

Return Postage Due

By Patrick Crosby



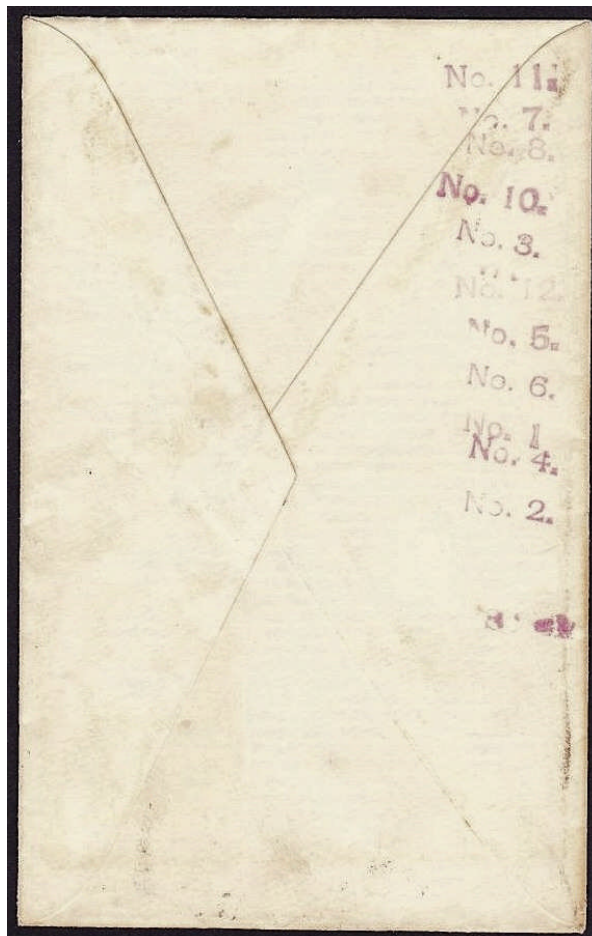
This 1893 1¢ Columbian envelope has a return request as part of its c.c. (corner card) – “Return to ... If not delivered within 5 days.” It was mailed and stayed in Easton, PA, best known for Crayola crayons. There is a pointing hand stating “Returned to Writer” and an s/l (straight-line) ancillary “Return Postage Due 1 Cent” marking. The latter marking is special in that it includes the word “Return,” referring to the 1¢ fee the post office was charging for this service.

The first-class letter rate at the time was 2¢ and first-class service included returning an item to the sender. But the illustrated envelope was mailed at the 1¢ third-class rate and would have included only printed matter. It would not have been returned except for the return request, and then there was a mandatory fee at the same rate (1¢) that the item was mailed.

The post office did try to locally locate the addressee, Mr. Wm. Stine, as evidenced by the reverse of the envelope where the Easton mail carriers rubber stamped their route numbers after reviewing the address and not recognizing the addressee.

Another mail service not afforded to third-class service unless specifically requested is forwarding. If Mr. Stine had moved and left a forwarding address this item was still not allowed to be forwarded. There may have been an attempt to forward this item, but it was stopped by erasing a word that appears close to reading “Portugal” and then writing “India” on top of the erasure, with “India” probably referring to India rubber, an erasure material.

There is also one other pencil notation reading “Remand” which was subsequently scratched out. “Remand” means to send back, and it was scratched out because the pointing hand replaced it.



So the Fair-View Park Association ended up paying the same 2¢ rate as first-class without first-class service. But with a number of letters being sent out by the Association at 1¢ each, the 1¢ postage due for the occasional return service made economic sense.

I purchased this item recently for \$3 from the online APS Stamp Store available to APS members and non-members. However non-members pay a 10% premium. When I purchased this envelope only the face was pictured, so I was pleasantly surprised at the carrier markings on the reverse.

References:

U.S. Domestic Mail Rates 1872-2011, Beecher and Wawrukiewicz, available from the American Philatelic Society at <https://stamps.org/Home>

Postal Laws and Regulations, 1879 and 1882, see the free <http://www.uspostalbulletins.com/> site for PL&Rs and Daily Postal Bulletins

Patrick Crosby is a member of the Nevada Stamp Study Society and collects U.S. postal cards, especially used, including first days; the 1886 Grant Letter Card (or Sheet); UC16, the first U.S. aérogram; and postal history on business or picture post cards.