

The U.S. Domestic Postal History of Postal, Reply-Postal, and Post Cards

Presented to the Philatelic Society of
Lancaster County

By Tony Wawrukiewicz

9 March 2022

The U.S. Domestic Postal History of Postal, Reply-Postal, and Post Cards

Hi, I'm Tony Wawrukiewicz. Welcome to my presentation of a fascinating area of U.S. postal history that you may not have considered before, the uses of domestic unmailable and undeliverable postal, reply-postal, and post cards (postcards).

Postal cards, cards with postage-paid indicia, produced by the Post Office Department (POD), were introduced in 1873. Reply-postal cards, also produced by the POD, pairs of cards with postage (indicia) on them that allow the addressee to send half back in the mail), were introduced in 1892. Finally, post cards, (private mailing cards (privately produced)), were first allowed as of July 1, 1898.

This presentation is meant to be an extension of the introduction to this subject made by Ken Lawrence in a *Linns* article that he published earlier this year. Lawrence gave a nice, but incomplete discussion that ended around 1910. I agree with Lawrence that the postal history of these cards is very important and exciting, but much happened to them beyond 1910, and this is why I am expanding on his presentation here.

Because cards were somehow looked on with what I consider less respect than letters, the various cards were handled differently than letters. Therefore, there were many unique and varied rules governing their use, and they're presented.

First, this discussion presents *all* of the incredibly varied ways in which cards were handled as unmailable (at the offices of mailing). The various types of unmailable categories are introduced in somewhat arbitrary order. As we'll see, most of these items were returned to the writer (RTW).

Then, at offices of delivery, for you to understand the frustratingly frequent and illogically changing ways in which the card types were undeliverable ('Unclaimed,' 'Not Found,' etc.) and were or were not RTW, I must and do list all of them. I try to make this less of a problem by listing them in the introduction and handout.

If you are confused at any time in this presentation remember (a) there is a Q and A after it, (b) it is being recorded, (c) there is a handout that repeats some of the important rules, and (d) my book *Insights into U.S. Postal History, 1855 – 2016* discusses the rules in great detail. This book is available from the American Philatelic Society at a special price to APS members.

Next, as an introduction, the Unmailable and Undeliverable categories are listed.

Unmailable, mainly RTW, Domestic Postal and Post Cards are classified as follows:

(a) Misdirected Cards – with inadequate address. No legal examples known before 1887, and as of 1887 until the present, all handled the same (Returned for Better Address).

(b) Cards Returned for Postage from writer (RFP) – paid less than one rate. Only from July, 1, 1898 was this possible as postal cards were paid with an indicia and so up to July 1, there were no short paid cards possible. After that date, only post cards could be unpaid or short paid. Then, after 1974 only unpaid cards RFP.

(c) As of May 1881, cards with excess writing on address side were unmailable. At first RTW and not remailed, after vertical line allowed (1907), letter rate required so RTW for postage.

(d) As of March 4, 1907, cards with other substances attached unmailable – coated with material that could damage mail handling machines. RTW for enveloping at letter rate.

(e) Cards with Address Tags Before 1876 unmailable, except that I have never seen any.

(f) Cards with pasted-on matter. From 1876 until Oct. 1, 1913, only address label allowed for mailability. After this date, thin pasted-on matter also allowed. If incorrect, letter rate needed.

(g) Cards with Obscene or Scurrilous Content – these were never RTW - only to the DLO.

(a) Now I List chronologically all the categories of the undeliverable Domestic Postal and Post Cards that were

RTW: I list it here and in the handout for your benefit because it is so complex. Keep in mind that this is all the POD's doing.

(a) Until the publication of the 1887 *PL&R*, there should be no undeliverable postal cards.

(b) From 1887 to 1893 *PL&Rs*, RTW of undeliverable postal cards allowed (and was free). The reason for the return was not required until 1893.

(c) From 1893 until 1902 *PL&R*, undeliverable postal cards could no longer be RTW. This was also true of Private Mailing Cards (Post Cards) when they were introduced on July 1, 1898.

(d) From 1902 until 1913 *PL&Rs*, only undeliverable reply-paid postal cards could be RTW (and was free).

(e) From 1913 until 1924 *PL&Rs*, free RTW of all undeliverable local cards was added to allowed free RTW of undeliverable reply-paid postal cards.

(f) From 1924 *PL&R* until 1941 Postal Bulletin announcement, only undeliverable local cards (all three types) could be RTW (and free). Non-local undeliverable cards returns (all types) had to be guaranteed at card rate (so not free and really rare).

(b) Here is the remainder of the chronological list of all the categories of the undeliverable Domestic Postal and Post Cards that were RTW:

(g) From 1941 until 1955, ALL undeliverable cards (all three types) RTW had to be guaranteed at post card rate of the time (1¢ or 2¢).

(h) From 1955 to 1970 no change from last period, except reply-paid card RTW was allowed and was free.

(i) From 1970 until 1979 DMM, too complicated to list (RTW policy depended on return comment in return address, and examples extremely rare). Details in Wawrukiewicz book.

(j) From 1979 until 1985, also too complicated to list (RTW policy depended on return comment in return address, and examples also rare). Details in Wawrukiewicz book.

(k) As of Feb. 17, 1985 all undeliverable card returns allowed and were free.

Now we start discussing Unmailable Cards (first Misdirected Cards).

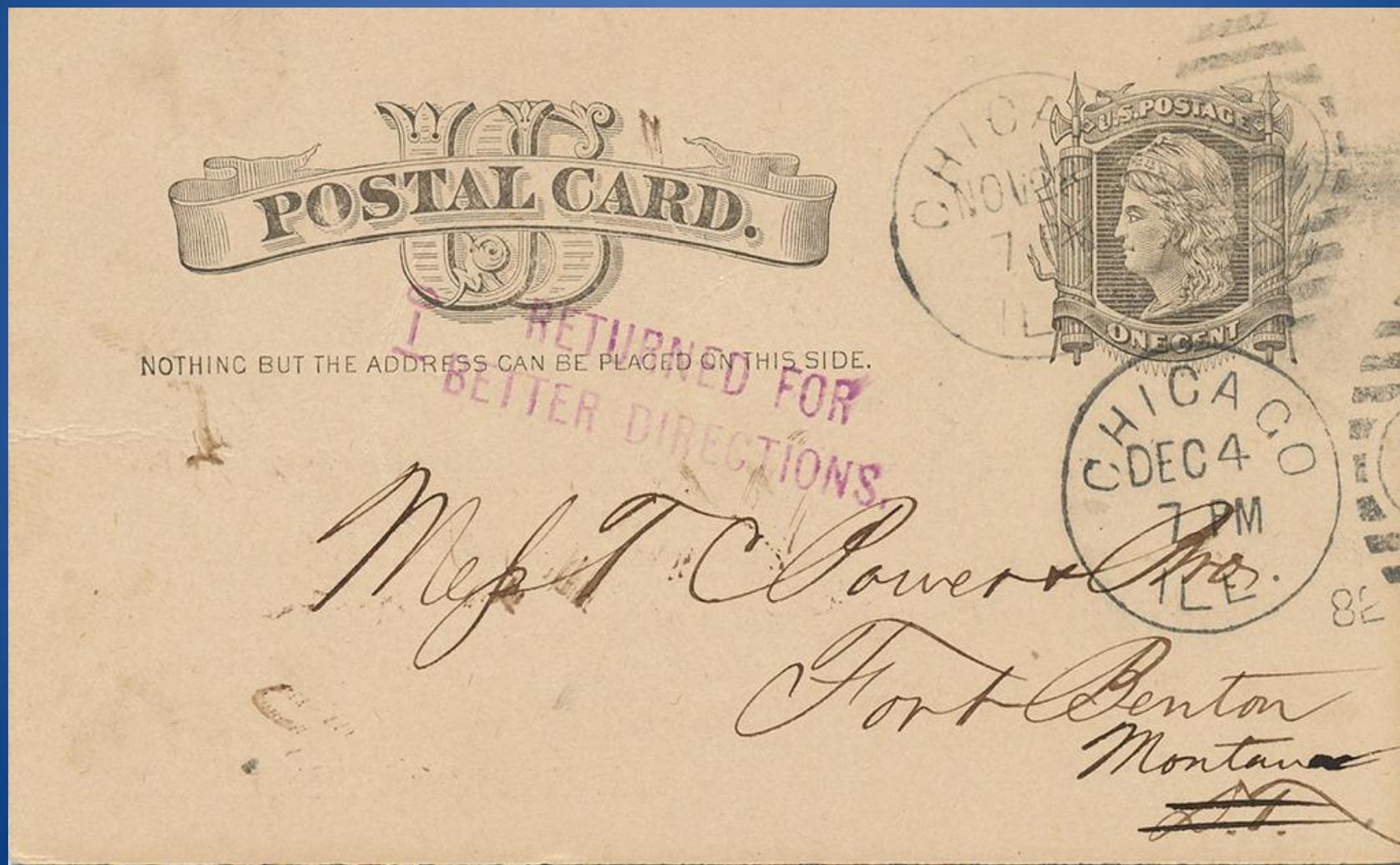
From 1887 until the present, Misdirected Unmailable Card Rules

This first category of RTW cards comprises cards that were unmailable because the postal and private mailing cards were “misdirected” – incorrectly, poorly, or incompletely addressed so that postal clerks did not know where to send them. Such unmailable handling occurred at the offices of mailing and transit.

No RTW allowed before 1887, but we have an 1882 illegal use.

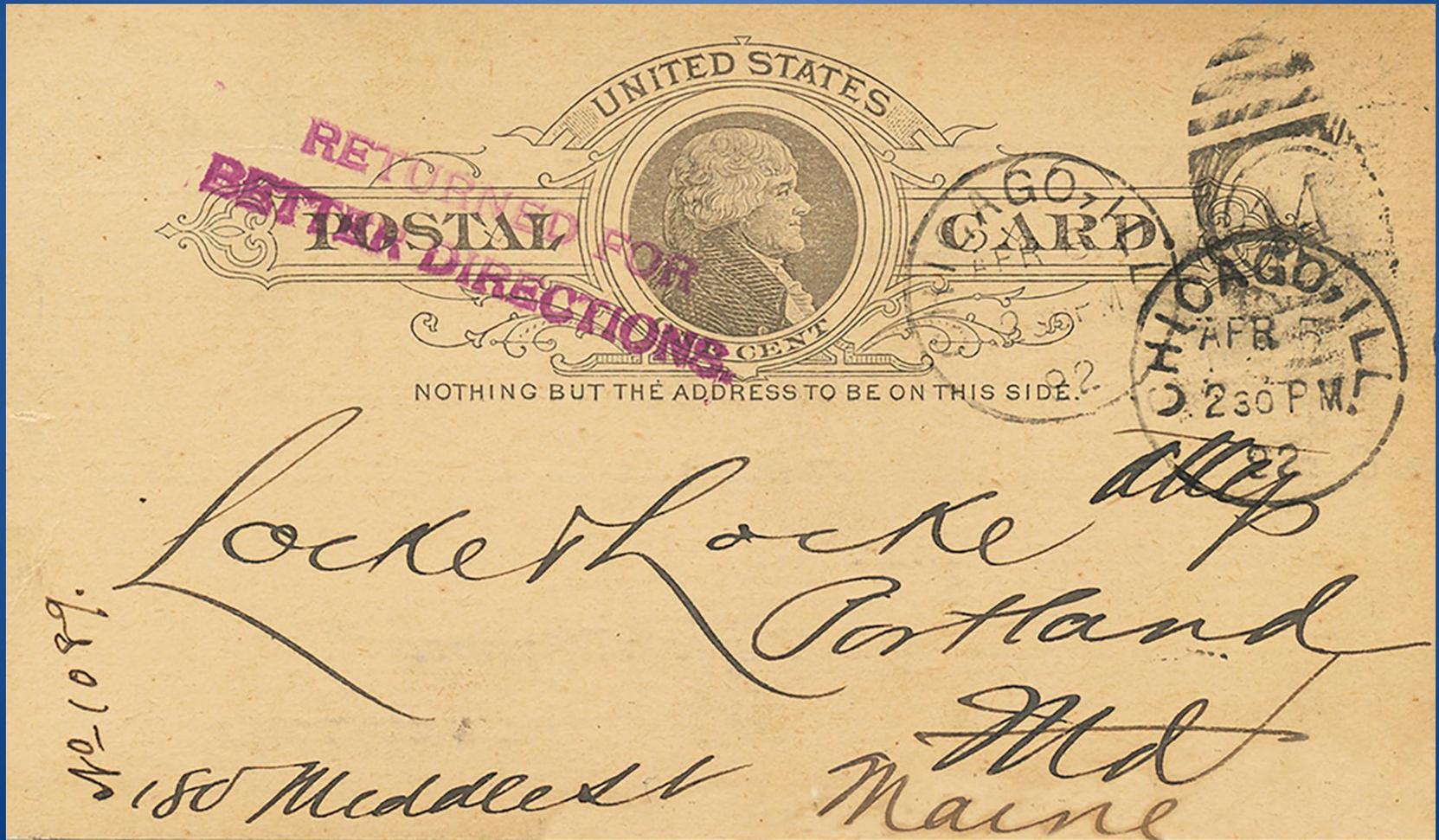
As of the 1887 *Postal Laws and Regulations (PL&R)*, though: “Misdirected matter of the first class, if it bear the card or request of the sender, should be withdrawn and returned to him with the words written or stamped thereon, “RETURNED FOR BETTER DIRECTION.” it is still true even today.

Early (Nov. 28, 1882) with CC misdirected 1¢ postal card ILLEGALLY returned from Chicago mailing PO, 'RETURNED FOR / BETTER DIRECTIONS.' After address corrected, card remailed free on Dec 4. Only pre-1887 use known to exhibitor, RTW and remailed in error? The Jan. 1882 *Postal Guide* made it clear that postal cards were NOT included in the ability to return misdirected mail for a better address.

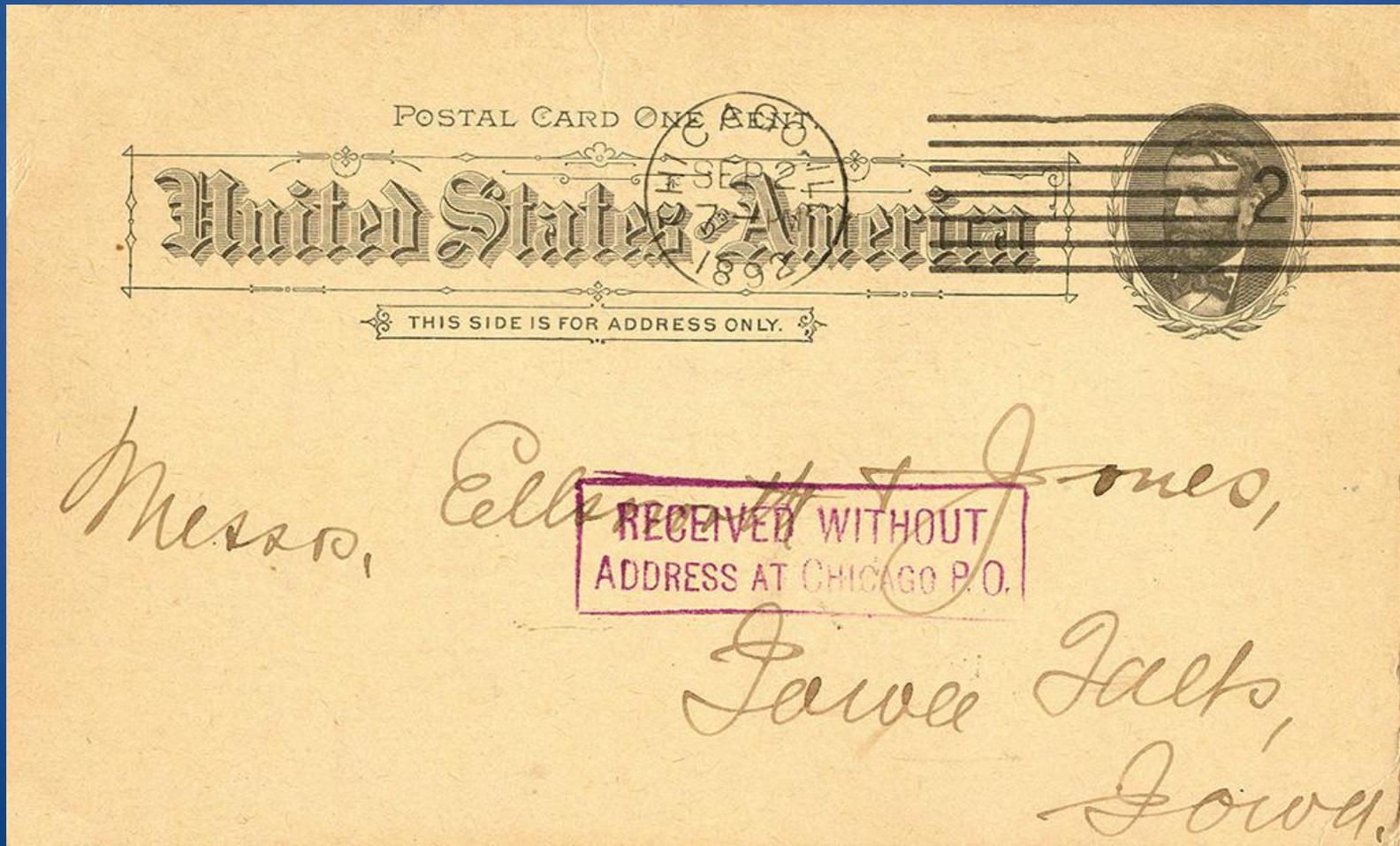


The 1887 PL&R stated that the all misdirected matter could be returned for a better address, and this is confirmed by the fact that post-1887 many cards are known that were returned for a better address.

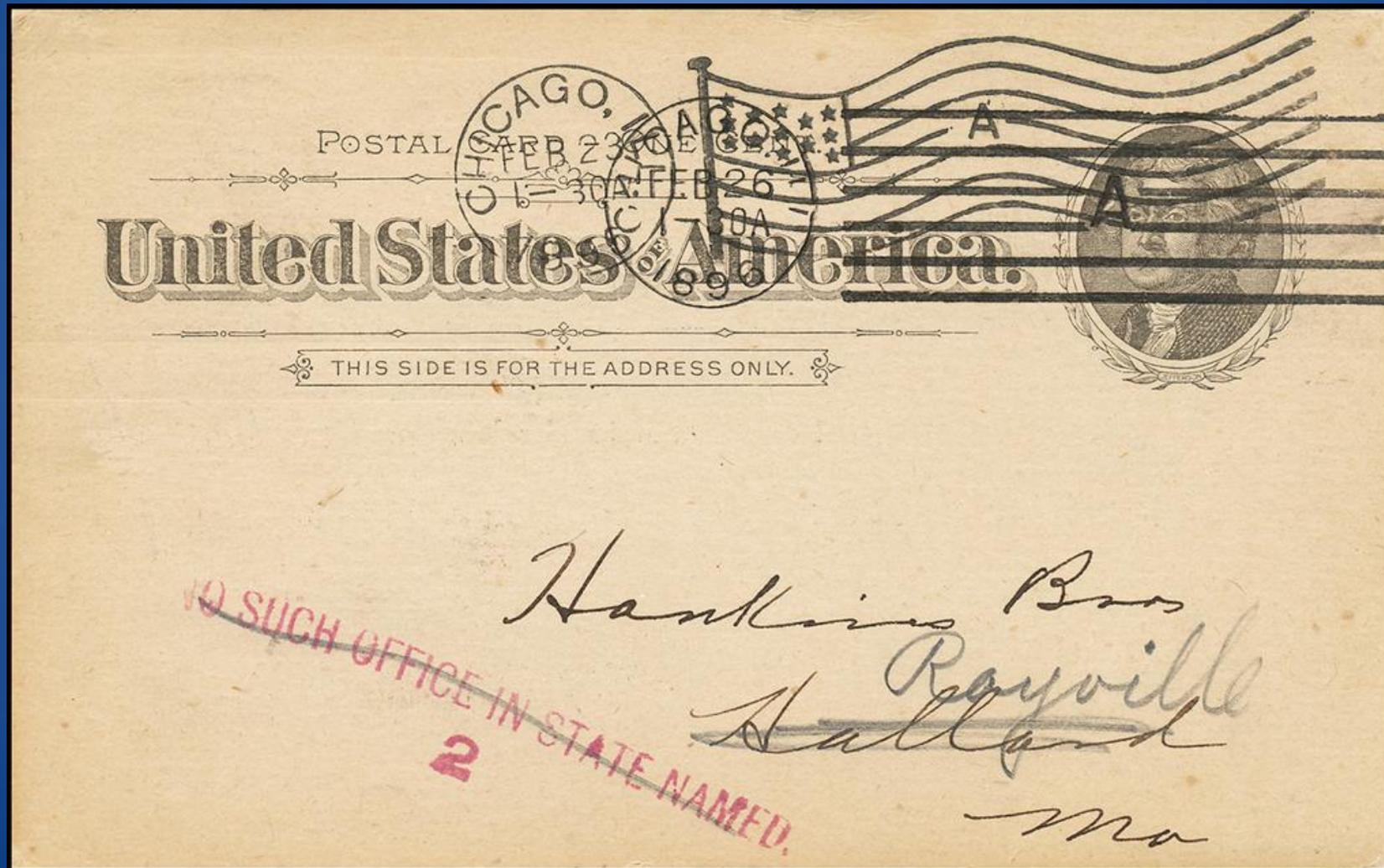
Here, for instance, is an early (1892) postal card with CC misdirected 1¢ postal card returned from Chicago mailing PO, 'RETURNED FOR BETTER DIRECTIONS,' free. After address corrected from Maryland to Maine, card remailed correctly free. Early such remailing.



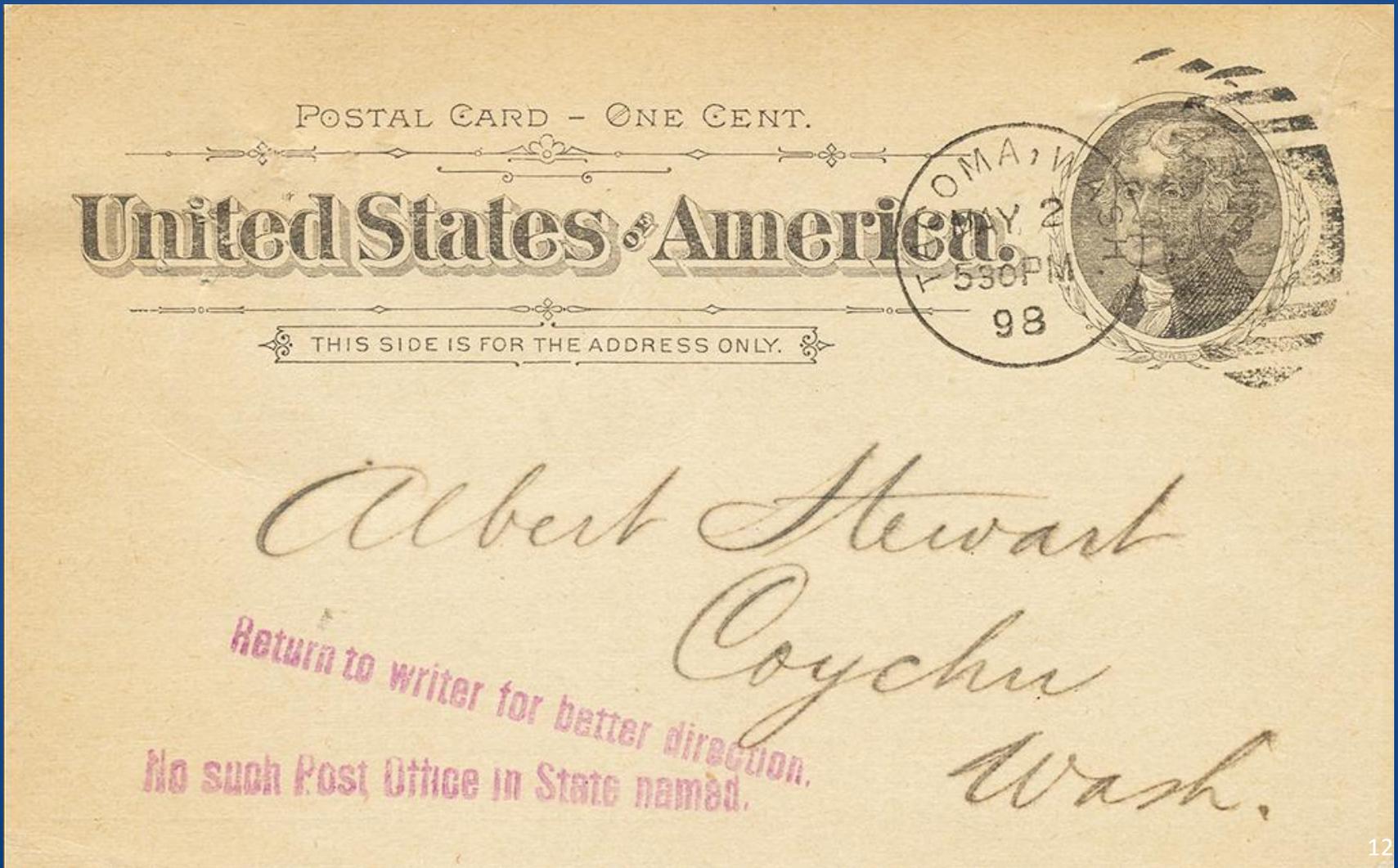
This August/September, 1892 1¢ postal card initially mailed unaddressed at Chicago, shows the ultimate example of an inadequate address — none at all. This card was mailed with no address at all on August 31, 1892 (date of message on back), marked 'RECEIVED WITHOUT / ADDRESS AT CHICAGO P.O.,' returned to the writer (The Western Banker indicated on the card's reverse), addressed and correctly remailed on September 2, 1892, without additional postage.



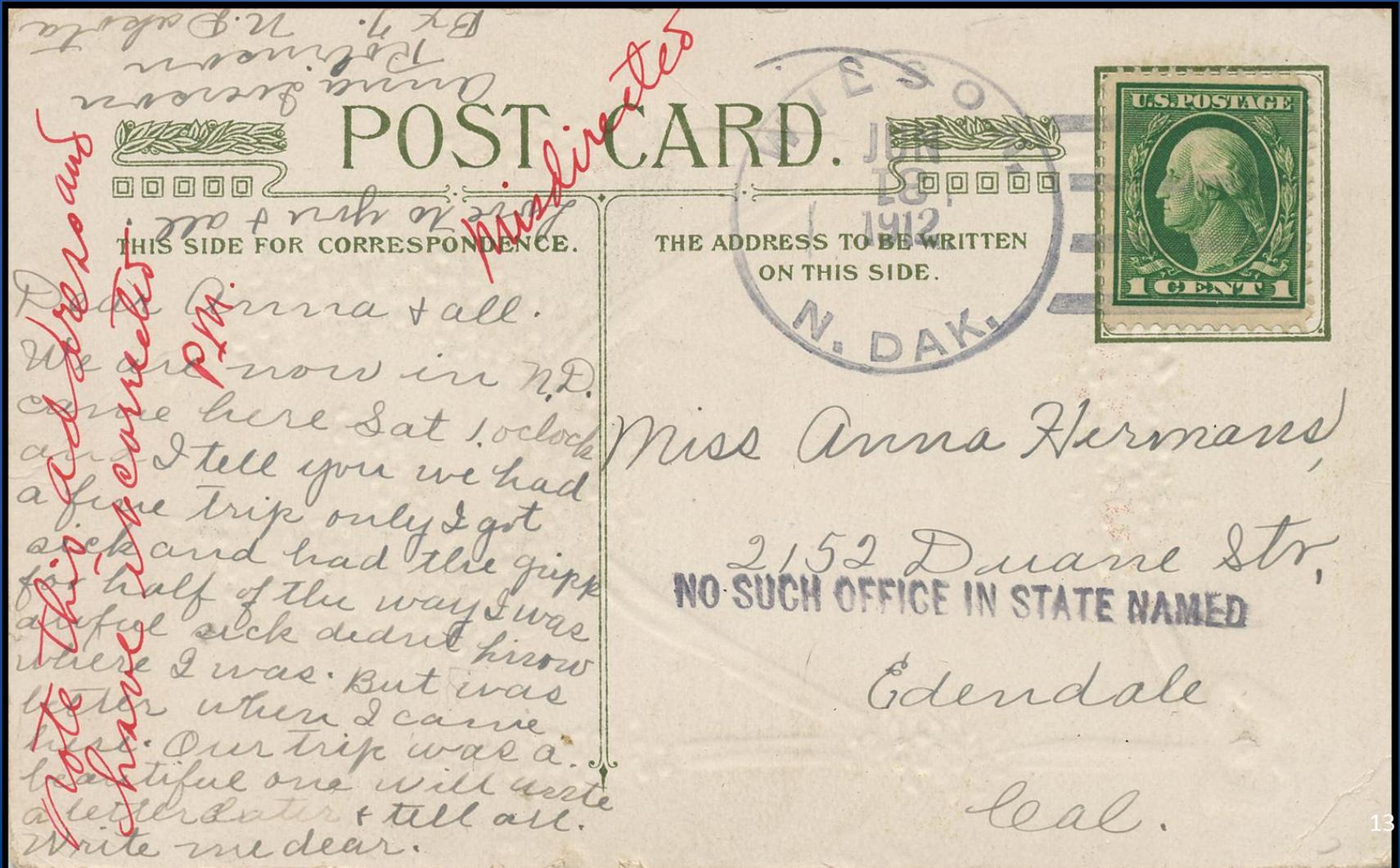
A Feb. 23, 1896 Chicago 1¢ postal card with CC correctly RTW for better address as unmailable as 'NO SUCH OFFICE IN STATE NAMED / 2.' Chicago carrier 2 in this case. Address corrected and card remailed on Feb. 26, correctly, free.



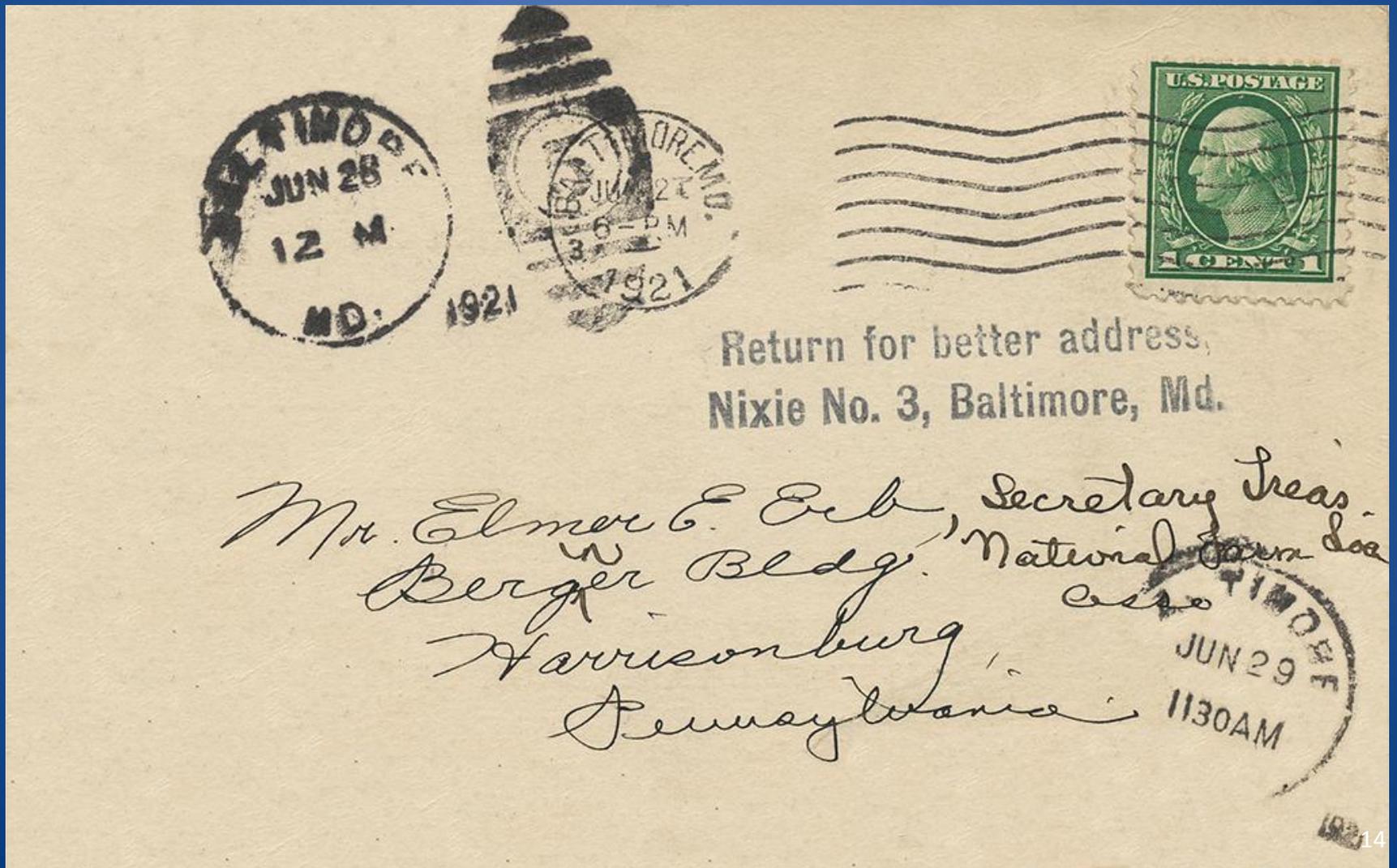
This 1898 Tacoma 1¢ postal card with CC correctly 'Return to writer for better direction' as unmailable as 'No such Post Office in State named.' Since address not corrected, card not remailed.



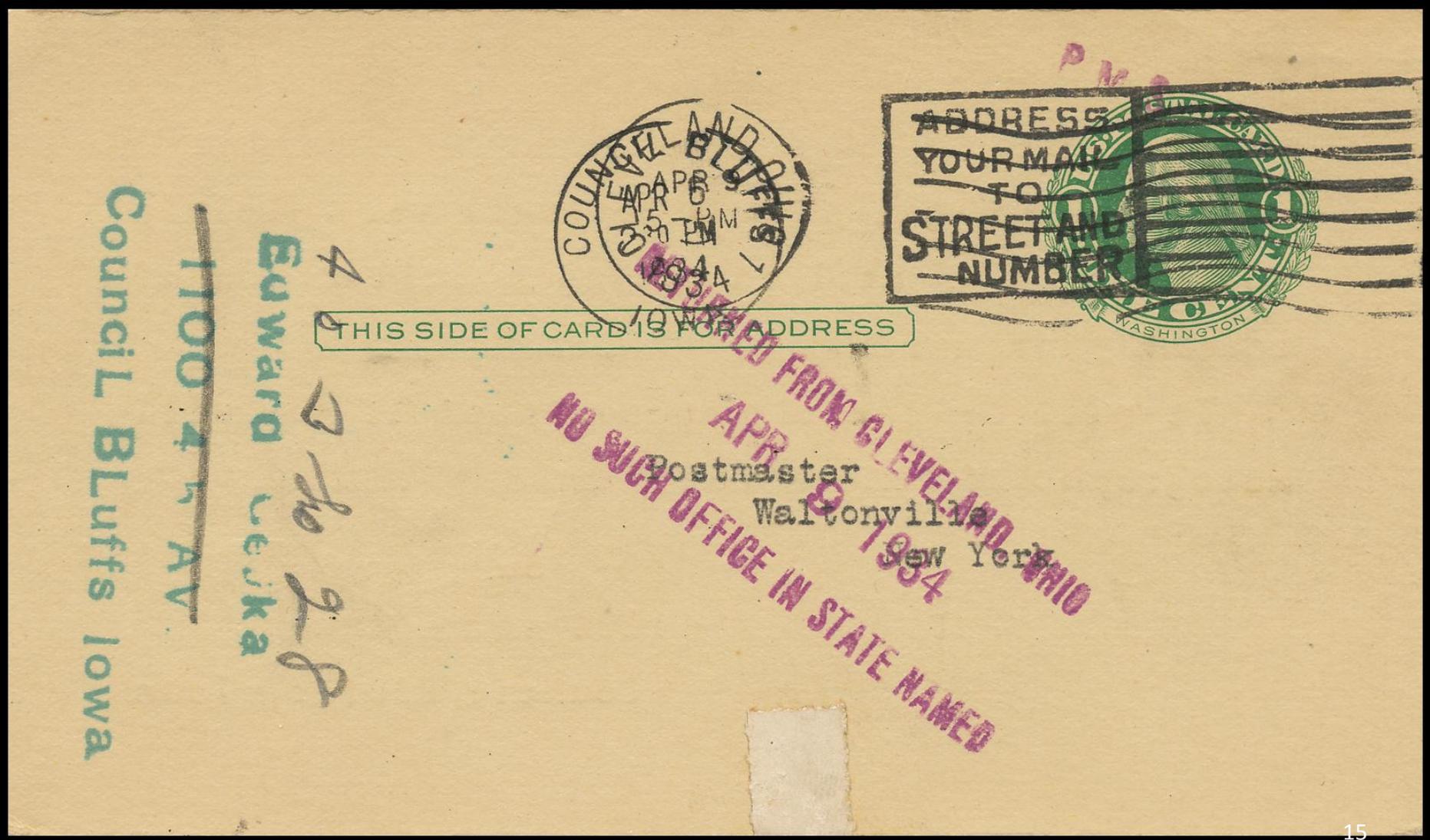
This 1912 private mailing card with a 1¢ postage stamp exemplifies the misdirecting process. It was mailed from Wilson, North Dakota, and was noted to be addressed to Edendale, Cal. Since the postmaster knew that there was 'NO SUCH OFFICE IN STATE NAMED,' he wrote 'Misdirected' on the card and returned it to the writer (there was a return address on the card!) The writer was asked to 'Note this address and have it corrected.' He did not, and the card was not remailed.



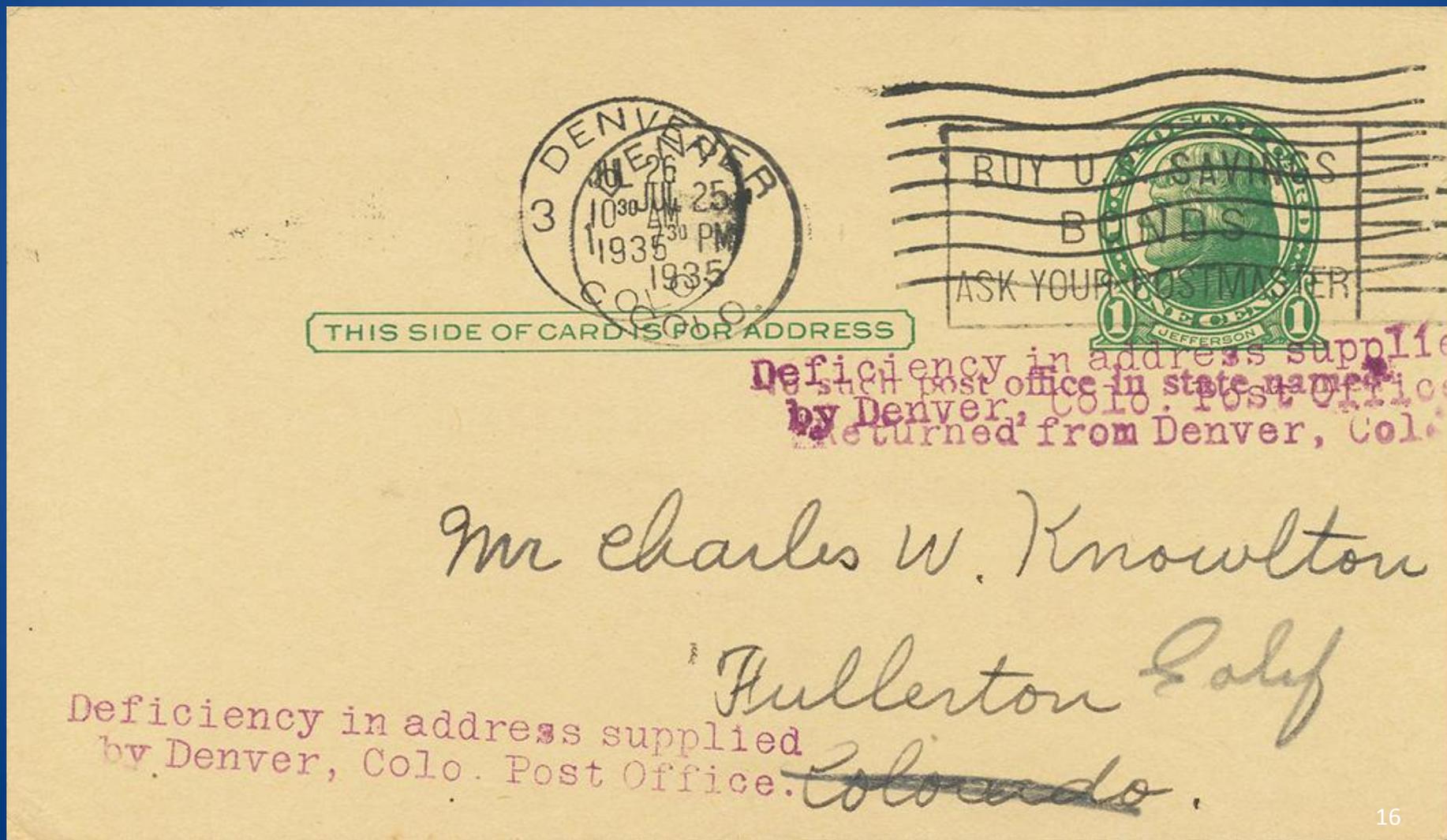
This June 27, 1921 Baltimore private mailing card with a 1¢ postage stamp was 'Return for better address' as unmailable (even w/o a return address addressee apparently known to postmaster and card could be RTW free). Address adequately corrected and card remailed on June 29, correctly, free.



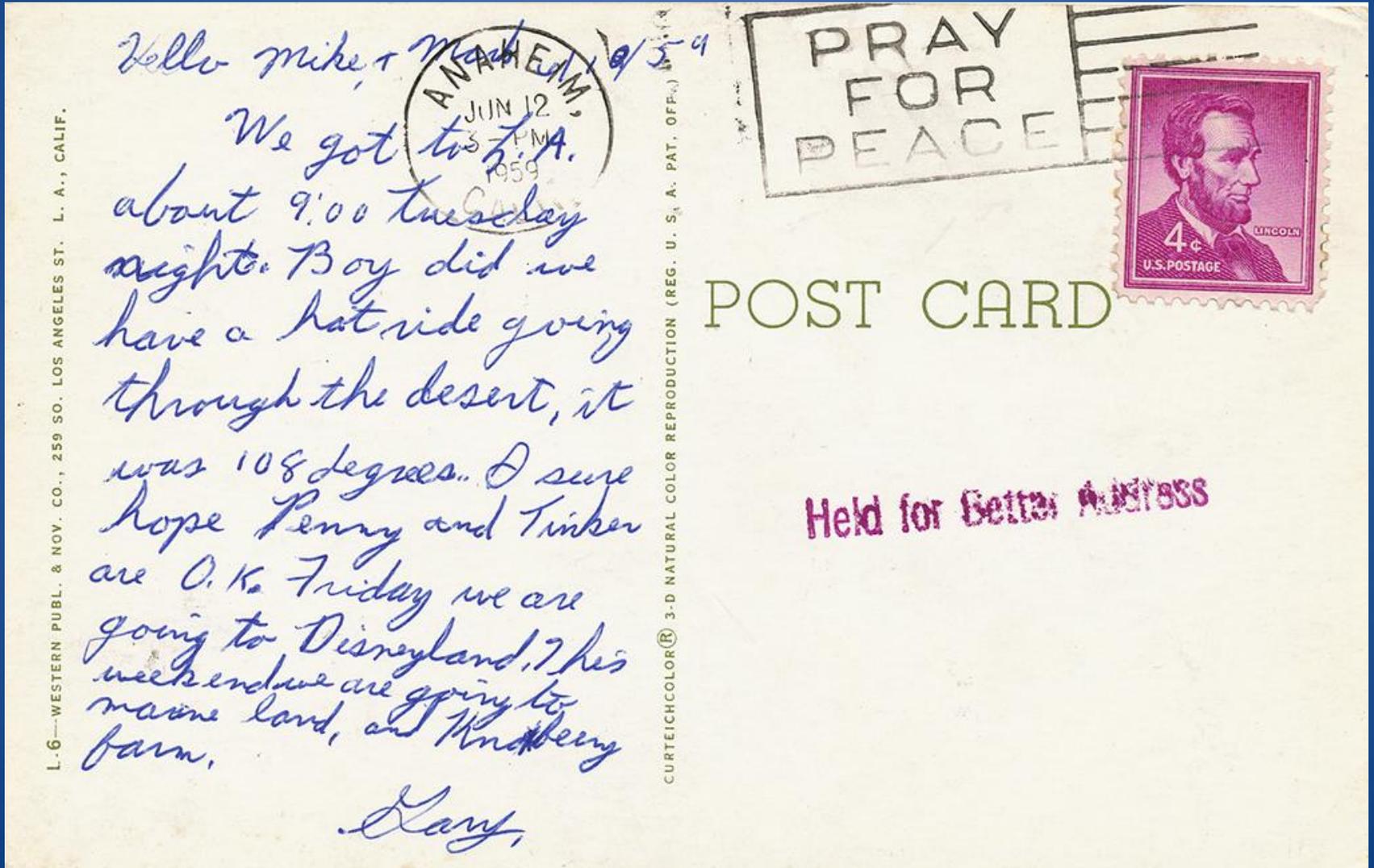
1934 reply-paid 1¢ postal card with return address unmailable at Cleveland transit office and returned to Council Bluffs from there, as 'NO SUCH OFFICE IN STATE NAMED.' As no address correction made, card was not remailed.



Unmailable, misdirected July 25, 1935 1¢ postal card mailed from Denver to Fullerton, Colorado. It was noted to be misdirected in Denver, 'Deficiency in address supplied / by Denver, Colo. Post Office,' then correctly remailed free to Calif. address.



1959 unaddressed private mailing card paid at the 4¢ card rate was 'Held for Better Address.' As no return address, and address not provided and card not remailed, not known whether postmaster returned card for an address



1997 private mailing card with return address paid at the 20¢ card rate. As inadequate (no city or state) address at mailing office, was unmailable and correctly returned free (RTS 'For Better Address'). Remailing free if address corrected but address not corrected.

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| Item #3 - 5lb. Fruit Gems Assortment | 18.95 |
| Item #4 - 3lb. Orchard Scene Tin (<i>Individually Wrapped</i>) | 15.95 |
| Item #5 - 9lb. Fruit Gems Assortment
in Fruit Pickers Basket | 26.95 |

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- | | |
|--|-------|
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| Item #11 - 2.3 lb. Irish Cream Mint | 18.95 |

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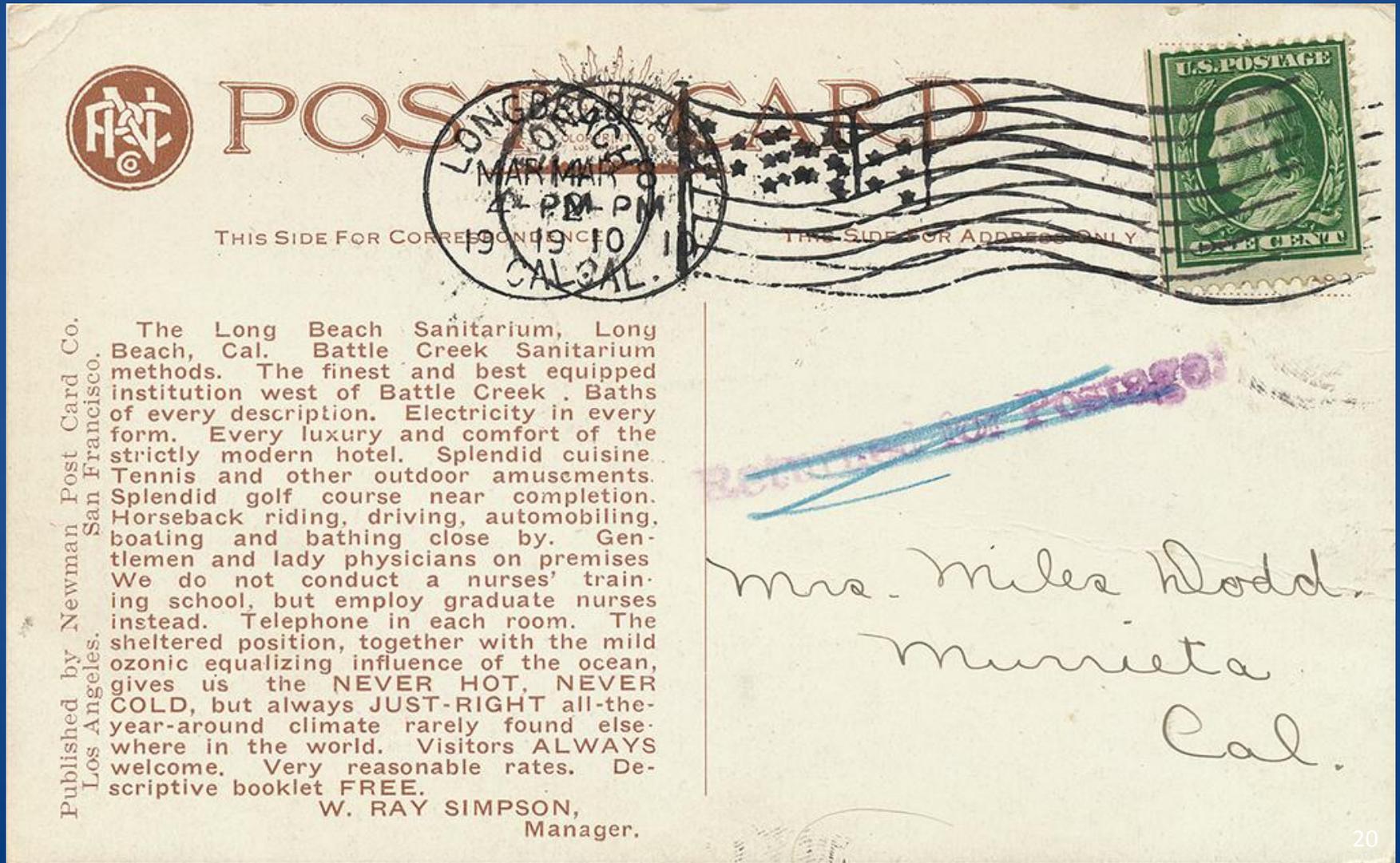
Cards Returned for Postage – paid less than one rate – discussed next , beginning on July 1, 1898 because only true, at first, for post cards.

Later (after 1952 when card rate increased to 2¢), postal cards could be short paid.

As of 1974, only unpaid cards could be RFP.

By the way, as of the 1902 PL&R, even if there was no return address (especially true for post cards): “if the sender he be known to or can be conveniently ascertained by the postmaster, and is within the delivery of the office, the letter or package will at once be returned to him for proper postage.”

Mar. 1, 1910 private mailing card, unpaid at mailing office and thus unmailable. Even w/o return address, in 1902 PL&R, "... or he be known to or can be conveniently ascertained by the postmaster," so could be 'Returned for Postage,' postage paid on Mar. 8, and remailed.



This was an unpaid war tax (2¢ rate), June 6, 1919 private mailing card. With an adequate CC, card 'Returned for Postage' from the mailing office. Due postage not paid, and thus card not remailed.



This Oct. 13, 1926 private mailing card paid 1¢ was underpaid 1¢ of the 2¢ private mailing card rate between 1925 and 1928. With a return address it could be 'Returned for Postage' 'Postage Due 1¢ Cent' from the mailing office. The 2¢ paid overpaid the amount due, and the card was remailed.

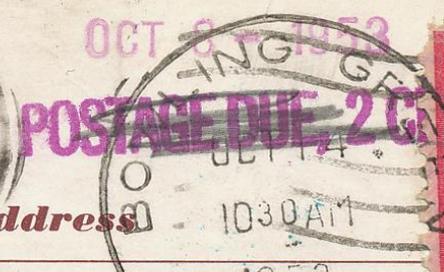
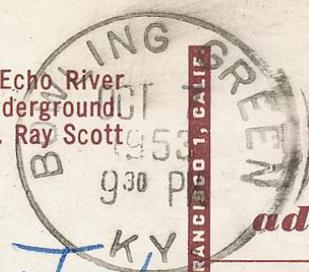


Unmailable (unpaid) Oct. 7, 1953 private mailing card from Bowling Green, Ky. As no return address, postmaster knew writer as card first 'Returned for Postage' 'POSTAGE DUE 2 CENTS,' When 2¢ not paid by writer, card Held for Postage ('THIS IS THE MAIL / FOR WHICH YOU SENT POSTAGE'). So addressee paid the 2¢ due (2¢ stamp), and card remailed on Oct. 14.

NPC-8

ECHO RIVER IN MAMMOTH CAVE
Mammoth Cave National Park, Ky.

On the fifth and lowest level of Mammoth Cave, Echo River winds through its mysterious channel, 360 feet underground.
Color by W. Ray Scott



Returned for Postage

Wed.

We were here today
most interesting
place to see.
Having a grand trip
weather has been
perfect so far -
Hope you had fun
on your trip
Alice

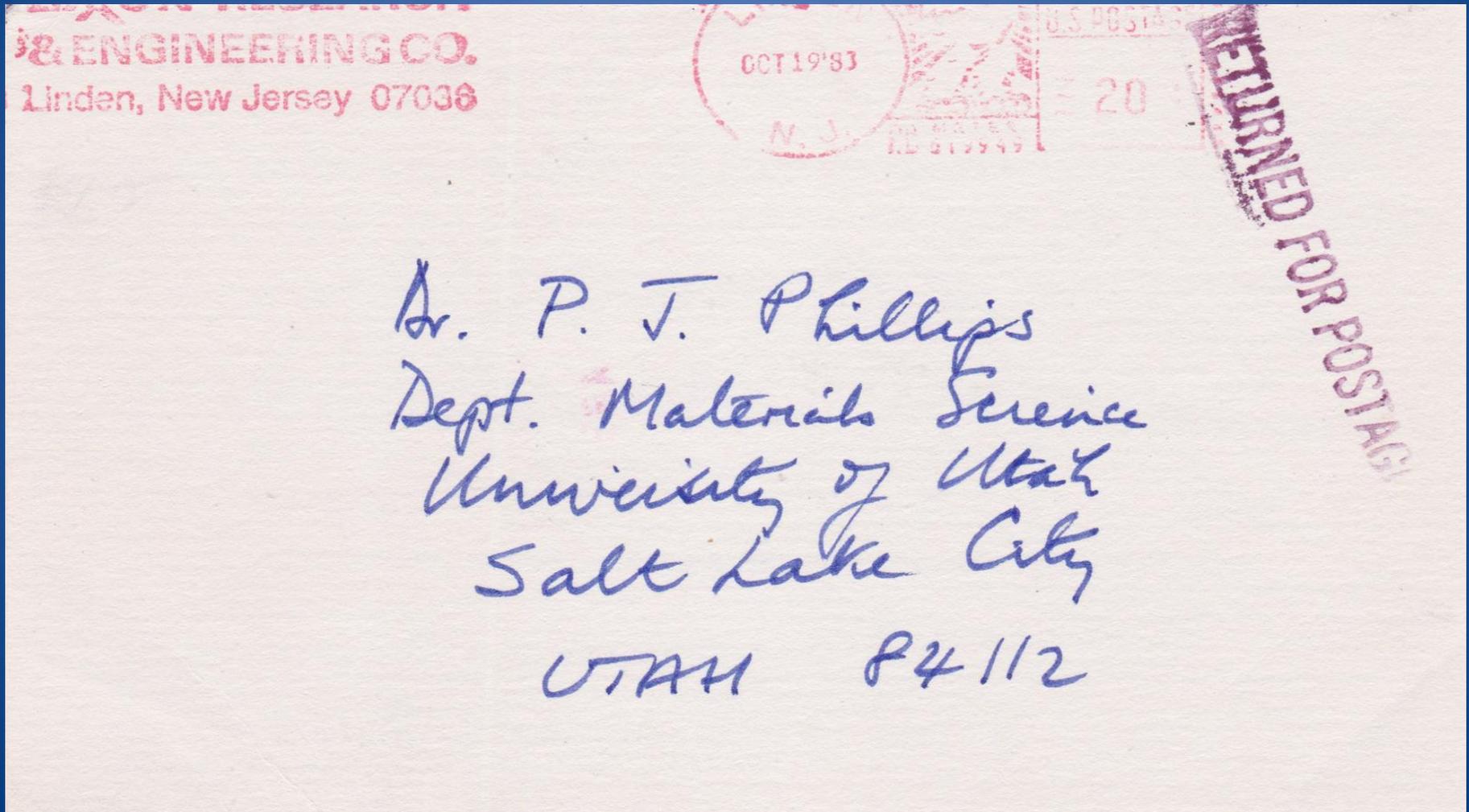
Mrs. Edward E. Hewitt
Manhattan Court
Elizabeth
N.Y.

THIS IS THE MAIL FOR
WHICH YOU SENT POSTAGE

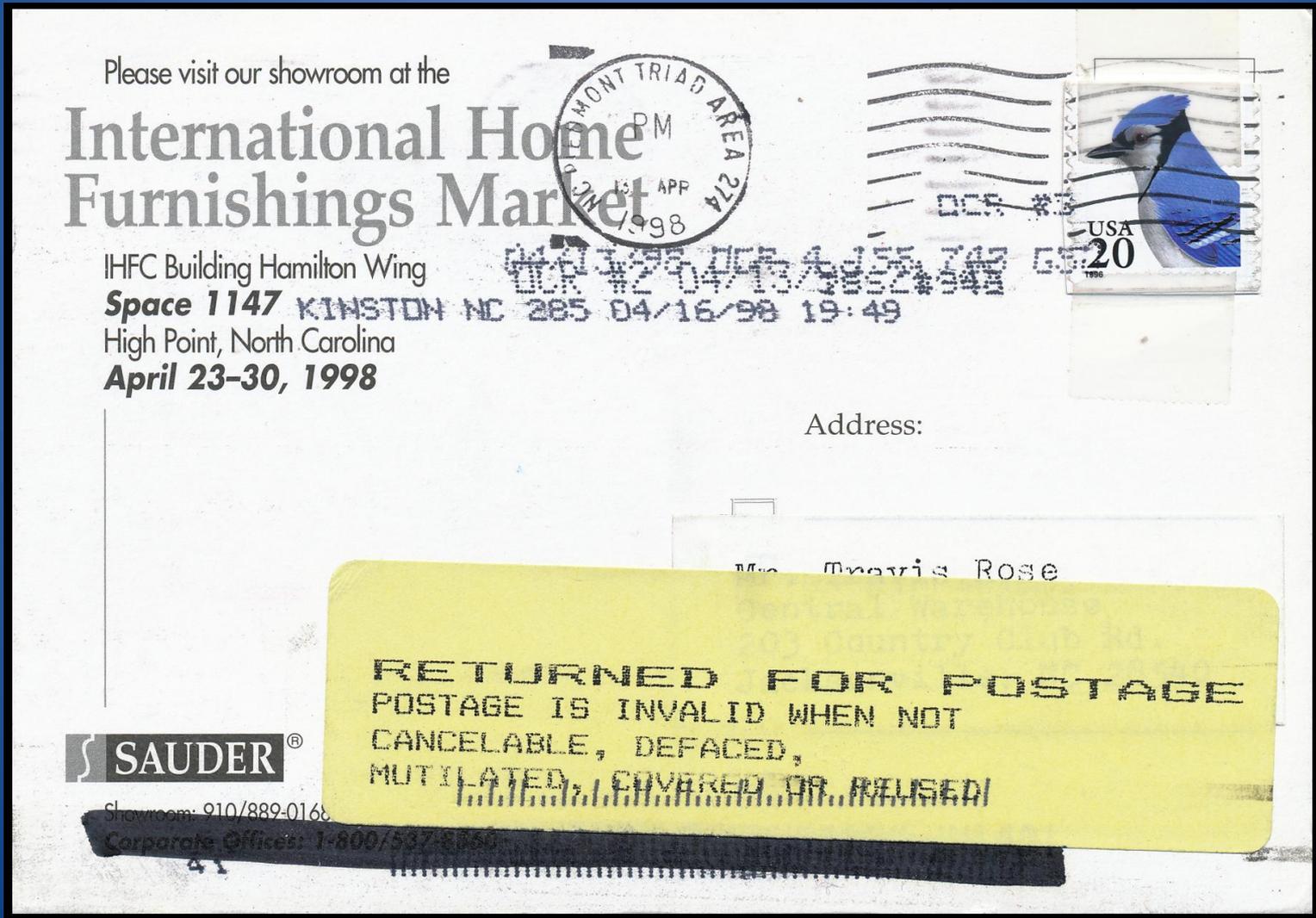
MIRRO-KROME CARD BY H. S. CROCKER CO., INC., SAN FRANCISCO 1, CALIF.

PUBLISHED BY NATIONAL PARK CONCESSIONS, INC., MAMMOTH CAVE, KENTUCKY

Unpaid 1983 post card from Linden, New Jersey to Salt Lake City. From 1974 until the present, only unpaid post cards could be returned for postage from the writer. The 20¢ due was paid by the 20¢ meter. At the time short paid postage was collected upon delivery to the addressee.



Unmailable (unpaid, as invalid postage was covered with tape) 1998 private mailing card from North Carolina. As with the previous card, at the time only an unpaid card could be returned for postage. With return address, postmaster could return card to the writer for this unpaid postage. As no new postage was forthcoming from writer, the card was not remailed.



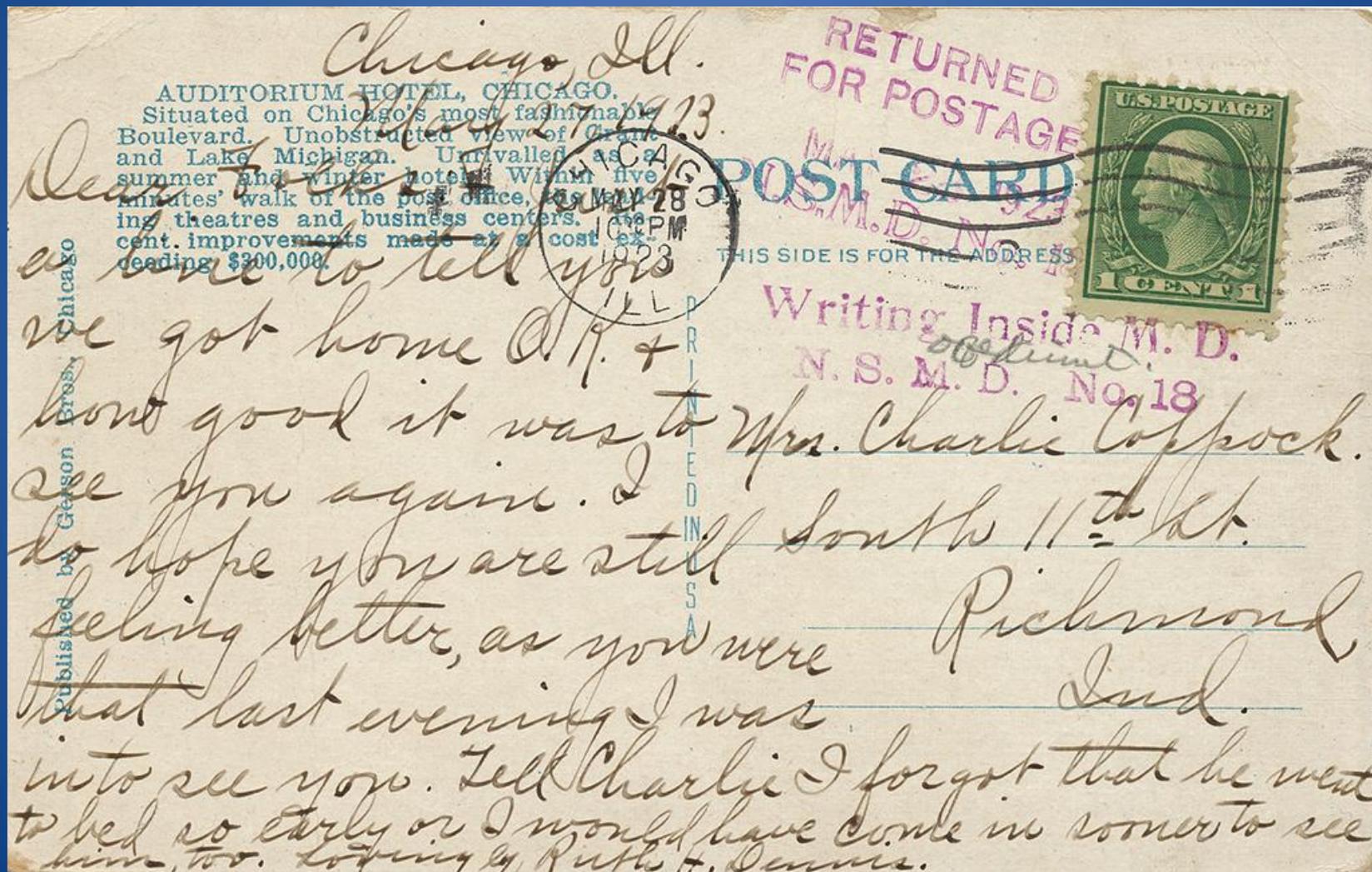
Cards with Excess Writing on Address Side – because excess writing obscured the address. Not allowed from May 1881 until the present, but I haven't seen any pre-1909 examples.

At first RTW, but as of 1907, when the vertical line was added to cards, the left side was only for the message, such cards required the letter postage from the writer.

Aug. 18, 1909 Los Angeles private mailing card mailed with 1¢ postage. As writing crossed over to address side, card requiring mailing at letter postage (2¢), Thus 'RETURNED FOR POSTAGE.' 1¢ postage added on Aug. 18 - card correctly remailed. This remailing of this type is rarely seen.



May 28, 1923 Chicago post card mailed with 1¢ postage. As writing crossed over to address side, card requiring mailing at letter postage (2¢). Thus 'RETURNED FOR POSTAGE.' Extra 1¢ postage required not added so card correctly not remailed.



1942 postal card paid with 1¢ postage. As writing crossed over to address side, card required mailing with letter postage (3¢). This card was 'POSTAGE DUE 2 CENTS.' Not clear where extra 2¢ postage required was paid, but it was, as indicated by postage due stamp, so card correctly remailed.

outfit. Don't know what to do. Awfully sleepy so guess I'll close. OK yes.
 my practice hr. on Thurs. has been changed to 5:00. Discussion period at
 11:00, eat at 12:00. Some full day. I'll get to study from 9:00 - 9:30
 and 4:00 to 5:00. They have a writing room at the music hall to study
 in and my art classes 1-4 are in the building about a block
 from music building. Convenient to nearly froze last morn.
 got more cover on. I love to write little penny
 post cards. Think I'll stock up on them. But I'm
 afraid that I'll spoil you. It is sort of like talking to you.
 Getting to where I really like my mom. She's very sweet
 even though we are so different. Tell Mrs. Don. "Hi" and kiss a nice one for
 me. Hope you can read this. Give Bird some love too.
 Washed out my brown dress. Had to.
 It really faded, but I guess it
 didn't hurt any. Some talk
 of moving Wabos in 2nd.
 Think I will let room
 go until after Oct. 1 to see
 if we get to stay here. Found
 your belt. How are my dresses
 coming along? Soley I'm tired and
 I have a 350 word theme & two tests
 to prepare for Mon. Eng. See this afternoon
 Church on tomorrow afternoon. Rate for league & church. Love, Sis.

SEP 13 1942



THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS

POSTAGE DUE, 2 CENTS



Mrs. J. L. King
 East Kirk
 Oklahoma

Cards with Other Substances Attached – coated with material that could damage mail handling machines

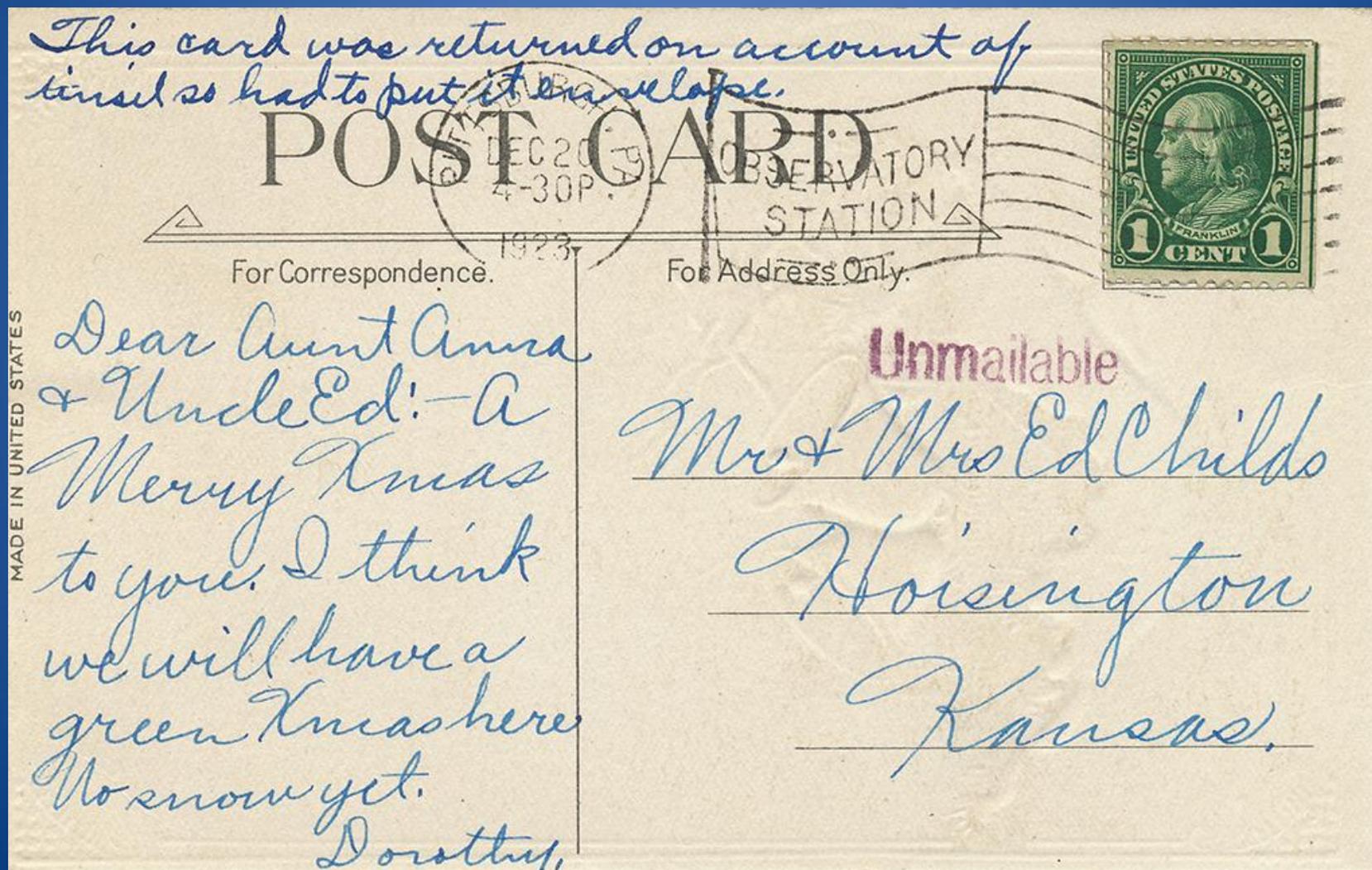
The March 4, 1907 *Postal Bulletin No. 8233* stated as Section 5:

“(5) Cards bearing glass, metal, mica, sand, tinsel, or other similar substances, are unmailable, except when enclosed in envelopes.”

March 9, 1907 (just 5 days after announcement) unmailable private mailing card as it had glitter on it. It was indeed 'UNMAILABLE,' as the handstamp on it indicates, and could be RTW because of the return address. It could only have been subsequently remailed in a protective envelope.



1923 private mailing card w/o CC and with glitter on it is another 'Unmailable' item. It was RTW item as the postmaster knew who had sent the card (sender's comment: "This card was returned on account of tinsel so had to put it in envelope"). Card mailable when remailed in an envelope.



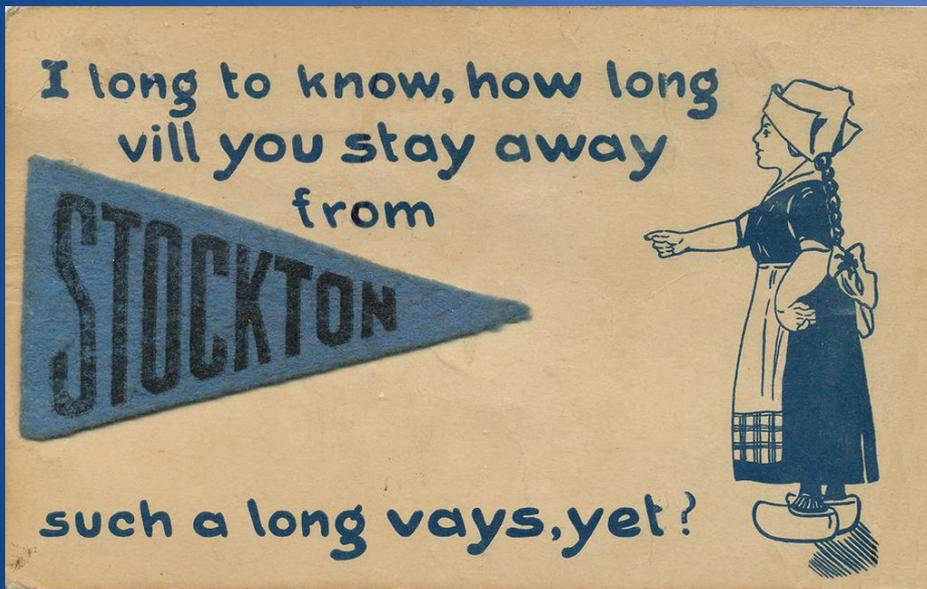
Cards with Pasted-on Matter

From their introduction until the 1913 *PL&R* (Oct. 1, 1913), anything pasted on a postal card or private mailing card, except an address on a postal card (after 1876), rendered it unmailable except at the letter rate. As of 1913 *PL&R*, very thin matter could be pasted on a card. Otherwise, they still would require a letter rate for postage.

1904 local Latham, Ill. post card, paid 1¢, with an illegal ad-on on the front of the card. Thus it was due the 2¢ letter rate, so short paid 1¢. The sender was unknown so the card could not be returned for postage, so 1¢ due on delivery. The 1¢ due stamp shows that the addressee paid the 1¢ that was due.



This Jan. 27, 1913 private mailing card was not RTW, but otherwise was handled as an illegal use that did not follow the pre-Oct. 1, 1913 laws as it had an attachment on the reverse that was illegal for two reasons, it wasn't an address label and it wasn't thin. Therefore, it had to be paid at the letter rate of 2¢, and thus 1¢ was due ('DUE 1 CENT'). It was not RTW because there was no return address. Therefore, it had to be 'HELD FOR POSTAGE' from the addressee. It was, and the addressee paid the 1¢ due.



Cards with Obscene or Scurrilous Content – these were never RTW

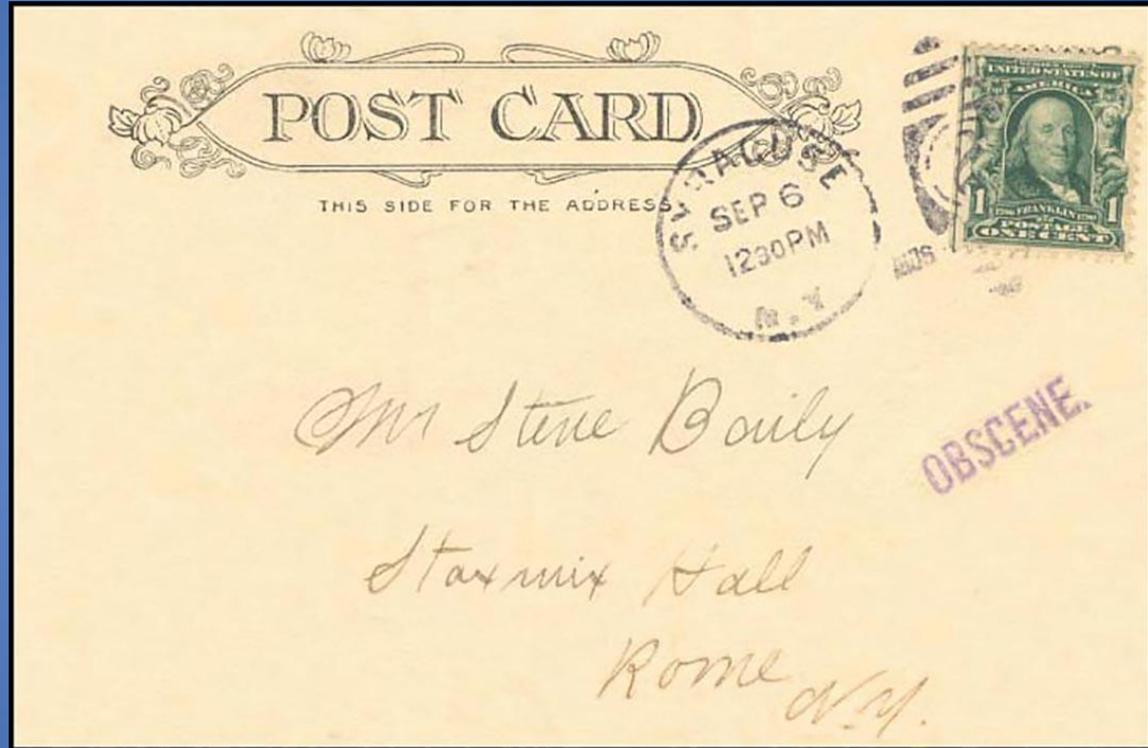
From their introduction, postal cards, then also post cards, were unmailable if they contained obscene or scurrilous content. Such unmailable cards were sent to the DLO for disposition and were never returned.

The example of an obscene item is shown (obscene for the time). The 'OBSCENE' handstamp was placed on this 1906 post card that presumably was sent to the DLO. It should not have been preserved but somehow the card survived and came into collectors' hands.



136 Daisy with her little bear behind.
Copyright 1906, by J. Murray Jordan

*at White City
come up to the fair and let me
know what day will take you to the grounds*



UNDELIVERABLE DOMESTIC CARDS

Earlier, the categories of Undeliverable items were listed. We now discuss them in detail with associated cards that were RTW.

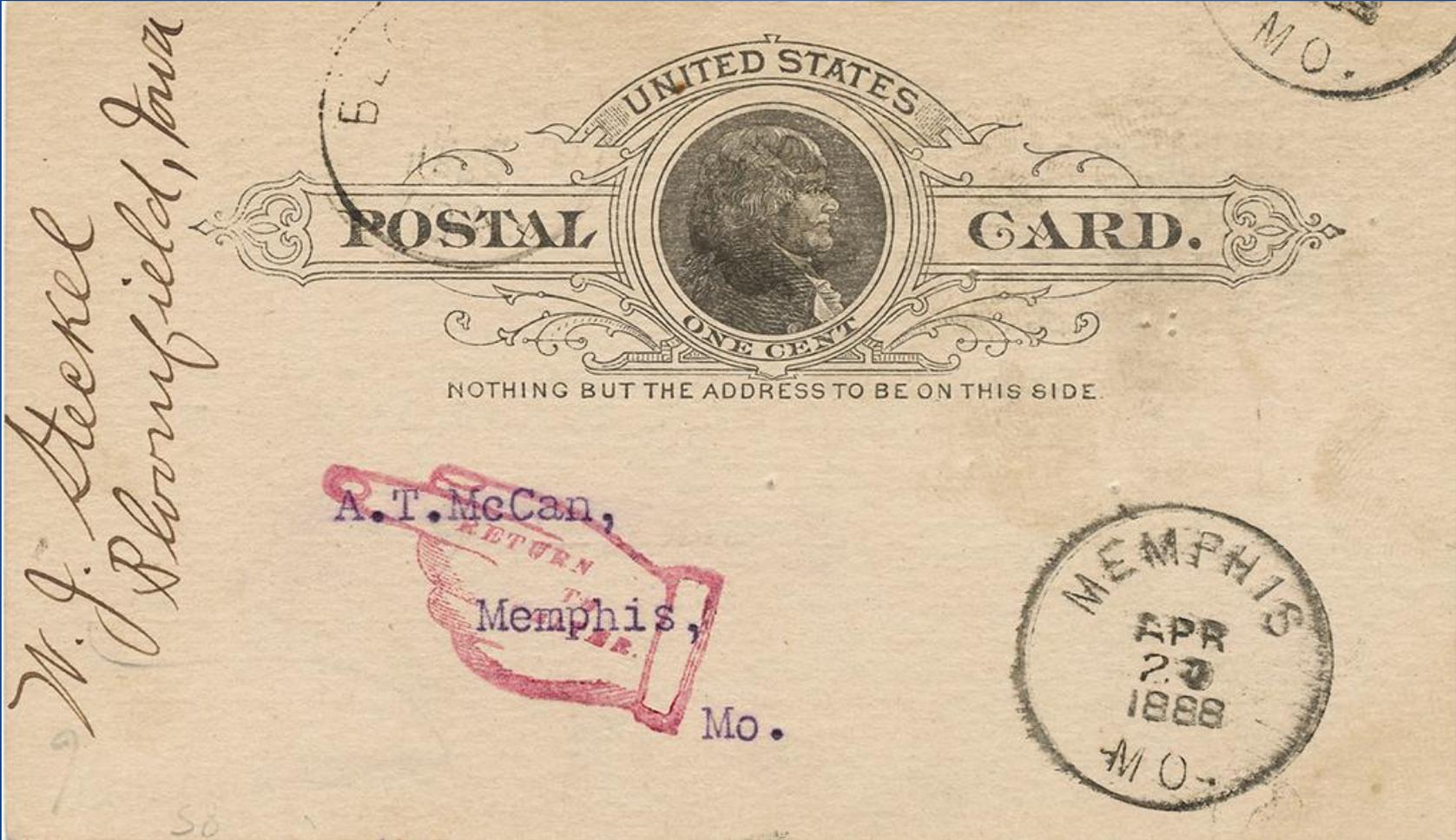
1887-1902 Undeliverable Card Rules

Until the publication of the 1887 *PL&R*, there should be no undeliverable postal cards.

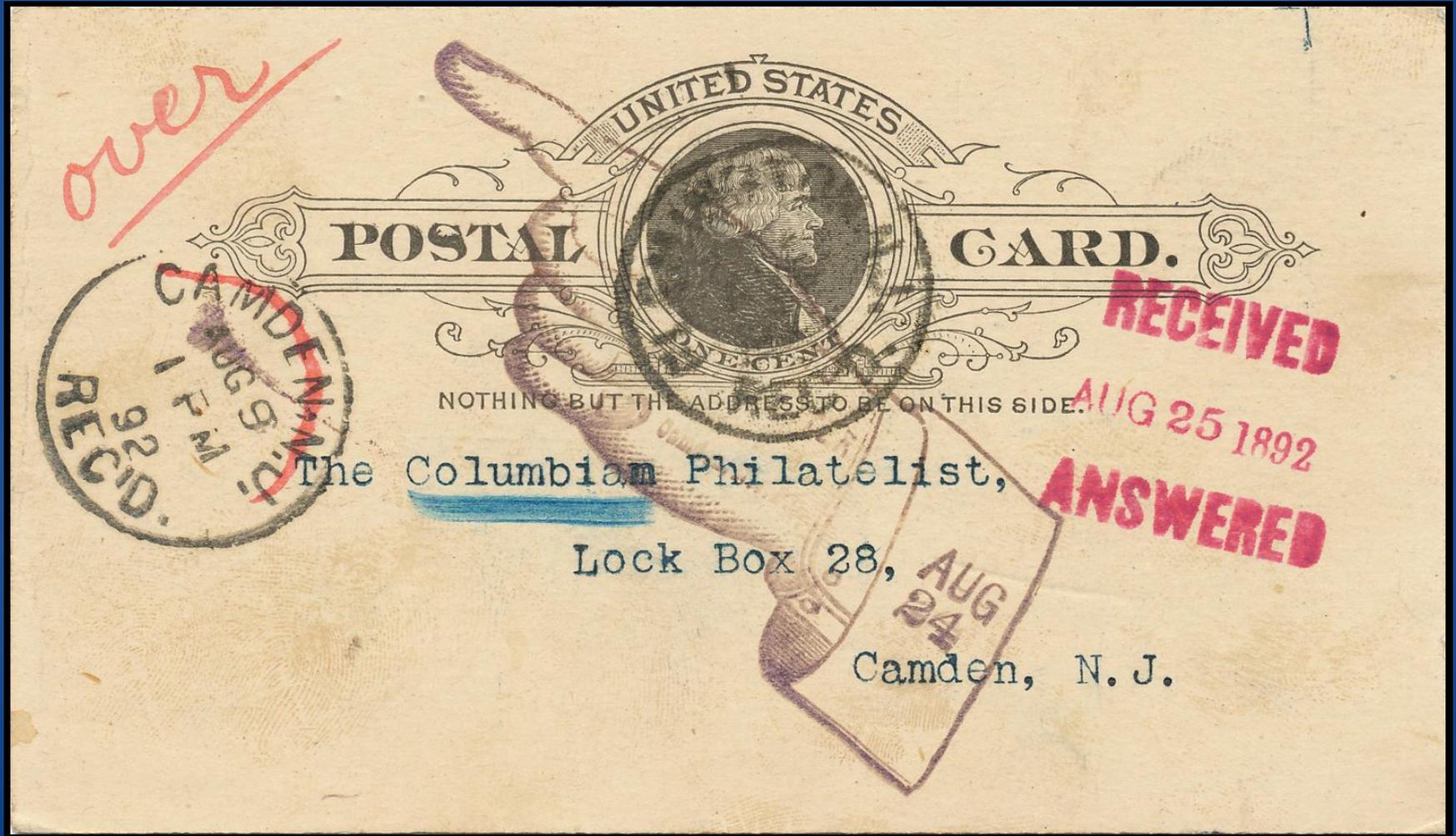
From 1887 to 1893 *PL&Rs*, RTW of undeliverable postal cards allowed. The reason for the return (on letters) was not required until 1893.

As of the 1893 *PL&R*, undeliverable postal cards could no longer be RTW. This was also true of Private Mailing Cards (Post Cards) when they were introduced on July 1, 1898.

1888 Bloomfield, Iowa postal card with CC (return address) correctly RTW free to Memphis, Mo. As undeliverable with no reason for return noted. Return reason not required until 1893.



This 1892 postal card w/CC was undeliverable from the Camden, N.J. post office (CC or return address on other side). Thus it was correctly returned to the writer. The reason for the return was not required to be stated on the returned card until 1893.



1902-1913 Undeliverable Card Rules

Changes again occurred as of Section 673 of the 1902 *PL&R*, as it stated: 2. *Double postal cards*, when unclaimed, will be returned to sender when the address of the sender can be ascertained; otherwise they will be sent to the Dead Letter Office. Care must be taken in indorsing (sic) and returning double cards not to deface or destroy the unused half.

So only double (reply-paid) undeliverable cards could now be RTW.

This local Seattle 1905 reply-paid postal card w/CC was undeliverable as it was 'Unclaimed' as the addressee was 'NOT THERE.' It was correctly returned to the writer because during this period undeliverable reply-paid cards could be RTW.

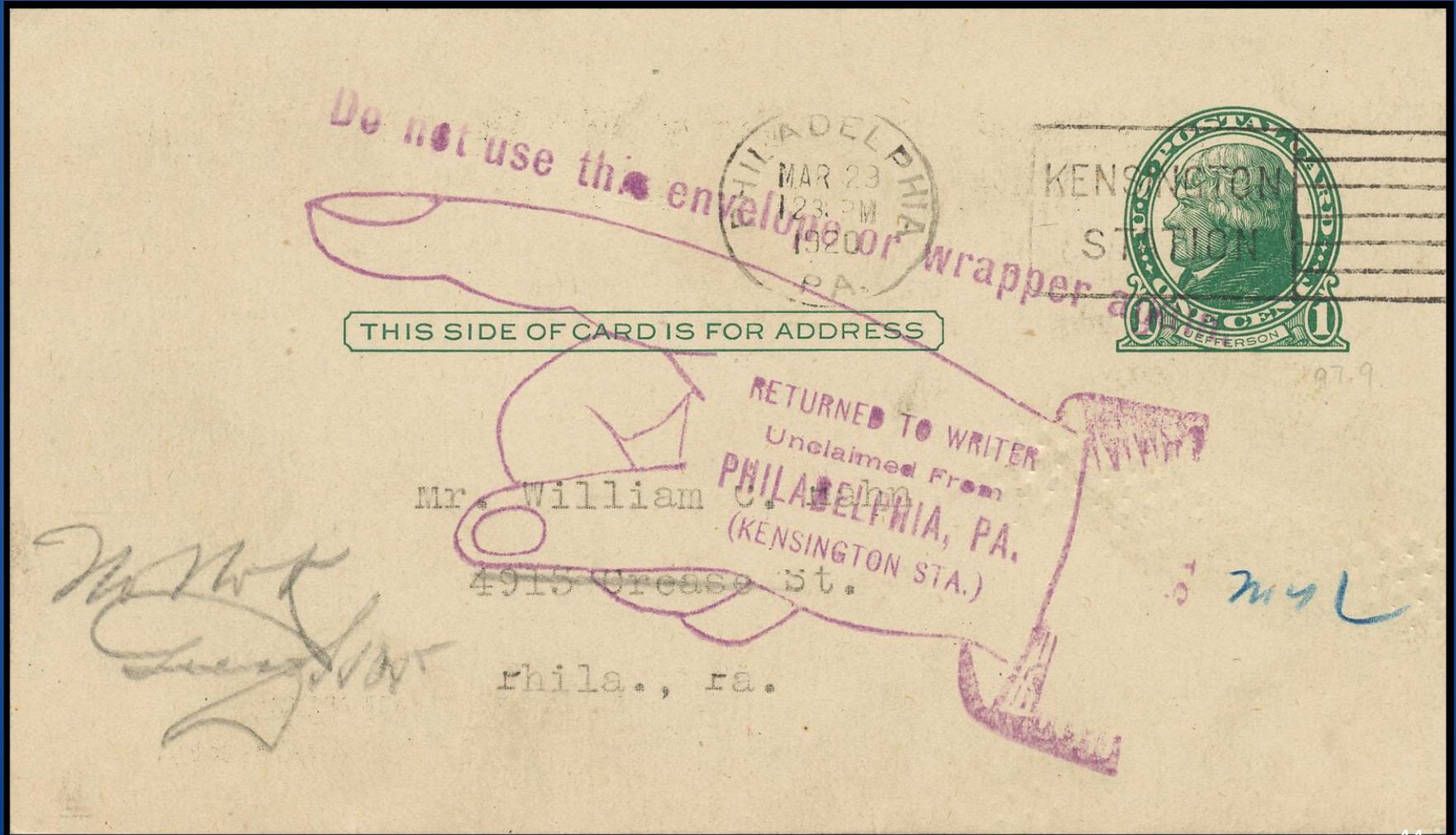


Undeliverable Cards from 1913 to 1924

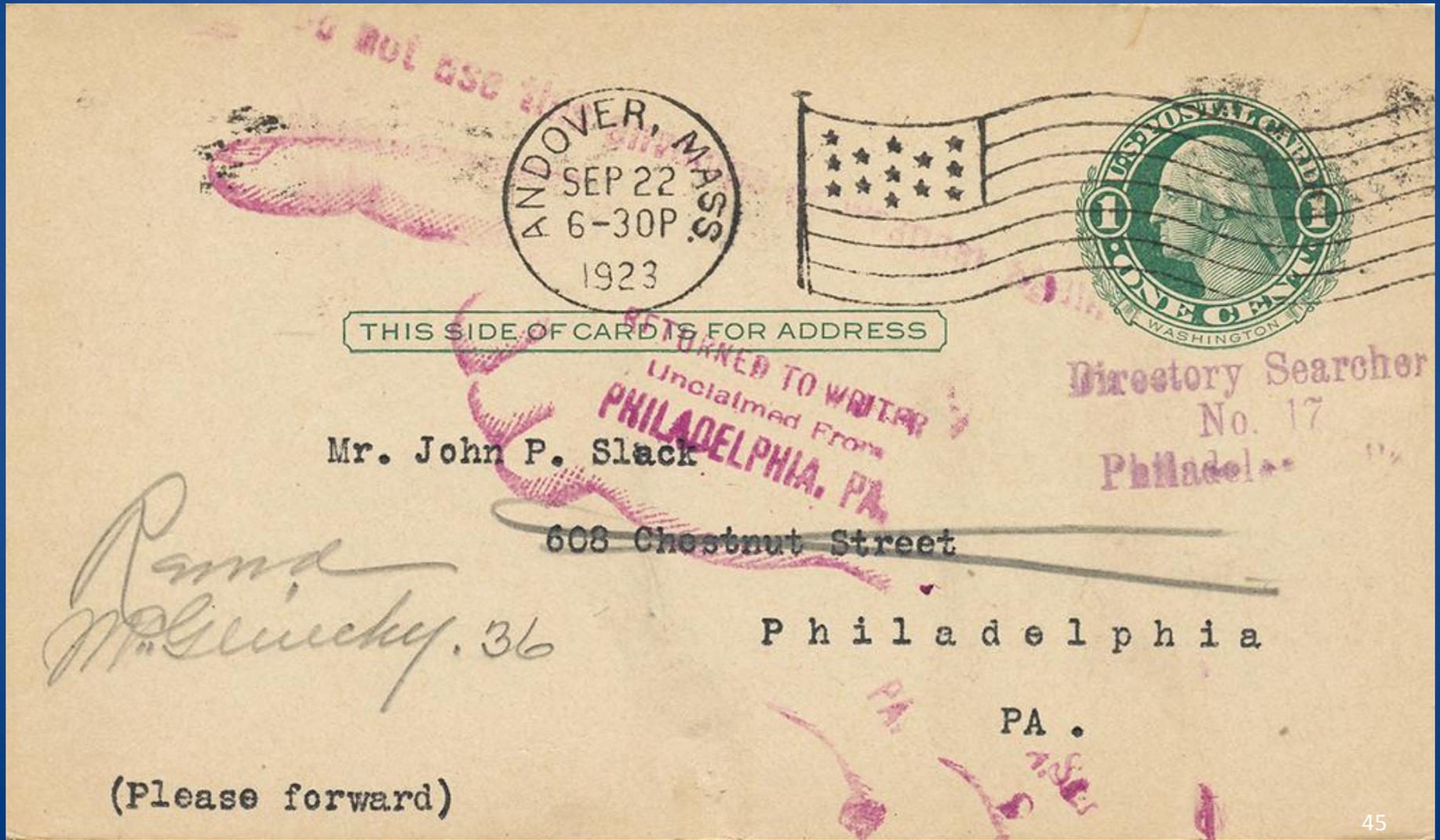
Another significant change in how the return of undeliverable domestic postal and post cards was handled occurred with the publication of the 1913 *PL&R*. Sec. 634 of that document stated:

Sec. 634. New was that unpaid, misdirected, unmailable, and unclaimed domestic postal and post cards deposited for ***local delivery*** shall be returned to the sender when they bear his card address. Also, **double postal cards**, when unclaimed, shall be returned to sender when the address of the sender can be ascertained.

Undeliverable *local* 1920 Philadelphia, Penn. postal card w/CC, RTW as 'UNCLAIMED' (correctly in this period). The handstamp 'Do not use this envelope or wrapper again' was appropriate. In the author's experience this latter marking really means that if the item was remailed, it required new postage.

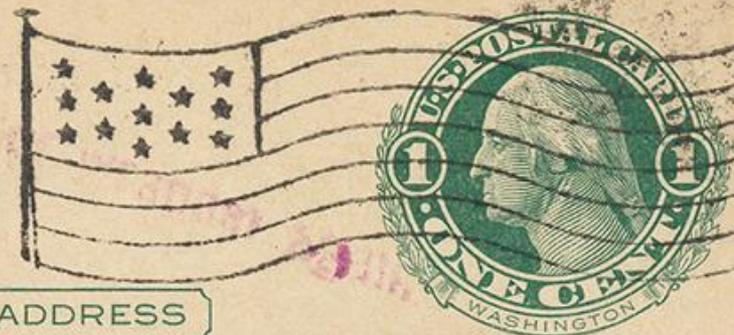


Undeliverable Andover, Mass. to Philadelphia *reply-paid* 1923 1¢ postal card w/CC, RTW as 'Unclaimed' (correctly in this period).



THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS

ANDOVER, MASS.
SEP 22
6-30 P.
1923



Mr. John P. Slack

RETURNED TO WRITER
Unclaimed From
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Directory Searcher
No. 17
Philadel...

608 Chestnut Street

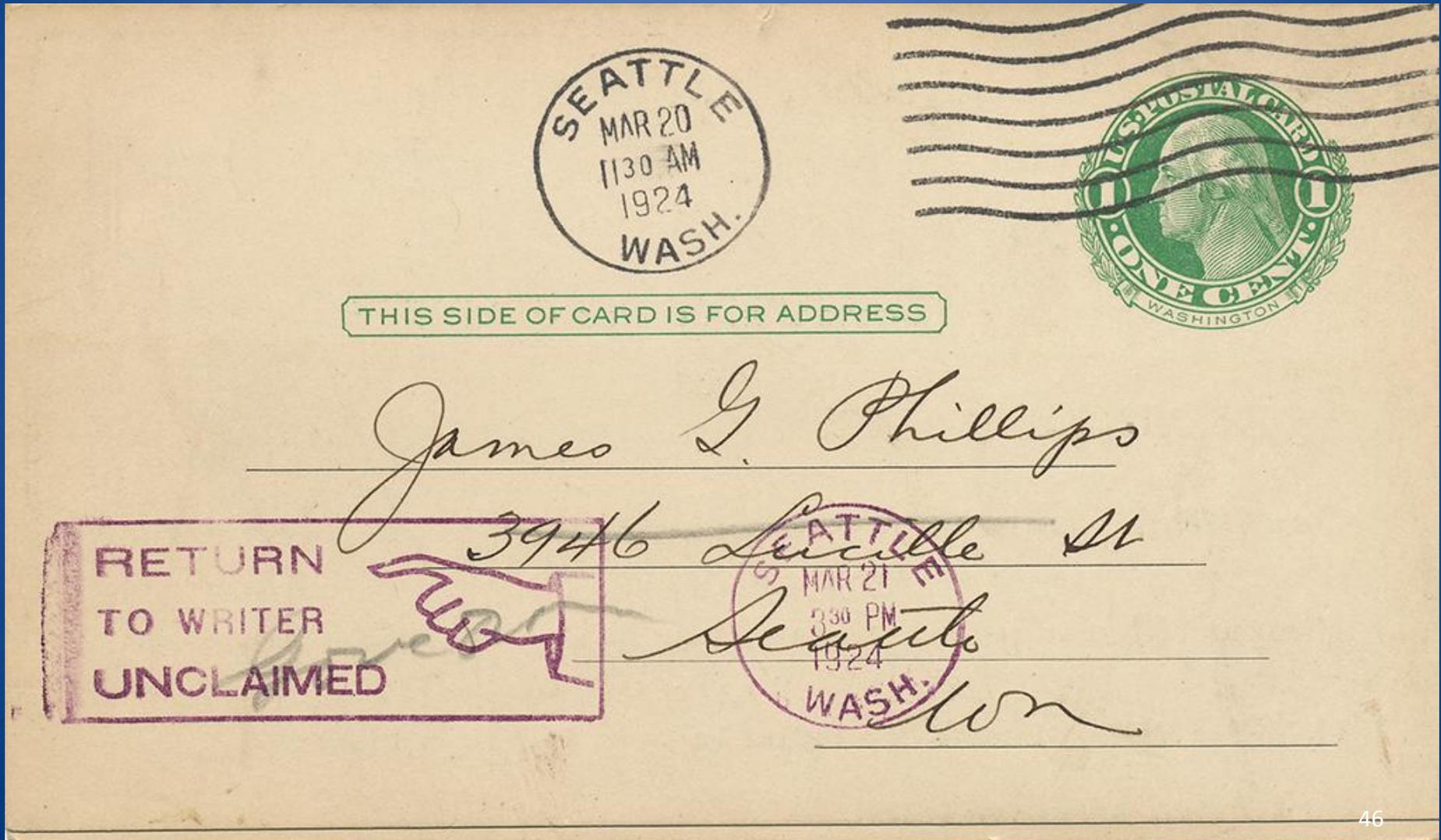
Philadelphia

PA .

Randa McGuechy. 36

(Please forward)

Undeliverable *local* Seattle, Wash. *reply-paid* 1924 1¢ postal card w/CC, RTW as 'UNCLAIMED' (correctly in this period undeliverable local and reply-paid cards RTW)

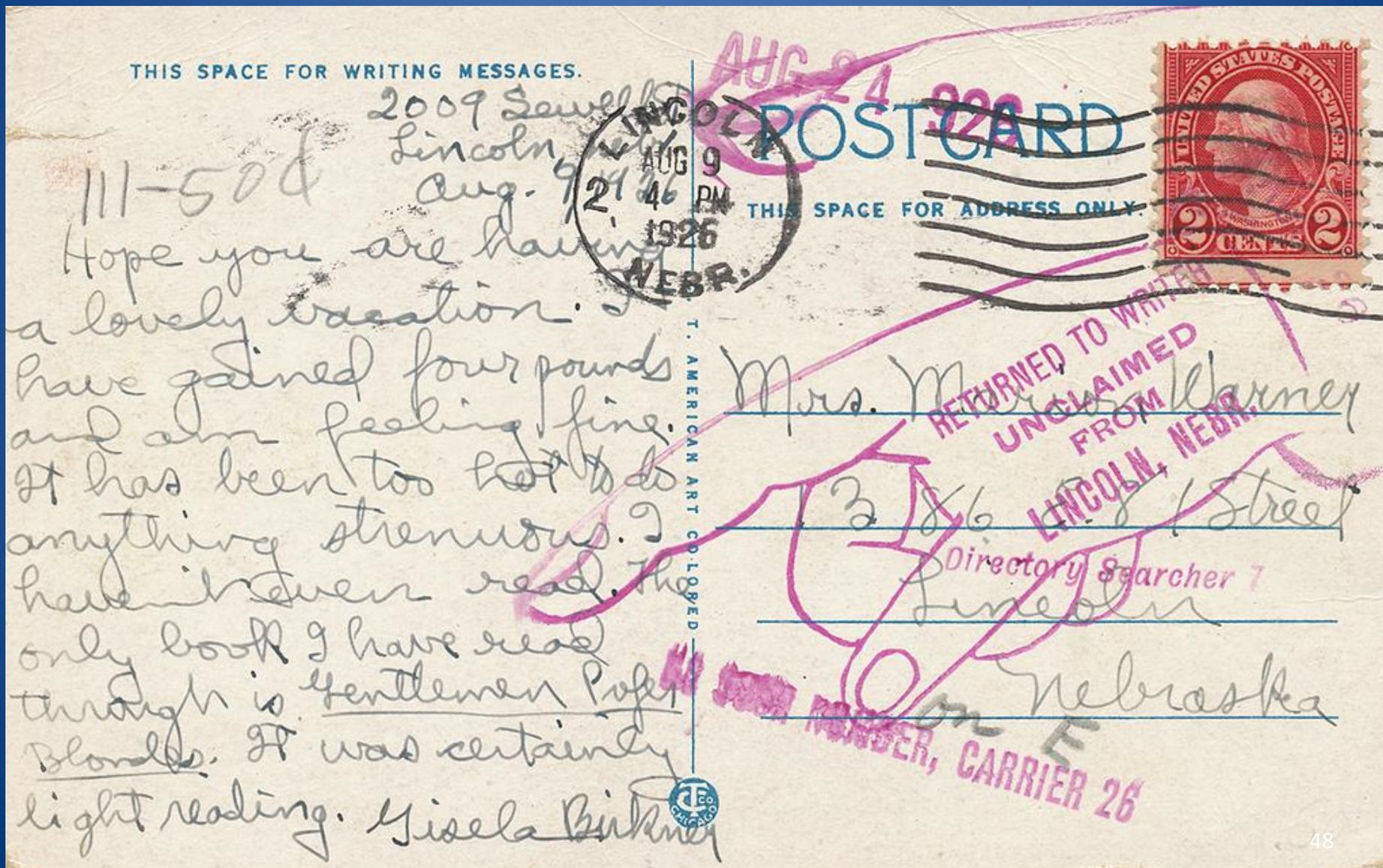


Undeliverable Cards from 1924 to 1941

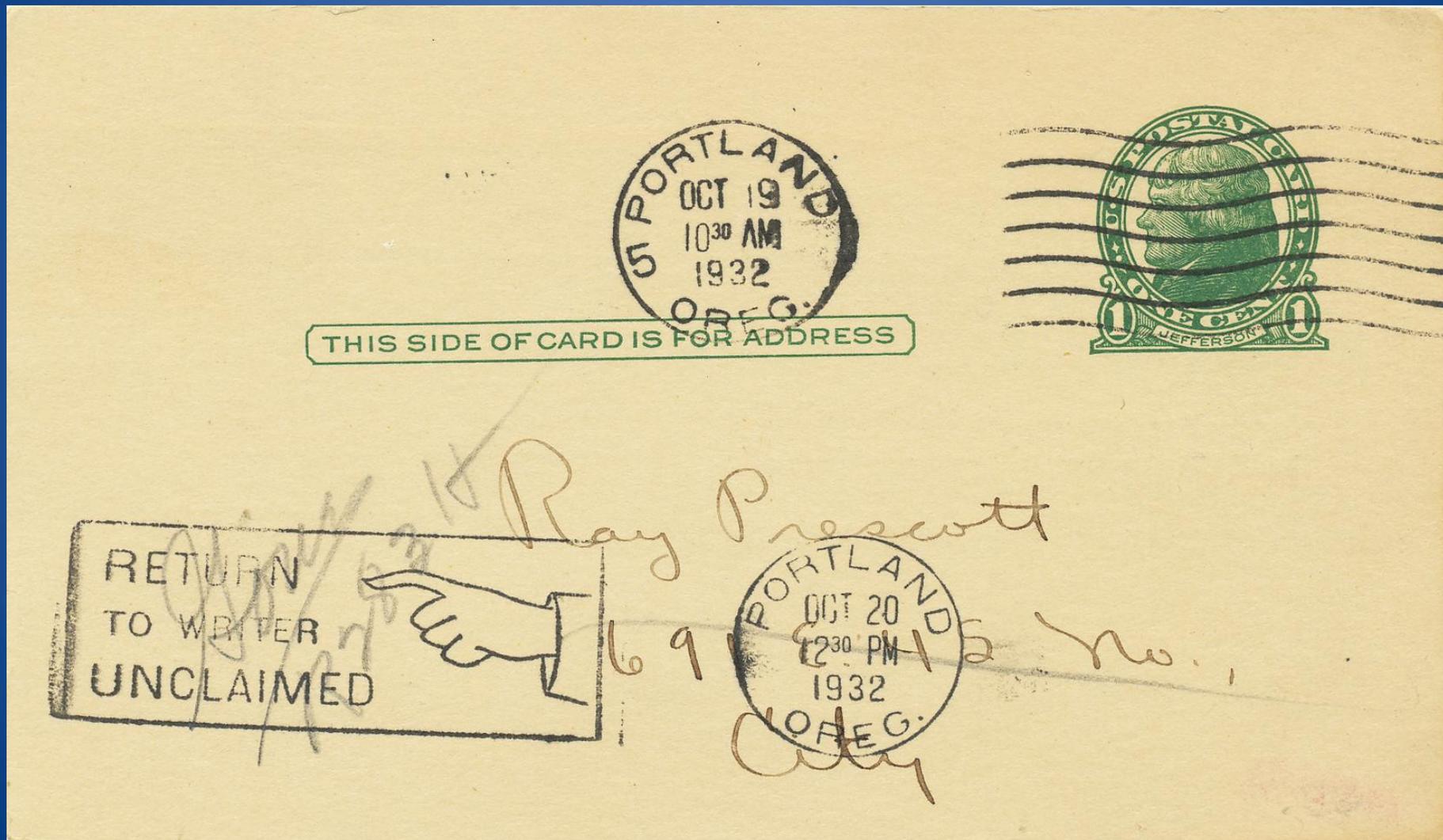
Further important changes occurred in the handling of undeliverable postal and post cards as of the 1924 *PL&R*, Section 611, which stated:

Per Section 611. So now only *local* undeliverable cards (all the three types) could be RTW without additional postage being paid. All other types (all undeliverable non-local cards (all the three types)) could only be RTW if the writer guaranteed that they would pay a return charge (the card postage rate) for their return. These guaranteed returns before 1941 are, in the opinion of the presenter, rarely seen.

Aug. 26, 1926 undeliverable *local* Lincoln, Neb. private post card, 2¢ special 1925-1928 private post card rate paid. As w/CC, RTW as 'UNCLAIMED' (correctly in this period).



This is a 1932 *local* Portland, Ore. Single postal card w/CC, 1¢ rate paid. As an undeliverable ('UNCLAIMED') local card in this period, it was correctly RTW.



Shown here is one of only two known examples of return-postage-guaranteed for return of undeliverable non-local cards before 1941. Correctly RTW 'Postager Due 1 Cent.' 1¢ postage due stamp indicated that the 1¢ amount correctly due was collected from the writer of the card.

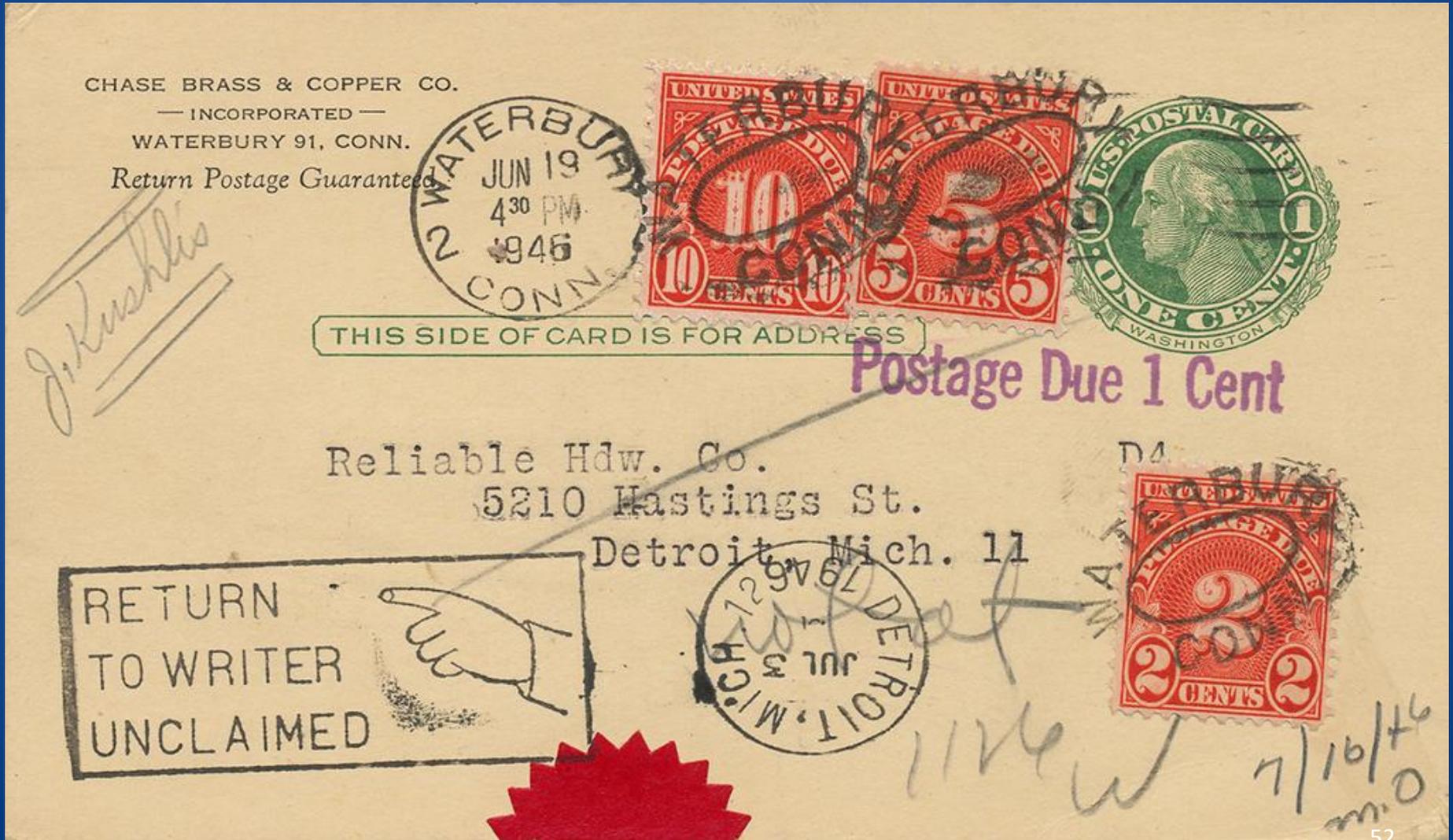


Undeliverable Cards from 1941 to 1955

The next major change in how these undeliverable cards were handled was announced in *Postal Bulletin No. 18327* (November 18, 1941) that corresponded to the Order of the Postmaster General No. 16411 (dated November 6, 1941), that amended Section 802 of the 1940 *PL&R*, where we find:

“Unpaid, misdirected, unmailable, and unclaimed domestic postal cards and post cards, whether single or double and whether addressed for local delivery or otherwise, shall be returned to the sender only when they bear his return card in the upper left corner of the address side, together with a pledge to pay return postage (the card rate of the time).

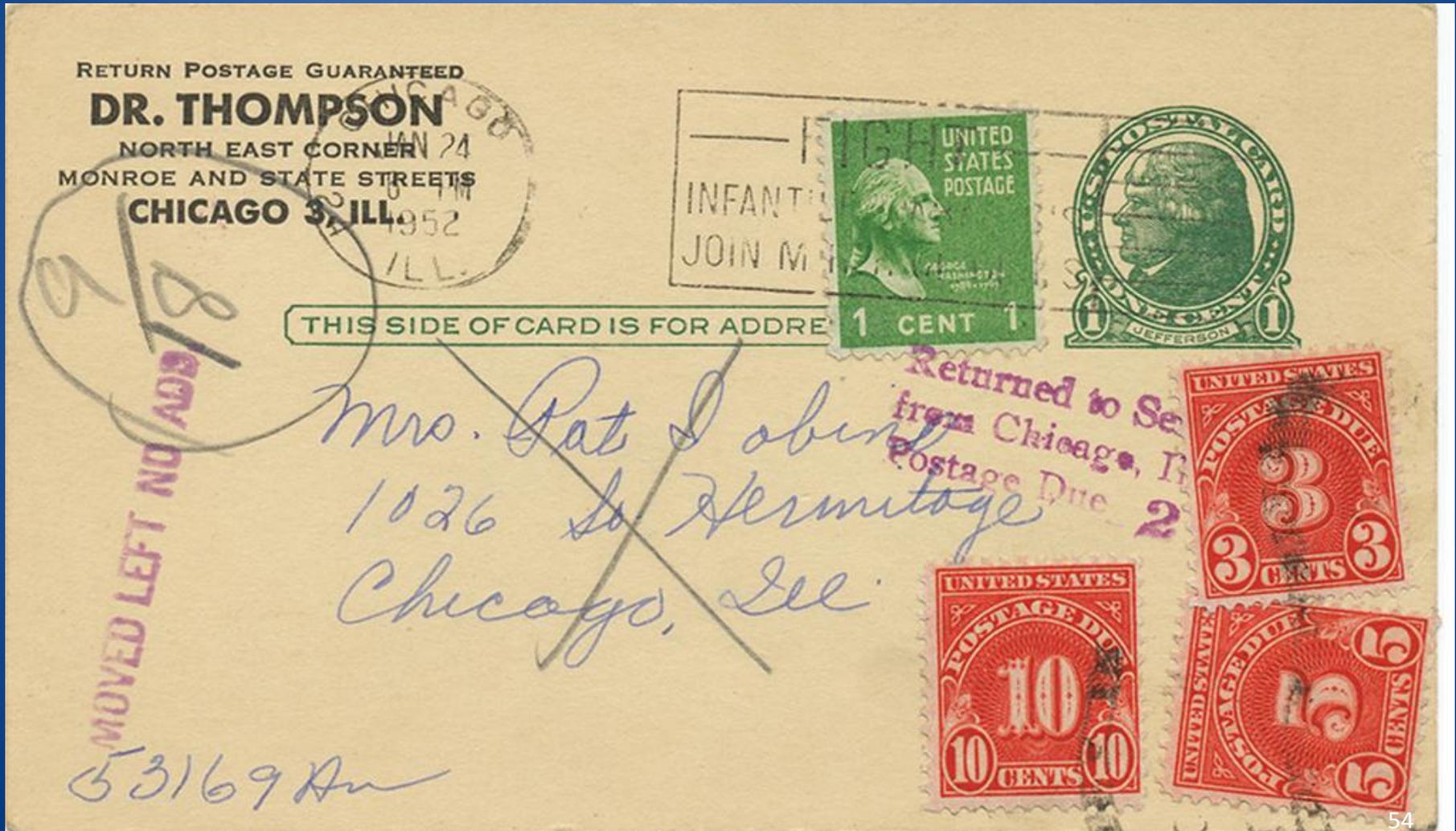
This 1¢ 1946 Waterbury, Conn. to Detroit (non-local) reply-paid postal card was undeliverable as it was 'UNCLAIMED.' As return postage was guaranteed with a return address, the card was correctly RTW. The 17¢ in due stamps indicates that a total of 17 cards were RTW at the 1¢ ('Postage Due 1 Cent') return (domestic card) rate.



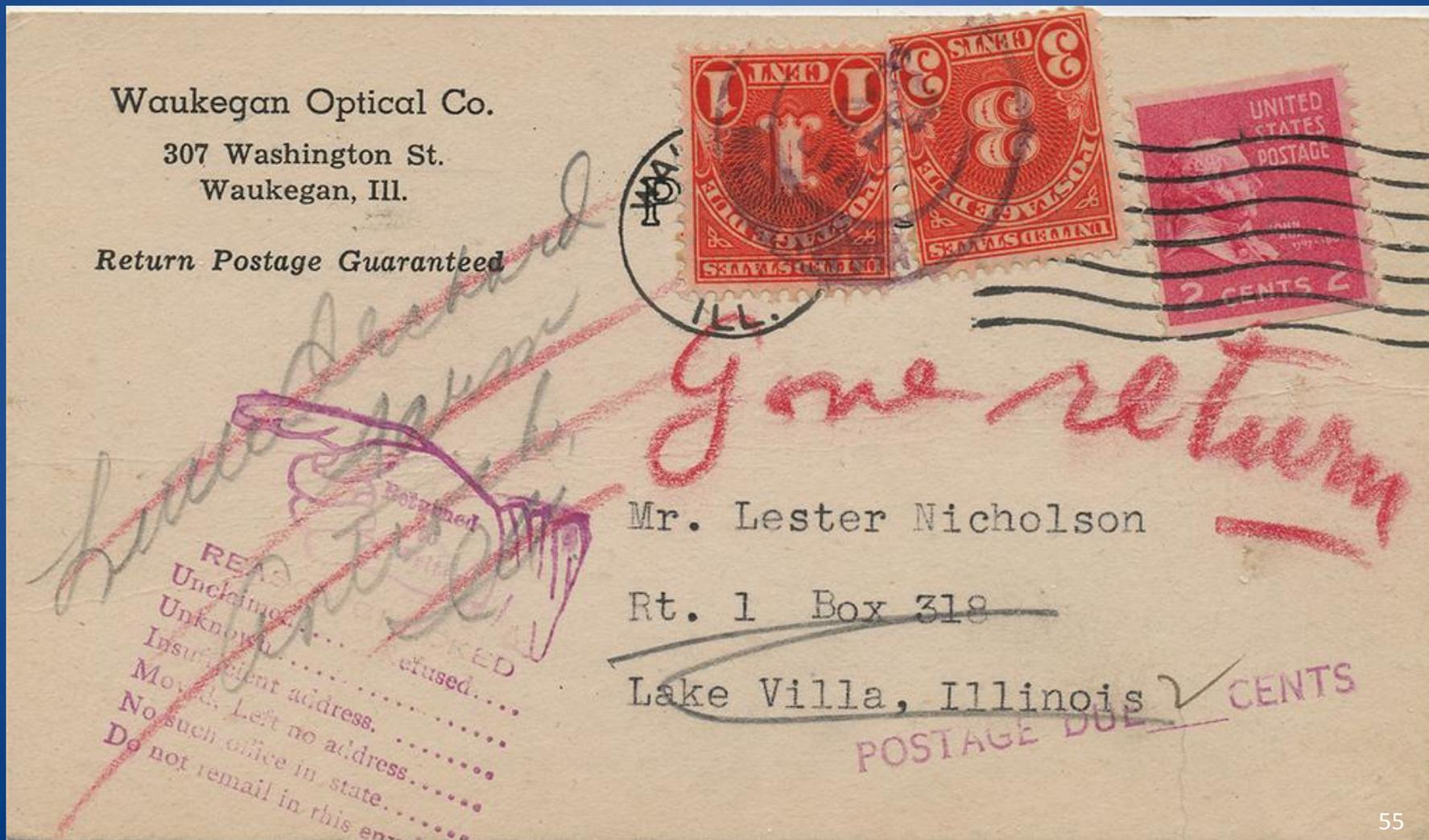
This non-local 1948 1¢ postal card was undeliverable because it was an 'Insufficient address' at the 'DELIVERY DIV.' The return was allowed because of the printed 'Return Postage Guaranteed.' The 10¢ in due stamps indicates that a total of 10 cards were RTW at the 1¢ return (domestic card) rate.



This is an undeliverable Jan. 24, 1952 local Chicago, Ill. 1¢ postal card paid at the 2¢ card rate with the 1¢ postal card indicium and an added 1¢ stamp. Also correctly returned when 'MOVED LEFT NO ADDRESS' since appropriate return postage was guaranteed with a return address. As indicated by the 18¢ in due stamps, a total of 9 cards were correctly RTW at the 2¢ domestic card rate.



This 1953 (reverse date) non-local private post card was mailed at the correct 2¢ post card rate. It was undeliverable as the addressee was 'Gone.' It was correctly RTW because the return was guaranteed with a return address. The 4¢ in due stamps indicates that a total of 2 cards were RTW at the 2¢ return (domestic card) rate.



Undeliverable Cards from 1955 to 1970

Frequent changes in how undeliverable cards were handled continued. In 1955 most of the new 1941 rules concerning the return of undeliverable cards remained the same, with one exception. This was found in *Postal Procedures Transmittal letter 3*, dated Aug. 1, 1955 where the following was found in new Section 345.22b:

That is, the only change was that undeliverable double cards were again to be RTW without collection of postage. I have no examples of this type to show.

This 3¢ 1959 local postal card was undeliverable as there was 'No such number' at the delivery office. As return postage was guaranteed with a return address, for this time period, this undeliverable postal card was correctly RTW with 3¢ (the domestic card rate) due for the return. (Courtesy Roland Austin)



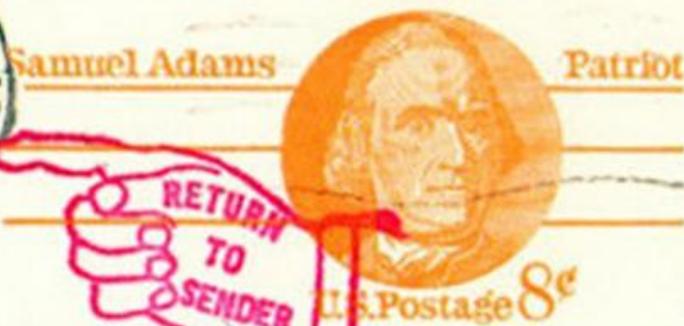
Undeliverable Cards from 1970 to 1979

Further major changes occurred as 1970 approached. These first announcements were incomplete and were more completely announced in the *Postal Service Manual*, in its *Transmittal Letter-1* of October 1, 1970 (now Section 159.212).

Too complicated to list (RTW policy depended on return comment in return address, and examples extremely rare). Details in Wawrukiewicz book.

This June 2, 1975 8¢ precanceled postal card, was mailed from the Campbell Public Library with the endorsement 'ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED' placed in the return address. Because of this endorsement (see the partial; statement on the prior page), when it was undeliverable ('MOVED LEFT NO ADDRESS'), it was correctly returned with 'Postage Due 10.'

Campbell Public Library
70 North Central Avenue
Campbell, CA 95008
Phone: 378-8122
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Postage Due 10

MOVED LEFT NO ADDRESS

Richard Taylor
600 Marathon Dr. #30
Campbell, Cal 95008



A
N
C
W.

Undeliverable Cards from 1979 to 1985

Yet another set of laws and regulations concerning the return of undeliverable as addressed cards was stated in *Domestic Mail Manual* Issue 1 of July 30, 1979 (Section 159.151). 'Return Postage Guaranteed' was still part of the card return process.

Again, too complicated to list (RTW policy depended on return comment in return address, and examples extremely rare). Details in Wawrukiewicz book.

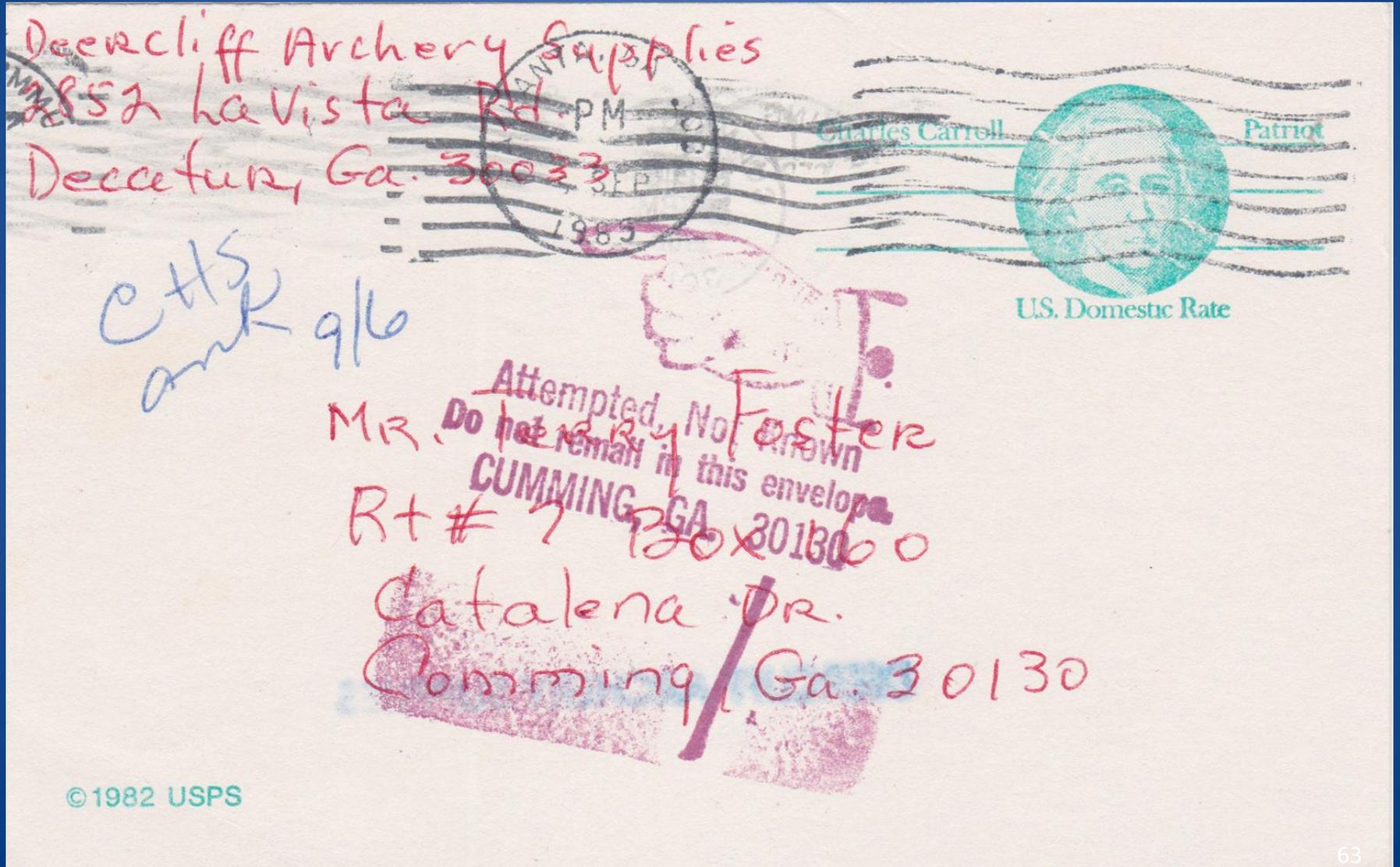
This postal card was returned in the period reflecting these new 1979 rules. This Dec. 1980 card was undeliverable. As the handstamp 'RETURN POSTAGE / GUARANTEED' had been placed and there was a return address, the card was correctly RTW with the 10¢ card rate due. (Courtesy Roland Austin)



Undeliverable Cards from 1985 to Present

As of Postal Bulletin No. 21500 of February 14, 1985, Section 159.151 of the Domestic Mail Manual was amended, effective February 17, 1985. With this amendment in the Domestic Mail Manual, for the first time since 1893, all undeliverable cards could be returned, and returned free of charge, whether or not there was any endorsement. All three card typed returnable free.

Sept. 1985 postal card mailed between two cities in Georgia, Undeliverable ('Not Known') so RTW. As of Feb. 17, 1985, this return free. To remit, new postage needed. But not remailed.



1986 Business Reply Card. Undeliverable because the address was guilty of 'FALSE REPRESENTATION,' so RTS. As of Feb. 17, 1985, this return free. Of course, the card was not remailed because of the 'FALSE REPRESENTATION.'



Miscellaneous Card Usages

There are a number of miscellaneous card uses that I want you to see, again to show how incredibly varied the postal history of domestic card uses are. I am showing these chronologically only as a way of organizing them.

What follows is a statement made in the Jan. 18, 1904 *Postal Bulletin (PB)*:

“The law officer for this Department advises that cards issued by private persons bearing on the address side the words “United States of America,” are in “likeness or similitude” of the regular United States postal card, and therefore in violation of law, and unmailable. (Sec. 1591, Postal Laws and Regulations.) However, in order to give owners of such cards reasonable time to dispose of those on hand, postmasters will accept them for mailing until July 1, 1904, upon payment of postage at the proper rate. On and after July 1, 1904, such cards will be treated as unmailable at any rate of postage.”

This latter fact is probably best seen in the case of the private mailing card shown in the next page, franked with a 1903 1¢ Franklin stamp that bears the phrase Postal Card on its address side. This Aug. 4, 1904 post card, owned by Jerry Johnson, was mailed from Narrowsburgh, N.Y. to Brooklyn, N.Y. It was ‘UNMAILABLE’ because after July 1, 1904, “PRIVATE MAILING OR POST CARDS BEARING THE WORDS POSTAL CARD, OR UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, ARE UNMAILABLE.”

HELD "UNMAILABLE." PRIVATE MAILING
OR POST CARDS, BEARING THE WORDS
POSTAL CARD, OR UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA, ARE UNMAILABLE.

UNMAILABLE.

PRIVATE MAILING CARD.—AUTHORIZED BY ACT OF CONGRESS OF MAY 19, 1898.



Postal Card

THIS SIDE FOR THE ADDRESS ONLY.



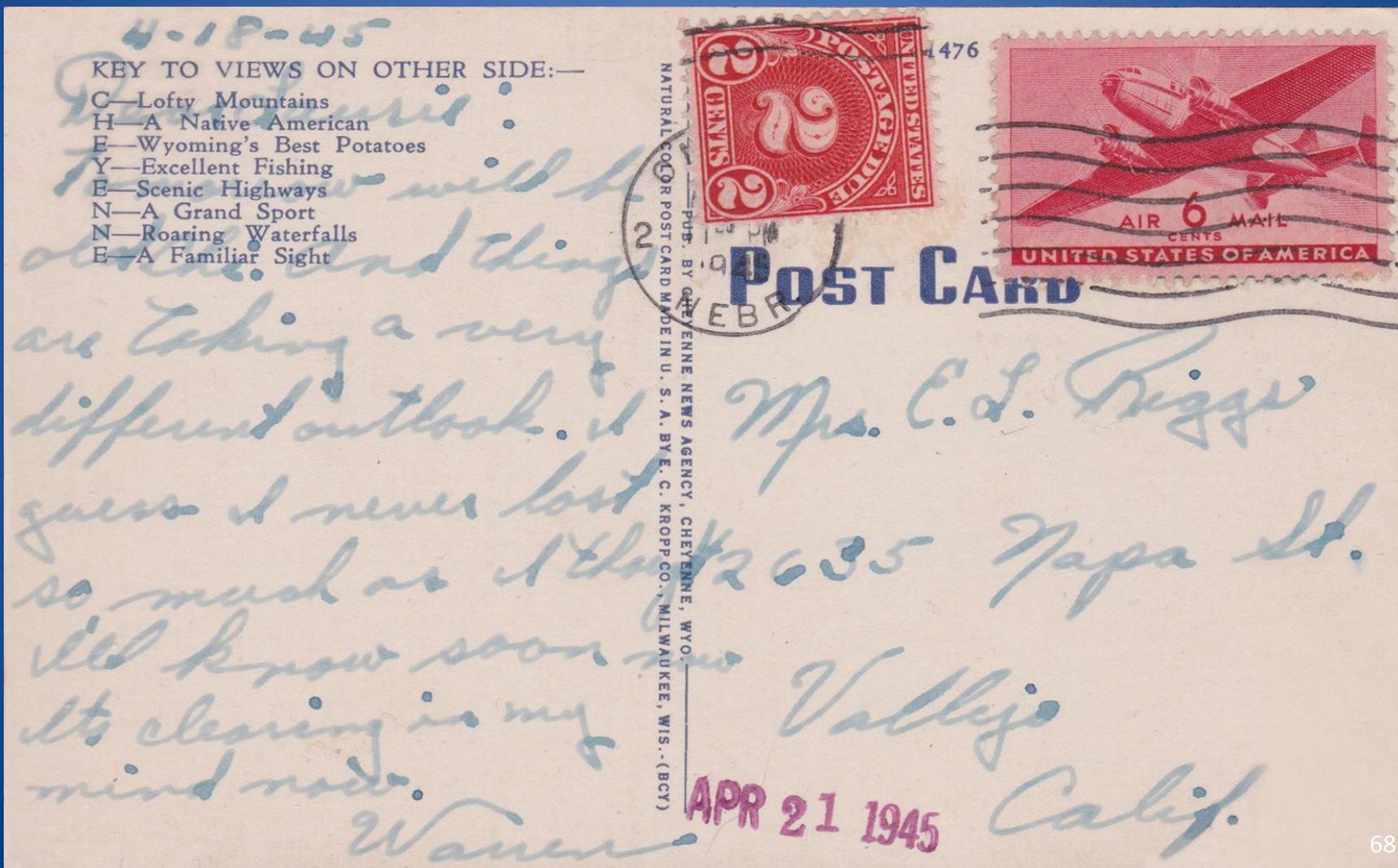
NEW YORK
AUG 15
7 12 PM
1904
N. Y.
R. P. O.

HELD "UNMAILABLE." PRIVATE MAILING
OR POST CARDS, BEARING THE WORDS
POSTAL CARD, OR UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA, ARE UNMAILABLE.

Mrs P. Lewis
537 Chauncy St.
Blyn.
N.Y.

UNMAILABLE.

This is an April 1945 post card, 6¢ paid. At this time, airmail cards were required to be mailed at the domestic letter airmail rate which was 8¢ per ounce. As, incorrectly, the card was not held for postage, 2¢ was due from the addressee. The 2¢ Vallejo postage due stamp indicates that, on delivery, the addressee paid the 2¢ that was due.



THE END

I hope that it was a useful introduction to what I consider an important and exciting but complex postal history story about unmailable and undeliverable domestic cards.

A Repeat Comment

If you were confused at any time in this presentation remember (a) there is a Q and A now, (b) it is being recorded, (c) there is a handout that repeats some of the important rules , and (d) my book *Insights into U.S. Postal History, 1855 – 2016* discusses the rules in great detail. This book is available from the American Philatelic Society at a special price to APS members.

This is a 1937 reply-paid postal card w/CC from Yellow Springs, Ohio to New York City. As a non-local card between 1924 and 1941, this card was incorrectly 'RETURN TO WRITER' because the addressee was 'Not Found.' Note the correct *PL&R* admonition not to deface the correctly returned reply-paid card. This admonition was first mentioned in the 1902 *PL&R*.



THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS

Mr. Edmund S. Cramer, Jr.
230 Park Ave.,
New York City.

~~RETURN TO WRITER
DO NOT STAMP OR
DEFACE REPLY CARD
UNDER SECTION 806 P. L. & R.
NEW YORK, N. Y. INC. DEPT~~

Edmund S. Cramer, Jr.

Unpaid Apr. 18, 1889 Chicago letter with a return address. Thus instead of sending the letter to the DLO, it was now 'Returned for Postage' at mailing office (no charge for this return). The 2¢ for up-to-one ounce postage paid and letter remailed on Apr. 22, 1889.

Undated Elmira, N.Y. letter with inadequate address (misaddressed - no Post Office given) mailed at the 3¢ for up-to-1/2 ounce rate. So, 'RETURNED FOR BETTER DIRECTION.' As 3¢ postage paid, use before Oct. 1, 1883. Address not corrected.

- 

This 1965 postal card was posted in Vienna, Austria using an invalid (ink line plus '0') Canadian postal card with the Canadian indicium, and thus was unpaid. Someone indicated that 25 gold centimes or 8¢ Canadian was due. At the time the surface postal card rate between Canada and non-British UPU countries was 4¢ so twice that or 8¢ was correctly due, as indicated by all the markings and 8¢ in postage due stamps on this card.



Per the 1893 PL&R: undeliverable single postal cards could not be returned to writer. As of section 673 of the 1902 PL&R, double post cards could be bearing returned to the writer.

July 1, 1898 authorized the transmission of private mailing cards with a written message at 1¢ per card. Only for domestic mails, For foreign use required letter postage (5¢). Must bear on the address side: “Private Mailing Card— Authorized by act of Congress of May 19, 1898.”

On Nov. 7, 1898, now authorized to Canada and Mexico (1¢) and to UPU countries (2¢). PB 6005) Nov. 7, 1899: and especially to the fact that letter postage is chargeable on Private Mailing Cards which do not bear upon the front—in addition to any other print—three words “Postal Card—Carte - postale/” and that ordinary printed cards which bear on the front any other words than the address, and the name and address (printed or stamped) of the sender are likewise chargeable with letter postage.

Non-conforming cards are “unmailable” PB 8447 (April 23, 1901)

PB 6652 (Dec. 28. 1901) Change words on address side to “Post Cards,” not Private Mailing Cards The latter allowed for a while.

PB 8233 (March 4, 1907) e. The face of the card may be divided by a vertical line; the left half to be used for a message, etc., but that to the right for the address only.

f. Very thin sheets of paper may be attached to the card, and then only on condition that they completely adhere thereto.

g. Such sheets may bear both writing and printing.

Also note the 1985 DLB admonition to the writer about the importance of the return address (and lack of it). This admonition is very similar to the 1893 one in this chapter, and suggests that in many ways things are still the same.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
ST. PAUL, MN. 55101-9514

DEAR CUSTOMER:

IF A RETURN ADDRESS HAD BEEN ON YOUR MAIL, IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SENT TO THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE TO BE OPENED AND RETURNED, IT COULD HAVE BEEN RETURNED AT THE POINT OF ENTRY.

RESPECTFULLY,
DEAD LETTER OFFICE

OPENED
IN DEAD LETTER OFFICE
ST. PAUL, MN 55101-9514

1893 New York City (NYC) inquiry notice sent to a NYC writer for address correction (no address). As the return for better address process began, some cities (e.g., NYC and Chicago) sent address correction form, not RTW.

Unaddressed Matter. (N. Y., 30 I. Ed. 5-2,000.)

2d Notice,
NOV 21 1893

2d Notice,
NOV 21 1893

Post Office, New York, N. Y.

INQUIRY DEPT FOR MISSING AND DEAD LETTERS.

Room 14, Second Floor, P. O. Building.

NOV 21 1893, 189 .

An unaddressed article supposed to belong to you is held at this office, and will be delivered, if identified as your property, *only upon presentation of this notice*, between 9 A. M. and 4 P. M., at the Inquiry Department, Room 14 Second Floor, General Post Office.

Packages will be held subject to call for thirty days.

No. 371 C. VAN COTT, *Postmaster.*

5-484

1894 New Haven Conn. official 'REQUEST FOR BETTER ADDRESS' postal card indicating an item with a CC and an inadequate address has been put into General Delivery of the mailing office as unmailable until the writer can supply a better address.

REQUEST FOR BETTER ADDRESS.

Post Office, *New Haven, Conn.* FEB 26 1894

REPLY AT ONCE.

There is a letter in this Office, bearing your business card and supposed to be from you, addressed to

C. J. Blanchard Div. School not at

As the address contains no street and number, and the party is unknown to us, we are unable to deliver the letter, and have placed it in the General Delivery subject to call. If you can supply a better address, please fill the blanks at the bottom of this card and return it to this office, giving street and number, or occupation or title, or some clue that will help the letter carriers to find the party.

The delivery of mail to transient parties would be greatly facilitated if marked "Transient."

N. D. SPERRY, P. M. Postmaster.

The above-mentioned letter is intended for _____
_____, No. _____ street.

Occupation or title: _____

PLEASE RETURN THIS NOTICE WITH YOUR REPLY.

5-2598

1922 Niland, Cal. letter misaddressed only to city. As indicated in official postal card above, it was then placed in General Delivery ('Placed in General Delivery / Because Address Incorrect').



From Minor Division of the DLO - handled valuable enclosures of minor importance such as postage stamps, photographs, unsigned deeds, wills, contracts, etc.



The Minor Division also used the circle to identify letters opened and found to contain no enclosure of value.



The Triangle figure, the most commonly seen, was used to identify items that were RTW by the DLO Returning Division. This division returned all the dead mail containing a legible address but with no apparent value.



The Property Division of the DLO used the Square figure to identify property of a bulky sort. This division handled letters not advertised and marked unclaimed and undeliverable parcels, except those that were registered. Known Property Division envelopes reveals returned foreign letters through this division.