

Wichita Stamp Club Newsletter

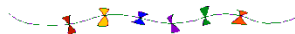


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Editor



"Go Fly A Stamp"



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A Philatelic Visit to Sumner County (Part II)

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SUMNER COUNTY PART 2 –

THE CHISHOLM TRAIL IN SOUTHERN KANSAS by Jeff Lough

The Chisholm Trail was used in the late 19th century to drive cattle from grazing locations in Texas to Kansas rail heads. In Texas, there were hundreds of feeder trails heading north to the main cattle trails. Jesse Chisholm first marked the famous Chisholm Trail in the 1850s for his own wagons. It went from his southern trading post near the Red River to his northern trading post near Kansas City, Kansas. Chisholm had also built several trading posts in what is now western Oklahoma.

Many thousands of head of cattle went along this route in its later reincarnation from the Red River Station at the mouth of Salt Creek in Montague County in north Texas into the Indian Territory to Wichita, Abilene, Ellsworth and Newton. Hundreds of cowboys drove these cattle and their rowdy ways contributed to many legends and a degree of suffering for others. This way of life was found in the southern border town of Hunnewell, KS located not far from where the Chisholm Trail crossed into Kansas in western Sumner County.

HUNNEWELL

Just across the border from Oklahoma is the current bedroom community of Hunnewell. Hunnewell was named after the president of the Kansas City, Lawrence & Southern Kansas Railway that had a branch called the Sumner County Railroad that ran through Hunnewell. The K. C., L. & SK Railway started the town with the collusion of several area cattlemen. On August 12, 1880 the post office was established and Frank P. Schiffbauer appointed post master. Hunnewell has been the scene of a variety of wild and life-taking events including the shooting up of the town by three ruffians in 1881 and the lynching of at least one drifter. Figure 1 shows a nice cover using Scott #213 bright green American Bank Note Washington dated Nov. 11, 1880 with a circular date and town postmark and killed with a target cancel. Also find a considerably later post card dated Jan. 20, 1914. The picture side of the card (Figure 2) shows a reforming attitude posited by a resident to a young lady in Cairo, Kansas a hundred miles to the northwest. The post card is stamped, on the front side (Figure 3) with a Scott #374 and cancelled with a straight line cancellation acting both as a postmark and a killer.



Figure 1
Hunnewell cover of Nov. 11, 1880

Figure 2
Reforming attitude post card at right

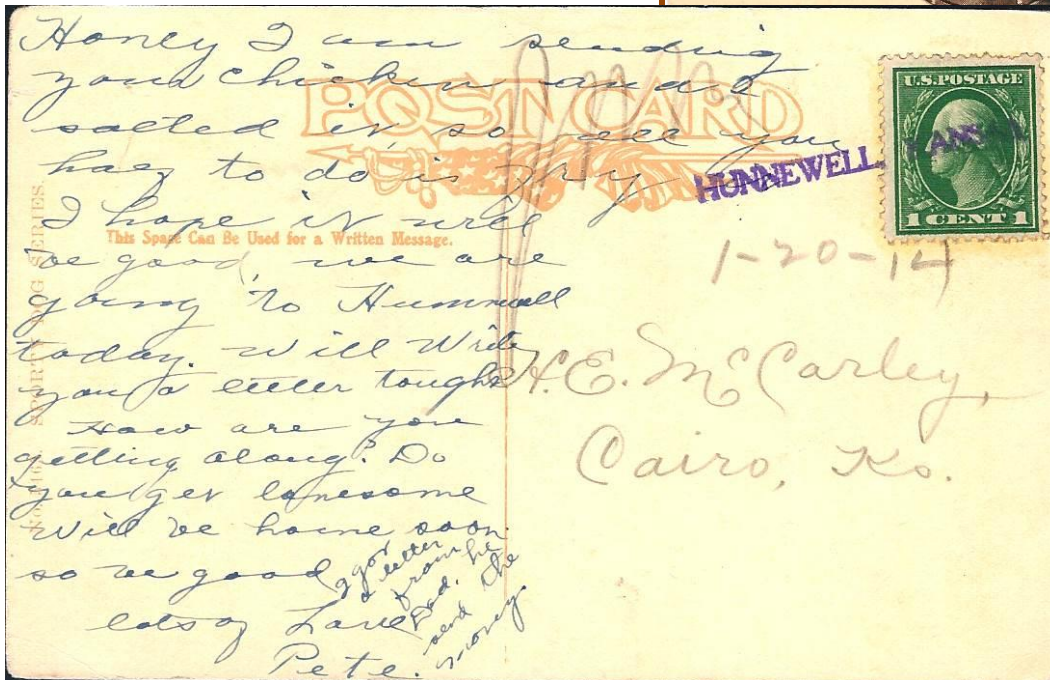


Figure 3
Hunnewell Post Card to Cairo, KS 1914

ROME

Rome is found a number of miles north of the Hunnewell on the way to the county seat, Wellington. At first Rome consisted of only a post office ½ mile west of the present location of the community. It had been established on January 6, 1874. The first store and a lumber yard in Rome were started in 1884. In 1886 an effort was made to move the town two miles south and change the name to “Carl City.” The city scales were moved down one day by the Carl City crew and back the next day by the Rome people. The railroad refused to put in a switch for Carl City and that ended the struggle. Up until the 1930s Rome had a school and numerous homes. A picture of the old Santa Fe depot in Rome is found in Figure 4. Nowadays Rome continues to be on a branch of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe and has a grain elevator, a couple abandoned commercial buildings and a couple homes. A piece of postal stationery (Scott #U385a, Figure 5) stamped by an old fashioned circular date (May 26, 1904) and town postmark and a crude appearing killer is addressed by a young lady in Rome to a male relative in Iowa.



Figure 4
Rome Santa Fe Depot

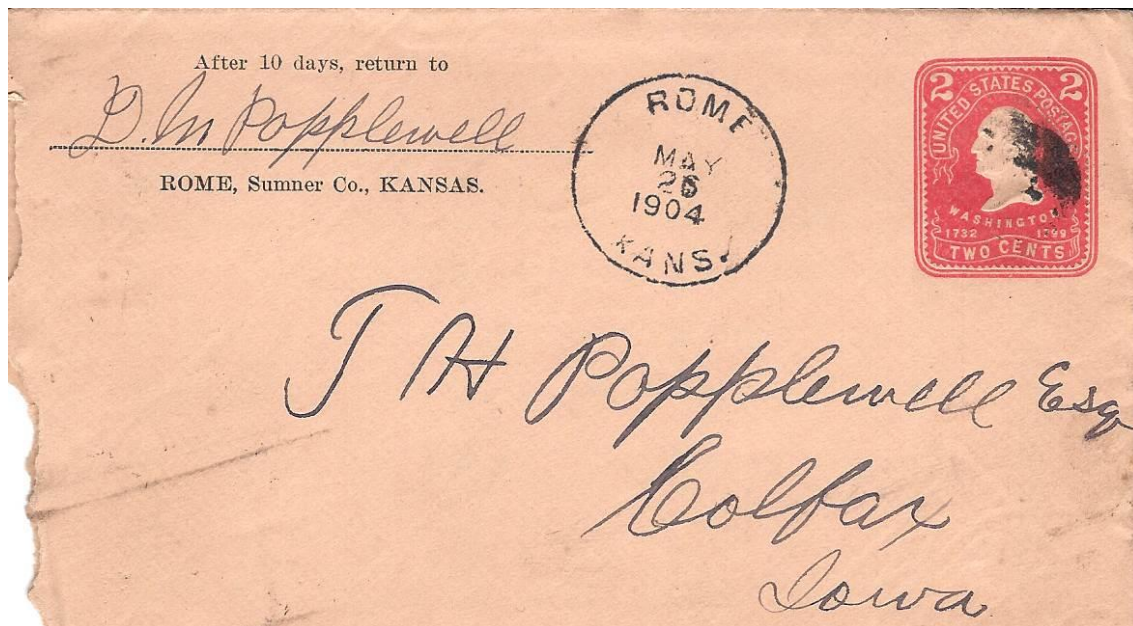


Figure 5
Rome, Kans. Cover May 26, 1904

It is interesting that another Rome, Kansas, one that never had a post office, was proposed just to the west of Hays. A town company that included 21 year old Buffalo Bill Cody was established for that town. The town grew to a size of 2000. Cody reportedly offended a railroad officer and the railroad depot was subsequently built in nearby Hays. A marker on the west side of Fort Hays State University shows where the proposed town was to have been located.

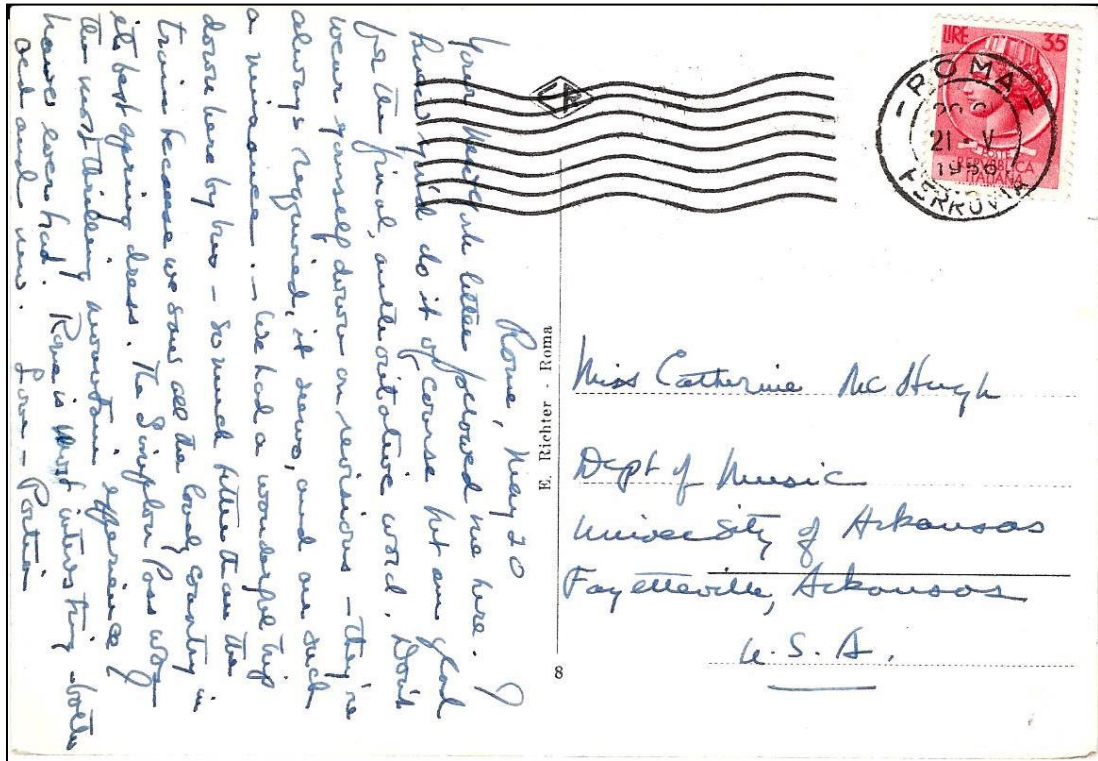


Figure 6
Rome Italy Post Card



Figure 7
Reverse side-Constantine's Arch

A number of other towns have been called Rome. There are Rome's in South Dakota and Nebraska and have been two in Oklahoma.

A post card (Figure 6) from Italy using Italy Scott #631 illustrates (Figure 7) Constantine's Arch from the city that holds the likely origin of the name for all the American Rome's. Rome, New York is the origin of the patriotically cacheted cover (Figure 8) sent to a soldier stationed overseas in WWII.



Figure 8
Rome, New York Cover WWII



Figure 9
Main Street Perth, Kansas

PER
TH

Northwest of Rome is the small residential area of Perth. It was a thriving town in 1882 when the post office was established. Figure 9 gives a sense of what main street Perth looked like. On July 25, 1882 the post office was established. The first postmaster was Benniah F. Grove. The accompanying May 8, 1900 cover with Scott #220 (Figure 10) probably enclosed an order to a medical supply company in Topeka that did a considerable business throughout rural Kansas.

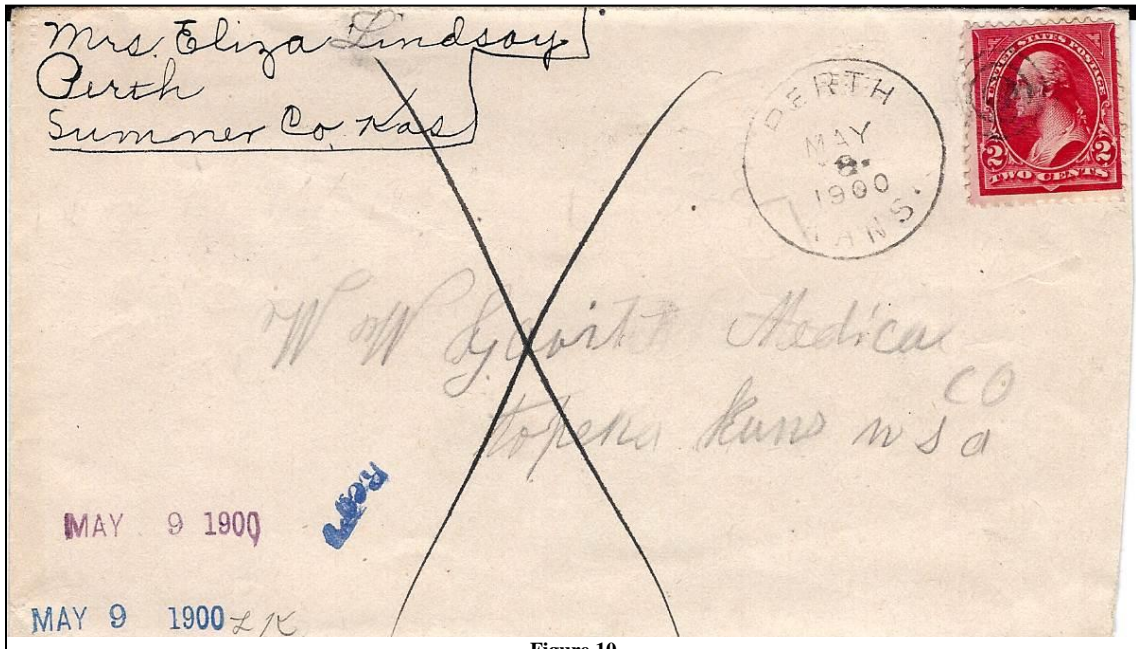


Figure 10
Perth, Kansas Cover May 8, 1900

ARGONIA

Argonia, on the far western side of Sumner County, was founded by a town company headed by Joseph Hollowell in 1882. It was named for the ship Argo in Greek mythology. The owner of the first mercantile, A. B. Cook, served as the first postmaster. He soon sold the store with the post office to L. L. Crites. The small social cover (Figure 11) is stamped with Scott #184 and cancelled with a fine double line purple cancellation. The cover illustrated by Figure 12 was sent to Ravenna, KS that at the time was part of the now departed Garfield County. The location of Ravenna is now in Finney County. This piece of postal stationery (Scott #U313 ("G" in "Postage" has a bar) has a nice oval town and date cancellation. In its early days Argonia was noted for its flour mill. Later it gained notoriety for having the first woman mayor in the U. S.

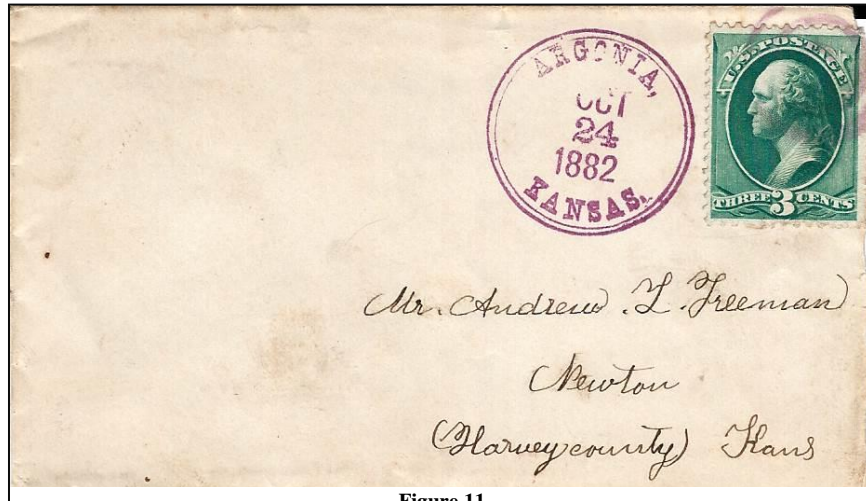


Figure 11
Argonia, Kansas Social Cover Oct. 24, 1882

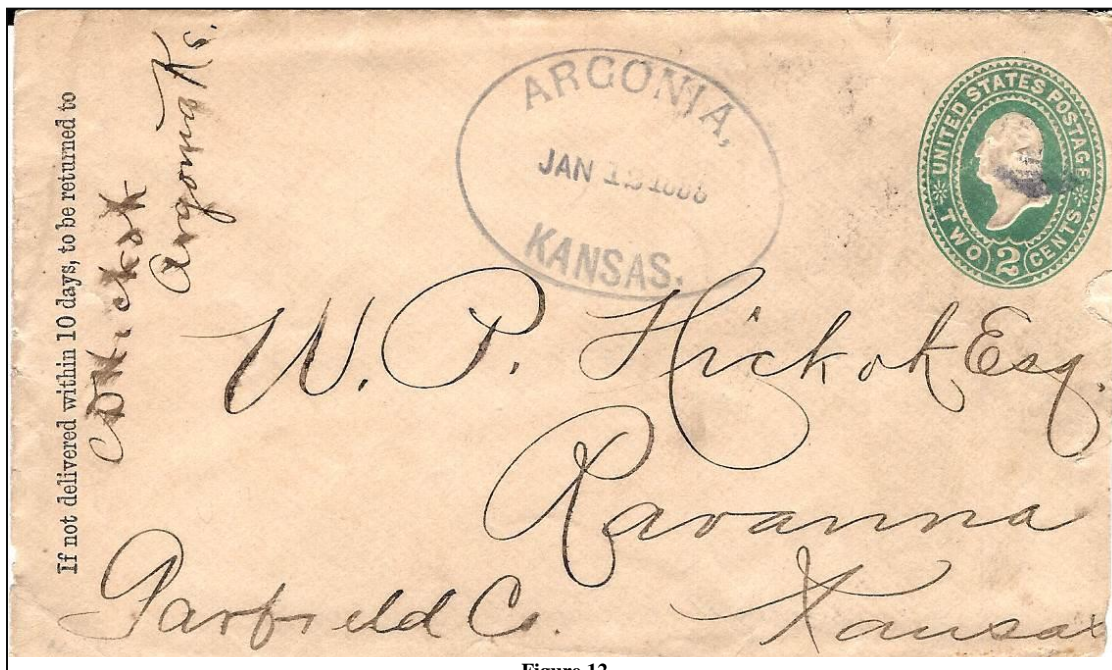


Figure 12
Argonia, Kansas Cover to Ravanna, Kansas

WELLINGTON

Wellington's post office was established in 1871 with C. R. Godfrey as postmaster. He provided postal service out of his home. The first official post office location was in Dr. P. A. Woods' drug store. Dr. S. Mann was appointed postmaster in 1873 and served until 1875 when Oscar Hackney was appointed postmaster and moved it to the "Bishop Building." The post office was made into a money order post office in 1875. L. F. Blodgett was appointed postmaster in 1877 and moved the post office to the Gadfrey Building on Seventh Street. Figure 13, with a Newton & Amarillo Railway Post Office cancellation dated April 1, 1909 on Scott #333 has a nice Antler Hotel corner card. The September 24, 1917 cover (Figure 14) with the Wellington flag cancel is marked with a private company "Received" stamp. It has a very nice poultry company corner card.

When the Santa Fe Railroad completed its line to Wellington in 1887 Wellington became the headquarters of the Santa Fe's "Panhandle Division." At one time five hundred men were employed in various capacities by the Santa Fe in Wellington, including shops and roundhouses. Wellington suffered when the division headquarters was moved to Amarillo, Texas in 1960. Wellington is home to the Chisholm Trail Museum, housed in a former three story physician-owned hospital. Wellington is central to Sumner County's and Kansas' famed wheat industry.

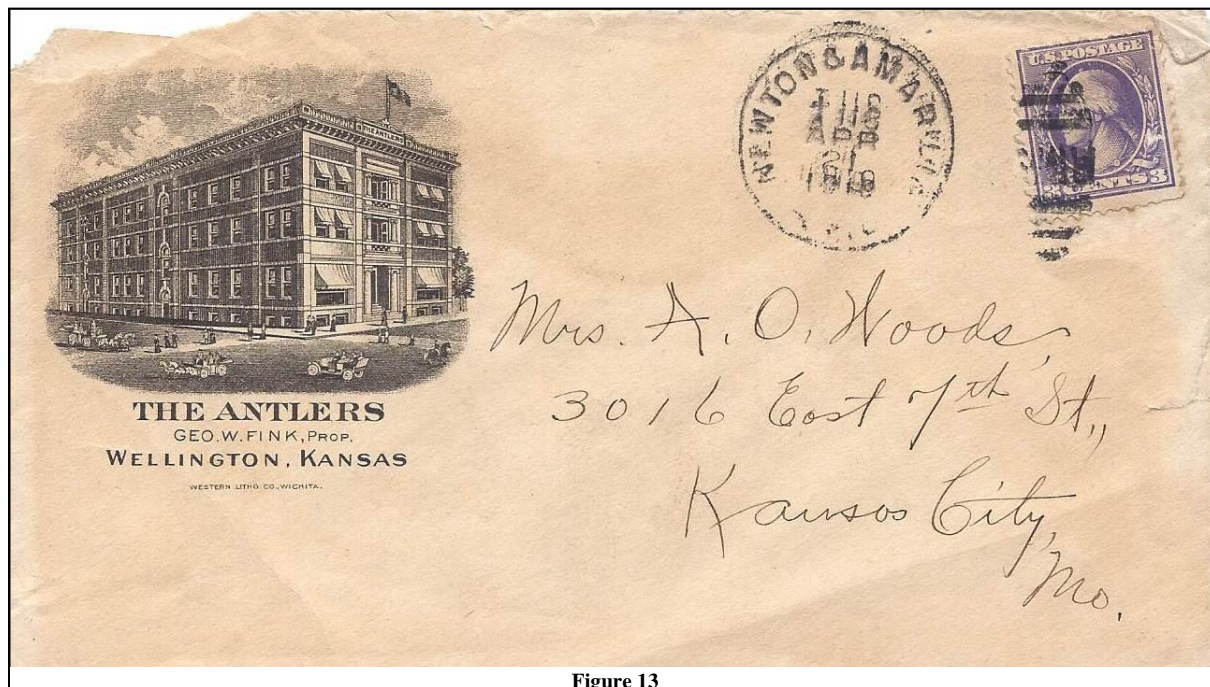


Figure 13
Wellington, Kansas RPO Cover 1909



Figure 14
Wellington, Kansas Commercial Cover Sept. 24, 1917

BLACKSTONE

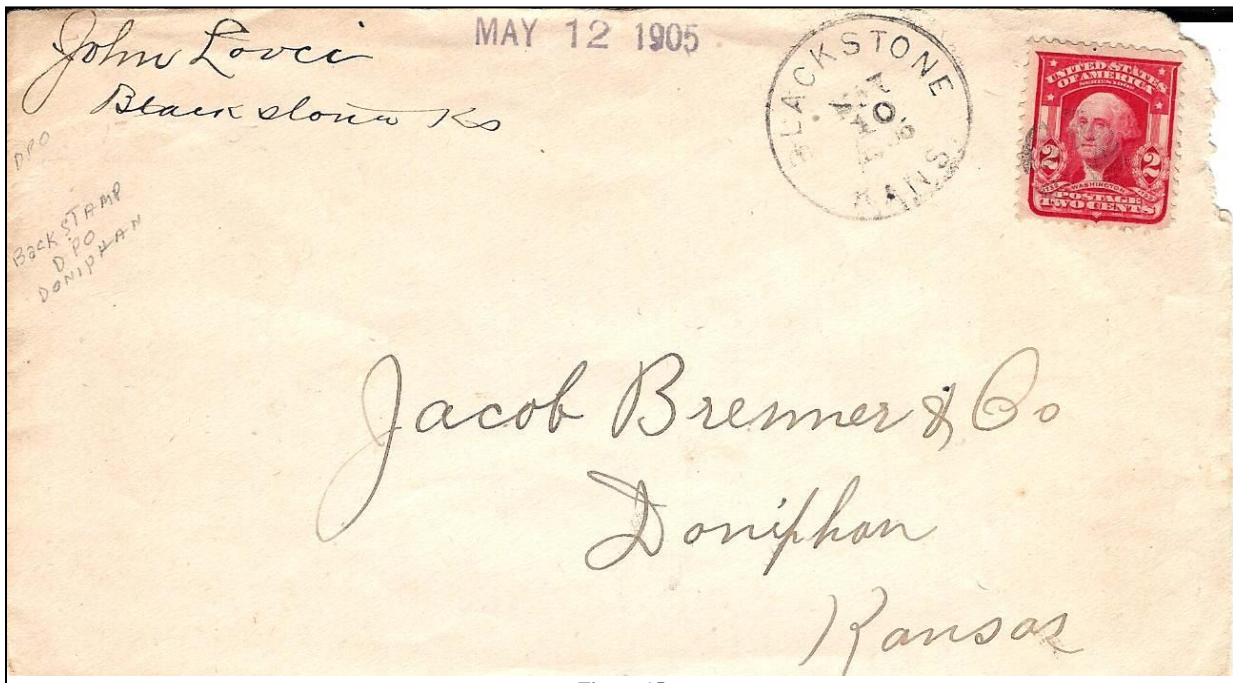


Figure 15
Blackstone, Kansas Cover May 1905

Blackstone was located in the far southwestern part of Sumner County a few miles south of the Ellsworth Trail that carried cattle from Texas at the same time the Chisholm Trail was being developed. Blackstone was organized by H. S. Palmer in November, 1878. The Blackstone post office first went with the name "Rex" and James W. King was the postmaster. The Rex post office was actually several miles north of the Blackstone area. Later, as Blackstone, Jeremiah Emmons was postmaster beginning in 1888. Blackstone's post office was also known as Metcalf Station. The accompanying Blackstone cover (Figure 15) dated both May 10 and May 12, 1905 was sent to a popular wine merchant in northeastern Kansas.

MILTON

Milton is an unincorporated community about 15 miles north of Argonia in northwest Sumner County. Milton has a very small active post office serving its 155 residents. A visit to the rather isolated community of farmers and retired folks revealed two churches and a number of older former business buildings that have fallen into disrepair. The area's first post office was located in the community of Levy, a couple miles northeast. That post office was established on December 6, 1878. The first postmaster in Levy was Benjamin F. Thompson. The buildings of Levy and the physical embodiment of the post office moved to Milton in 1886, although the name of the new location was "Milton" the post office continued to be called "Levy" until October 15, 1887 when it was changed to Milton. "The buildings were jacked up, wagons pushed under, and horses pulled their loads over rough roads to the new location. In spite of such crude methods, the whole task was accomplished in about three days. The old post office became a private residence." (Page 89, Sanders and Sanders) At one time Milton had two hotels and the usual complement of stores and other service businesses.

The location of the town of Milton again moved in 1902 when the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railroad moved to a different area about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile west. The first leg of this railroad, the "Orient" also known as the "Long Route to No Where" was completed between Carmen in the Oklahoma Territory to Milton on April 1, 1903. It had originally been conceived to be part of a very long line connecting the western Mexican port of Topolabambo to Kansas City. The "Orient" also ran through the colorful Harper County community of Runnymede. The railroad eventually failed both because of the Mexican Revolution and because it had become more economical to ship oil by pipeline.

The Milton school district was the first consolidated school district in the state, requiring a special act of the legislature. Accompanying Figure 16 is a philatelically prepared cover that celebrates the first day of issue of the stamp (Scott #1396) that commemorates the end of the U. S. Post Office Department and the beginning of the United States Postal Service July 1, 1971 with a resurrected 4 bar Doane afternoon cancellation.



Figure 16
Milton, Kansas FDC 1971

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

- Collins, Robert. *Ghost Railroads of Kansas*. Lexington, KY: Robert Collins, 2009.
- Sanders, Gwendoline and Sanders, Paul. *The Sumner County Story*. North Newton, KS: The Mennonite Press, 1966.

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