



Reading Stamp Show  
Saturday, 2 November  
See Pg.-2

# Philatelic Society of Lancaster County



The James Buchanan Chapter (#173) of the  
American Philatelic Society  
American Topical Assn., Chapter 118  
Member, NY Federation of Stamp Clubs

Doors open at 6:30 pm, Wednesday, 9 October 2019  
Bourse at 6:30 pm, Business meeting at 7:00 pm; Lou DiFelice, Host

## The Veranda Chronicles

The cooler weather has arrived and we are coming off a successful **Autumn Auction** on September 11. Before we began, I led a short business meeting, followed by a moving 9/11 remembrance speech by Vin Kneizys and a moment of silence. There were over 50 members and guests in attendance, with 43 registered bidders, 28 actual buyers and 155 lots for sale. Overall the evening was a success. A special thanks to our auctioneers (Aaron and Mike); runners (Robert and Charles); bookkeepers (Dick and Lou); and hosts Mike Marino and Joe Berlin for the tasty treats and drinks. Notably in this issue (Pg.-3), there are important updates to our Auction rules and requirements, as we continue to evolve our approach to afford the best possible experience. For anyone interested in volunteering for our tri-annual auctions, please contact Dick Shaefer

and/or Treasurer Lou DiFelice.

The Society would also like to thank Bill Harris, President of the Allentown Philatelic Society<sup>1</sup>, his wife Susan, and Bob Kotanchik, their webmaster (and now PSLC member) for stopping by the club and for a dinner meeting prior with myself to discuss partnership opportunities between the two Societies<sup>2</sup>.

On September 17, I was privileged to speak at The Greater Philadelphia Stamp & Collectors Club, which was preceded by an enjoyable dinner with their Officers and members. My presentation was entitled *The Development of Perforations on U.S. Postage Stamps: 1855-1857*<sup>2</sup>, followed by a dynamic Q&A session, and I was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation. I am looking forward to speaking at their club in the near future, if

they will have me back.

On September 21, the members of the Philatelic Gathering met at the CCHS and were treated to a presentation by Tom Geiger on "U.S. Private Perforations" using his 1-cent Franklin Sc. #314 imperforate issue as the basis. He also had a Schermack vending machine on display. Then Alan Warren presented a program about the U.S. 1933 Byrd Antarctic stamp preproduction essays and die proofs, printing anomalies, first day covers, and non-first day uses of the stamp. In the open discussion session, Alan mentioned the "philatelic crime" that is committed when collectors and exhibitors sell their collections, and their years of research notes or page write-ups are lost. He urged everyone to prepare PDFs of their collections with **See Veranda Pg-2**

Volume 82, Nos. 10  
October 2019

Visitors are Always  
Welcome

PSLC meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month (except August) at the Crossings Meeting Room, Landis Homes, 1001 East Oregon Road, Lititz, PA 17543 at 7:00 pm. Dues are \$10.00 a year. For club information call Paul Petersen at 717-299-5640

Website: [LCPS-Stamp.org](http://LCPS-Stamp.org)

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**Reading Stamp Show:**  
Saturday, 2 Nov. in Leesport



## Czeslaw Slania: Master Engraver-II, Dave Hunt

Dave Hunt's Part-I a few years ago was so interesting that we pressed him for more. Fortunately for PSLC Dave has many more items to show, and is willing to return. Dave reports that Czeslaw Slania was the most prolific and well-known stamp engraver of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, engraving 1080 different stamp designs for 32 different countries. He was born in Poland in 1921 where he showed early graphic ability – getting into trouble at school for faking lunch tickets. This evidently was good practice for the war when he made fake documents for the Polish resistance. After WW2 he studied at the Art Institute at Krakow and was subsequently employed by the Polish Stamp Printing Works. On a

visit to Sweden in 1956, he left behind his job and family and remained there. It took three years of working menial jobs before he was hired by Sweden Post, but that was a match made in heaven as he produced the majority of his work for them.

The U.S. was a minor player in Slania's work, but he did engrave eight stamps for the USPS. Slania engraved banknotes for 10 countries and also engraved portraits of famous people, landscape scenes, and bookplates as well as some commercial work.

Slania's popularity in the philatelic world is shown by the existence of the Czeslaw Slania Study Group based in the U.S. (now

inactive), some Internet websites devoted to his work, and several stamp dealers who specialized in his stamps.



# Minutes and Treasury of the September Meeting

**Opening:** Dr. DiComo opened the meeting at 7:00 and encouraged members to view the auction lots.

**Membership:** Barb Buchannan introduced new members Bill Caldwell from Mt. Joy, and Bill (and Sue) Harris and Bob Kotanchik, both from the Allentown club. Visiting was Jennifer Fink. Attendance tonight was 55.

**Drawing:** Eight door prizes were available from a new stock book and magnifier to covers, souvenir sheets, and assorted sundries.

**50-50 Drawing:** The drawing was deferred this month.

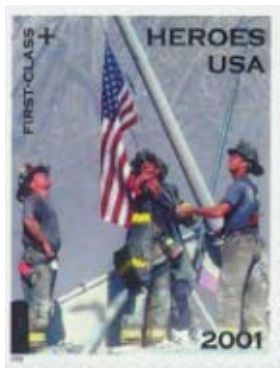
**Approval of July Minutes and Treasurer's Report:** These were approved unanimously by voice vote.

**New Business:** Paul passed around several cards for signing.

**2020 Meeting Hosts:** Paul passed around the signup sheet for meeting hosts for 2020, which involves the provision of snacks and drinks. Greeters are also needed.

**Remembering 9/11:** Tonight's

meeting date corresponds with the eighteenth anniversary of the unprovoked terrorist attack on the U.S. In remembrance of this event, Vin Kneizys provided some poignant commentary. Further, Vin noted that the Manheim Township Library has some damaged artifacts from the terror sites on display. This was followed by one minutes of silence.



**One-Page Exhibits in November:** Paul explained the process and passed around a sign-up sheet. New this year will be the opportunity for

exhibitors to submit a scan of the page(s) instead of posting the items on the wall. Either submission is appropriate. Each exhibitor will have a total of 3-4 minutes to present one or more exhibits.

**Tonight's Program:** The fall auction\* was conducted this month. Mike Marino and Aaron Heckler, Auctioneers, Dick Shaefer, Recorder, Lou DiFelice, Treasurer, Robert Kramer and Dr. DiComo, Runners. (\*See Auction Review below.)

❖

**[August Minutes:** There was no business meeting in August due to the club picnic. The August Treasury Report (The data for July '19) is contained below.]

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## Treasury: 1—31 July 2019

<b>Opening:</b>	\$5,174.12
<b>Income:</b>	\$10.00
<b>Expenses:</b>	\$129.06
<b>Sum:</b>	\$5,055.06
<b>2-CDs @</b>	\$5,818.10

## \*September Auction Report-Lou DiFelice, Treasurer

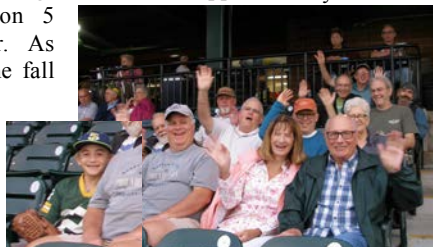
It was a busy auction with 155 entered lots of which 80 (52%) sold. There were 43 registered bidders and 28 (65%) of them won lots. The sales total was \$671. And while PSLC charges neither buyers' nor sellers' fees, there were donated lots totaling \$65. Six sellers sold ten lots each, while one sold 12 lots, a bit over the allowed limit.

## PSLC at Clipper Stadium

It was another successful game night for PSLC. There were six for pregame cheeseburgers at Five-Guys and eight more at Clipper Stadium on 5 September. As always, the fall evening brought perfect baseball weather, but this wasn't sufficient for a Barnstormers win. They lost to the Long Island Ducks by only one run. So at the end of a disappointing season, all of us diehards start to point to next

year in a similar way as we do for the Phillies and the Orioles.

In attendance for burgers at Five-Guys were Dennis Shumaker,



Paul Petersen, Al and Twila Schaub, Wm Greiner, III, and Howard Chaundy. Joining us at Clipper Stadium were Johnny and Dan

Martin, Dick Colberg, Joe and Diane Sullivan, Michael Shirley, Tim Boland, and John Hostetter.



# Club Notes

## Programs, Hosts & Shows

### 2019 Programs

**9 October:** Czeslaw Slania, Master Engraver-II. Dave Hunt. Lou DiFelice, Host

**13 November:** Open House and One-Page Exhibits. Len Kasper and Paul Petersen. Diane Meek, Hostess

**\*18 December:** December Dinner. Deb Ehleiter & Co.

*\*Please note that this is the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) Wednesday of the month.*

### 2020 Programs

**8 January:** Club Auction. Hal Klein, Host

**12 February:** From the U.S. to Farther India & Back Again: A Five Month Journey in 1856-1857. Dr. Charles J. DiComo

**11 March:** The U.S. 1933 Byrd Antarctic Stamp: Production, First Day & Other Uses. Alan Warren. Dick Shaefer Host

**9 April:** Exploring Postal History. Bill Schultz. Tony Coccio, Host

**13 May:** Canada's Role in Union & Confederate Postal Cross-Border Mail during the U.S. Civil War. Ron Majors

**10 June:** Club Auction

**8 July:** In Progress. Program pending

**14 October:** 1) GB Stamped to Order Stationary and 2) Royal Household Official Mail. Dave Hunt

**11 November:** Open House and One-Page Exhibits

**December:** December Dinner

### Of Local Interest

**Red Rose Coin Club:** (Thur) 17 October. A Tour of the Littleton Coin Co., Kerry Wetterstrom. 7:00, Farm & Home Ctr.



←**Reading Stamp Collectors Club:** Saturday, 2 November, Leesport Farm Market, Route 61 just north of Leesport. 312 Gernants Church Road.

**Some Sunday Stamp Shows:** 27 October, 15 December, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Farm & Home Center, 1383 Arcadia Road, Lancaster. **Lunch is free.**

**From Veranda Pg.-1:** notes on their exhibits and to place them with philatelic libraries such as the APRL, the USPCS archive, amongst others. This way other collectors can benefit from your studies. As usual, a luncheon followed where the philatelic discussion and camaraderie continued. If anyone is interested in joining this dynamic group and attending our monthly meetings, please let me know. For more details on dates, presenters, topics, etc., visit the landing page on our website.<sup>3</sup>

On October 9, the Society is pleased to welcome David Hunt for a presentation on the "Czeslaw Slania - Master Engraver," you do not want to miss this one. And our gracious Host will be Lou DiFelice.

Finally, let me remind you that on November 13 your Society will hold its Annual Meeting, Open House and Exhibition. I am calling for all our members to find that one item or topic you are most excited about and consider sharing it in this forum - this is, of course, part of our mission. It's one of my favorite events of the year. **CDi**

<sup>1</sup> [www.aps-lv-stamps.org/](http://www.aps-lv-stamps.org/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.lcps-stamps.org/presentations/](http://www.lcps-stamps.org/presentations/)

<sup>3</sup> <http://lcps-stamps.org/study-groups/>



## Musings: Some reflections on our last and future stamp club auctions

To me the adjustment in 2019 to the new meeting venue at Landis Homes has been well navigated. Some of us drive a little longer while for others the distance is less. Parking remains easy. The landscape orientation of our new room is conducive to presentations on the two front big-screens. The audiovisual technology is first rate. Everyone is able to see and hear what is going on up front.

Notwithstanding, 50 to 60 people at our auctions presents a challenge at Landis Homes. There are so many more lots and a little less space than we had previously. Last month I arrived at L.H. at 6:30 thinking I would be early, and the tables were just about filled to capacity with auction items. I had ten donated lots and about six of my own to place. I barely fit just over half of them on the table and brought the rest home. Further, I never had the opportunity to closely check the display tables to see what else was on the block. The tables were crowded, and time was tight. As a result, I bid on only one item. I'm not complaining, it was just that the experience seemed like a Moroccan Bazaar. Energy was flowing, and Mike and Aaron, our auctioneers were working their hearts out.

During cleanup and packing out following the meeting and auction, some members of the auction committee and club leadership informally assessed the situation. It seems the auction finally hit a wall. It wasn't that things went drastically wrong, but there was just too much stuff in the limited space, and some of it was of varying quality. A bit of regrouping is needed. In addition, I solicited further email input from the committee, which is included in this essay.

And just a quick sidebar for a moment: The auctions take a lot of work. The team members do not get to enjoy the event as much as the rest of us who are buying and selling. Auctioneers and runners are on their feet all evening while getting hoarse, and many times they are trying to figure out what they are holding in their hands due to sketchy

lot descriptors. In addition to being frustrating, this is also time consuming thereby extending the auction duration longer than necessary. Our recorder and treasurer are working handwritten spreadsheets with all the numbers insuring that the balance sheets are in order when folks settle up. This is certainly not as much fun as bidding. The auction team needs more members. Don't ask what your auctions can do for you; ask what you...!

The one action of the committee is to reduce, for now, the number of auction items from ten (10) to seven (7). This will begin in January, 2020. They also observed that there are some items that reappear in our auction time after time...at the same unsuccessful minimum bid as in the previous auction! What is to be done with the stubborn items that do not sell time and again? Well, reduce the price, or sell it at the bourse at the following meeting. One can never go wrong by undervaluing a philatelic item for sale.

And not everything has to go into auction. We are fortunate to have a very popular bourse at each meeting. This is a good venue to buy and sell,

especially the bulk lots of 1000s of stamps on paper. What better way is there to turn over some of our duplicate material?

Auctioneers report that the items starting at \$20+ don't sell well. These more expensive items might be placed on a separate table. If any club member wants to bid on such an item, he or she moves it to the auction table with the assumption that they will bid on this.

The Harrisburg Club has a box to check on the auction lot form for those tire kickers willing to bid on the item. If this is not checked off, it will not be auctioned. Another model has the auction items on a display table, and if a bidder is interested in an item, he or she moves it to the auction table. Only these items go on the block.

Un-auctioned items can be sold afterward by private treaty. This will save a lot of auction time. Unfortunately, this suggestion requires more table space than we currently have available. In fact, table space in Landis is already at a premium.

Further there needs to be better use of the auction forms. These must

be filled out completely, more than simply consisting of a bidder number and minimum bid. Some think that lots lacking completed forms should not be auctioned. A suggestion was made to make samples available of appropriately completed forms vs. incomplete and less useful ones. There might even be a 10-minute class or web video for such.

So in January there should be no drastic changes to our auction format other than the reduction from 10 to 7 auction lots per member. However, auction forms should be completed in detail to help the auctioneers describe the lots with accuracy.

And where do we go from here? There are a variety of stamp club auction models available. The Buffalo Club, for example, has First Friday Auctions and Third Friday Educational Programs. Possibilities are endless.

While the committee has given some input, what are your recommendations for a streamlined and successful stamp club auction? Let's get the discussion going using the newsletter as a forum. Ed. ☒

### Open House & One-Page Exhibit Night

This is one of our greatest programs of the year, and it has been successful since its inception. In November will be a very short business meeting followed by two short philatelic presentations. After a break with

special snacks, come the One-Page Exhibits. Members are encouraged to sign up for one or more pages and topics, but each member will only have 3-4 minutes total for presentation of the items. In the past we have placed the exhibits on the wall, and we walk around the room viewing and listening to

each presentation. This year has the option to place the exhibit(s) on disk, AKA a digital scan, so that they can be seen on the two big screens in the front. If you would like to do this, and it is encouraged, email your scans in .pdf to Dr. Di-Como to have ready on the laptop for our viewing pleasure.

### Change in Dues Structure for 2020

The board, to help speed up the process of collecting next year's dues has approved a new dues structure. The intention is to have all paid up early, by December, by wishful thinking. Here's how it works. Members who pay dues in 2019 will get a 10% discount. So don't wait until Lancopex, as some do, or wait for the third and final notice in June. Please pay your dues tonight, and show mercy on the Membership Committee and Club Treasurer.

☒ ✂ .....

Please clip this dues renewal notice, complete it, and turn in to Barb Buchanan at the next meeting with **\$9.00**. You may also send it to her at PO Box 116, Conestoga, PA 17516-0116. This 10% dues reduction is only good in 2019.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

ATA Member ☐

APS Member ☐

Please check the appropriate ATA/APS box(s) if you are a paid up member.

☒ Make checks payable to Philatelic Society of Lancaster County.

***FROM THE FRONT LINES: LT. COL. WILLIAM G. BELKNAP'S FIRST  
HAND ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE OF MONTERREY DURING THE  
MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR IN 1846.***

**By Charles J. DiComo, PhD**

This article shall paint a picture of the last days of the battle for the city of Monterrey during the Mexican-American War drawn from a first hand account written at the front lines by Lt. Colonel William Goldsmith Belknap (**Figure 1**) while he was serving as Inspector General at Camp Monterrey under the command of General Zachary Taylor in September of 1846.

The Mexican-American War (1846-1848) marked the first U.S. armed conflict chiefly fought on foreign soil. It pitted a politically divided and militarily unprepared Mexico against the expansionist-minded administration of U.S. President James K. Polk, who believed the United States had a “manifest destiny” to spread across the continent to the Pacific Ocean. A border skirmish along the Rio Grande started off the fighting on 25 April 1846 and on 13 May 1846 Congress declared war, despite opposition from some northern lawmakers. No official declaration of war ever came from Mexico and at that time only ~75,000 Mexican citizens lived north of the Rio Grande. U.S. forces were able to conquer these lands with minimal resistance, and advanced across Mexico and the disputed territories over the next two years. On 2 February 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed and when the dust cleared Mexico had lost about one-third of its territory, including nearly all of present-day California, Utah, Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico.



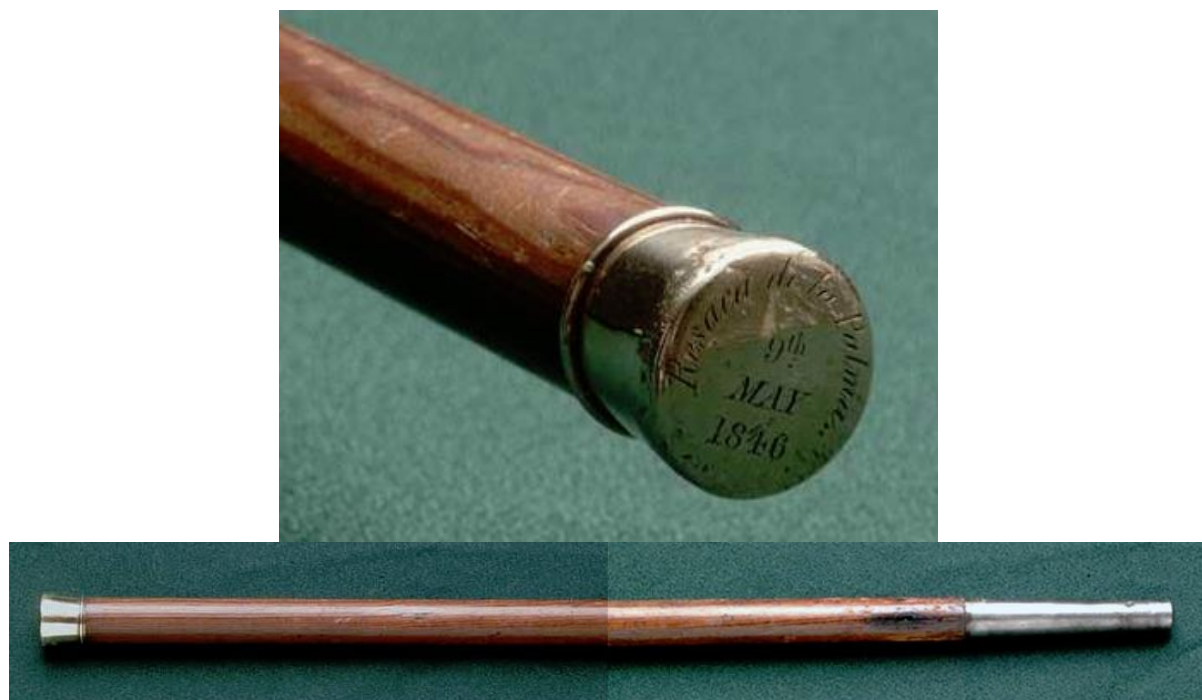
**Figure 1.** William G. Belknap (1794 - 1851), U.S. Army Brigadier General.<sup>1</sup>

William Goldsmith Belknap (7 Sept. 1794 – 10 Nov. 1851) was a career soldier in the United States Army, was brevetted three times for service in three wars, served as Brigadier General, and served as commandant at Fort Gibson, Fort Washita, and Fort Smith.<sup>2</sup> Belknap was born in Newburgh, New York to Samuel Belknap, Jr. and Mary Goldsmith. In 1821, he married Ann Clark (1801-1858) in Keokuk, Iowa and they had four children: Anna Mary

(1821-1893); Clara Belknap Wolcott (1824-1906); William Worth Belknap (1829-1890) and Frederick Augustus (1832-1832), who died in infancy.

Belknap was a lieutenant in the War of 1812 where he served with great distinction; became captain on 1 Feb. 1822; brevet major on 1 Feb. 1832; major on 31 Jan. 1842; and was brevetted lieutenant colonel on 15 Mar. 1842 for his services in the Second Seminole War in Florida. In 1828, Captain Belknap assisted in establishing Fort Leavenworth in Kansas. Belknap acted as inspector general at the Battle of Monterrey, became lieutenant colonel 26 Sep. 1847, and was brevetted brigadier general on 23 Feb. 1847 for services at the Battle of Buena Vista.

Belknap was involved in several battles during the Mexican-American War. One occurred during the Rio Grande campaign in May 1846. The Mexicans had just beaten back an American cavalry charge against their emplaced artillery at Resaca de la Palma, Texas on the eastern banks of the Rio Grande. General Taylor ordered Belknap, who was then commanding the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, to advance one regiment from the guard of the train and lead his 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry into action. Belknap sprang forward, seized a standard from a Mexican ensign, rallied his troops and engaged in hand-to-hand combat. His men then “split” the enemy lines and drove them from the field.



**Figure 2.** Gold-mounted cane, “split Mexican stick”, engraved **Resaca de la Palma 9<sup>th</sup> MAY 1846.**

The battle proved an overwhelming victory for the American forces and for this Belknap received the brevet of colonel for gallantry. **Figure 2** is a cane, referred to as the “split Mexican stick”, from the staff of the Mexican standard captured by Belknap on 9 May 1846 at Resaca de la Palma. William had this sent to his family friend and prominent Newburgh resident, Samuel Watkins Eager in New York to have it gold-mounted.<sup>3</sup>

So grateful were the citizens of Newburgh for his military service, that on 27 June 1846 a meeting was held at the Orange Hotel by a select committee of townspeople, including his

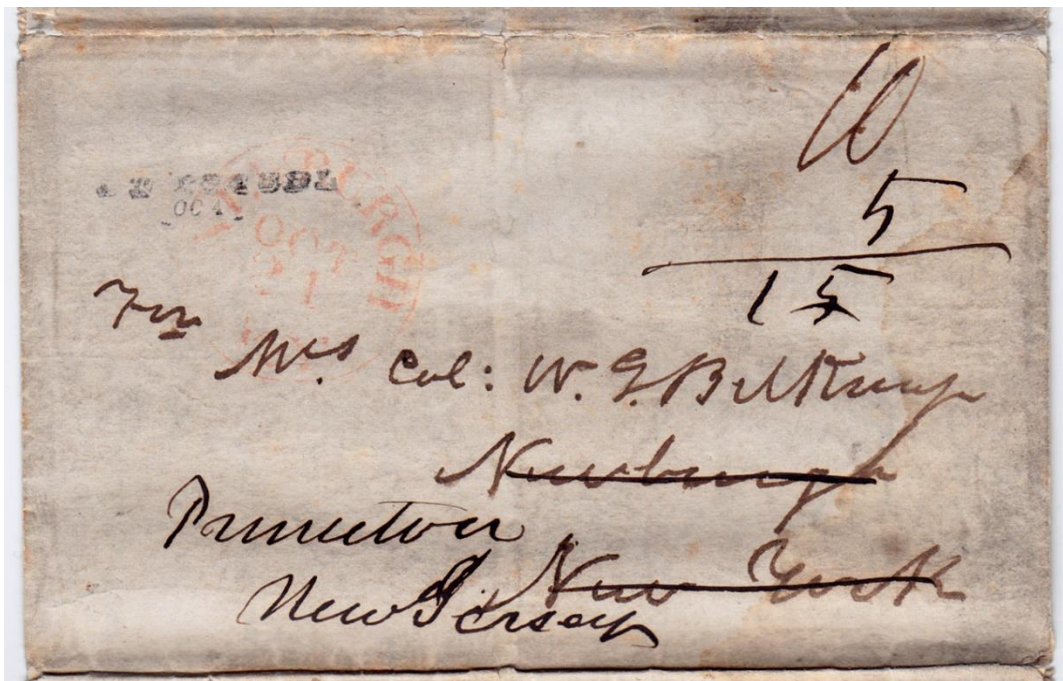
friend Samuel W. Eagers, to determine how they would honor him.<sup>4</sup> After much discussion and a unanimous vote, it was resolved that the Trustees of the Village of Newburgh would procure a Sword with a value of \$350 be made for presentation of, on which were the following inscriptions below.

On the blade:

*“Fort Eric, August 15, 1814; Palo Alto, May 8, 1846; Resaca de la Palma, May 9, 1846”*

On the scabbard:

*“Presented by citizens of Newburgh, his native place, to Col. Wm. G. Belknap, U.S.A.”*



**Figure 3.** 1846 SFL from Camp Monterrey, Mexico to Newburgh, New York. Letter was carried by military transport overland to provisional P.O. at Point Isabel, Texas, where it entered the mails, traveled via military vessel to New Orleans, LA where it was distributed for delivery to Newburgh, NY.

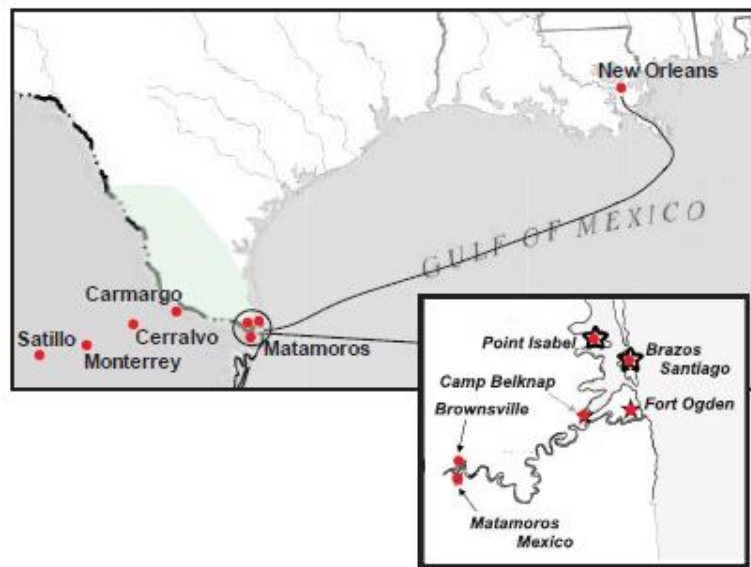
And now on to the primary focus of this article, the stampless folded letter (SFL) illustrated in **Figure 3**. I was fortunate to acquire this in a random box of un-cataloged stampless postal history at the Reading Stamp Collectors Club Annual Stamp Show in Leesport, PA. Upon opening the folded letter, I was delighted to discover it contained contents, was datelined September 24, 1846, and had been written by Belknap while he was stationed at Camp Monterrey during the last days of the battle for the city.

On the obverse, the SFL is addressed to “Mrs. Col: W.G. Belknap, Newburgh, New York”, his wife Ann Clark Belknap. It also shows the “Newburgh New York” crossed out and



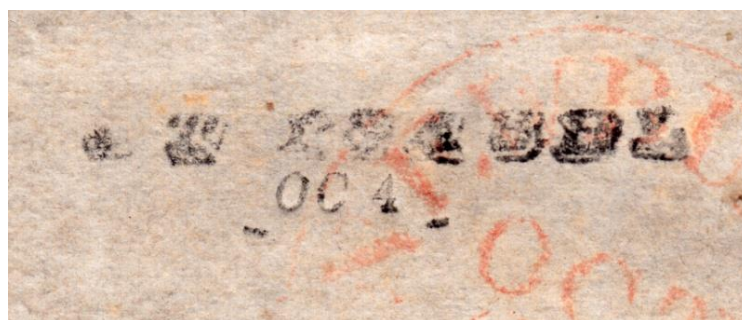
“*Princeton New Jersey*” added at lower left, as well as two handstamps and three manuscript rate markings. I shall describe these features in the subsequent sections.

Armed Forces mail being sent from the front lines in Mexico headed for the United States was carried by military transport to points in southwest Texas. By May of 1846 in response to the military build-up in this region, the New Orleans postmaster dispatched Henry Levy, one of his distribution clerks to Point Isabel, TX. His job was to set up a provisional Post Office and facilitate the transportation of the mails to the U.S. Troops on the Rio Grande (**Figure 4**). It was here that the SFL entered the mails, where Levy struck the letter with the faint black “PT. ISABEL OC 4” handstamp and wrote a manuscript “10”, as a ratestamp had not yet been introduced. The 10¢ denoted the U.S. inland rate from New Orleans, LA to Newburgh, NY, a distance of >300 miles.



**Figure 4.** Map of the Gulf of Mexico, SW Texas and NE Mexico. Point Isabel (now called Port Isabel) is located just north of Camp Belknap and Fort Ogden, which sits on the mouth of the Rio Grande.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 5** is an enlargement of the 2-line Type I Point Isabel, TX handstamp. This device was in use for only ~3 weeks (16 Sept. – 22 Oct. 1846) and was removed from service due to rapid degradation. Most examples are very indistinct with illegible dates. This example clearly shows the month/day “OC 4” for October 4. I am pleased to announce that after corresponding with noted Texas postal historians Mark Bankchik and Vince King, this is a new find that can be added to the census, of which there are fewer than 10 examples known.

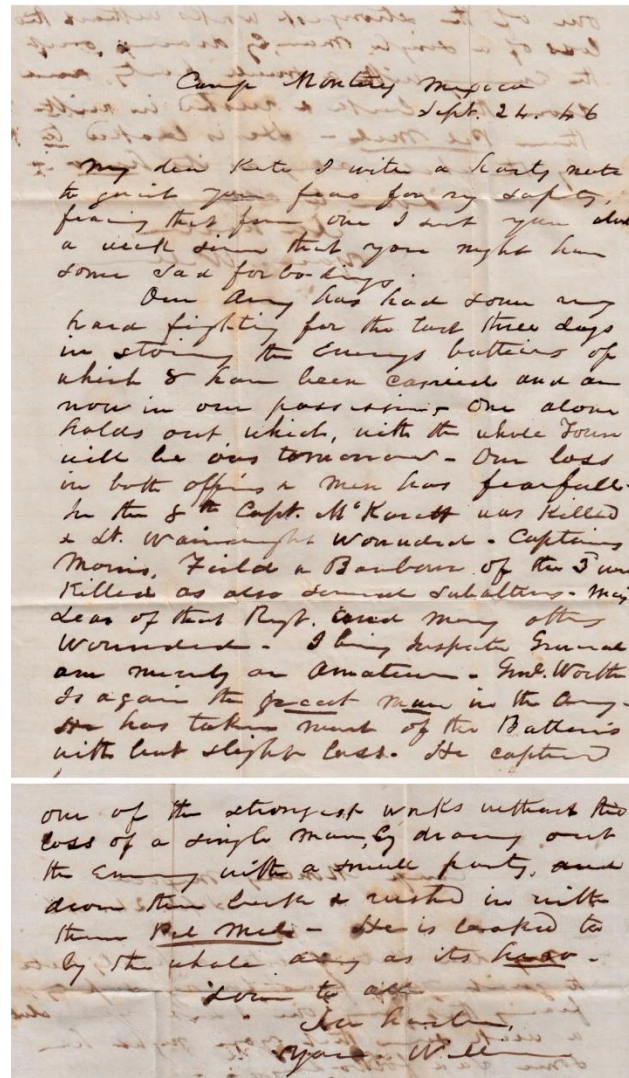


**Figure 5.** Enlargement of the 2-line Type I Point Isabel, TX handstamp “PT. ISABEL OC 4”.

From Point Isabel the letter traveled via military transport vessel to New Orleans, LA where it was distributed for delivery to New York. After a 17 day overseas journey, the letter arrived in Newburgh, NY. While the letter has no indication it was advertised, the clerk must have been aware that Mrs. Belknap was not in the city to pick up her mail at the P.O. and knew where she was residing. He proceeded to cancel the letter with a red “**NEWBURGH OCT 21 NY**” circular date stamp, crossed out “*Newburgh, New York*” with a single black line and re-addressed the letter at lower left to “*Princeton, New Jersey*”. He then added a manuscript “5” (the forwarding fee), along with an underline and total of “15” cents due upon arrival. It is most likely that Mrs. Belknap was visiting her son William Worth Belknap who was attending Princeton University (graduate of 1848). He would go on to be a lawyer, soldier in the Union Army (achieving rank of Major General), government administrator in Iowa, and the 30<sup>th</sup> United States Secretary of War under President Ulysses S. Grant.<sup>6</sup>

Mrs. Belknap no doubt was relieved to receive any letter from her husband, a lifelong military man who served in numerous conflicts, and was now very much involved in the Mexican-American War. **Figure 6** illustrates the two-page letter datelined “*Camp Monterey [sic] Mexico Sept. 24, 46*”. While William’s letter is brief, its contents are detailed and compelling, which the translation shall reveal.

**Figure 6.** The 2-page letter William wrote to his wife Ann from Camp Monterrey on 24 September 1846 during the last days of the battle while serving as Inspector General under the command of Gen. Zachary Taylor.





Belknap was an educated, career soldier who exhibited the typical penmanship and writing style for the period. Decoding his letter was not as difficult as one might consider. What follows is the literal translation.

*Camp Monterey [sic] Mexico*

*Sept. 24. 46*

*My dear [Kate] I write a hasty note to you with your fear for my safety. Fearing this for one I write you about a week since that you might have some sad forebodings.*

*Our Army has had some very hard fighting for the last three days in storming the Enemys [sic] batteries of which 8 have been ca[rried] and are now in our possessions – one alone holds out, which, with the whole Town will be ours tomorrow – Our loss in both officers and men was fearfull [sic]. In the 8th Capt. McKavitt was killed & Lt. Wainwright wounded. Captains Morris, Field, & Barbour of the 3 were killed as also several subalterns – [illegible words] of that Regmt. And many others wounded. I being Inspector General am merely an Amateur.*

*Genl. Worth is again the front man in the Army. He has taken much of the Batteries with but slight loss. He captured one of the strongest works without the loss of a single man, by drawing out the enemy with a small party and drew them back & rushed in with them Pel Mel [sic] – He is looked to by the whole Army as its Hero.*

*Love to all*

*In Haste,*

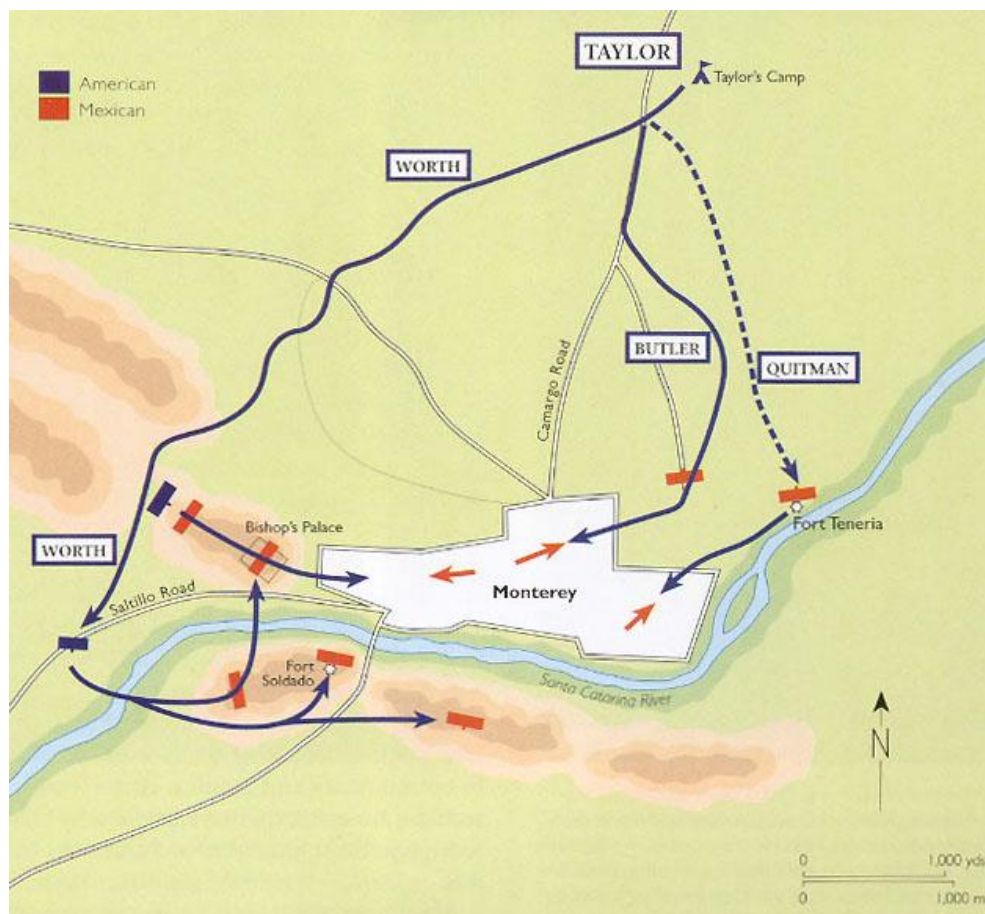
*Your William*

This “hasty note” and stark details from the front lines while the battle for Monterey was still raging reminds us of the harsh reality of war. William opens by endeavoring to dispel his wife’s concern for his safety, having only written her a week earlier, presumably telling her of the impending march on Monterey (**Figure 7**).



**Figure 7.** General Worth’s Division Marches on Monterey from the West.<sup>7</sup>

The Battle for Monterrey commenced on 21 September pitting ~6200 U.S. Troops against ~7300 Mexican Troops. Under the command of General Zachary Taylor, Generals William J. Worth, William O. Butler, and John A. Quitman led divisions that marched on Monterrey city that was being fortified by General Pedro de Ampudia and the Mexican Army of the North (**Figure 8**). After 4 days of intense fighting the U.S. Troops were victorious. On 24 September General Ampudia decided to negotiate with General Taylor. This led to a two-month armistice in return for the surrender of the city. The Mexican Army was then allowed to march from the city from 26 to 28 September with their personal arms. In the end, this hard fought battle led to numerous casualties and losses on both sides; 488 on the American and 367 on the Mexican.



**Figure 8.** Map of the Battle of Monterrey showing American and Mexican Troop advances.<sup>8</sup>

William does not hold back in sharing his experiences with his wife. He details the fighting and taking of the enemies batteries; mentioning by name the dead (Captains McKavitt, Morris, Field and Barbour) and wounded (Lieutenant Wainwright), along with the “*many others wounded*” of the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment. Even though a career Army soldier having fought in multiple wars, being wounded in a sortie in 1814, and engaging in hand-to-hand combat a few months earlier at Resaca de la Palma, he admittedly tells his wife after experiencing this clash “*I being Inspector General am merely an Amateur.*”

William ends his letter to Ann by giving deference to General Worth for his heroics in capturing numerous batteries and much of Monterrey city with “*slight loss,*” even leading a

small party headlong, or “*Pel Mel*,” to draw out the enemy. I think it is safe to say that the Belknap family would have been relieved to learn that he survived such an intense battle, during which well over 800 lives were lost.

Following the Mexican-American War, General Belknap commanded his regiment and the garrison of Fort Gibson, Oklahoma in the Cherokee Nation from 14 December 1848 to 7 May 1850. He devoted himself greatly to secure the welfare of the Cherokees. In May 1851, he was ordered into Upper Texas to keep the Indian tribes within their lines. He died near Preston, TX of typhoid dysentery on 10 November 1851 engaged in scouting a location for a military post to protect California-bound emigrants and settlers moving to Texas while *en route* from the Brazos River to Fort Washita, Indian Territory.<sup>9</sup> He was buried temporarily at Fort Washita, south of the Red River according to the *Fort Belknap Post*.

After General Belknap's death, his wife Ann, accompanied by her daughters Anna and Clara, traveled to join her only son William W. Belknap, who was serving as a government administrator in Keokuk, Iowa, and make it her home. She passed on 7 December 1858 and her obituary extols her life as “*the wife of a gallant and distinguished soldier – the late Brig. Gen. William G. Belknap*,” who came with her husband “*to the then far west more than a third of a century ago to lead a frontier life*,”<sup>10</sup> This is a reference to the period between 1827 and 1828 when then Capt. Belknap was ordered to establish a military post on the Missouri with the name of Fort Leavenworth.

Ann had been far removed from the comforts and refinements to which she had been accustomed in her early life in Newburgh. It was only in the last few years of her life spent in Keokuk with her children did she experience calm and enjoyment. It was fitting then when in 1872 their son William W. had his fathers remains brought back to Keokuk and reburied in the Oakland Cemetery nearby Ann. (**Figure 9**).



**Figure 9.** Headstone of Brigadier General William Goldsmith Belknap, Oakland Cemetery, Keokuk, IA.<sup>11</sup>



In closing, Brigadier General William Goldsmith Belknap, a native of Newburgh, NY, was a highly decorated, career soldier in the United States Army, serving his country until his untimely death in 1851. This article portrays William's first hand account in his 1846-dated letter to his wife Ann of the last days of the battle for the city of Monterrey during the Mexican-American War. We are fortunate that this postal history artifact has survived and that I was able to recount this brief snapshot of his storied life with our readers.

### Acknowledgements

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