

BULLETIN



OF THE EMPIRE STATE POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Volume 54, Number 1

March 2021

President's Message

And a very happy New Year to you all with best wishes for better times in 2021. We will have to wait and see what the spring has in store for us, weather-wise and COVID-wise. Let me share that thanks to the commitment and dedication of my health system and our multidisciplinary teams, I received my 2 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine in alignment with the PA DOH recommended phases. I took my shot for my family, my friends, my colleagues, and my community - to make this a safer world and do my part to stop the spread. I know when the time comes for those reading this, you will do the same.

One of my colleagues at my health system shared with our care teams the three pillars of pandemic survival: 1. eat wisely and exercise regularly; 2. socially distance as needed; and 3. work on your stamps and covers daily (he is a philatelist by the way). Since I agree wholeheartedly with his suggestions, I am passing these recommendations on to you.

An insightful inquiry I recently read about in the philatelic literature is the question of how the pandemic is affecting our hobby. Many are of the opinion that it is a mixed blessing. While we all miss our face-to-face meetings and stamp shows, we have experienced a broad growth of the hobby online via virtual sessions. APRL Librarian Scott Tiffany noted in the *Philatelic Literature Review* that the autumn Postal History Symposium was well attended for the week's events. The average audience per session was ~155 and a few sessions had >200 logged on. There was similar success with the APS Summer Session, along with the Society's virtual exhibit and stamp show. The thought is, and I concur, that these advances will have a firm impact on the hobby for years to come.

With that in mind, please continue to share among your circle of friends the good work of our Society and encourage them to visit our website and Facebook page, and to consider joining. This month's *Bulletin* and *Excelsior!* are a testament to the health of our club and the desire of our authors to share their interests in a broad array of New York State postal history topics. As I remind our readers in nearly each President's message, please consider penning an article or two for either of our digests and/or share a presentation, monograph or exhibit for posting on our website.

Stay safe and be well.

Charles J. DiComo, PhD | President, ESPHS

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EXCELSIOR! DEADLINE

The deadline for the [September 2021](#) issue of *EXCELSIOR!* is [July 15th](#) or earlier if possible.

As an incentive, submitting a one to four-page article will get you a one year extension on your membership and a five-page article will get you a two year extension. Just think – if you write regularly for *EXCELSIOR!*--you'll have the potential of earning free membership for life!...And think about how you will enrich yourself and others. Submit questions or articles to Jeff Stage at nyspostal@gmail.com

Secretary's Membership Report

Deceased Members

Parson, Alan
Elmira, NY

New Member

Steve Kennedy
Riviera Beach, FL

Treasurer's Tidbits

Hopefully, you all got through the holidays safely and happily. If nothing else, the pandemic lockdowns (along with our snowy winter days) have provided us with plenty of extra time to hunker down and work on our collections.

Dues notices will be on their way to you soon. Your dues help to pay for our publishing costs which are necessarily expensive to maintain the quality provided to the membership, so please continue to support our Society, and remit promptly if possible. Dues remain at \$20 per annum.

Included will be a form for you to vote for the best article published in *Excelsior!* during 2020. The winning author will be awarded the second annual award for what will continue as a yearly competition, one that hopefully will stimulate some of you into sharing your New York State Postal History knowledge with the rest of us! The winner will be announced in the next issue of *The Bulletin* along with a picture of his or her award. A self-addressed stamped envelope will be included for your convenience in returning your dues payments and the voting ballot.

Wishing you all the best for 2021!

George F. DeKornfeld, DDS
Treasurer; Awards Chair

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Bayside Stamp Show

Bayside, Queens, New York

Mar. 21, Apr 21, 2021

The Best Western Queens Gold Coast, 22033 Northern Blvd., Bayside, Queens, N.Y. 11361

Hours: 10-4:30. Info: Marilyn Nowak, Email: marilynnowak@verizon.net

10th Northeast Postal History and Ephemera Show

Albany, New York

July 17 & 18, 2021

Polish Community Center, 225 Washington Ave. Ext. Albany, NY



Alan Parsons
March 21, 1928 – February 3, 2021

Long-time RPA member Alan Parsons passed after a relatively short bout with Covid-19 on February 3, 2021. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Joan Parsons, and by their two children and their families. Al was 92 years old.

A graduate of Dartmouth College and Cornell University Law School, Al practiced commercial and personal law at Sayles & Evans in Elmira, NY. He retired from his law practice some time ago but remained active in the philatelic community until his death.

Al was a well-known philatelist at the local, regional, state, and national levels. Among his major interests were Elmira and Steuben County postal history, first day covers of the 1929 Sullivan Expedition stamp, and Warren Harding philately. His leadership as a long-time chairman, and in other roles, was a major factor in the ongoing success of the STEPEX show hosted by his home club, the Elmira

Stamp Club.

Al was a strong supporter and longtime member of the Rochester Philatelic Association and an ardent supporter of ROPEX. For many years he placed one or two exhibits in every ROPEX show. Al served the Empire State Postal History Society as president and in other board positions for many years. His contributions were a significant factor in the ongoing success of the ESPHS. He was a regular to the Stamp Insider regional periodical.

Al was elected to the APS Board of Vice Presidents for the 2005-2007 term. He was a regular attendee at national APS shows as well as other World Series of Philately shows. He organized competitions between the Empire State Postal History Society and the other state postal history groups in the region fostering communication and friendships among collectors with similar interests

The philatelic community lost a great ambassador with the passing of Al. He was a gentleman and scholar in all of his personal, professional, and philatelic pursuits. Al was quiet and understated until something needed to be done, and then he suddenly turned into Super Stampman and organized everybody to do whatever it was that was needed. And when Al was involved, things not only got done, they got done right. He will be remembered as good and decent man.

Reprinted from Stamps & Tongs the newsletter of the Rochester Philatelic Association.

BULLETIN DEADLINE

DEADLINE – The deadline for the June issue of the *BULLETIN* is **May 20th**. The editor is always looking for short (1/2 page, 1 page, 1 ½ page or 2 page) articles to fill spots in the *BULLETIN*. Submit to largin1@verizon.net.
Larry Laliberte

An 1835 stampless cover: London to Philadelphia via New York

By Charles J. DiComo, PhD and Larry Laliberte



Figure 1: The cover from London to Philadelphia via New York.

At first glance, the cover shown in **Figure 1** might appear to be a relatively common piece. It is simply addressed to “George Read, Esq. Philadelphia”, is postmarked “NEW YORK APL 6” and rated at “12 ½” cents for a single sheet letter traveling between 80 and 150 miles. This rate was in effect from May 1, 1816 until July 1, 1845. Still, nothing remarkable.

The minute you turn the cover over, you see something unusual. There are two 36x24 mm red oval strikes reading “FORWARDED BY, DAVIS^{1,2} & BROOKS NEW YORK”, **Figure 2**, The question arising of why.

Carefully opening the letter, we see the docketing shown in **Figure 3**. It was written by someone in Read’s office on the inner back-flap and reads ‘James Giro³, London 14th February, 1835. Recd. 7th (or 9th) April by W.A. Read, Ansd.’

There are no markings indicating that the letter was ever handled by the Royal Mail or charges for the trans-Atlantic voyage assessed. This would indicate that the cover was probably placed with others in a private mail pouch destined for the United States.

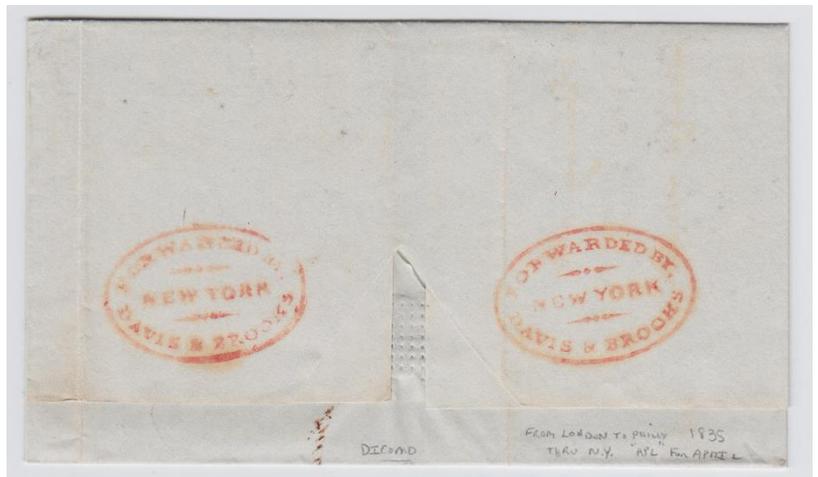


Figure 2: The back of the cover with the “Davis & Brooks” hand stamps.

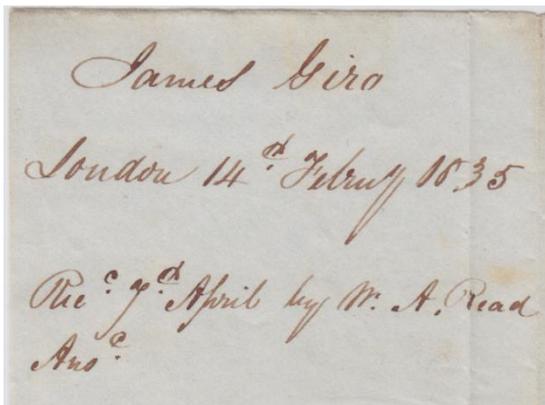


Figure 3: Docketing on the cover.

The pouch travelled via packet (most likely out of Liverpool) to New York City and the offices of Davis & Brooks who deposited it with the United States Post Office where it received the 27 mm red “NEW-YORK APL 6” CDS (APL for April instead of APR) and manuscript rate “12 ½” cents.

This cover spent 52 days at sea, travelled one to three days by stage to Philadelphia and its ultimate destination as noted in the bottom portion of the docketing.

Some biographical information on Charles Davis and James Giro

Charles Augustus Davis, Figure 4

Merchant, born in New York in 1795; died there, 27 January 1867. For many years he was in the iron trade with Sidney Brooks, as the shipping and commission merchant firm of Davis and Brooks. In a letter to Halleck, written from Athens, he says: "I do not know how I can go back to business and pig iron in John Street." He was well versed in commercial and financial affairs, and wrote brilliantly and intelligently upon those subjects. The "Peter Scriber Letters" and "Major Jack Downing's Letters" (New York, 1834), first published in the "Commercial Advertiser," detail his interviews with President Jackson and the plans for overthrowing the U.S. bank. For many years his house in New York was the resort of the poet Halleck and other of the Knickerbocker writers."

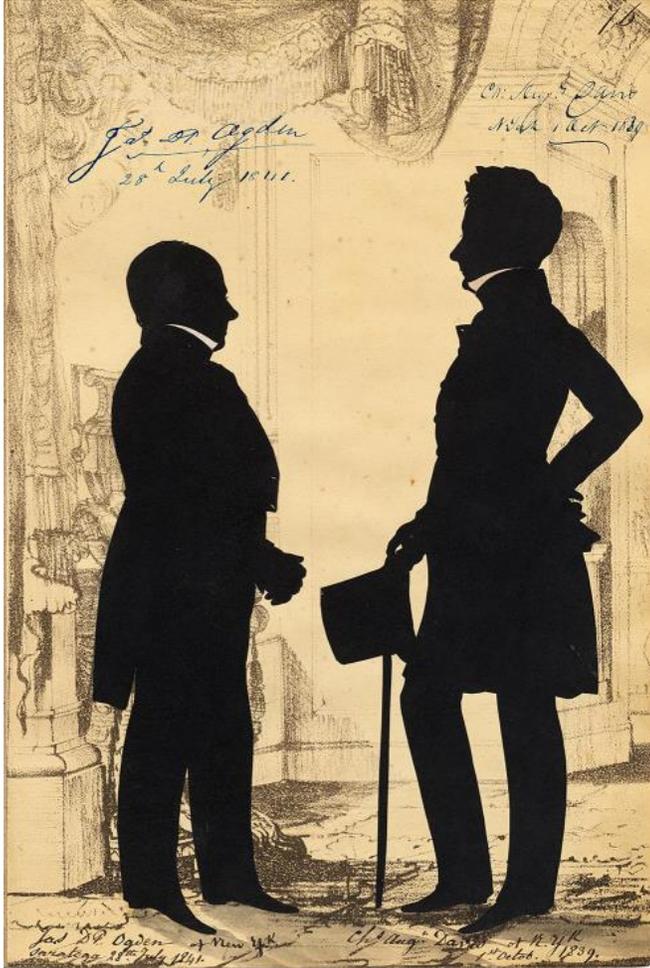


Figure 4: Silhouette of Davis on right.

Extended: He was a prominent member of the silk-stocking community in NYC about the time he published his first "J. (Jack) Downing, Major" letter in 1833. He was a man of considerable financial experience, with interests in current affairs and a partner in the firm of Davis and Brooks, shipping and commission merchants. Davis was a wealthy Whig, close friend of aristocrat Philip Hone and an enemy of everything democratic. He was a member of New York's elite, hosting a dinner in honor of the visiting English novelist Charles Dickens, and attended balls with van Rensselaers of Saratoga Springs, NY. Davis was a member of the Bread-and-Cheese Club organized by James Fenimore Cooper, and the Book Club, along such notables as Washington Irving.

His "J. Downing" letters solidified his position as a leading conservative Whig in NY. In 1835, he was chosen VP of an elite anti-abolition meeting, and along with James J. Roosevelt Jr., Peter Stuyvesant et al., was named to the city's Committee on the Erection of Buildings and the Arrangement of the Fire Department. In 1842, Davis was given one of two places of honor among a select group of 24 Whigs chosen to host a visit to NY by Daniel Webster. In

addition to his Downing letter, he is generally recognized as the pseudonymous author of three pamphlets on finance (1844, '49 and '57).

James Giro

James Giro was a partner of Bernard Henry, as Merchants and Commission-Agents in Toeknhouse Yard, City of London under the firm of Henry, Giro and Co. On August 12, 1835 by mutual consent dissolved, and business in future was carried out by James Giro.

References

1. 1839 Silhouette by Auguste Edouart, Lithograph and cut paper on paper; Subjects: at left James DePeyster Ogden (1790-1870), at right Charles Augustus Davis (1795-1867) with cane and top hat. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; gift of Robert L. McNeil, Jr. <http://browse.americanartcollaborative.org/object/npg/16708.html>
2. Short Bio of Charles A. Davis: <https://sewardproject.org/person-public-fields/63487>
3. James Giro, Merchant of London. The London Gazette for the Year of 1835, Volume II, page 1556.

A Stampless Cover re: Lumbering in Saratoga County at Barkersville, N.Y.

Nov 27th 1849

By Mark Fonda

The Barker family moved from Massachusetts & Rhode Island in the 1790's to Saratoga County and bettered their fortunes by building and founding Barkersville, N.Y. in 1796. They built an Inn for travelers and branched out into extensive business interest, building a saw-mill, grist mill, shoe shop and tannery in the years between 1796 and 1868.

Asa Barker, who wrote the letter in **Figure 1**, followed his family from Providence, Rhode Island after serving as a Sargent in "Stall's" Rhode Island Militia during the War of 1812 [i.e. 1812-1815]. He married Ruth Carpenter [1799-1867] and they had six children. Asa oversaw the saw mill and other business interests of the family in Saratoga County.

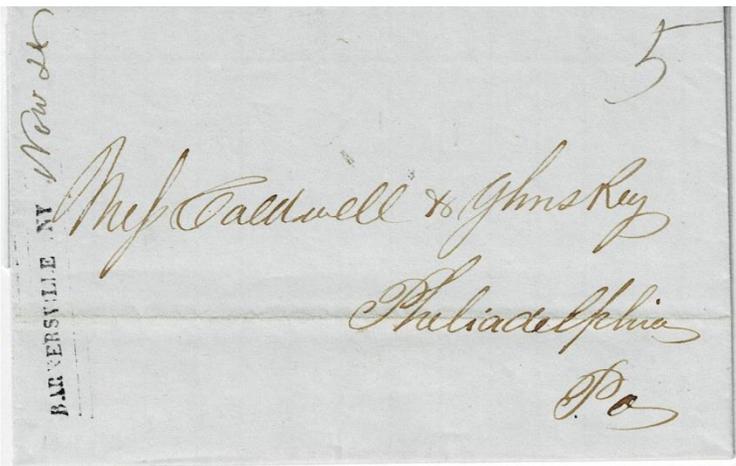


Figure 1: The stampless letter from Barkersville, NY to Philadelphia, PA

In the stampless letter, Asa discusses the order for hand manufactured "sneaths" [scythe handles] going to the firm of Caldwell & Grishkey in Philadelphia, Pa. and their hardware and mercantile business. Asa warns these business men that it is late fall [Nov. 27th 1849] and that the Sacandaga and Hudson River shipping routes from Saratoga County will close shortly due to freezing conditions and he won't be able to fill their orders until the following Spring.

Asa also cites the dwindling availability of lumber and possible price/cost increases [i.e. special lumbering of Alder, Birch, Pear, Plum and Cherry becomes harder to acquire!]

He compares the prices for "Sneaths" with the Philadelphia firms of R.W.C. Biddle Co. and Curtis and Hand Co. with that of the Barker & Co. showing that they are the better choice in an attempt to influence Caldwell and Grishkey to be patient until the spring on 1850.

The Barker descendants were prolific as many are found in Saratoga and surrounding counties. Of note, is an Asa Barker in later years [i.e. WW II] who was a test pilot for the Flying Tigers Fighter Squadrons.

PS: It is interesting that the docketing of this stampless cover indicates it was received on Nov. 30, 1849, just three days from the initial cover date on Nov. 27, 1849. Pretty amazing mail service from Saratoga Co. to Philadelphia, Pa.

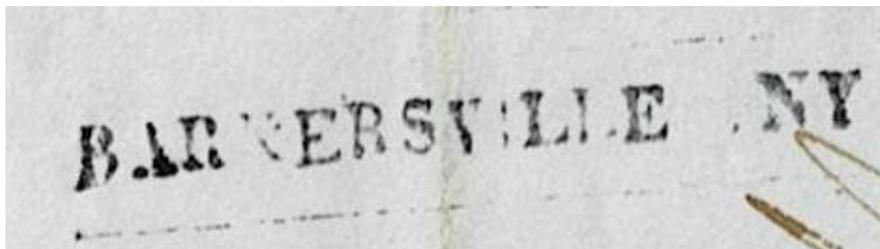


Figure 2: The "Barkersville NY" straight line cancel.

Analyzing the cover, the "5" indicates the rate in effect from July 1, 1845 to June 29, 1851 for a letter traveling under 300 miles. The "Barkersville NY" straight line cancel, **Figure 2**, [36 mm x 2.5 mm] probably was applied by the first postmaster, John Barker. The post office was in existence from July 1, 1843 to Dec 31, 1911.

The Collection and Distribution Wagons of Buffalo and New York City

By George McGowan

In the 1890's the United States Post Office Department was particularly invested in improving service. The Street Car Railway Post Offices were introduced, Rural Free Delivery was tried, and found successful, pneumatic tube systems were installed in some cities, and two specially constructed Collection and Distribution Wagons, resembling miniature railway mail cars were tried.

The "White Wagon Service" (because of the color of the wagons) was inaugurated on October 1st 1896. The wagons had sorting racks and tables enabling the postal clerk to ply his craft. The service was intended to provide pick-up from letter boxes and postal stations along a set route. They even had a mail slot cut into the side of the wagon. So pick-up, sorting and some delivery could be made without having mail pass through the main post office.

The New York wagon service was tested on September 24th 1896 and was under the control of the Railway Mail Service. In August of 1897, it was decided that the amount of work accomplished in NYC did not justify the expense and the wagon was transferred to Buffalo. Buffalo's wagon service lasted just two years, the last reported date being October 15th, 1899. This wagon was sent to St. Louis and used by a contractor in that city and no postmarks are known from there.

The other wagon, **Figure 1**, went to Washington DC and began service on October 1st 1896. It was put to more use than the other wagon and lasted until June 15th, 1900.



Figure 1: A period photo of the Washington, DC wagon. Note the mail slot just under the front window.



Figure 2: The New York cancel.

Figure 3. Is a sample from Buffalo, N.Y. It is a type 1 dated March 14, 1899 and was also on trip number 4.



Figure 3: The Buffalo, N.Y. cancel.

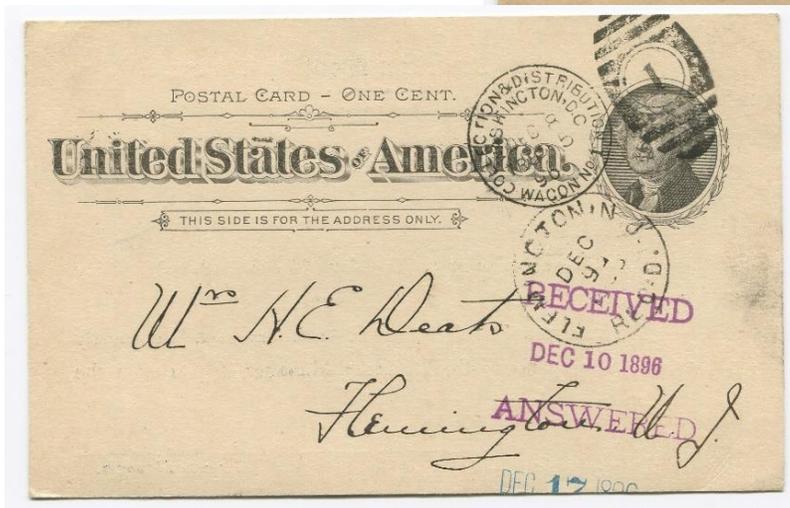


Figure 4: The Washington, DC cancel.

Figure 4. Is a Washington DC cancel, type 2, and dated December 8, 1896.

Figure 5. Is an oddity. Mailed from Pasadena, CA to Buffalo, is contains a Buffalo Wagon cancel used as a forwarding cancel sending it off to NYC. On the reverse is a "Train Late" notation dated November 23, 1898, and a Buffalo receiving cancel, Station C, dated one hour later. This Wagon cancel on the front is also dated the 23rd. It arrived in NYC on the 24th, proof of extraordinary service.



Figure 5: Unusual use as a forwarding cancel.

There were many positive reports about the wagon service but wagon deterioration, the movement toward cars and trucks, and investments in other services ended their usefulness.

Much of the facts herein are taken from COLLECTION AND DISTRIBUTION WAGON SERVICE, 1896 to 1904 by James. Bruns published by the Mobile Post Office Society 1986.

Checking in from Excelsior!

By Jeff Stage, editor

Greetings all. Production for the March edition of the journal is well under way. I just want to pass along a few notes and thoughts, in no particular order of importance.

All articles, short and long, are welcome, though due to many factors exact date of publication can't be guaranteed. But if you have a compelling reason to have your article published in a specific edition (perhaps the article is linked to some sort of anniversary, etc.), please let me know. That said, I think at this writing that ALL currently submitted material will be used this spring, so we'll be in need for more articles for September. Let's set a deadline of July 15, but sooner is always better.

Important – please remember to submit images and text separately.

Text, including tables or breakout items, is best sent as a separate Word document. There is no need to use any kind of layout, fancy fonts, etc. We are using Times New Roman for basic text and I will use various fonts for other treatments, such as headlines.

Using image, painting or drawing programs to create text means much more work on this end as I have to pull it all apart, something that becomes a lot fussier if the text is within boxes or art elements. Also, by having to do this, it increases the chance for errors, which no one wants.

Do NOT embed images within text. This is a bear to work with. Just send images separately as high resolution images (jpegs preferred; no PDFs if they can be avoided).

If you have layout ideas just send them as a separate file or as a note. If I have questions, I will contact you.

A few authors have received notes about style choices. For example, as I have noted before, I really prefer articles without footnotes. In general, they tend to slow a reader down. What is preferred is a journalistic style within the story, such as "... the U.S. Post Office Department made the change on July 1, 1876, according to XXX **Source Here** XXXX." Then at the end of the article, just include the source in a list of references.

Some of you have likely noticed that if I add a little something to the article, I will include any pertinent reference within the list.

Images and captions: You can note in the text of your article where you think an image should be placed. If you use standard figure system, just be sure to label the actual image something like, "Figure 1. Oswego 1878" and write it as "... xxx xxx xxxx Oswego [Figure 1] ..." within the text.

Please include captions for your images, even if it's something simple like, "Cover from Geneva, manuscript cancel 1843." Place captions at the very bottom of the article.

When submitting an article with images, consider whether the images actually match the article. For example, say we have an article about a postal markings from a specific time period and place, let's say 1825 to 1830 in Syracuse. The author sends along images of Syracuse-area covers from 1838 and 1840. Well, those could be nice secondary images to show what happened after the time period discussed, but this artwork wouldn't really match the focus of the story.

Next: An apology. If I have taken too long to respond to your emails, I am deeply sorry. The email account we are using – nypostal@gmail.com – is specifically for the Excelsior! That said, as we only publish twice a year at the time being, I admit I was not so diligent checking the email during the months of October-December. For that reason, I might have not gotten back to you right away. A New Year's resolution is to be more consistent in checking emails during those lag months.

Wanted: Basics for a Reference Article

OK. Last bit of business. For the next issue of the Excelsior! (or the one after, depending on response and space), we would like to put together a compilation that lists reference materials and sources that would be helpful to members. These would be materials you use for your Empire State collections or general collecting that might be related to New York material.

If you have any such go-to materials, please share. We don't need a lot. I am thinking 2 to 6 paragraphs about each, with maybe an anecdote or testimonial as to why the references is important. (Think: What has this done for me?)

We can include books, specific magazines or journals (even out-of-print items), websites, etc. With the submission, please include any of the following that are appropriate: title, author (or editor or webmaster), publisher and/or society sponsor, exact web address, year of publication, a 1-sentence summary of what it covers. Also, if you can include a note as to the availability – out-of-print, but retained by Such-and-Such society or American Philatelic Research Library; can obtain through Amazon, etc.

Once you submit an item we can send out an email telling folks it's been covered so no one needs to duplicate the work.

Jeff Stage, editor, Excelsior!

Notes from the Editor

The Society has received a thank you note from Helen Chaleski for the help we provided in researching her grandfather's (Casper Van Hoesen) postal career and the resulting article that appeared in the December *BULLETIN*. She also included a check for \$35.00.

Our President, Charles J. DiComo continues his writing career. A *Noteworthy Pre-cancel on Lancaster Watch Company's Advertising Covers* is the title of his article that appeared in the February 2021 issue of *The American Philatelist*. That issue is titled The Research Issue.

If you haven't already noticed from the calendar, the organizers of the 10th Northeast Postal History and Ephemera Show are optimistic. They have scheduled the next show for July 17 and 18 of 2021. The venue remains the Polish Community Center in Albany.

With the passing of Al Parsons, the Southern Tier Regional Representative position is now open. Any volunteers? Other Regional Representative that are still open include; Mohawk, Lower Hudson, Leatherstocking/Catskill, and West Central. These are not very time consuming positions. If interested, contact Charles J. DiComo.

Using a Perpetual Calendar

By Lawrence Laliberte

In our search for information about philatelic material that we acquire, knowing the date, month, year or day of the week can be crucial or just down right fun. In my search for this information I have found a web site that make this easy. It is sponsored by Ancestor Search and can be accessed at;

<http://www.searchforancestors.com/utility/perpetualcalendar.html>



Figure 1: The subject cover with a date of APL 6 (1835).

Using the stampless cover from London, England described in the article on page five, and shown again in **Figure 1**, I wanted to know what day of the week Apl 6, 1835 was.

When first entering the site, you will see the business section shown below in **Figure 2**. Below that, are tips for use (not shown) but are included here:

USE DROP DOWN MENU TO SELECT MONTH AND THEN ENTER 4 DIGIT YEAR (FROM 0000 TO 9999). THEN CLICK BUILD. Entering the month "April" and the year "1835" and hitting "build" will bring up the next screen, **Figure 3**, which shows the entire month. Referring to that calendar, we can see that April 6 was a Monday. It's that simple.

Perpetual Calendar

Find the calendar for any month and year -

Choose month and year, click "build" button OR click on TODAY

January 2016 Build!

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

<< < Today > >>

Figure 2: The business section of the site when you first enter.

Perpetual Calendar

Find the calendar for any month and year -

Choose month and year, click "build" button OR click on TODAY

April 1835 Build!

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			01	02	03	04
05	06	07	08	09	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

<< < Today > >>

Figure 3: After information is entered.

Additional instructions include:

USE > TO ADVANCE THE CALENDAR ONE MONTH: >> TO ADVANCE THE CALENDAR ONE YEAR.

USE < TO BACK UP THE CALENDAR ONE MONTH: << TO BACK UP THE CALENDAR ONE YEAR.

You want to search this site in more detail. Near the bottom of the page is a list of other Calculators that could be useful, including; Age Calculator, Tombstone Birthdate, Day of the Week Calculator, Inflation Calculator and more that are related to genealogy.