



**EMPIRE STATE
POSTAL HISTORY
SOCIETY**

APS UNIT 28

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Meets twice annually

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MCKINLEY'S SUMMER WHITE HOUSE

Washington, D.C., can be very hot and humid in the summer. Before air conditioning, many of the Washington elite would escape to a cooler and dryer climate in the summer. In 1897 and 1899, President William McKinley found refuge in northern New York at the Hotel Champlain, built on a bluff overlooking Lake Champlain just south of Plattsburgh. The Library of Congress has a photograph of McKinley with the 26th US Volunteer Infantry on the hotel's lawn (above right).

Even though he was on *vacation*, the affairs of state still needed attention. An 1897 cover, possibly from McKinley himself, to the Acting Secretary of State in Washington, D.C., is post-marked with a double circle "HOTEL CHAMPLAIN / Clinton Co., N.Y." date stamp (top left). I assume there is no "FREE" marking because the corner card contains the word "OFFICIAL."

Alvey Adee was a career diplomat who was Acting Secretary of State while Secretary of State John Sherman was in ill health. Adee was second Assistant Secretary of State from 1886–1924.

The hotel was built in 1889 and 1890 by the Delaware & Hudson Railroad Company as a summer resort. The three-story, 400-guest hotel sat high above Lake Champlain on an overlook called Bluff Point. It was served by both the D & H and Lake Champlain Steamboat Company.

The hotel used a number of cancels with Clinton County as part of the name, perhaps to ensure people would know where the hotel was located. An 1892 example is shown beneath the Executive Mansion cover. The hotel was destroyed by fire in 1910. A new building was used from 1911 until the hotel and post office closed in 1951. The hotel's summer post office operated from 1890 to 1950. Clinton Community College now occupies the site. ■

— Glenn A. Estus

1892 cover from Gerald Wiley collection