

Auxiliary Markings

Publication of The Auxiliary Markings Club

www.postal-markings.org

January 2024
Founded 2003

A journal that reports about and studies the myriad markings
added to a letter that explain how it reached its final destination.

Vol. XXI No. 1
Issue No. 82

Fraudulent: Actina Appliance Company

by Andrew S. Kelley
stamps@andrewkelley.net

THE COVER in Figure 1 marks the last gasp of a long-running quack medicine scheme. Addressed to the “The Actina Appliance Company” in Kansas City, Mo and postmarked November 1915, the cover is stamped “FRAUDULENT. Mail to this address returned by order of the Postmaster General.” As evidenced by this cover, after many years of complaints, the Post Office Department denied Actina the use of the mails and put it out of business.

Section 485 of the 1913 Postal Laws and Regulations (PL&R) authorized the Postmaster General to deny use of the mail to anyone engaged in lotteries or any other scheme for obtaining money through the mails by “false or fraudulent pretenses, representations, or promises”.¹ If the Postmaster General detected such activity, he would issue a fraud order against the bad actor. Per the PL&R, the fraud order would be enforced (only) at the delivery post office; the PL&R directed such office to stamp the mail “Fraudulent: Mail to this address returned by order of the Postmaster General” and return it to the sender. To my

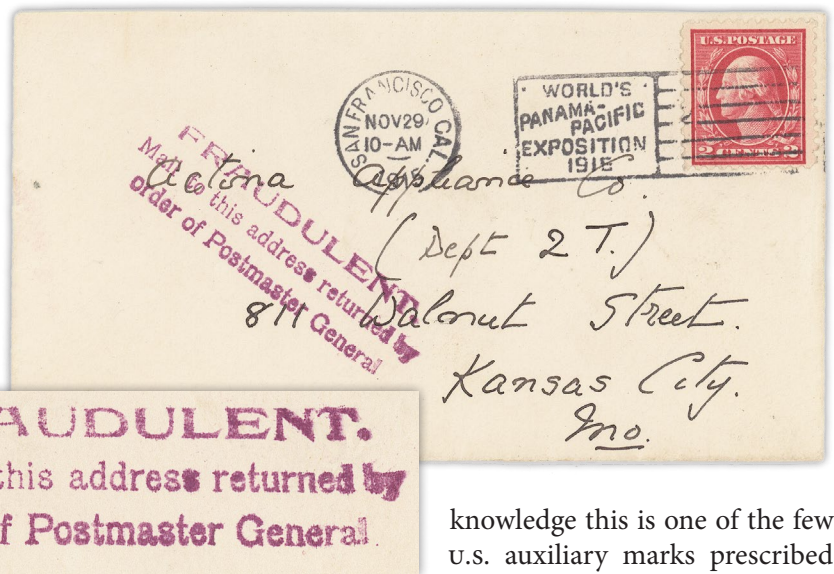


Figure 1: “Fraudulent” Cover to the Actina Appliance Co.

knowledge this is one of the few U.S. auxiliary marks prescribed by statute.

The Actina Appliance Company came to the attention of the Postmaster General after several decades of quack medicine sales by the self-styled “Professor” William C. Wilson and his associates. Wilson got his start making “magnetic body wear,” garments featuring magnets and strips of metal.² In 1886, after losing his body wear business to creditors and other legal problems, Wilson launched the “Actina,” a small steel vial with stoppers at each end and filled with chemicals, including oil of mustard and sassafras, belladonna, ether, and even atropine. See Figure 2. One end of the device was applied to the ear and the other to the eye. Vapors emanating from the Actina would (purportedly) remove eye or ear deposits and cure blindness and deafness. Capitalizing on the public’s interest in the medicinal properties of newly-mastered electricity, Wilson also claimed that the Actina was a battery with electrical properties. It sold for \$10—a week’s pay—with quarterly “recharges” (oil reloads) at \$1 each.

In 1890, Wilson relocated to Kansas City. He heavily advertised Actina as a marvelous “pocket battery” or “electric battery” or “ozone battery.” He appears to have expanded the claims for the curative powers of the device, asserting that it could cure not just vision and hearing ailments, but

Redner Wins the 2023 Tony W. Award

Gregg Redner won the inaugural 2023 Tony Wawrukiewicz award for his outstanding article “Pre-philatelic Port Payé Auxiliary Marking on Belgian Mail,” which appeared in the January 2023 *Auxiliary Markings*.

The award, named in honor of our late founding editor, recognizes the best article in *Auxiliary Markings* each year. Redner’s article was selected by a special committee appointed by President John Hotchner. (Your Editor suggested articles for the committee’s consideration but—thankfully—was not otherwise involved in the difficult task of selecting the winner.)

Congratulations to Gregg on a well deserved honor.

Contents

Fraudulent: Actina Appliance Company by Andrew S. Kelley	1
Redner Wins the 2023 Tony W. Award	
President's Message by John M. Hotchner	2
Treasurer's Notes by Peter Rikard	5
Snow Bound by Tom Fortunato	5
The Belgian <i>Non admis au transport</i> Label and Handstamp: 1892–1910 by Gregg Redner, PhD, FRPSC	6
New “X-Rayed Cleared for Delivery” Auxiliary Marking by Douglas B. Quine, PhD, Otto E. Bergman, and Peter Elias	8
Unusual Business Reply Postage Due	10
Refused On Account of Tax by Jerry Johnson	11
Package Box Route by Charlie Freise	11
A Baseball Mailing Strikes Out! by Paul Albright	12
Sioux City “Fee Claimed” Marking by Jim Peterson	12

We Want Your Articles and Your Feedback

Auxiliary Markings is possible thanks to the many contributing authors. If you have submitted articles, thank you (and please keep them coming). If not, please consider doing so.

This edition features an updated the design of the journal. I welcome your feedback. Like it? Hate it? Have ideas for improvement? Please let me know. -Ed.



President's Message

by **John M. Hotchner**

jmhstamp@verizon.net | P.O. Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125

HAVING PROMISED to start these columns with a truly unusual cover, may I ask you to take a look at the one shown back and front illustrated on page 3. Mailed in Venezuela, it is addressed to Herbert Allen, Esq, Oriental Tea Co., Court St., Boston, Mass. It is canceled February 16, 1918.

Given that the cover arrived while WWI was still being fought, it is not a surprise that it has been censored, though no date is evident. On the back is an auxiliary marking that says “Found in Corridor and Returned to Box”. Despite the

fact that there was a handstamp created for this problem, suggesting this was not the first time this problem occurred, I’ve not seen a match in 50 years of collecting.

Did this happen in a post office or in a separate censor’s off-site location? Who was “LBE” who signed the marking? Why would someone in Venezuela be writing to a lawyer for a tea company? I don’t expect we will ever have answers to any of these questions, but if you’d like to take a shot at one or more, I’d be happy to hear from you. Onward to AMC business.

PRESIDENT

John Hotchner
P.O. Box 1125
Falls Church, VA 22041-0125
jmhstamp@verizon.net

VICE PRESIDENT

Scott Steward
16311 Manning Rd W
Accokeek, MD 20607-9755
scott_steward@hotmail.com

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY/TREASURER

Peter Rikard
10314 Nassawadox Way
Ashland, VA 23005
postal.markings@gmail.com

EDITOR

Andrew S. Kelley
9038 East 25th Dr.
Denver, CO 80238
stamps@andrewkelley.net

WEBMASTER

Douglas B. Quine
P.O. Box 153
Bethel, CT 06801
webmaster-2010@postal-markings.org

DIRECTORS

Roger Brody
27 Schindler Court
Somerset, NJ 08773-6201
brody-2020@postal-markings.org

Tom Breske
1318 Carpenters Point Rd
Perryville, MD 21903-2017
tcbreske@verizon.net

Gregg Redner
468 Wellington Street
London, ON N6L1G2, Canada
greggredner@rogers.com

Continued on page 3

Constitution and ByLaws. Thanks to the 42 Members who voted to adopt the documents updated by Doug Quine's Committee. And to those who didn't vote but didn't object!

Member Advertising in Auxiliary Markings: One voter, unidentified, asked about allowing member and other advertising in AM. This provoked a considerable string of emails among your Board. The result will be announced by our Editor. [See insert in this issue with instructions and a form for submitting your ad. -Ed.] But I do want to thank the Member who made the suggestion.

Next Election and Nominating Committee; Call for candidates: Our first election under the new governing documents will be in 2024. In order to identify strong candidates, I appointed a nominating Committee composed of past president Ralph Nafziger, myself and Scott Steward.

Happily, the committee has identified good candidates for all open positions. That said, any Member who would be interested in serving; carrying forward the work of improving AMC's operations and services, is gratefully asked to contact one of us. Ralph is at nafziger@peak.org. My email is above, and Scott's is at the top of page two of this issue.

Dues due: Please note that dues are holding at \$18; principally because a good number of Members have opted for electronic delivery of AM. As yearly postage rate increases have pushed our per-Member cost higher, the Board has decided to forego a dues increase to see how electronic delivery affects our bottom line.

If you have not already opted for that alternative, please consider it. You will get your issue faster, and help the Club at the same time.

A Publicity Director is urgently needed: The job consists mainly of cranking out a press release every 60 days or so. But of course if creativity were brought to the job, there are other ways we might put ourselves before the nonmembers out there. If you are interested in this way of serving the Club, please get in touch with me.

National convention of the AMC at PIPEX '24 in Portland. PLEASE let me know if you will be coming to our

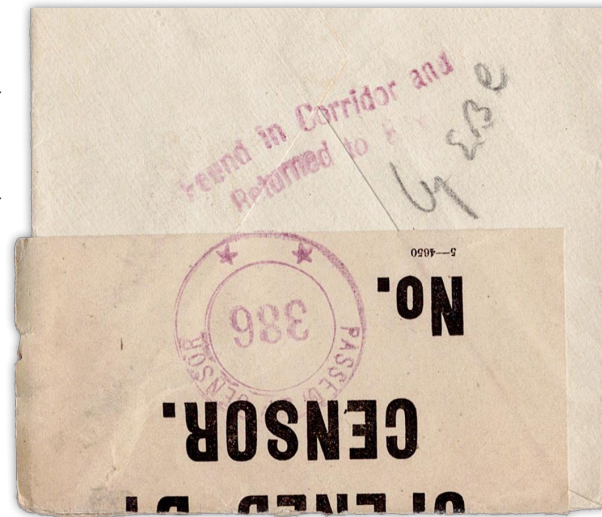
first national meeting at PIPEX on May 3-4, 2024. We need our Members to exhibit, and for a few to do programs. The latter can be done in the traditional classroom setting, or as

a scheduled at-the-frames discussions about your exhibit; a method tried at Chicagopex '23 by the Collectors Club of New York. It was enthusiastically received.

And speaking of Chicagopex: We are being invited to hold our 2025 national gathering at that show; by acclamation one of the best shows on the circuit. I never miss it! The Board has voted to accept the invitation. The show will be held the weekend before Thanksgiving in Itasca, near O'Hare Airport; so no need to worry about the well-publicized crime problems in the City. I might mention that this show has just about the best awards banquet of any show, thanks to the work of our Member Jackie Alton.

Until next time, please do give some thought to getting involved in the Club (and further involved in auxiliary markings) by answering one or more of the calls to service/involvement in this message. It is said

that clubs depend upon 5% of the membership to operate. The 40+ votes for the Constitution lead me to hope that we can do better than 5%. -JMH



**Time
to
Renew**

Please Renew Your Membership:

- \$15: hard copy, or
- \$12: electronic delivery

Payment to:
Peter Rikard
10314 Nassawadox Way
Ashland, VA 23005

Thanks!

also a list of maladies ranging from hay fever to cancer. This pitch was attractive; the Government estimated that his company sold more than 100,000 devices.

The commercial success of Actina ultimately contributed to its demise. In 1906, as part of a long-running series called “The Great American Fraud”, Harper’s Magazine ran a story about the Actina; author Samuel Hopkins Adams described it as an evil-smelling swindle:

Easily first among the mechanical fakes is Actina . . . It is a small steel vial with screw stoppers at both ends. One end cures eye ailments and the other ear troubles. They work simultaneously. . . . The Actina, upon being unpacked from the box in which it is mailed, comports itself like a decayed onion. It is worth the ten dollars to get away from the odor. “Can be used by anyone with perfect safety,” says the advertisement, but I should regard it as extremely unsafe to offer it to a person with a weak stomach. Its principal ingredient is oil of mustard, an active poison, regarding which the United States Pharmacopeia prints this emphatic warning: “Great caution should be exercised when smelling this oil.” So the “perfect safety” guarantee is hardly sound. The Actina contains also oil of sassafras, representing presumably a brave but hopeless attempt to kill the inexpressible odor, and some alkaloid, possibly atropin. So far as curing any genuine eye or ear disease is concerned, the sufferer might just as well—and with far more safety—blow red pepper up his nose, and get his sneeze cheaper than by sniffing at a ten-dollar evil smell. The whole contrivance costs probably about twenty-five cents to make.³

At the same time, during passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, proponents of the Act repeatedly cited Actina as a paradigm of the quack medicine that the Act was meant to address. The claims that the device had electrical properties attracted particular criticism.



Figure 2: the Actina device.

Evidently in response to the passage of the Act, Wilson withdrew his claims regarding Actina’s electrical properties and renamed his company from “The New York & London Electric Association” to “The Actina Appliance Company.” However, these efforts were not enough to save the business.

Acting on complaints from the American Medical Association and others about the Actina, in March 1915 the Federal government directed the Actina Appliance Company to show cause why a fraud order should not be entered against it. After a three-day hearing, Judge W.H. Lemar, the solicitor for the Post Office Department, recommend that the Postmaster General issue a fraud order. The order was issued May 29, 1915, denying the Actina company the use of the mails. The June 8, 1915, Postal Bulletin announcing the fraud order is shown in Figure 3. By 1916, the Company was out of business.

Notes

¹ Postal Laws and Regulations of the United States, Edition of 1913 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), sec. 485.

² Unless noted, the facts in this story come from two sources: “Actina: A Wonder of the 19th Century,” From the Hands of Quacks (blog), January 12, 2015, <https://fromthehandsofquacks.com/2015/01/12/actina-a-wonder-of-the-19th-century/>; Andrew P. Ferry, “Professor’ William C. Wilson and His Actina Electric Pocket Battery for Curing Ocular Disease,” Ophthalmology 105, no. 2 (February 1998): 238–48, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0161-6420\(98\)92821-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0161-6420(98)92821-4); “Actina.”

³ Samuel Hopkins Adams, The Great American Fraud, Fourth Ed. (P.F. Collier & Son.), 110–11, accessed December 26, 2023, http://iapsop.com/ssoc/1907__adams_the_great_american_fraud.pdf.

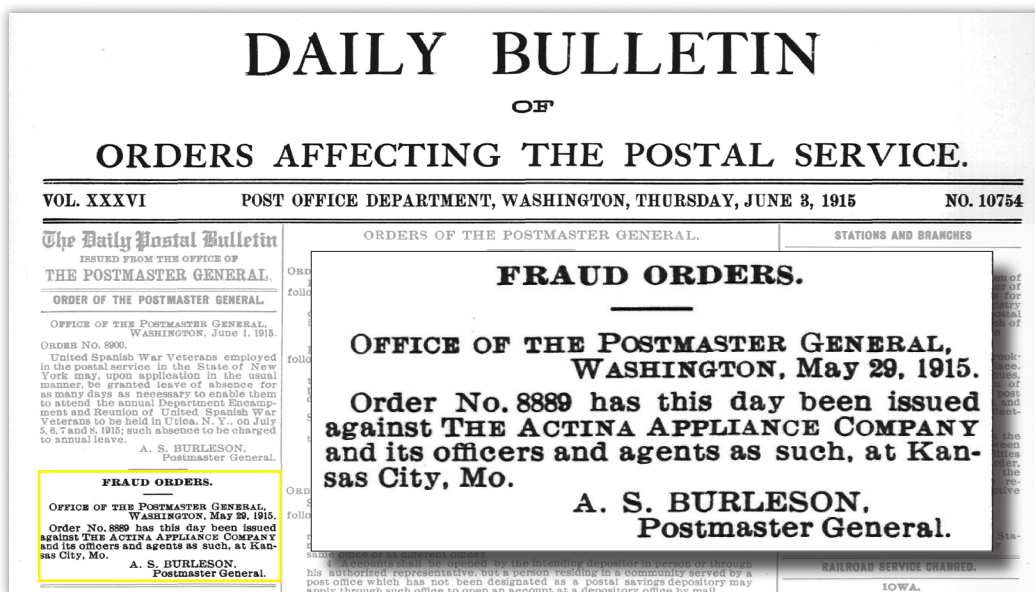


Figure 3. Postal Bulletin announcing fraud order against Actina.

Treasurer's Notes

by **Peter Rikard**

postal.markings@gmail.com

AS YOUR new secretary/treasurer this past year it has been an interesting time. When I attempted to open a bank account in that would accept checks made out to the AMC, I was declined by both my bank and my credit union. Both of those institutions had held accounts for me and accepted checks made out to the organizations that owned the account. No more.

The result has been that I have had to return about 10 checks to members that made their checks to the AMC. One member has refused to write a check to me until he can write a check to the AMC. He did however make a useful suggestion on how I can fix the problem. I am in the process of attempting to create a new account that will accept checks to the AMC. That will require the Commonwealth of Virginia, the IRS and the bank to complete the process, so don't write checks to the AMC today.

I also made an error in not putting a renewal notice in the October issue. I instead emailed current and past members a notice. Since you had not seen an article about renewal many folks felt that they had missed a mailed renewal notice. I would rather not mail a notice as this is an expense that we should not need to bear.

Internally, the officers have had a discussion about dues. The dues have been \$15 since the inception of the AMC, 20

years and counting. After some discussion we are retaining the \$15. dues and we are offering a \$12. dues for those who will receive an electronic copy of the newsletter. So far, 23 members have chosen an electronic copy of newsletter. This will save printing and postage costs. We will revisit dues this coming fall when we see how the accounts are doing.

Treasurer Accounts

Beginning Balance	\$4,076.73
Expenses to date	\$2,262.78
Ending balance	\$3,281.04

The ending balance includes 2024 dues paid by 71 members. Expenses are the printing and postage of the newsletter and the fee for our website. The expenses this past year included the special newsletter for the passing of Tony Wawrukiewicz. No other expenses than these.

Each newsletter in the past has cost about \$480 for printing and postage. Postage will rise again in 2024, but with the new offering of an electronic delivery of the newsletter we are hoping that we can balance income and expenditures. Questions...email me at postal.markings@gmail.com

Snow Bound

by **Tom Fortunato**

stampmf1@charter.net

“NEITHER SNOW nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.” That's the very unofficial motto of our Postal Service, a slight rewording of a quote credited to Greek historian Herodotus about 2,500 years ago. Can this phrase be recreated using auxiliary markings?

Well, here's a start. I can't recall ever seeing a U.S. marking dealing with snow, but I ran across this one during an eBay search. Written and posted February 4, 1902 from Brookfield, New York (30 miles southeast of Syracuse), it took an unusually long four days to reach its destination, Belmont, New York, 110 miles away to the west. Winters can be pretty brutal in this part of the country, and the “DELAYED/SNOW BOUND” explains part of the story. The four page personal letter from a mother to her daughter accompanying the cover tells more, starting out, “The great storm seems to be about over and people are shoveling or tunneling out this morning and tis expected the mail routes will be opened today.”



As it turns out, the winter of 1901–02 was a snowfall record breaker for shovelers and a boon for scientists. The Smithsonian Archives holds a work published in the annual summary of the Monthly Weather Review titled, “Studies Among the Snow Crystals During the Winter of 1901-2,” documenting their findings (https://siarchives.si.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/WAB_Snow_1902.pdf) including 22 plates of snowflakes!

The Belgian *Non admis au transport* Label and Handstamp: 1892–1910

by Gregg Redner, PhD, FRPSC
greggredner@rogers.com

THE ENTIRE subject of postal labels did not make an administrative appearance until the end of the nineteenth century and this was no different in Belgium. Certainly, postal handstamps had been in use in the country prior to this time, but there were no postal labels. The subject was first hinted at during the second General Postal Union Congress held in Paris in 1878. On July 1, 1878, the Congress recommended that postal items which were undeliverable, be returned to the sender “with the reason for deliverability stated.”

The undeliverable mail was to be returned with a clear indication of the reason for its nondeliverability. While many countries did adopt this practice, it did not become common practice in Belgium until 1885. The first-time mention was made of postal labels at a UPU Congress took place in Vienna in 1891, when on July 4 a notation suggested that their use might be more efficient than handwritten instructions:

The reasons for the undeliverability of the correspondence should be indicated by a label to be stuck on the reverse of the postal item by the destination office.

The directive was to be implemented on July 1, 1892, and was at first intended to apply only to international correspondence. However, a week later it was extended to cover internal mail. The Belgian Postal Authority would not adopt this new “recommendation” until July 9, 1892, when in “Instruction No. 20” (See Figure 1) the decision was made that all mail, when returned, should have an indication of why it was being returned. To facilitate this, the Belgian Postal Authority created a series of eight postal labels, numbered 399 to 406, that indicated the most common reasons for return.

Labels issued on July 9, 1892:

- #399—RÉFUSÉ/Geweigerd (Refused)
- #400—INCONNU/Onbekend (Unknown)
- #401—Non Reclamé/Niet afgehaald (Not claimed)
- #402—DÉCÉDÉ/Overleden (Dead)
- #403—Retour à l’envoyeur/Terug aan Afzender (Return to sender)
- #404—Adres Insuffisante/Onvoldoende adres (Address insufficient)
- #405—Non admis au transport/Niet ter vervoer toegelaten (Not admitted to the mail)
- #406—Parti sans laisser d’adresse/Vertrokken zonder adres op te geven (Party left with no forwarding address)

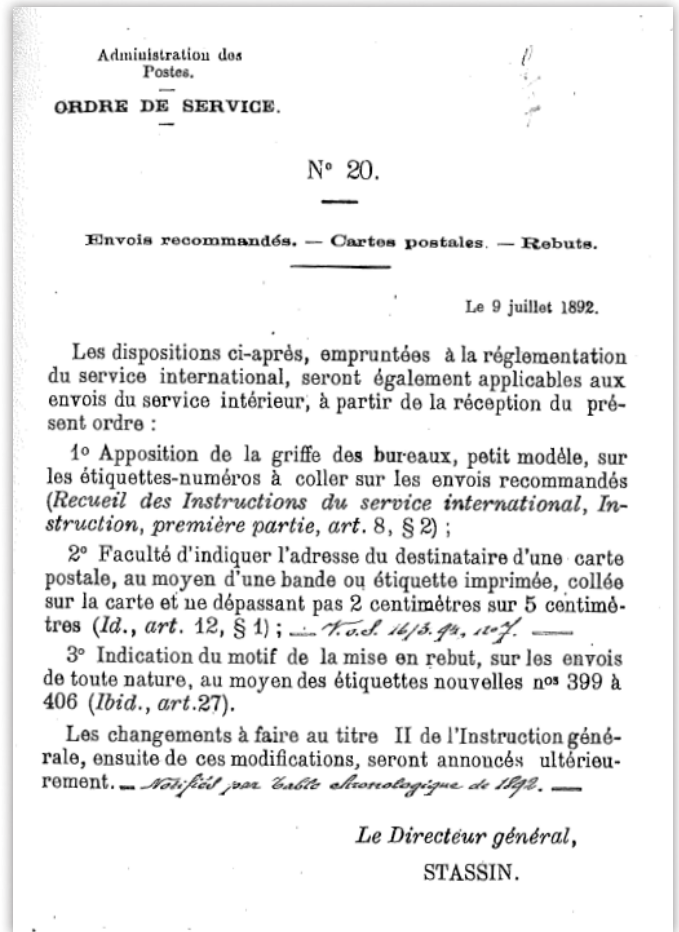


Figure 1. Belgian Administration des Postes, Ordre de Service No. 20. The third paragraph mentions the creation of the labels.

The subjects of these labels would remain in place until 1932, when new subjects would be added, and the numbering would be changed.

One of the least used of the first four generations of labels—1892, 1894, 1900 and 1910—is label #405, the *Non admis au transport* label. Of the hundreds of early Belgian labels in my collection, label #405 is by far the scarcest label represented by only twenty-two examples.

This label was intended to prevent inappropriate materials from entering the mail. This could include dangerous materials, politically subversive or inflammatory mail as well as images considered to be pornographic. However, it could also be used because some aspect of the card or cover violated a protocol of postal regulations.

By far the most common applications of label #405 is to identify mail which violates some aspect of postal regulations, followed by mail with inappropriate images, mail containing dangerous materials and last of all, mail which is politically inflammatory.

Our first example is a 1903 postcard mailed at Peruwelz on June 29 (See Figure 2). This card has a second-generation

Continued on page 7

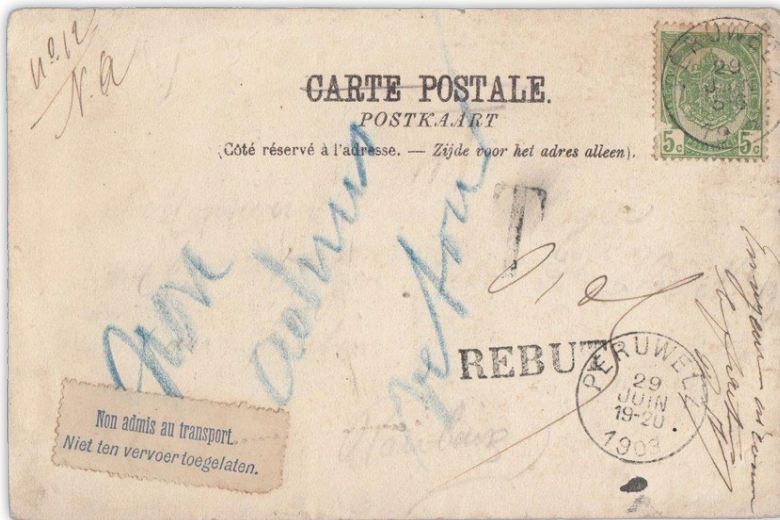
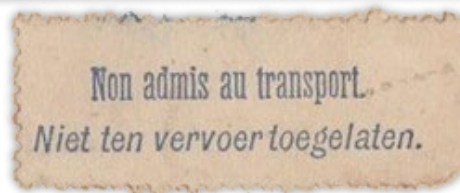


Figure 2. June 29, 1903: Postcard with second-generation label #495. The card was not admitted to the mails at the P.O. in Peruwez.

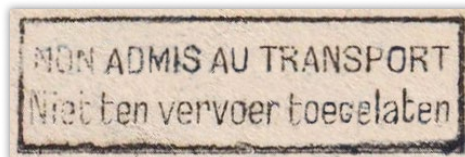


#405 label on it. Interestingly, the labels from the second generation are the scarcest of the early Belgian labels, and the label in question is scarcest of all. In this particular instance, the card was inadmissible to the mail because there was writing on the reverse, which violated Belgium postal regulations. It is unclear what happened to the text written in pencil on the obverse. It was clearly erased and replaced by the blue text in crayon, but it is unclear why.

The next example is postal card mailed from Havana, Cuba to Brussels in 1902. The card was sent unfranked and should have borne 15 centimes in postage. As such it was taxed 30c or double the postage due. Once again, this card



Figure 3. October 16, 1902: Cuban postcard mailed from Havana to Brussels with *Non admis au transport* handstamp.



was not admitted to the mail because it contains writing on the reverse. Notice that the card does not contain the appropriate third-generation #405 label, but instead is marked with two strikes of a handstamp containing the same text. The handstamp strikes were crossed off in the same blue crayon that corrects the spelling of the city. The assumption is that the regulatory violation was overlooked, and the card was eventually delivered.

The use of handstamps to replace auxiliary labels was not authorized, and yet it happened with great frequency. It has been suggested that the handstamps were employed in places where there was a shortage of labels. However, this does not seem justifiable, especially considering the fact that the receiving post office at Brussels was the Principal Post Office in the country. The reason for use of handstamps in place of labels remains an unanswered anomaly.

The final example of a *Non admis au transport* auxiliary marking is found on a September 9, 1909, postcard mailed from Alexandria, Egypt to Brussels. (See Figure 4.) The auxiliary mark is not placed by the sanctioned label, but rather

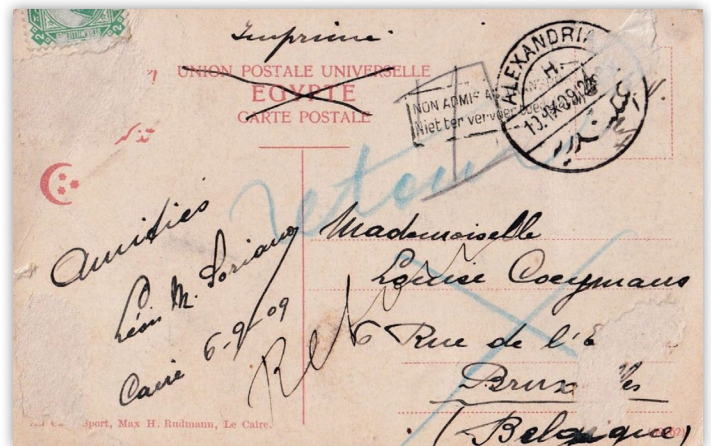


Figure 4. September 9, 1909: Egyptian postcard mailed from Alexandria to Brussels with *Non admis au transport* handstamp, resulting from improper stamp placement.

with the same handstamp used on the previous example. In this instance the card was not admitted to Belgian mails because the postage stamp was placed across the upper left of the card with half on the obverse and half on the reverse. This prevented proper canceling and voided the postage. The card was returned to Alexandria as can be seen by the presence of both blue crayon and black pen *retour* manuscript markings.

I would be delighted to hear from anyone who has examples of the label #405 from the period 1892–1910.

Correction: In my article on Belgian *Decédé* auxiliary marking labels in the October 2023 edition of *Auxiliary Markings*, I misidentified a label in Figure 1, as Belgian. I have now come to realize that the label was French.

New “X-Rayed Cleared for Delivery” Auxiliary Marking

by Douglas B. Quine, PhD, Otto E. Bergman, and Peter Elias

drquine@gmail.com

THIS ARTICLE analyzes 68 “X-RAYED CLEARED FOR DELIVERY” handstamped covers addressed to Senior District Judge Dee D. Drell at the United States District Court for the Western District of Louisiana in Alexandria handstamps (Figure 1 for example). These markings have not been reported previously in *Auxiliary Markings*.



Figure 1. UK cover with X-RAYED CLEARED FOR DELIVERY handstamp. (See Figure 9, top, for an enlargement of the marking.)

Peter acquired these covers at a stamp show and shared them with Otto and Douglas for analysis. Mailed between August 14, 2018 and July 18, 2023, they include several domestic professional covers and many international numismatic/philatelic covers. Since these covers have passed through the hands of multiple philatelists, they are not a random statistical sample of incoming mail (most of the domestic covers were retained for their meter markings), but they do enable us to study the chronology of these auxiliary markings. The analyzed covers originated in Argentina, Australia, China, Croatia, France (6x), Greece (3x), Hong Kong, Hungary (2x), India, Ireland (2x), Israel, Italy, Japan, Malta, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Slovenia, South Korea, Thailand, United Kingdom (36x), and the United States (3x). Much of the foreign mail was sent by Express or Registered mail in large envelopes or parcels to enable tracking and ensure delivery.

Notably, these covers were X-rayed without regard to their origin or size. Screened items ranged from an envelope originally containing only a few sheets of paper mailed by a Justice Department employee in Mississippi using official postage to parcels sent with stamps from Oman, and correspondence franked with computer vended postage from Argentina.

Douglas found (on Otto's suggestion) that the markings on these covers



Figure 2. First (top) and second (bottom) design handstamps.

are handstamped impressions from two different designs of inked sans-serif font “rubber” stamps. The first design (Figure 2 top) is seen on 11 covers between August 14, 2018 and November 2, 2019. The second design (bottom) is seen on 32 covers from April 8, 2020 to July 18, 2023. The designs of the other incomplete markings could not be determined.

While the text on the two handstamps reads the same, there are many differences between them (Table 1). First, and most obviously, on the first handstamp the letter “D” on the top line appears above the letters “EL” on the lower line while on the second design the “D” appears above the letters “LIV”. Fonts also differ between the two designs with a heavier more crowded font on the first design. The first line of first design text is narrower (slightly taller) than the second design while the second line of text is wider (and taller)



Figure 3. Purple ink handstamp, second design.

on the first design than the second design. The new design lines are more separated. Finally, the first and second design handstamps were used on different dates.

Two handstamp colors were used. We see the screening center initially used a black ink pad for the handstamp since the 29 dated covers (first design and then second design)

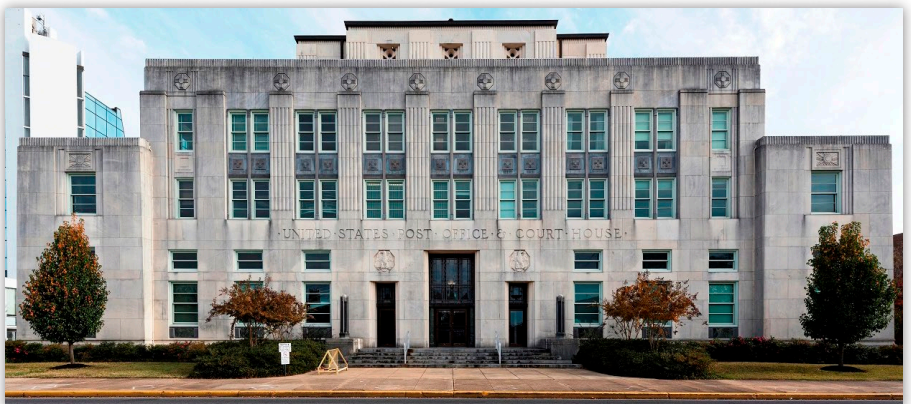


Figure 4. US District Courthouse (via Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress)

Continued on page 9

between August 14, 2018 and June 19, 2021 appear in black ink. A purple ink pad (Figure 3) was then placed in service and all 14 covers (second design) from February 4, 2022 to July 18, 2023 have a purple handstamp. The remaining 22 covers had illegible postmarks or no postmarks at all (7 covers had uncanceled stamps).

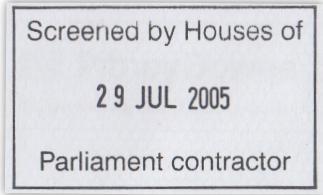


Figure 5. Parliament mail screened by private contractor handstamp.

Despite the engraved limestone facade, the post office is no longer in the courthouse (Figure 4). Since postal services do not provide secure mail screening, government agencies and companies around the world arrange their own secure mail screening. This is illustrated by a UK parliament marking in Douglas’ collection (Figure 5). Otto was told these handstamps were applied by the Court Security Officer in the court screening facility.

The variability associated with this manual handstamping process is evident from the range in print quality with one cover having only one of the 25 characters (24 letters plus a hyphen) imprinted on the envelope (Figure 6) to several covers having all 25 characters in various levels of intensity. Figure 7 illustrates a handstamp that was slightly

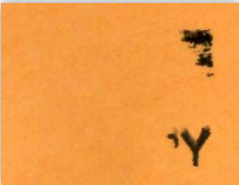


Figure 6. Partially stamped variety of handstamp.



Figure 7. Double transfer of handstamp.

rocked causing a double transfer of the second line of text. In Figure 8, the officer handstamped off-perpendicular to the paper causing a partial imprint and then restamped

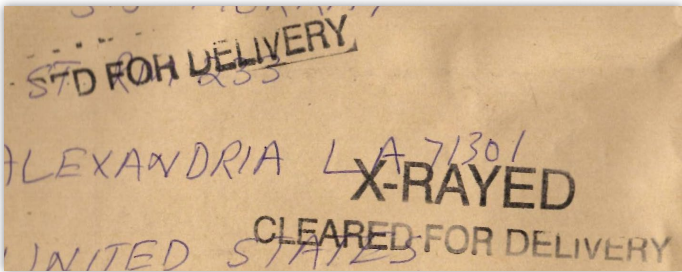


Figure 8. Double stamped X-RAYED CLEARED FOR DELIVERY handstamp.

Design Difference	First Handstamp	Second Handstamp
“D” line 1	Over “EL”	Over “LIV”
Hyphen line 1	1 mm spaces	2 mm space left
Font	Thick, close	Thin, spaced
Line 1 width	3.9–4.0 mm	4.4–4.5 mm
Line 1 height	7.5–8 mm	7.5 mm
Line 2 width	7.4–7.5 mm	6.7–6.9 mm
Line 2 height	5 mm	4 mm
Line space	3.5–3.8 mm	4 mm
Known dates black ink	Aug. 14, 2018–Nov. 2, 2019 (11x)	Apr. 8, 2020–June 19, 2021 (18x)
Known dates purple ink	(none)	Feb. 4, 2022–July 18, 2023 (14x)

Table 1. First and second design handstamp features.

to get a better impression. Such “rubber” stamps typically have a rectangular foundation layer with raised characters. If the handstamp is tilted towards an edge, the inked base makes an imprint as observed on covers where the top left and right corners of the foundation are seen (Figure 9). In



Figure 9. Backing base of handstamp at top left and top right revealed by misaligned impressions.

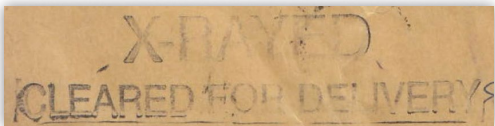


Figure 10. Backing base of handstamp at bottom and bottom sides revealed by misaligned impressions.

Figure 10, the inked bottom edge of the foundation is seen all the way across the handstamp and on the left and right sides of the bottom line of text.

Since mail screening is not widely understood, it seems appropriate to provide some context. Concerns about hazards being transmitted through the mail have a long history (Speirs, 2010). Pope Innocent XII’s worries as far back as 1691 of the mail spreading plagues caused him to mandate fumigation of the mail with a detailed protocol to prevent

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

the transmission of biological threats (Vandervelde, 2002). Mail fumigation was done from time to time into the twentieth century and the envelopes can often be recognized by the characteristic holes punched in the envelope to allow the fumigation to penetrate the mail piece. In the past half century, concerns have shifted from the spread of plagues to the use of the mail by terrorists to deliver explosive devices or other hazards to the mail recipient.

The USPS requires that all mail being transported by air weighing over 13 ounces be prepaid with a postage meter or computer vended postage that can be traced to the mailer; otherwise, it must be submitted in person to a postal clerk for acceptance. This rule traces to the letter bombs sent by the Unabomber (Ted Kaczynski) and was based upon the assumption that a certain mass was required for a significant threat (Speirs, 2010 p. 11). Government offices, courts, and corporations with dedicated adversaries have been triaging and screening their mail for decades to intercept and divert incoming threats. Large mail pieces which could hold

explosives and foreign or stamped mail that is introduced into the mail-stream without any traceable postal digital postage payment or postal clerk identity verification of the mailer are of particular concern. Mail from known trusted mailers is sometimes exempt from screening, while bulky anonymous international mail franked with only stamps would gain particular attention—especially if they were leaking or have unusual odors. Some government employees, such as Judge Drell, have their mail sent to their place of work for security screening. At this courthouse, Otto learned all incoming mail is handstamped after successfully passing through an in-house X-ray machine to confirm to the individual opening the piece that it has been reviewed. These covers provided an extraordinary opportunity to understand the evolution of an auxiliary marking.

Bibliography

Speirs, D. 2010. "The History of Mail Bombs: Philatelic & Historical Study." The Wreck & Crash Mail Society. 128 pp.

Vandervelde, V. D. 2002. "The Disinfection of Mail in Rome in 1691." *Pratique XXVII* (1): i-xiv (5)

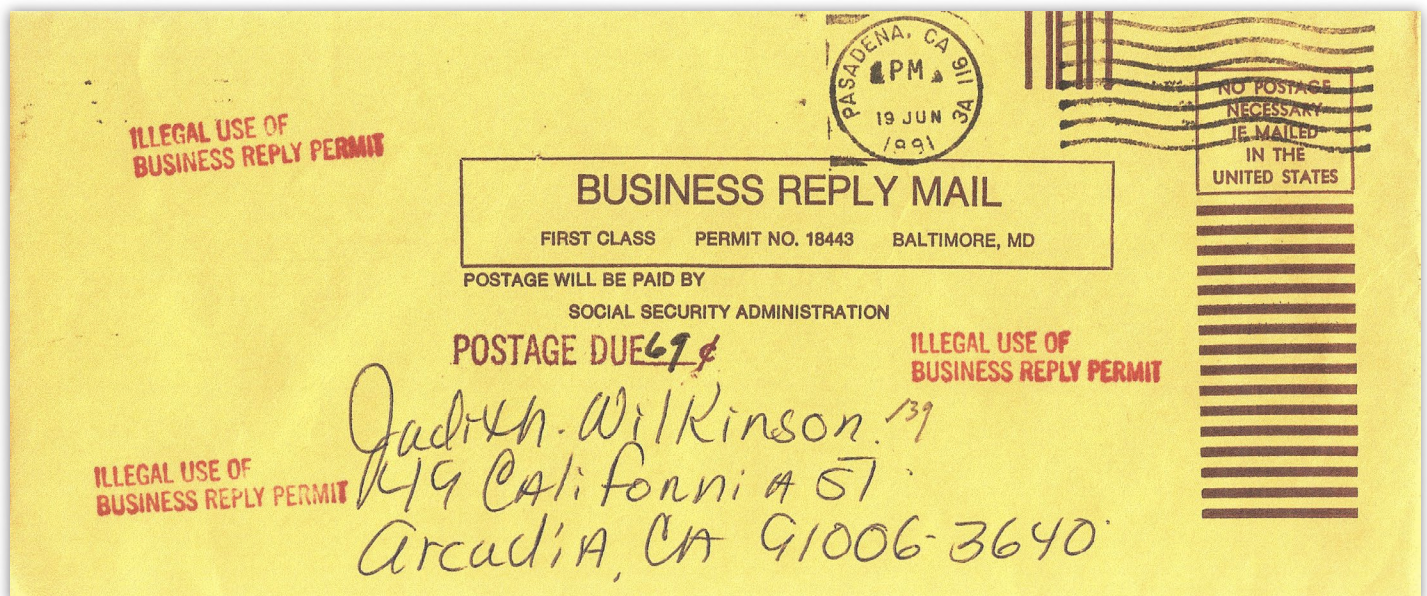
Unusual Business Reply Postage Due

MERLE FARRINGTON shared this interesting Business Reply Mail cover. The sender attempted to use a Social Security Administration business reply envelope to send mail to a third party.

The USPS rejected the attempt, marking the envelope "ILLEGAL USE OF BUSINESS REPLY PERMIT" (three times). Because the letter could not be returned to the sender, it was delivered the addressee and assessed 61 cents postage due.

Remarkably, the postage due assessed appears to include the business reply mail (BRM) fee. Consulting Tony W's *U.S.*

Domestic Postage Rates 1872–2011, we see that in June 1991, when the letter was postmarked, the BRM fee was nine cents per item. First class postage was 29 cents for the first ounce and 23 cents for additional ounces. Assuming this letter was double weight (and assuming that assessed postage due is 61 cents and not 69 cents), the rating would be: 9¢ BRM fee + 29¢ first oz. + 23¢ second oz = .61¢. Can anyone think of another rating that would explain the postage due?



Refused On Account of Tax

by Jerry Johnson

johnson66@charter.net

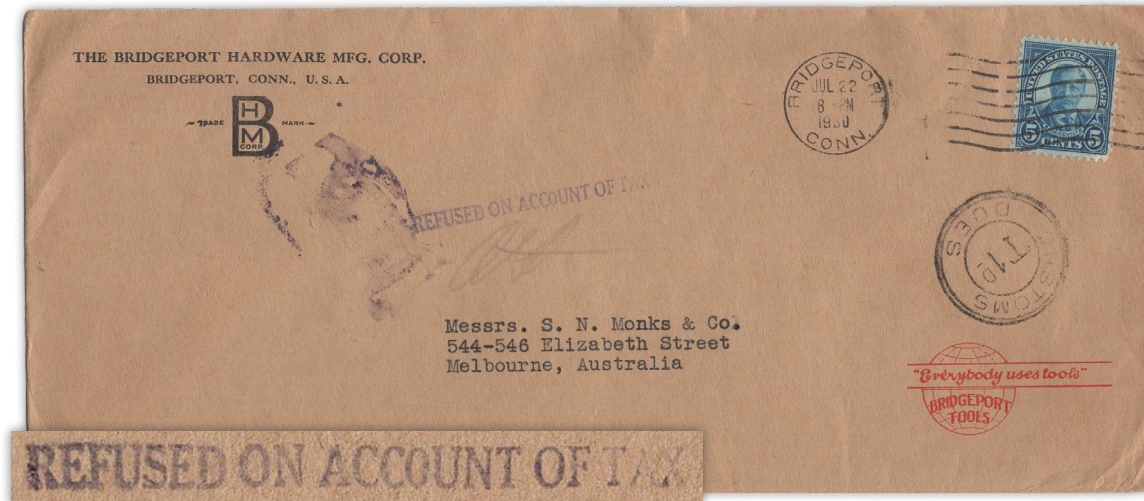
THE COVER shown in Figure 1 has the marking “Refused On Account of Tax”. It originated in Bridgeport, Connecticut and was sent to Melbourne, Australia; it was posted on July 22, 1930.

The circular marking at the right side states: “Customs Dues T1D.”

The sender, Bridgeport Tools, must have enclosed an item that required a customs fee. The company in Melbourne refused to pay it.

Since the item was refused, it ended up in the dead letter office (DLO) as noted on the back side and shown below. The date of this marking is September 30 (1930).

The cover was returned to the sender as noted by the blurry pointing finger marking. The initials, written in pencil to the right of the pointing finger, are most likely a clerk in the DLO.



Customs mark from front (top) and dead letter office mark from reverse (bottom).

Package Box Route

by Charlie Freise

vapid1000@gmail.com

ONE OF the benefits of being a hoarder and accumulator is re-discovering something you set aside, relegated to a dusty corner or catchall carton of miscellaneous philatelic material. Every so often the repository of miscellany requires emptying, this provides an opportunity to go treasure hunting. Sometimes a special item is found, most often you come across an item and your mind immediately cramps up and you wonder, “Where did this come from, why did I purchase it, and what is it doing here?”



This is one of the happier results of a recent treasure hunt. Pictured below is a small business cover franked with a single example of Scott #319. A New York, NY, Sta. H, International Machine cancel, dated April 27, 1904, ties the stamp to the cover. The cover is addressed to Msr's Binder, Esq., Toledo, Ohio. On the reverse is a faint blue oval stamp reading “Pusey & Company, Printers and Stationers, 123 W. 42nd Street.”

A little research reveals the letter, sent from New York, to Toledo, Ohio, was to a well-known law firm. The New York Printing Trades Blue Book has a listing for the Pusey Company. It was a well-established printing firm and became Pusey Press Inc. in 1911. Additional details indicate they were job and hotel printers.

In the top center front of the cover is an interesting “Package Box Route” red rubber stamp auxiliary marking. Seriously, tell me you did not notice this. This auxiliary marking is not listed on the Auxiliary Marking Club website. It is believed the printing firm sent a package to the Toledo law firm. The package was sorted out from the regular mail and placed on a special route for the delivery of parcels. If anyone has another explanation for this auxiliary marking, please share with the rest of the community.

A Baseball Mailing Strikes Out!

by Paul Albright
albrightsp@gmail.com

AFTER THE Colorado Rockies baseball team concluded another disastrous season in September, I gathered a few post-season newspaper analyses and mailed them to a nephew, who is another follower of the bottom-dwelling Rockies. While the mailing to Wyoming failed, it did provide an opportunity to learn more about post office operations.

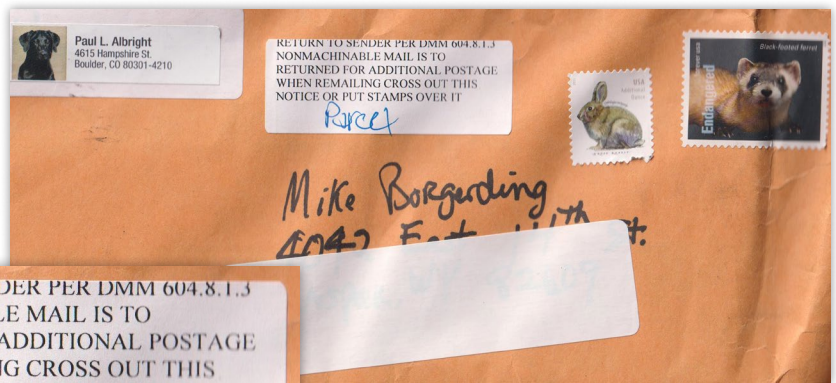
About a dozen days after mailing, the manila envelope was back in my mailbox with an instructive auxiliary marking. A determination had been made, probably at the regional sorting facility in Denver, that the contents in the 10.75 x 4.75-inch envelope made it too bulky to be processed in the automated cancellation system. The envelope was determined to be nonmachinable mail and was returned to the sender (me).

But the USPS provided an option. I could add additional postage by crossing out the auxiliary marking or placing stamps over it. Someone had inked "Parcel" at the bottom of the auxiliary marking, defining this as parcel mail.

I decided to follow up on this matter, first by checking the USPS website for DMM (Domestic Mail Manual) 604.8.1.3. There I read that "Shortpaid nonmachinable First-Class Mail letters are returned to the sender for additional postage." The envelope already was franked at the two-ounce first class rate of 90 cents. So, what would that additional postage be?

To answer that question, I conferred with counter clerks at two separate post offices and then double checked the USPS website.

Because "Parcel" was written on the auxiliary label, I asked what the "parcel post" rate would be. That's when I



learned that the 110-year-old domestic Parcel Post service dating back to 1913 was dropped in July, 2023, and renamed and trademarked as "usps Ground Advantage."

The postage would be \$4.90 for Ground Advantage (formerly Parcel Post). I thought that a bit much for mailing a few newspaper articles weighing less than two ounces. While considering my options, another clerk at a different post office said it was an error to have written "Parcel" on the auxiliary label. The clerk pulled out a cardboard template with two different cutouts: one to measure the allowable thickness for machinable letters and a second one for the maximum thickness of large envelopes. The thickness of my envelope easily qualified it as a large envelope at a first-class rate of \$1.59.

So, I could have added 69 cents in postage (\$1.59 minus the 90 cents already on the cover), removed the blank label blocking the delivery address, and re-mailed it to our nephew in Wyoming. But I decided not to do that since by then the 2023 World Series was over, and we were deep into the football season. Instead, I invoked an historic declaration that long-suffering baseball fans repeatedly express: "Wait Till Next Year!"

Sioux City "Fee Claimed" Marking

by Jim Peterson
jimbob1216@comcast.net

"**F**EE CLAIMED AT..." is very common. What's added below on this marking that is a little unusual: "For Night, Sunday and Holiday Delivery/Use the Special Delivery Service."

The sender did exactly that. The cover was sent on Friday, July 12, 1940 at 9:00 PM with a special delivery stamp. The Sioux City, Iowa receiving CDS on back is dated July 14, 1940 (9:00 AM), a Sunday. One would assume the letter was delivered to the recipient shortly thereafter.

