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EXCELSIOR!



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Editor's Box

I had the opportunity of spending a few days at the APS StampShow in Columbus, Ohio this past August. I had never been to a national show before, and with Columbus being less than a four hour drive from home, the decision to go was made easy. Aside from the many national organization and dealer booths (where I must admit I spent not only lots of time but a small fortune), I had the distinct pleasure of running into many fellow ESPHS members. Among those were former ESPHS president Al Parsons, Drew Nicholson, John Cali, Elwyn Doubleday, Henry Chlanda, Don Tocher, and Roger Brody. Attending any stamp show is always a great experience; however it is made more meaningful when the experience can be shared with those with whom you have common interests. I am looking forward to the APS Wintershow which I understand is scheduled to come to Louisville, KY in January, 2013. Until then, I hope to run into some of our ESPHS members at the many commercial and club sponsored shows in the coming year.

THE SAMUEL AUGUSTUS BARKER LETTERS, 1789-1797

By: George H. Lukacs, City of Poughkeepsie Historian

When I first had the opportunity to purchase these letters I did not identify the town names as belonging with those that I collect from Dutchess County, NY. A little research identified Barker as a Revolutionary War hero, which caught my attention; however, I failed to bid on the first few letters that were offered. Gradually the contents of the letters were more fully revealed—correspondence between Samuel A. Barker and his wife, Maria; appearing to be critically important both domestically and politically for that era, I decided to examine them more closely.

Once I realized a couple of the letters included Dutchess County as part of the address I knew I was on to something historically (and postally) important which needed to be added to my local history collection. The town names Fredericksburgh, Fredericks-Town, and Franklin were not names I expected to be from Dutchess County. However, with some research the answer became obvious: In June 1812, the southern part of Dutchess County was separated to create Putnam County, thus these towns were actually located within Dutchess County predating the separation. Part of Frederickstown contained the hamlet of Fredericksburgh in 1795 when the Town of Frederickstown was divided into three parts: the Town of Franklin (renamed Patterson in 1808, in honor of Matthew Pat(t)erson, whose home lay within the hamlet), the Town of Frederick, and the Town of Carmel. As a result the name of the hamlet was renamed—Fredericksburg became Franklin.

With this information in hand I eventually purchased 27 letters from the Barker correspondence dating from 1789-1797 (regrettably missing out on about a half-dozen or so) as well as additional relevant family letters from later years. While reading these letters I have found that the contents from this core period in the Barker correspondence have proven to be an important documentation of the life and times of an early Dutchess County homemaker and her politically active husband, during the critical first decade of our fledgling country under the Constitution. Before I begin dissecting the importance of the seven letters chosen for this article, a brief overview of Samuel A. Barker's early life is in order.

Samuel Augustus Barker was born on December 9, 1756, in Branford, CT. In 1775, at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War he was serving as a Sergeant in the 6th Company, 1st Connecticut Continental Line (Regiment). In December 1776, he was appointed adjutant on the regimental staff of Brigadier General "Mad Anthony" Wayne. He subsequently served as captain of light infantry of the 4th Connecticut Line under the command of the Marquis de Lafayette, who appointed him as his aide-de-camp and who considered Barker as his trusted and beloved friend. During the Battle of Monmouth in 1778, during which Lafayette's command was engaged and valiantly helped to rout the British forces, Barker received from the Marquis extremely enthusiastic praise for his gallant conduct: *My brave! My good! My virtuous! My adopted brother!* Lafayette proceeded with that spirit so common to his countrymen, clutching the young aide to his breast and kissing him upon the cheek. Barker would continue with Lafayette in Virginia from April to November 1781. (Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate his portrait to replicate here; if a reader should know of such, I would appreciate contact: <saltglazed@aol.com>.)

In 1786, Barker settled in Frederickstown, Dutchess County where he married Mary (Maria) Delevan. He was elected to the New York State Assembly beginning in 1788, and upon his election Lafayette wrote from France a congratulatory letter which included a poem postscript that takes each letter of Samuel August Barker's name to start each line:

*Sage of the East! Where wisdom rears her head;
Augustus, taught in virtue's path to tread;
'Mid thousands of his race, elected stands
Unanimous to legislative bands;
Endowed with every art to frame just laws,
Learns to hate vice, to virtue gives applause.*

*Augustus, oh, thy name that's ever dear
Unrivalled stands, to crown each passing year!
Great are the virtues that exalt thy mind,
Unenvied merit marks thy worth refined.
Sincerely rigid for your country's right,
To save her liberty you deigned to fight;
Undaunted courage graced your manly brow,
Secured such honors as the Gods endow.*

*Bright is the page; the record of the days
Attracts my music thus to rehearse thy praise.
Rejoice then, patriots, statesmen, all rejoice!
Kindle his praises with one general voice!
Emblazon out his deeds, his virtues prize,
Reiterate his praise to the skies!*

M.D. LaFayette (sign.), P.S. – The Colonel will readily apologize for the inaccuracies of an unskilled muse, and be convinced the high estimation of his amiable character could alone actuate the author of the foregoing.

Samuel Barker was reelected for the 1789-90 and 1791 New York Assembly Sessions, while in 1790 he also was appointed a Justice of the Peace, was named an Assistant Marshall for the State of New York and was placed in charge of the 1790 Census for Dutchess and Ulster Counties. It is during this period that the letters in my possession begin. It should be noted here that the vast majority of the 27 letters were carried and delivered “outside of the mails,” as are all seven presented herein. During this period there was no local post office—the Pawling post office eight miles north was not established until Dec. 1, 1806 and Patterson until Apr. 2, 1811—and delivery “Through the Favor” or “Favored By” (common phraseology of the times) of a neighbor, friend or acquaintance was common in rural areas such as eastern Dutchess County.

Figure 1 (below) is a stampless folded letter (SFL) addressed to “Mrs. Samuel A. Barker/Fredericksburgh” and carried (“Favd by Mr. Akin”) from New York and while not year dated, based on the contents likely dates to 1791. In this letter Barker outlines how he will return home:

I expect to come by water to Fishkill—I can there procure a horse to come home—but must set off directly for Ulster County to complete my Enumeration (1790 Census!) as I shall be short in time—Remind John to have my horse in order—This will be handed to you by young Mr. Akin.

(Samuel Barker’s route from New York City included a being a passenger on a sloop up the North [Hudson] River to Fishkill, followed by a long and tiring trip on horseback on the Fishkill-Danbury Road [Rt. 52 today] to the Frederickstown Road (Rt. 311).

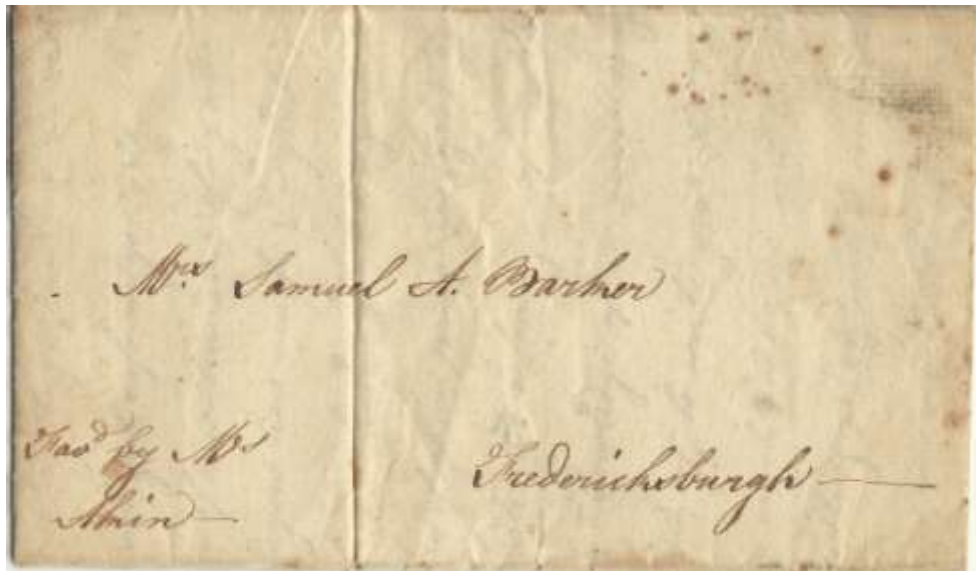


Figure 1: Conveyed “outside of the mails”—“Fav’d by Mr. Akin”—
New York City to Fredericksburgh (then Dutchess Co.)

The letter continues, *you may inform any person if you please that Mr. Akin’s son, Isaac, is appointed Justice of the Peace.* The Akin family farm was located at the juncture of the Old Drover’s Road (now Rt. 22/55) and the Frederickstown, and family members were known to make the occasional trip to NYC to seek buyers for farm produce, thus the members of this family made ideal conveyors of “out of the mails” letters from and to Samuel Barker.

The SFL in **Figure 2** (below) is also not year-dated but based on its having been written by his wife Maria on Monday morning, March 14th, it must date to 1791. It is addressed to **Col.** Samuel Augustus Barker in New York (City) as a sign of respect since in fact he had been appointed Lieut. Colonel in the Dutchess County Militia, July 1789. In this letter Maria writes of her concerns about mail delivery:

I do not Promise my self that you will receive this letter as Frisbie is to be the bearer—yours by Mr. McKay informs me that you have had but one letter from me and that by Mr. Akin(s)—I am) surprised that Frisbie would be so ungenerous as to interrupt the one I wrote you by him.

It appears that the most reliable courier is Mr. Akins.

Barker was reelected to the NYS Assembly (1792 Session), but was not elected in 1793. He returned for the 1794 and 1795 Sessions so a number of letters appear from this period.

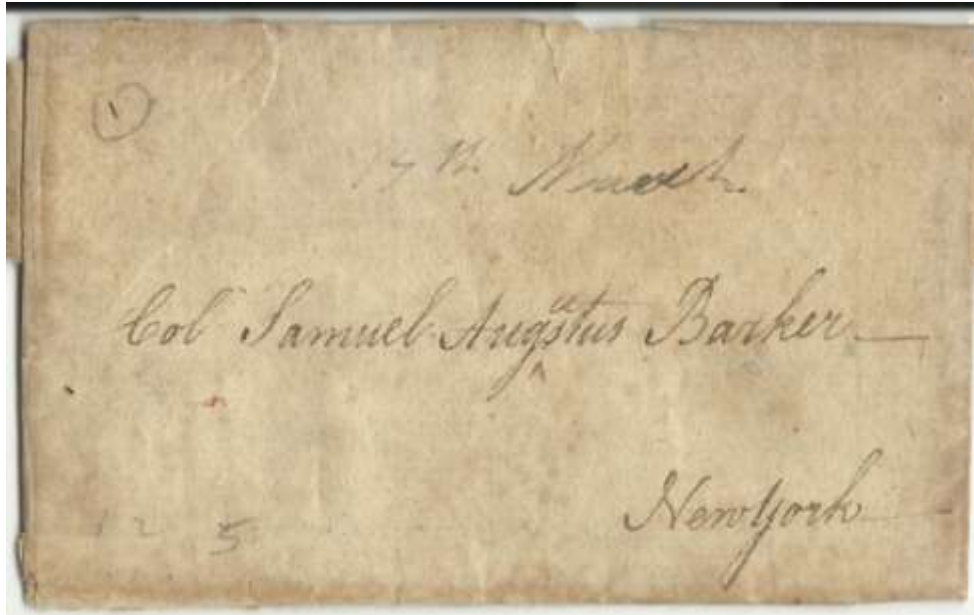


Figure 2: Conveyed “outside of the mails” by “Frisbie” (identified within)—
Fredericksburgh to New York (City)

The SFL in **Figure 3** (below) is dated February 9, 1795 and is written from New York City and was carried to Fredericks-Town (a frequent spelling variant during this period) outside the mails by Mr. Akins. (The Akins spelling variant is frequently found, however the correct spelling is Akin, a famous pre-Revolutionary family with descendents being farmers even today, though not on the same land as in the 1790s.) The letter is long and contains much interesting information:

...[We] then moved our Quarters to Col. Stoutenburgh's near the North River, where we are now, Brooks, Radcliff, Oakley & myself in good Quarters...this I send by William Akins, who informed me of the desertion of Mr. Arnold—I think it is best not to go after him, let him go...

He follows with a very personal note: *...this is so much a love letter I hope you will let no one see it...* (Interestingly, a couple of potentially “choice words” have been torn from the letter towards the end.)

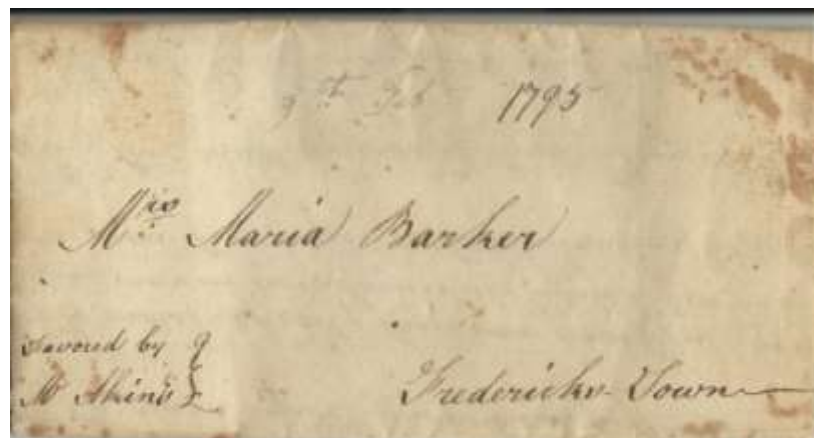


Figure 3: Conveyed “outside of the mails” by Mr. Akin(s)—
New York City to Fredericks-Town (then Dutchess Co.)

However, there are two additional comments, both of which give a picture of life in New York: ...*I sent my Horse home by Pearse the Drover* (most likely via the Drover's Road—later called the Post Road—which linked NYC to Vermont)—*I hope he arrived safe ...Mr. Jay (John Jay) is nominated by our Party.*

The **Figure 4** (below) SFL is dated five weeks later on March 17, 1795 and written by Maria from Frederickstown to Samuel in New York (City). In this letter she writes: *I have heard of the death of General Brinkerhoff happy happy it is for me that it was not you but him.* As a result of General Abraham Brinkerhoff's death, Barker was appointed Brigadier General of the New York State Militia on April 8, 1795.



Figure 4: Conveyed “outside of the mails” (deliverer unknown)—Frederickstown to New York (City).

As an aside, which from our 2011 viewpoint adds a not-to-pleasant aspect to the “portrait” of Samuel Augustus Barker (but one should be careful to remember to place it in the context of the late 18th century before we castigate him), there is found an advertisement placed by Barker which appeared in *The Poughkeepsie Journal* (the principal newspaper of the county seat of Dutchess County) on October 19, 1795:

Runaway from the subscriber on the 14th of October instant, a Negro Man named Jack, about 30 years of age, 5 feet 7 or 8 inches high, slender built, sprightly walk, has lost the sight of his left eye, born in Connecticut, speaks good English, plays on the fife and German flute, had a fife with him; ... Whoever will take up the said Negro, and send word to the subscriber or secure him in any gaol (jail), shall receive Ten Dollars, or Twenty Dollars if returned to his master. Samuel Augustus Barker, Frankln, County of Dutchess.

This illustrates that slavery was prevalent even in New York State at this time, and Barker was part of this foul system that thankfully would be abolished in New York State sooner than in most.

Beginning with the SFL illustrated by **Figure 5** (below), a letter dated January 29th, 1796 and addressed to Mrs. Maria Barker, Franklin, we see a direct reference to the fact that the Barkers reside in Dutchess County. The letter is written from Albany where the New York State Assembly is now meeting and he laments:

I had a good opportunity to write by Grant, but at that time, I had been so short a time from home that I had nothing to write since that time I have not had one direct conveyance. Apparently it was more difficult to find carriers of letters from Albany; it had been much easier to find them when the Assembly met in New York City. He explains further how Maria may best send a letter to him: ...if you have no other opportunity, write by the Post—give your letter, (and it must be a long one,) to Andrews & tell him to put it in the Post office, Poughkeepsie from when it will come safe.” (The Poughkeepsie post office was established in 1786.)

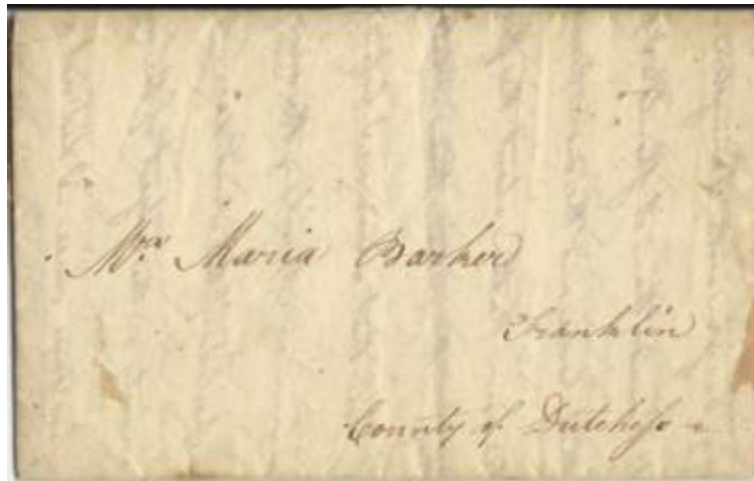


Figure 5: Conveyed “outside of the mails,” conveyor not known—
Albany to Franklin, Dutchess County

A February 5, 1797 SFL (**Figure 6**, below) is addressed by Maria to “General Samuel A. Barker, Albany, in response to his new promotion. In it she expresses considerable emotion:

With Inexpressible Joy My Dear Husband I received your letter by the Post. By it you made me so happy as I possibly can be while so dear so loving so well beloved Husband. There is no doubt there is great love between them! Note the address is now *Franklin*, which illustrates renaming of Fredericksburgh.

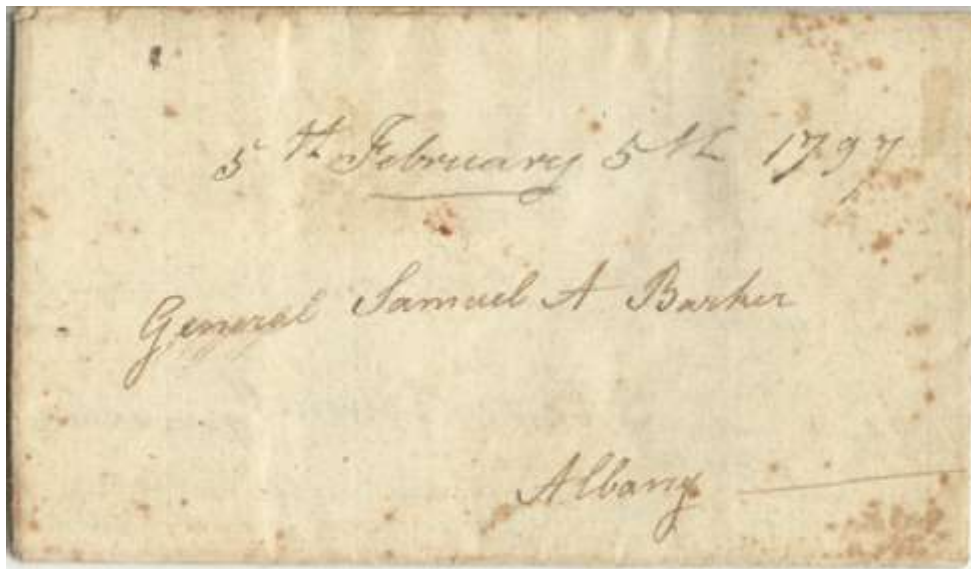


Figure 6: Conveyed “outside of the mails,” conveyor not known—
Franklin to Albany.

On February 24, 1797 the aforementioned “Grant” is the conveyor of an SFL (**Figure 7**, below) from Samuel in Albany to Maria in Franklin; we now know his given initial, “G.” In the letter Samuel explains how much he misses her and how their letters were transported:

Confined to the society of men only, I languish & pine for the softer society of your softer sex, the charms of which carries balm to my soul, if troubled or if elevated with any thing pleasing the pleasure of sharing it with a congenial soul of your sex highly adds to the gratification—I was made happy by the receipt of your letter by Mr. St. John, he arrived here on Sunday morning the 19th—yours was dated the 15th—I had wrote you two letters by Post after the one I wrote by Hawley, which you inform me you have received.

This long passage reveals two important facts: 1. Samuel and Maria are not afraid to express their passionate love for each other!; and 2. It took approximately four days to travel from Franklin in Dutchess County to Albany—not bad when one considers the condition of the roads in those times.



Figure 7: Conveyed “outside of the mails” by G. Grant—
Albany to Franklin

This group of letters ends in 1797 as Samuel Barker was not reelected to the Assembly in 1798. And sadly an obituary appeared in *The Poughkeepsie Journal* of October 14, 1798:

On Tuesday, the 7th inst. Departed this life, after a few hours of illness, Mrs. Mary Barker, wife of Gen. Samuel Augustus Barker, of the Town of Beekman, in this county. Mrs. Barker was 29 years of age—has left a family of small children to bemoan the loss of a kind mother, her husband’s affectionate wife, and her friends an acquaintance and agreeable companion.

Samuel A. Barker would remarry in 1805 (a custom of the period for widowers with small children to raise); regain public life by becoming Supervisor of the Town of Beekman from 1805-13 and 1815; and even served again in the New York State Assembly in 1808-09 and 1811 Sessions. In 1804, he was chosen chairman of the first meeting for a public library in Beekman, and in 1806 he was elected 1st vice president of the Dutchess County Agricultural Society. He continued his involvement in the Census by being placed in charge of the 1800 Census for Orange, Ulster, and Dutchess Counties. *The Poughkeepsie Journal* of November 24, 1819 carried his death notice: *At his residence in the Town of Beekman, last Friday (night) in his 64th year, General Samuel Augustus Barker...* (Samuel purchased 200 acres of land in the Town of Beekman in 1797 from Gilbert R. Livingston, erected their “dream” house and moved there from Franklin.) Within the contents of the letters in Figures 5 and 7 are found several references of its importance to them, perhaps the most telling is that in Figure 7: *I know, my dearest Maria that you promise yourself happier days, than we have yet seen, should we succeed in getting that place—and I cannot bear the thought of disappointing you.* The land was purchased for 500 Pounds; the cost of constructing the house is unknown.)

Based on this 27-letter correspondence a unique history of a remarkable man and his loving wife makes an outstanding documentation of life in Dutchess County during this formative period in U.S. postal, political and social histories. From just the seven letters presented herein, one can see the value and importance of researching and documenting Samuel Augustus Barker’s life and times in a more complete written text—which is already under way.

POSTAL HISTORY IN THE MAKING

On July 26, 2011, the U. S. Postal Service announced it is considering closing 3700 post offices nationwide because of declining revenue. Closing post offices is one of several proposals that the Postal Service has put forward to cut costs in light of a looming \$8.3 billion budget deficit this year. In New York State alone, over 110 post offices are being considered for closure.

As an example, member Glenn Estus sent a note mentioning, that according to the Syracuse Post Standard of June 12, 2011, the following post offices are among those being considered as candidates for closure. This article appeared even before the official U.S.P.S. announcement; therefore these offices may or may not be on the official list for consideration:

Clarksville (Albany County), Clemons (Washington County), Clockville (Madison County), Depeyster (St. Lawrence County), Deferiet (Jefferson County), Ellisburg (Jefferson County), Fishers Landing (Jefferson County), Halesboro (St. Lawrence County), Jordanville (Herkimer County), Leonardsville (Madison County), Lorraine (Jefferson County), Mallory (Oswego County), Martinsburg (Lewis County), Old Chatham (Columbia County), Peterboro (Madison County), Redfield (Oswego County), Sabael (Hamilton County), Smyrna (Chenango County), Thousand Island Park (Jefferson County), West Leyden (Lewis County), West Stockholm (St. Lawrence County) and Woodgate (Oneida County).

This action by the U. S. Postal Service is an opportunity for postal historians to act to document postal history in the making.

Glenn writes: *I recommend that the ESPHS suggest to members to report all such potential closings and actual closings to somebody so that they can be listed. As postal historians, it's our duty to make sure this information is recorded in Excelsior! for future postal historians. Remember postal history is 18th, 19th, 20th, AND 21st centuries.*

COLLECTION AND DISTRIBUTION WAGONS

By: David Przepiora

The United States Post Office experimented with various systems of handling mail. One of the methods of speeding delivery was the trial use of Collection and Distribution Wagons also nicknamed "White Wagon Service". They were inaugurated on October 1, 1896 in both Washington DC and New York City. The New York wagon was transferred to Buffalo NY in October 1897 and began service there on October 18, 1897. Both the Washington DC wagon and the Buffalo wagon were later transferred to St. Louis; the Buffalo wagon in 1899, starting service in St Louis on November 20, 1899 and the Washington DC wagon in 1900, starting service there in July/August 1900. Both wagons were discontinued on April 30, 1904.



Figure 1. The Buffalo, NY collection wagon, which was in use from October 18, 1897 to June 30, 1899.

The experiment involved the use of specially constructed wagons equipped with sorting racks and tables which enabled a postal clerk to make a primary distribution of the mail en route. The service was intended to provide direct pickup from letter boxes and postal stations along a prescribed route so that the essential sorting could be made without the necessity of the mail passing through the main post office. Two wagons were acquired through the NYC firm of Van Tassell & Kearney on specifications provided by the post office. It appears the actual construction of the wagons was done by Henry Hooker and Co. of New Haven, Connecticut.

As seen in **Figure 1** above, the wagons were substantial, but neat, and of attractive design. They were painted in pure white with gilt lettering, the words “United States Mail” being on the side and “Collection Wagon No. _” on the rear. They were each 18 feet long overall while the body of the wagon was 12 feet in length. The fittings, though plain, were of the most improved style. The interior was finished in oil over whitewood and was large enough to give plenty of headroom. On the one side of the wagon, inside, was the distributing table while on the other was a rack for holding mail bags. Pigeon holes for distributing were arranged across the front end. The wagons had four windows along each side for light and were also equipped with gas lights for working at night. The wagons had rubber tires and a heater for cold weather.

In 1897 the No. 1 wagon was brought from NYC to Buffalo. An announcement in the Buffalo Commerce dated October 7, 1897 stated:

The new collection wagon will arrive in a few days and will be placed in service about October 18. Postmaster Baker says that the new wagon will take in nearly all the large office buildings. The route will be up Main Street to Tupper and down Pearl Street. If necessary, the wagon will also collect the mail at the Central and Lackawanna Depots.

The Collection & Distribution Wagon was in Buffalo from October 18, 1897 to June 30, 1899 and made 9 trips a day. The wagon was touted by post office officials as being able to handle a large quantity of mail in the business section of the city and expedite its delivery.

Buffalo Postmaster Baker seems to have been enthusiastic about the wagon service, but he was replaced on March 11, 1899 by Postmaster Samuel Dorr. Dorr an obvious automobile enthusiast was quick to begin thinking of getting rid of the wagon. The demise of the Collection & Distribution Wagon service in Buffalo came as no surprise to local residents or postal officials in Washington. Local newspapers had printed several bleak accounts of the experiment. Postmaster Dorr complained it collected such a mass of mail and caused disarrangements at the main office. Dorr had even called the wagon a “white elephant” St. Louis asked for the wagon and it was transferred there.

Postmaster Dorr wanted to experiment with automobiles and got permission on July 2, 1899. That’s when Dr. Truman Martin, promoter of the Buffalo Electric Vehicle Transportation Company, took postal superintendent John Leib of the city delivery system around in his electric carriage to collect the mail from a long route of street letter boxes. The trip was made in less than half the time it takes a collector with a horse. Thus Buffalo was the first post office to experiment with autos for mail delivery. History was again made two years later when the first ever automobile mail collection was tried. This experiment was conducted between the Main Buffalo post office and the Pan American Exposition grounds. Seven trips were made daily in electrically operated vehicles. The 4 1/2 mile trip was made in 35 minutes.

Five distinct postal markings are known for the Collection and Distribution Wagons. Two types each has been recorded for Washington DC and NYC with the remaining type used in conjunction with service in Buffalo, NY. Several examples of the Buffalo marking are shown at the end of this article. No markings are known for wagon service in St. Louis.

All of the postmarking devices used appear to have been the “flange type”. One common characteristic of this type of marking device is the appearance of a large round outline around the entire mark. This halo-like image is caused by the rim of the flange. This effect is not very prominent on the Buffalo postmarks I have collected.

The post marking contains the words COLLECTION & DISTRIBUTION, the city, date, wagon # and trip #.



Figure 2. December 27, 1897, Trip #2



Figure 3. August 19, 1898, Trip #5



Figure 4. November 25, 1898, Trip #1.

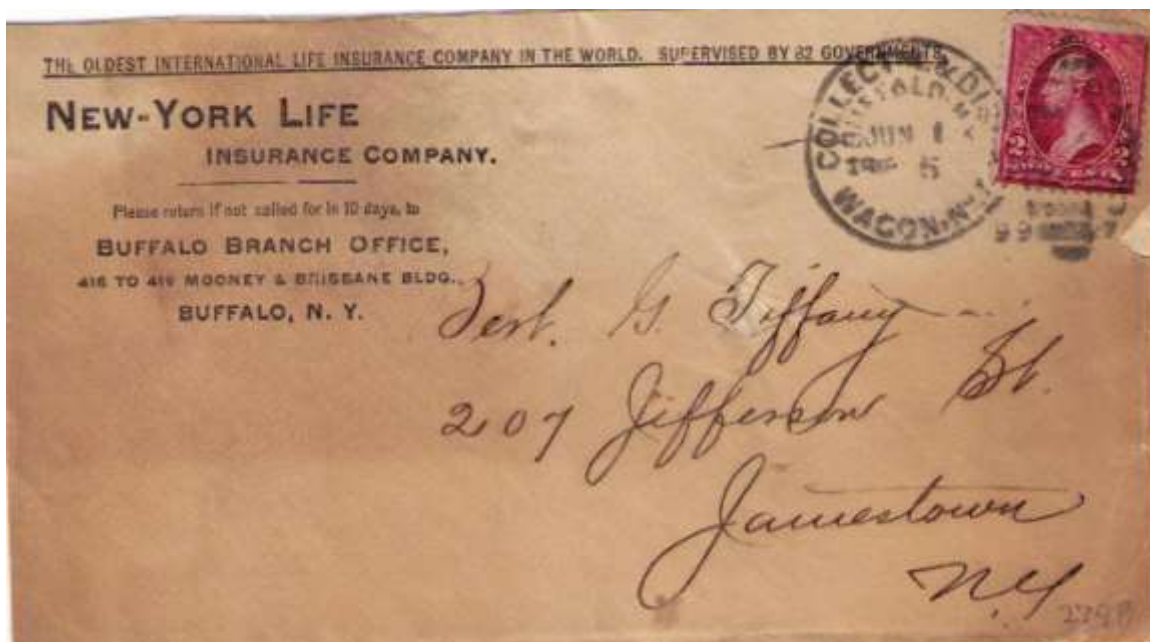


Figure 5. June 1, 1899, Trip #5.

References:

Collection and Distribution Wagon Service, James Bruns, 1986, Mobile Post office Society.

David Przepiora may be contacted at djprze@hotmail.com.

WHEN EGOS MAKE US BLIND

By: Jesse I. Spector M.D.

As a recent member of the Empire State Postal History Society I found myself chastened by the serendipitous discovery of a gross error in my postal history mentality. As a product of the Keystone State, spending the first twenty five years of my life in Philadelphia, I was convinced that Philadelphia was *the* center of the universe. Thus, when I acquired this lovely, albeit slightly tatty, Civil War cover, seen in **Figure 1**, posted with a Scott 65 to a Leut. Col. Wm. M. Coburn in Carthage, Jefferson, NY, I assumed that the 36 mm circular cancellation indicated that the “Official Business” as handwritten and underlined across the top of the cover had clearly originated in my city of brotherly love. I mean, where else would important official business originate from?



Figure 1. Official Business cover mailed from Philadelphia, NY to Carthage, NY

The mind sees what it wants to see, and as I researched our protagonist, William M. Coburn, I consistently ignored the glaring fact that two additional letters and one period were most clearly evident in the cancellation, namely “N. Y.” Oh, how I attempted to explain away what stared me in the eye: “well, the letters are in the opposite direction from the Philadelphia lettering, and maybe that’s not a Y, and more likely it has something to do with the obliterated date, and maybe....” Fortunately, once having joined the ESPHS, I became more open-minded to the possibilities offered by an affiliation with a New York institution. There it was, right in *Wikipedia*- Philadelphia, New York, where our cover originated and subsequently received in Carthage, New York, both locations being in Jefferson County! With that in mind let me introduce you to the Coburns of Fells River and Carthage, New York.

William M. Coburn (**Figure 2**) was born at Felt’s Mills, Jefferson County on January 26, 1825 to Merrill Coburn and Sally Coburn, nee Mitchell. Merrill Coburn, the owner of two lumber mills, is included in biographical sketches of prominent Jefferson County personages in the 1878 *History of Jefferson County*. William, it was reported, grew up and was educated under the “strict rule of his worthy father” and was stated to have practiced strict integrity, equal and exact justice to all men as well as demonstrating untiring industry. He became a partner in the lumber business and in 1860 moved to Carthage and owned a lumber mill in West Carthage.

His civil war military history remains enigmatic, in that, exhaustive searches of Union records including extensive review of military search engines for that time-period fail to elicit further details of his participation in the War of Secession. Nevertheless, local militia units, numbering in the hundreds, existed throughout New York State, in addition to federal Union military units. It is likely

that he was a member of the former group that resulted in a lack of information being available for Lt. Col. (modern usage) Coburn.



Figure 2. William M. Coburn (1825 – 1873)

William was twice married, his first wife Margaret Jane Middleton having died in 1858, the year of the birth of their only child, Marcia. It is likely that Margaret’s death was related to childbirth. His second wife, Harriet Coburn may have been a cousin, since her maiden name was also Coburn. Harriet was 15 years younger than William and the pair spawned four children between 1863 and 1873.

William was a prominent, civic-minded citizen. He was a director in the Carthage and Watertown Railroad, a director of the Jefferson County National Bank, and also the National Union Bank. He was one of the founders of the Empire State Life Insurance Company and the Black River Fire Insurance Company. He was reported to be “eminently public spirited and an enterprising citizen.” The tributes to the man were numerous and it was said that in all positions he held he always commanded respect. His philanthropic spirit was also notable, and one cannot help but conclude that, even taking into account the hyperbole notable for these times, he clearly was an individual who left a remarkable and indeed enviable impression on his fellow man. William Coburn died on February 10, 1873 at the relatively young age of 48.

His offspring were apparently cut from the same mold. Frederick, the oldest of his four children from his second marriage, built a very large home on Coburn hill overlooking the Black River, and the house remains a village landmark today. The family owned a lumber mill located on Coburn Island, now a peninsula jutting into the river above the NYS Dam. The foundations of the mill are still evident. The Coburn family supplied much of the lumber for the reconstruction of Carthage after the Great Fire of 1884.

The Coburn family legacy is quite consistent with the entrepreneurial spirit of nineteenth century America—industrious, shrewd, civic minded, philanthropic individuals—some with one or more, a few with all of these attributes. William was notably one of the latter. In an era quite notorious for winner-take-all mentality, William Coburn speaks well for those who were able to combine the new capitalistic spirit with virtue and grace.

I appreciate David Churchill for his assistance in making this article feasible.

Dr. Jesse I. Spector may be contacted at jesse.spector@verizon.net.

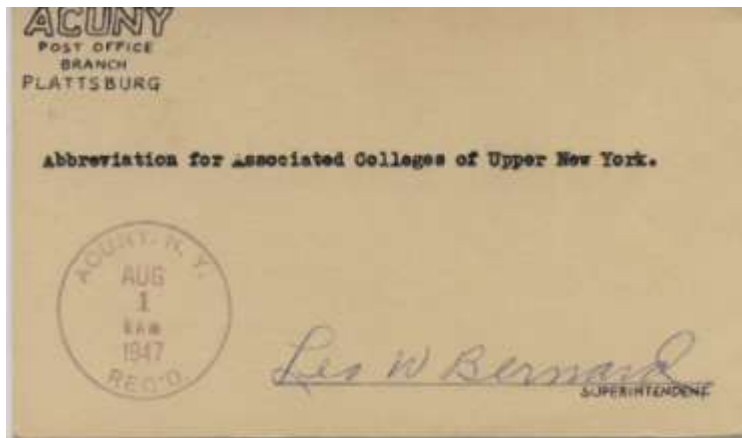
MILITARY/ACUNY, NY

By: Glenn Estus

From May 8, 1917 through July 31, 1947, the post office in Plattsburg had a branch (“Military”) on the grounds of Fort Plattsburg. On August 1, 1947 the name of the branch was changed from “Military” to “ACUNY”. According to Smith and Kay, this branch existed until October 1, 1954.

The illustrated card in **Figure 1** shows a machine cancel from the last day of Military, N.Y. The next day the name of the branch was changed to ACUNY, a funny name for a post office. An example of this is seen on the back of the same card at the bottom of **Figure 1** in the form of a receiving cancel dated August 1, 1947.

Figure 1. This postal card bears a Military, NY machine cancel dated the last day of operation of the post office by that name. The back (below) has a received marking from Acunyu dated on its first day of operation, August 1, 1947.



When World War II ended, millions of former servicemen returned home to an uncertain future. New York State's educational response was to establish the Associated Colleges of Upper New York (ACUNY) since the State Education Department did not feel that the existing private and public colleges in New York State could handle the estimated 100,000 veterans who would be seeking college level education.

On May 17, 1946, the Board of Regents chartered ACUNY with the goal of providing the first two years of college education for any qualified veteran who was rejected from one of the state's four year colleges because of "insufficient housing, overcrowded classrooms and lack of instructional staff."

Initially three ACUNY schools were established: Sampson College near Geneva (but in Seneca County) on the site of the US Naval Training Center, Mohawk College, the former Rhoads Hospital, Utica (Oneida County) and Champlain College in Plattsburgh (Clinton County). The three schools began operation in late 1946. In 1947, the Middletown Collegiate Center opened in Orange County. Both Mohawk and Sampson had postal branches on their campuses as well.

The schools were just a short term solution to an emergency situation and by the end of the 1940s both Mohawk and Sampson had closed. Champlain College became the first liberal arts college in the SUNY system, but in 1953 it graduated its last class. In that year it was absorbed by Harpur College, which today is one of the six colleges of Binghamton University.

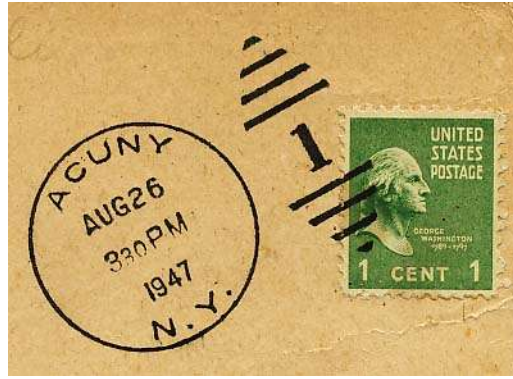


Figure 2. A duplexed postmark of Acunyn dated later in August, 1947.

My area of interest is Clinton County. Plattsburgh had a large military presence since before the War of 1812 until 1995 when the Plattsburgh Air Force Base closed under the post-Cold War Base Realignment initiatives. As a matter of fact, the PAFB was the last base considered by the original Realignment committee. PAFB was active from 1954 through 1995. Champlain College was one of the casualties due to the building of PAFB because it was situated on the former home of the Plattsburg Barracks which the Air Force reclaimed under a “recapture clause” to build PAFB.



Figure 3. Postmark of the Acunyn Branch of the Plattsburg post office from 1948.

So now you know the rest of the story: ACUNY was actually the branch post office at Champlain College in Plattsburg, N.Y.

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THANKS CAL!

By: George DeKornfeld

Calvet (Cal) Menger Hahn is a name that should be easily recognized by members of the Empire State Postal History Society. Cal, seen below, was not only a founding member of our group but also served as an early editor of our journal, *Excelsior!* Well known and respected throughout the philatelic world, Cal served many societies as both a board member and editor of publications. Adding the American Philatelic Society’s prestigious Luff Award to his lengthy list of accolades in 2000, he was an intense and active researcher and a prolific writer. During his collecting life, he put together what could arguably be called the largest and most complete collection of New York State pre-stamp postal history ever formed.



Figure 1. Calvet Menger Hahn (1927 – 2004)

It is a harsh reality of our hobby that oftentimes desirable items only come onto the market once its current owner, as the Bible so aptly words it, is sleeping with his Fathers. Being the case here, it is with mixed emotions that I present some of Cal's covers that are now appearing en-masse on the philatelic market place, most recently in Kelleher auctions and mail sales.

The Robert A. Siegel Sale #966 of December 2008 appears to be where Cal's collection first came onto the scene, being sold as large-sized lots one of which I assume was purchased by Kelleher and is now being offered on an individual cover basis. I've been in contact with several fellow members who have been snapping these covers up as have I, and hopefully we'll see some reporting from them in the future, particularly since many of these are changing the game as far as listings in the planned revision of *The American Stampless Cover Catalog (ASCC)* are concerned. As for me, I'll be showing stampless covers from, you guessed it, the City of Hudson.

I might as well start with what I consider to be the Columbia County blockbuster coming out of Cal's amazing collection. Previously, even though the Hudson Post Office came into being on June 12, 1792, the earliest recorded cover originating at Hudson was from 1794, written by Cotton Gelston, the first Postmaster. **Figure 2** shows the now new EKU, with a 25x4mm straight line similar to the Gelston cover. Note the abbreviation in the marking for August is typeset as 'AVG.' This cover, weighing '1 oz' and rated 50-cents in red manuscript, was pre-paid at four times the rate due to enclosures (single sheet rate 12 ½ -cents, 100 – 150 miles, per Act of February 20, 1792) and mailed to New York City. Needless to say, this folded letter now sits on the Title Page of my exhibit and causes my heart to race a little bit every time I look at it!

Figure 2. New earliest known use (EKU) Hudson, NY cover dated August 29, 1793. Note the unusual use of "AVG" for the month of August

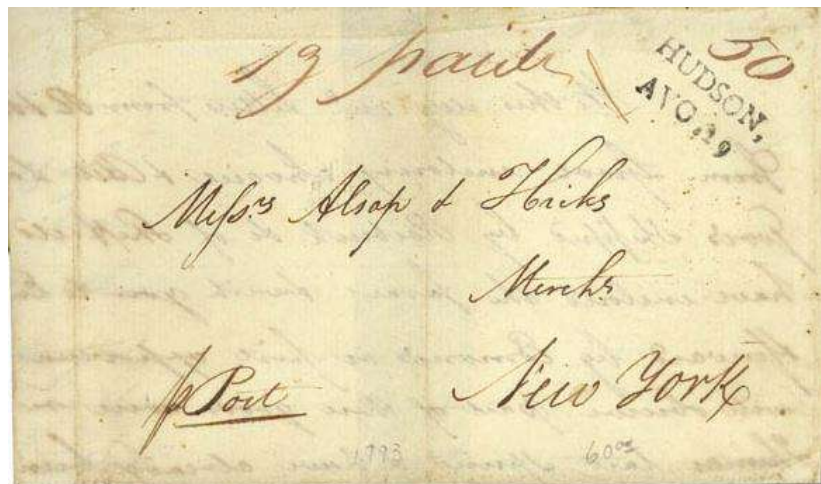


Figure 3 illustrates the next Hudson stampless cover with another straight line marking, this one measuring 22x4mm. Unpaid and mailed to New York City in 1796, this folded letter is rated at the 12 ½ -cent single sheet rate. Two facts supply the interest to this item. First, the current *ASCC* has no straight line markings of this size listed for 1796. In addition, from a marcophily perspective,

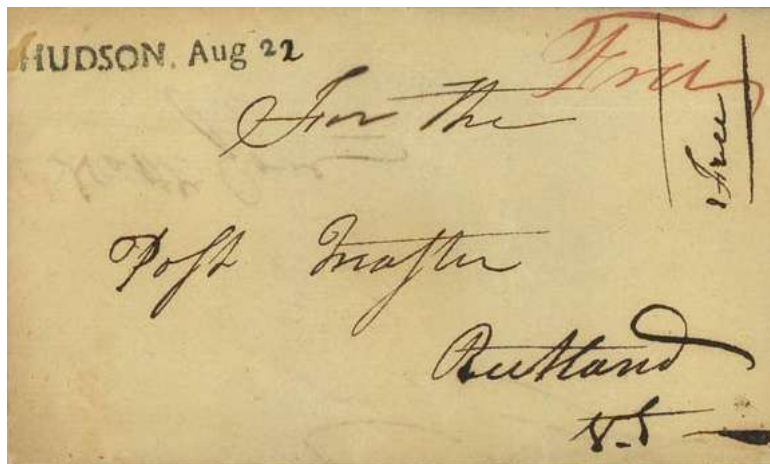
one can see that the original rate written at the top right of this cover was wiped/scratched off and corrected to the 12 ½ -cent rate.



Figure 3. A 1796 Hudson cover bearing a 22x4mm straight line marking. This marking was previously unreported for the year 1796.

The 1797 stampless shown in **Figure 4** was also mailed to Manhattan, this one double-rated at 25-cents and unpaid. Here the straight line marking measures 25x5mm, an ASCC unlisted size for the year of use. The 'HUDSON' in the handstamp appears almost italicized, although this may be the result of a slipped strike. Unusual also is the abbreviation 'Fey' used for 'February' in the typeset, a variation that also doesn't appear in the catalogue.

Figure 4. A 25x5mm Hudson straight line appears on a 1797 cover with the unusual abbreviation of "Fey" for the month of February.



Then there's the one that got away. **Figure 5**, at left, shows a free-franked cover mailed to Rutland, Vermont in 1798 (this image is from the Kelleher catalogue). The free franks appear in both red and black manuscript, adding to the balance and visual appeal of this folded letter, which includes another straight line marking measuring 25x5mm. Again from a marcophily perspective, note that the day date was corrected

via manuscript from August twenty-first to the twenty-second likely indicating that the postal clerk had neglected to change the date on the new day, noticing the error once the marking was applied and changing it to the true date.

I watched myself get outbid on this cover via live internet bidding on Stamp Auction Network while having one of those 'deer in the headlights moments,' and it was gone. Weeks later, I'm still kicking myself you know where for letting this one go.

Each of Cal's items comes with a label (not affixed to the cover) with his type-written description of the rate and marcophily related to the cover. These not only serve to identify covers from the Hahn collection, but also add a hefty flavor of provenance to these delightful bits of postal history which have been out of the collecting eye for decades.

I can only hope that more of these Hudson stampless folded letters from the Hahn collection exist and will be appearing in future sales, the next prospect being the upcoming Kelleher auction slated for late August. But even if not, my exhibit is nevertheless happy, the editor for the *ASCC* revision is happy for the new information, and I'm very happy. Thanks Cal!

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VERY DEAD POST OFFICES OF ALLEGANY COUNTY

By: Bill Howden

I lived the first twenty-four years of my life in Allegany County and I thought I knew, or has at least had heard of, most places in the county. Twenty years later, after I had begun collecting and researching the counties nineteenth century postal history, I began encountering a number of places I had never heard of, which resulted in my search for maps which show the location of these early, but no longer existing, nineteenth century post offices of Allegany County.

I located Aristotle and East Caneadea on a 2004 Allegany County Tourism map. Oil Spring and Seymour were found on an 1869 Town of Cuba map on the internet, while Stone Dam was discovered on a partial county map shown on an advertising placard for an 1880's furniture store in Wellsville, NY. Utopia and West Genesee were found by searching for cemeteries on maps. A new 2010 Allegany County High Adventures tourism (ACT) map surprisingly included the location of a number of now dead nineteenth century post office settlements.

Information on the following dead post offices includes; a general location (if known), the post office opening and closing dates, the post office providing mail service after closure, and occasionally a bit of historical information. Early post offices were not always within a settlement; they may have been located in stage-stops, homes, inns, a store or business office, or even at only a central location for out-lying farms, especially in this rural section of New York State.

It is a fact that the number of Allegany County post offices began to fall after 1900, following the national trend. It can be seen that a number of late nineteenth century post offices in this article were closed in the first decade of the twentieth century. My 2010 ACT map not only locates a number of long dead places, but also names all roads and even a number of waterways, so it is a very welcome addition to my research material. But, the question remains; are the places today at the same location they were over one hundred years ago? The names of a number of early settlements and post offices were precursors to later "place" and post office names.

There are still several unknown post offices, such as Summitville (probably between Cuba and Friendship, although there is also a summit between Andover and Alfred Station). Canakedier (12/9/1845 to 9/22/1847), Henry (3/29/ 1842 to 9/16/1882), and Haight, (6/12/1825 to 1/12/1838) also remain elusive. East Rushford is lost to view, as it is under the waters behind the Caneadea dam

(Rushford Lake), built in 1927, although foundations and streets may yet be seen, but only when the water in the lake is extremely low.

I have written several articles, as I have found information, about past and present Allegany County post offices, and there are still a number of the 150 post offices waiting to be found, recorded and brought into the present. I also have to write something about the remaining twenty-nine existing post offices in the county. I may have to live forever.

The following thirty-one dead post offices include six written previously, for which I mention new information. The remaining 25 are those of which I do not have an example in my collection, which means they are hard to find and expensive. But, they deserve to be remembered, and I do have enough information to write of them, so here they are.

A favorite, **Aristotle** Post Office can still be seen. A barn is across the road from this residence. The post office is the center section of the home (2009) located on Old State Road, a right turn off State Rte. 15 north, at the Allen town line, north of Angelica. The former stage stop included a post office operating from 4/26/1888 to 2/28/1902 with mail service then provided by Angelica. The Inn-Homestead dates from 1817.

I have yet to find the **Bennett** Post office, but it was located in the town of West Almond, operating from 1/14/1894 until closure 12/31/1903, with mail service then by near-by Angelica. The 2010 ACT map shows a Bennetts being located on State Rte. 16, at its junction with Murphy Hill Road, town of West Almond. Neither the post office nor the postmaster, Andrew Bennett, had an "s" at the end of Bennett. Probably the same place, but I need more proof.

Chautauqua Valley is another place unfound by me, but it was located in the northwest corner of the Town of Grove. John H. Ross served as postmaster of the post office established on 12/7/1850 until its closure on 11/2/1863.

The post office of **Church Tract** was located in the Town of Grove, established after the first Short Tract Post Office closed on May 4, 1822 and operated until closing on January 2, 1828. Joseph Backus was postmaster of Church Tract and after closure became the first postmaster of its successor, Grove.

Located in the town of Bums, the **DeWitt's Valley** Post Office operated from 11/12/ 1825 until it was replaced by Bums on 7/14/1846. Bums remains a rural settlement in the north-east corner of Allegany County.

The **East Granger** Post Office succeeded Grove (see Church Tract, above), in the town of Granger, on 5/14/1859 and operated until closing 2/28/1902, with mail service then by Dalton, Livingston County. Still known as East Granger, it is noted on the 2010 ACT map as being on the Old State Road, at the intersection of Walbridge and Bennetts Roads.

Fulmer Valley Road was found by me in 2003, but not until viewing a 2010 ACT map, did I learn where the post office was probably located; at the junction of Fulmer Valley Road and Perkins Road. This is just south of the Town of Andover line, at the north-west corner of the Town of Independence. William Fulmer was the first postmaster of the **Fulmer Valley** Post Office which was established 4/4/1870. After closure on 11/30/1904, postal service was provided by the Andover Post Office.

Unknown by me, the **Galen** Post Office succeeded **Stateroad** on 8/21/1896 and served until

2/28/1902. It was located in the Town of Allen, probably at or near the State Road settlement. After closure, mail service was then by way of the Angelica Post Office.

The **Higgins** Post office is one of several that has been dead for over one hundred years, but the tree-shaded gem of a settlement still exists, located in the Town of Centerville, on a meandering lane which follows Higgins Creek down a hillside, leaving and rejoining County Road 3, west of Hume. This last post office to be formed in the county served from 10/22/1897 to 7/15/1903, with mail service then provided by Fillmore.

Hiltonville has been written about previously, but I had only a guess of the probable location until finding it on a 2010 ACT map, exactly where I had guessed; at the end of Hiltonville Road, where it meets Sullivan Road, west of North Almond Valley. The Hiltonville post office existed from 12/18/1878 until 2/28/1902, with mail service then by way of Arkport, in Steuben County.

Elias Hull was the postmaster of short-lived **Hull** Post Office, which operated from 4/9/1822 until 9/4/1824, when it became Allen. It was located on the Old State road in the Town of Allen. Early maps have shown Allen at the intersection of Old State Road and present Holdridge Road, which veered right towards Birdsall, and remains as a dirt road, lacking a name-sign, as do many of the county's dirt roads.

Inavale (Innervale) means "the valley between two hills." Located in the Town of Wirt, Inavale was once a thriving community, with a cheese factory, blacksmith shops, etc., and a post office. The Inavale Post Office operated only from 5/26/1891 to 8/15/1903, with service then by the Utopia Post office. Today Inavale has only a Grange hall and a few homes on the parallel roads on each side of the valley.

Karrdale Post Office was located up Karr Valley, on County Road 2, east of John Dixon Road between Almond and West Almond. Walter McHenry was postmaster of the post office existing only from 2/15/1886 until 11/30/1894, with mail service then from Almond. McHenry and Karr were early settlers in the Town of Almond.

Knightsville is another place unknown to me. Alanson Knight was postmaster of this Birdsall Township post office, open from 8/23/1883 until 5/30/1903, with mail service then provided by the Birdsall Post Office.

Knight's Creek is shown on a 2010 ACT map as being on County Road 9, at its junction with Morgan Hill, between Allentown and Scio in the Town of Scio. The Knight's Creek Post Office first existed from 9/18/1858 to 11/9/1860 with a second opening on 1/29/1879 and final closure 9/27/1881, with service then provided by Allentown.

Mapes was once a small settlement in Willing Township, north of Stone Dam. Thomas Mapes was postmaster for twenty-three years of the Mapes Post Office, dating from 11/25/1891 to 3/31/1914. After closure, mail service was provided by the Wellsville Post Office. A 2010 ACT map has Mapes located on County Road 29, just west of Yorks Corners and the Genesee River.

Marshall was a small settlement in the Town of New Hudson, with a post office dating from 8/29/1882 to 11/29/1902. The 2010 ACT map shows Marshall as being located at the junction of Slusher Hill Road and Haskins Road, north-west of Rockville at the east edge of the Hanging Bog N.Y.S.D.E.C. Forest.

A **Marsh Creek** Post office existed only four months, from 7/5/1872 until 11/11/1872 with

Ramson Beebe as postmaster. It was probably located south of Cuba, as the Beebe name was familiar in the Cuba area, and Beebe Hill Road runs between State Rte. 305, south of the village, to Summit Road near its junction with State Rte. 20, east of Cuba.

The name of **Mills Mills** requires an explanation. There are all kinds of water falls in nearby Wiscoy Creek. The first settlers who were named Mills, erected saw and feed mills on the creek at an early date, thus the name becomes obvious. Located in the Town of Hume, north of the hamlet of Hume, this post office opened 8/28/1850 and survived until 12/14/1903 with service then provided by Fillmore.

The small settlement of Mixville, located in the Town of Hume, was probably named after an early settler named Mix. The **Mixville** Post Office opened 4/20/1837 and was closed on 7/17/1849 when it became Wiscoy (Wiskoy). Today, Wiscoy is located east of Mills Mills and west of Rossburg, at the top of the county.

The 2010 ACT map shows Rockville located to the west of Rockville Lake, at the junction of State Rte. 305 and Baragon Hill Road. The **Rockville** Post Office first opened on 8/12/1839 and was closed from 8/3/1864 until re-opening on 3/2/1883. It finally closed on 1/31/1934 with service then by the Belfast Post Office.

Spring Mills was also written up previously, but new research has confirmed my guess that the community located south of Whitesville, was a thriving farm community in its early days. Its post Office was established on 10/17/1827, served 98 years, and closed on 11/14/1925, with the Whitesville Post Office then providing mail service.

My earlier guess of the **Stateroad** Post Office once being between Belmont and Angelica is apparently wrong, as the 2010 ACT map indicates State Road as being in the Town of Allen. It was located where previous maps had placed Allen. It was where today the old State Road turns to dirt and Holdridge Road (also dirt) bends to the east to Birdsall. State Road was the hamlet; Stateroad the post office was established on 3/6/1882 and served until the name was changed to Galen on 8/21/1896.

Stone Dam was located just inside the Town of Alma, on present County Road 38, west of its junction with County Road 29. The 2010 ACT map shows Stone Dam in the Town of Willing, at the junction of Graves Road and County Road 29, a logical location as the narrow Honeoye Creek valley is very swampy west of the junction of County Roads 29 and 38 today. The Stone Dam Post Office opened 9/19/1878. In December of 1895, the name was contracted to Stonedam and served until 8/31/1909, with mail service then provided by the Genesee Post Office of Potter County, Pennsylvania.

Located in the Town of Andover, **Strong's Mills** Post Office opened on January 24, 1824, and months later was terminated when the name was changed to Andover on November 3, 1824. Thaddeus Baker was the only postmaster of Strong's Mills and also became the first postmaster of the Andover Post Office.

Styx was a small cross-road hamlet near West Allen in the Town of Allen. Postal service began on April 1, 1882, and lasted only until October 25, 1885, when the post office was closed. The Angelica Post Office provided mail service after closure. Styx is another place yet to be found by me.

The **Summitville** Post Office location is unknown, but was probably between Cuba and Friendship, on the Summit Road, perhaps near its junction with Beebe Hill Road, south of County Road 20. Joseph Cole was the postmaster, and there are still Coles in Cuba and the surrounding area. The Summitville Post Office was only in existence from May 18, 1850 until closure January 6, 1851.

Located in the Town of Belfast, **Sumner's Valley** had a post office from 7/11/1826 to

8/12/1839, when its name was changed to Rockville. If my 2010 ACT map is correct, Sumner's Valley would have been located at present State Route 305, at its junction with Baragon Hill Road, west of Rockville Lake, and probably served outlying farms.

Transit Bridge was located in the Town of Belfast at the intersection of the Angelica Road (County Rd. 16) on the east side of the Genesee River, near the location of the first bridge over the river in 1808, and County Rd. 26 (Jennings Road). It apparently was a thriving farming community in its early days. Its post office opened 12/17/1849 and closed 8/13/1857, but the closing was rescinded 8/26/1857, and it remained open until December of 1895, when the spelling was condensed to Transitbridge, which survived until closure 5/31/1905, with service then by the Friendship Post Office.

Located on the Town of Alfred, the **Vandermark** Post Office was established 4/24/1832, with closure 1/28/1846. The exact location is unknown, but was somewhere along Vandermark Creek, probably closer to Alfred than Scio. Today it would be in the Town of Ward, perhaps between Baker and Sprague Roads, or maybe at Five Corners. Farms continue to dominate the length of Vandennark Creek.

West Allen was written up some time ago, with a general location being west of Allen Center, which was on County Rd. 15, at the intersection with Dorvit Road. My 2010 ACT map places West Allen one road west of County Rd. 15, on Dorvit Road at its intersection with Peavey Road. The West Allen Post Office was first formed 2/28/1879, with closure 8/10/1888. It reopened on 9/22/1888 and served until 2/28/1902, with service then from Angelica.

Research materials used:

- * Petri, Pitt, *The Postal History of Western New York*, 1960.
- * O'Brien, Frank, *Wellsville Daily Reporter*, Series on Allegany Co. P.O.'s, August, 1995.
- * Kay & Smith, *New York Postal History*, American Philatelic Society, 1982.
- * Chlanda & Wilcox, Editors, *Manuscript Post Offices of New York State*, 1984.
- * Allegany County Chamber of Commerce Office of Tourism, *Allegany County High Adventures Tourism (ACT) Map*, 2010.

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COVER OF THE ISSUE

Submitted by: Glenn Estus

Footprints was a post office in Madison County from June 23, 1886 until April 15, 1890. Mail service came from the nearby town of Munnsville when the post office was discontinued. Here's an interesting cover with a beautiful Circular Date Stamp and Killer that was in the Kelleher Auction #623 (January, 2011) Lot #1064. It was part of the Beane Family Collection of United States Fancy Cancels.

It would seem that the name "FOOTPRINTS" came from a local phenomenon. According to James H. Smith in *The History of Chenango and Madison Counties* (1880): "Indentations in the rocks which form the bed of a small stream which courses down the east hill a little northeast of Munnsville, have been supposed to represent the footprints of human beings and domestic and other animals. They are not, however, well-defined foot-prints and require a vivid imagination to give them that resemblance." Smith goes on to describe how they "footprints" are actually erosion in the limestone river bed. Smith also notes in his work that in 1880 Grove S. Hinman was supervisor of the Town of Stockbridge which includes the village of Munnsville. He was supervisor from 1880 to 1882.



Many smaller post offices in the 1870s and 1880s purchased their own CDS's and included either or both County names and postmaster names. At the current time I have about 400 such examples from New York State. I also have a want-list of about 200 more that I hope to find.

The killer is a wonderful example of the fancy design "US MAIL entwined." Usually this killer becomes less distinct as it's used to cancel the mail, but in this case the letter was postmarked only weeks after the post office was established. So the killer was still in almost pristine shape.

In April 2011 I was at the Crossroads Stamp show in Quechee, Vermont and talking with friend and dealer Elwyn "Doub" Doubleday. Our conversation turned to #210s on cover. Doub collects #210s from New York State Post Offices and I collect them from Vermont. He mentioned that he had recently been unsuccessful in the Kelleher auction on an item from Footprints. Doub said it was the only known Footprints cover and somebody else must have really wanted it since the price realized was quite high.

What a laugh we had when I told him that I was the high bidder on the item! Now the kicker: at the same show, a fellow Vermont collector told me about a Vermont postmaster/county cancel in the Kelleher auction that he had been outbid on also. It, too, was an extremely rare example that he said he had never seen in years of collecting. Of course, he was also surprised when I told him that I was the high bidder on that item as well.