would refuse a place in his collection to a stamp whose centre is inverted if he knows for a certainty that this is a genuine error and not merely a snare with which to bait unsuspecting collectors. It were quite another matter in the latter event's being true, and such things have been known to happen more than once. Such probabilities should be considered under other headings, such as "forgery" or "speculation".

But in cases where it is known that certain stamps do exist in "perfect" condition—that is, we shall say, properly centered, fully perforated, and with original gum, it is folly to accept less than the best, if one pays for the best. A man does not go to an exclusive clothier and pay a handsome price for a shirt that he knows to be of inferior quality if he sees its perfect brother lying on a nearby shelf and priced for no more than he is about to pay for the poor specimen. If he does not see the well-made shirt and lets the dealer dupe him into paying full price for something if, the error is his for the reason that he does not know his shirt.

It is just this same thing that many unsuspecting collectors encounter when they purchase stamps. It is their own lack of knowledge that lets them be taken in on such occasions. He will protect himself if he becomes conversant with various facts concerning stamps and their conditions. These facts, many of them, are to be gleaned from

careful study of the stamps themselves, and from earnest perusal of literature discussing them.

But there are many instances of poor condition of stamps which do not require any great credence on the part of the collector. Anyone with good eyesight can tell when a stamp is torn or creased. Having determined such things, the discerning collector will reject the item as not being worthy of the appellation "superb". In philately as in other fields there are always people who will try to put off upon careless customers the imperfect as the perfect. For this reason many collectors are deceived. It is a different matter if a collector, knowing the stamp is not perfect, wishes to purchase it and does so for a price which is less than that demanded for the perfect article. It is not unethical for dealers to grade their stamps according to condition and then sell them at prices based upon those facts.

There are, of course, stages to stamp collecting. The beginner may not know how long his interest will last. In many cases children collect because of the novelty of the thing. Indeed, most boys reach a stage in their development in which it becomes almost inevitable that they will collect stamps. Their interest may grow, or it may not. If it does, the collectors will find themselves undergoing a process of weeding out, replacing poor specimens with good. They will take various steps in their collecting careers, based upon a natural growth of interest and, of course, a corresponding growth in financial ability. The young collector does not aspire to the possession of a rarity, but the man of thirty-five or so, with a fair income, may conceivably entertain the idea of such possession and strive to realize it.

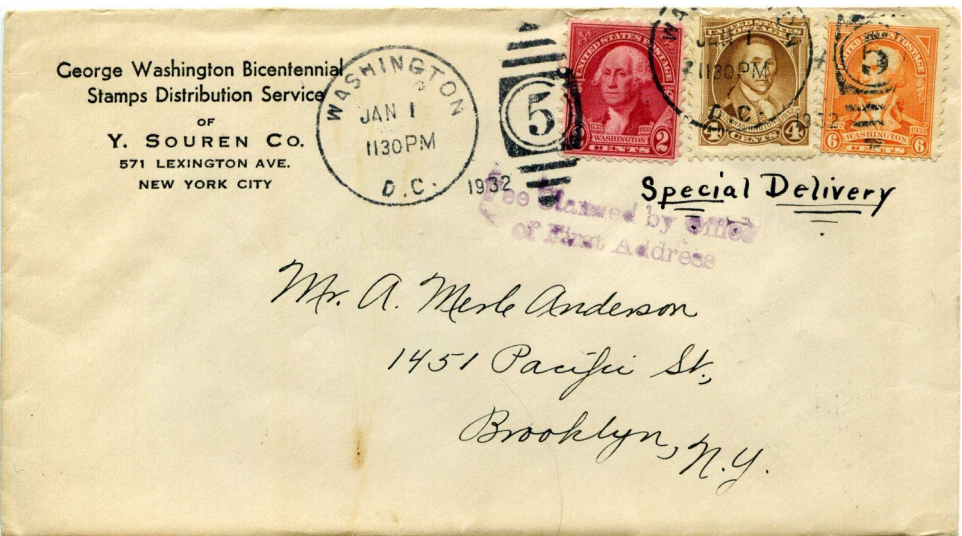
It does not seem possible to lay too much stress upon the importance of preserving stamps. A large proportion of stamps become, as it were, de-conditioned through careless handling by both dealers and collectors. This seems very nearly inexcusable. Accidents do happen to cause destruction, but for the most part much of the ill-fate that befalls stamps could be avoided if collectors and dealers would exercise even ordinary care in the handling of their possessions. One does not approach a rare tapestry with mud-covered hands. A two-cent stamp is, decidedly, not a rarity, but if its condition is perfect, why mistreat it needlessly? Children who learn to handle their stamps carefully have also learned to handle other things with care. They have learned a valuable lesson in respect for property. Mutilated stamps are worthless and nullify the value of any collection no matter how fine other items in it may be. A "complete" collection which includes imperfect stamps is not so "complete" as one which, though every space may not be filled, is entirely comprised of fine copies.

However much the collector may study his stamps, he quite often finds himself at the mercy of dealers who are none too scrupulous. This is not true alone of stamp collectors, but of all sorts of collectors. Indeed it is true of anyone who buys any commodity at all. No matter how expert a housewife may be in the selection of lettuce, she may have, upon some occasion, to rely upon the word of her grocer as to whether or not the day's supply of the herb is good.

Since occasions will arise in which the buyer must rely upon the word of the seller, it behooves the former to make quite sure of the latter. This is nowhere more important than in the realm of stamp buying. The collector, no matter how expert he may be, must be sure that what the dealer tells him is bona fide. He must be able to depend upon the dealer, and the dealer must be, in every way, worthy of such dependence. He must, if he is to be the recipient of trust, be deserving of trust.

The firm of Y. SOUREN CO. have, through years of experience, earned that trust which careful collectors throughout the world have come to place in them. Trust is the keystone of the business structure which has, through the years, been carefully built. Collectors know that the word of Y. SOUREN CO. regarding the condition of a stamp is all that is necessary to guarantee the truth. The long experience in the stamp business which Y. SOUREN CO. have had has enabled them to know thoroughly the commodities they sell. In philatelic matters where discrimination and knowledge are required, Y. SOUREN CO. are well qualified to serve. Our stock of SUPERB items will measure up to the demands of the most exacting collector just as truly as the most exacting collector will, in the long run, win out against those who are less careful.

Y. Souren



are shown below.)

It would be interesting to see other George Washington Bicentennial first day covers from New York state. If you have any, send along a high-resolution image and we'll share it with others.

For more detailed articles about the George Washington Birthday Bicentennial stamps of 1932, we suggest a couple of articles that appeared in *The American Philatelist*, the journal of the American Philatelic Society. The most recent article, which looked mostly at the first day of issue and its covers, by Marjory Sente, appeared in the September 2025 edition. Ken Lawrence wrote a detailed article on the stamps in the December 1999 edition.

Thank you, Douglas, for the contribution.

A very appreciable difference of opinion exists among collectors regarding the condition of stamps. Many there are who are not too particular about such things. They perhaps are guided by the theory that half a loaf is better than none—in other words, they had rather have a poorly conditioned specimen than none at all. This thought may

be admissible when one is purchasing copies of rarities which are interesting for purposes of study. But from the standpoint of the ultimate worth of a collection, this is a poor consideration indeed. In the minds of many collectors it is better to have a vacancy in the album than to ruin the general effect of perfection by the inclusion of even one item that does not "measure up" in all respects to the standard set by the others whose condition is excellent in every way.

Though it is sometimes difficult to know just where to draw the line, so imperceptible as it is, often, there is a difference between irregularity and poor condition.

Such outstanding irregularities as, for example, an inverted centre or errors in printing so that "pence" is rendered "pennce" are not to be considered under the heading "condition". None but a fool would refuse a place in his collection to a stamp whose centre is inverted if he knows for a certainty that this is a genuine error and not merely a snare with which to bait unsuspecting collectors. It were quite another matter in the latter event's being true, and such things have been known to happen more than once. Such probabilities should be considered under other headings, such as "forgery" or "speculation".

But in cases where it is known that certain stamps do exist in "perfect" condition—that is, we shall say, properly centered, fully perforated, and with original gum, it is folly to accept less than the best, if one pays for the best. A man does not go to an exclusive clothier and pay a handsome price for a shirt that he knows to be of inferior quality if he sees its perfect brother lying on a nearby shelf and priced for no more than he is about to pay for the poor specimen. If he does not see the well-made shirt and lets the dealer dupe him into paying full price for something if, the error is his for the reason that he does not know his shirt.

It is just this same thing that many unsuspecting collectors encounter when they purchase stamps. It is their own lack of knowledge that lets them be taken in on such occasions. He will protect himself if he becomes conversant with various facts concerning stamps and their conditions. These facts, many of them, are to be gleaned from

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 or president for details.