



**EMPIRE STATE
POSTAL HISTORY
SOCIETY**

APS UNIT 28

www.esphs.us

Meets twice annually

Membership info: George McGowan
PO Box 482, E. Schodack, NY 12063-0482
geolotus2003@nycap.rr.com, 518-479-4396



FAST MAIL IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

By Gerald Wiley

My local newspaper, the *Watertown Daily Times*, recently printed a short item titled “Fast Mail, 1850”: “The *Watertown Jeffersonian* for Jan. 11, 1850 reported that despite the lack of rail service to the community a package had been received in Watertown via stagecoach only 13 hours after it was dispatched from Albany. The event was deemed of considerable importance at the time. The same feat today would earn high commendation for the postal service.”

No further details were given concerning postal matters.

Presumably, the mail went by railroad from Albany to Utica and from there to Watertown by stagecoach. The dated backstamps used at post offices to show time of receipt give collectors examples of speedy mail in times past.

A piece of mail from from the correspondence of W. H. Grenell, seed grower of Pierrepont Manor in Jefferson County, is a good illustration of this. The postal card from Detroit, Michigan, with a postmark dated 1:30 p. m. August 29, 1884, was received at Pierrepont Manor on August 30. The railroads provided quick transportation for moving the mail.

Rural Free Delivery was first tried in 1896 and in following years was greatly expanded. It no longer was necessary for residents living in rural areas to travel to a post office to pick up and send mail. A post card handed to the carrier on Sandy Creek Route No.1 in Oswego County on Monday afternoon, August 19, 1912, was delivered farther along on his route the same afternoon. He canceled the stamp, which he may have sold to the sender, and applied the date with indelible pencil.

The message on the card: “Mrs. Rensington / Madam / Please save me one quart milk tonight and I will be after it, if nothing happens. / Aurelia Huffstater”

That was really fast mail. ■