

APS UNIT 28

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EMPIRE STATE POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

GENERAL DELIVERY

By George McGowan

General delivery is used to send mail to transients or those lacking a permanent address. Mail would be held for a period, usually 30 days or less and, if unclaimed, be treated under existing postal regulations.

The *Postal Laws & Regulations* of 1902, 1913, and 1924 stated: "Letters without street number or box number shall be treated as transient letters and placed in the General Delivery."

I was surprised by the measures the former U.S. Post Office Department took to ensure delivery of an item, including advertising in local papers, searching directories, and querying city and rural carriers, before sending it to the dead letter office. There never has been a fee for general delivery, the only exception being that if an item was advertised in a local paper, the recipient was charged (usually one cent) to defray part of that cost.

A card posted from Clintonville (top) on April 4, 1912 to a general delivery recipient in Syracuse was received on April 5 by General Delivery Clerk #3. A card posted on June 19, 1914 from Oneonta to Hudson Falls was sent to general delivery because of the insufficient address (middle). The sender of a letter from Cayuga to Auburn asked the postmaster to "Keep until called for." Sent on November 3, 1915, it arrived the same day and received the first red *Gen. Del.* double circle. By November 27 it had not been picked up and was advertised as indicated by the second red double circle. Finally, having not been picked up, it was stamped *unclaimed*.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mail can still be sent to general delivery, but must meet certain requirements listed on the USPS Web site (www.usps.com). Letters with incomplete addresses or lacking a general delivery endorsement usually are returned to the sender.

