

THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY JOURNAL

IN THE NAME AND BY THE AUTHORITY
OF
THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS.

To all to whom these presents shall come or may concern: ~~WHEREFORE~~

Be it known, That I, W. P. Barr
Postmaster General of said Republic of Texas, reposing special trust
and full confidence in the Honor, Patriotism, Fidelity, Skill and Capacity of
J. W. Ward do by these presents, ~~consti-~~
~~tute~~ and appoint him the said Ward
to the office of Post Master
at the City of Houston,

Giving and hereby granting to him, the said J. W. Ward
Ward full power and authority as such, to exer-
cise and discharge all and singular the duties, obligations, and trusts to
his said office, in any wise appertaining, by the Constitution and Post
Office Law of this Republic: To have and to hold the same, and all
and every the honors, fees, perquisites, and dues thereunto belonging, for
and during good behaviour; or my term of service, agreeable to the law
regulating this department.

Given under my hand and seal of my office, at
Houston this 12th
day of April A. D. 1839,
and of the Independence of said Republic
the fourth

W. P. Barr
Postmaster General

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On the cover is a picture of the certificate appointing T. W. Ward postmaster of Houston, Texas. For more information on the problems faced by Mr. Ward's successor in the post, see "Texas - Some Violence in its Postal Past," in this issue.

THE TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Dues \$7 per year, payable to Secretary-Treasurer

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PRESIDENT'S PAGE



It's been an interesting four years being your president.

We have had a number of good meetings but also a few that had almost no participation. I wish there was a way that we could meet together occasionally without the obligations some of us have when we attend exhibitions. You did, however, express your opinions on that subject and the majority prefer getting together at shows. More of you should bring trading material when you do come because it seems that only three or four have any.

In the last four years we have had some very good articles submitted; a special Sesquicentennial issue was published; John Germann and Myron Janzen have begun publishing their county series; several members have exhibited material in Texas and across the country, although much of it did not pertain to Texas postal history; and John Whitehead has done a fine job as journal editor. Our membership has remained about the same over a period of years. Jim Alexander reports our financial status as being good.

The attendance at our Houston meeting was good and Bill Emery gave us a program on early Texas postal history that also involved the correspondents and addresses shown on the covers. Our nominating committee of Chairman, Jim Stever, Jane Fohn and Romaine Flanagin presented the following slate of officers for the next two year term:

Bill Emery, President
John Germann, Vice-President
Jim Alexander, Secretary-Treasurer

The nominees were accepted by vote of the membership present. You will find a ballot enclosed with this issue.

In the last journal you saw mention of our member Joe Crosby volunteering to provide Texas Postal History Society with an index of the journal. Joe had indicated to me a few months ago that he would offer his valuable time and service in this endeavor. We appreciate his willingness to give the society and its members such a valuable asset.

My thanks to the officers of the society, to the editor, to our journal writers, to the clubs and societies who have graciously provided our meeting places, and to those of you who have helped TPHS in many ways.

Ten of our members had exhibits at HoupeX-TexpeX. This was a really good turnout. Many of them received some nice awards and our congratulations to J. R. Keeling for his entry of "Texas Usage of Confederate States of America General Issues" which received the best Texas postal history award.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Well, finally the December, 1987 issue goes to press -- in January, 1988! We appreciate the great articles in this journal, and I'm sure you readers will find them very interesting. David Connally documents the trials and tribulations of an early Houston Postmaster in "Texas - Some Violence in its Postal Past." Fred Ekenstam has provided us a list of Octagonal Texas Postmarks, and Jane King Fohn has contributed a book review of Postmarks on Postcards, by Richard W. Helbock.

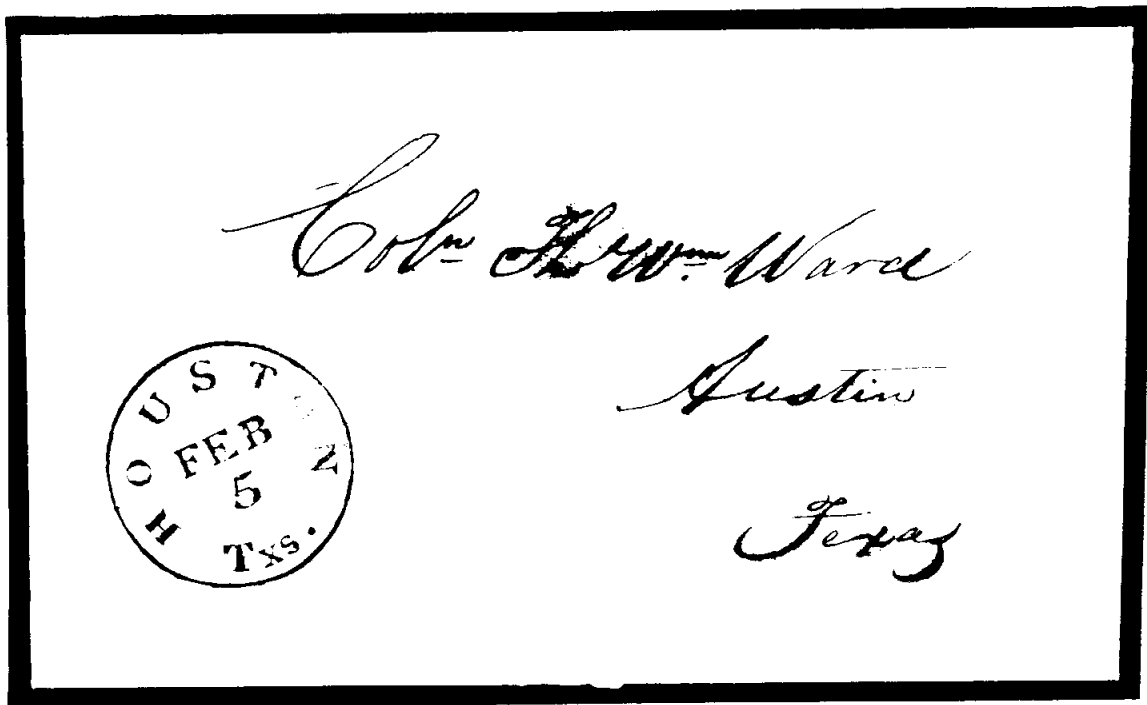
As always, we are in need of articles for the next issue, so get busy, people!

And now, a NEWS FLASH -- John J. Germann has completed an update to Charles Deaton's classic Texas Postal History Handbook, with 1500+ listings, including over 500 offices which have opened or closed within the last 50 years. This is a "must have" item for all of you cover lovers! It is printed in looseleaf form, and is available for \$5.00 (!) postpaid (!!) from John J. Germann, 12102 Whittington, Houston, Texas 77077.

TEXAS - SOME VIOLENCE IN ITS POSTAL PAST

by David Connally

Shown below is an early Texas letter whose content rather than its cover provides some unusual postal history. The letter was written by one J. Riordan in Houston on February 4, 1849. What Riordan had to say concerning an early Texas postmaster proves more interesting than the letter's routing or its rating or its fine postal markings. The purpose of the letter was to request the political assistance of Colonel Thomas William Ward, of Austin, in obtaining a federal appointment for J. Riordan as postmaster in Houston. Riordan knew that Ward was a close acquaintance of a U.S. Senator from Texas who would have great influence over such an appointment. Riordan probably also



Riordan's 1849 folded letter was mailed the day after it was written. Both the handstamped "5" and the Houston CDS are black.

knew that Ward himself had briefly served as Houston Postmaster ten years earlier, during the time of Texas' existence as an independent republic¹. In his letter to Colonel Ward, Riordan wasted little time in explaining just why he believed the appointment of a new Houston postmaster would soon be necessary:

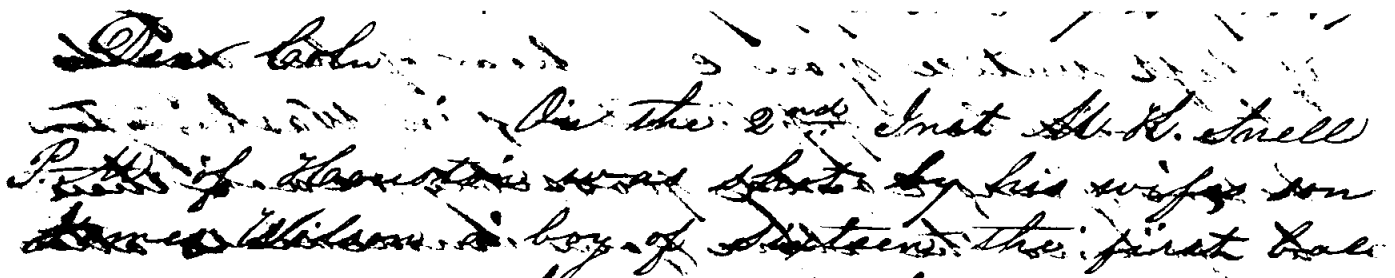
Houston February 4th 1849

Dear Colonel,

On the 2nd Inst. [i.e., February 2nd] M.K. Snell, P.M. of Houston, was shot by his wife's son, James Wilson, a boy of 16. The first ball entered near the mouth, the second close under the eye and near the nose, both coming out within two inches of one another at the back of the neck. He is still living but very little (if any) hopes of his recovery. The general opinion is that he will not live another day. Therefore the office of Post Master must be vacant. I know that there are many here who will immediately apply for the office, and as you spoke to me before on the same subject, I would now request of you to write to Sam Houston [then United States Senator from Texas] or any of our representatives in Washington with whom you are acquainted to obtain for me the office. It is true that the present administration will soon expire, but if appointed by it, there would be a fair chance to be continued under the next. It is an office that would suit me well and I believe I could fill with credit. It would be for you to say whether it would be prudent to apply while he [Postmaster Snell] is living, and if left until you can hear of his death there will be applications in Washington before yours could possibly reach there. By giving the above your immediate attention you would do me great service, and confer a greater favour on your humble servant,

J. Riordan

Punctuation has been added and a postscript concerning Mrs. Riordan not transcribed. The letter was written on soft porous paper and does not yield a very legible reproduction (as can be seen below) because ink bleeds through the page:



Dear Colonel, On the 2nd Inst M.K. Snell
P.M. of Houston was shot by his wife's son
James Wilson, a boy of sixteen. The first ball

Whether Senator Sam Houston or anyone else was ever contacted in Riordan's behalf is not known. But it seems extremely unlikely, since Ward's docketing on the letter simply reads "From J. Riordan", with a date². If contact were made, however, postal records indicate it would definitely have been premature: M.K. Snell continued his postmaster's duties until the following September³.

Maybe Riordan's description of the postmaster's wounds was based on rumor. Perhaps his prognosis for Snell's recovery reflected the would-be postmaster's wishful thinking. Whatever the case, M.K. Snell seems not to have been as incapacitated as Riordan's letter would indicate. In fact, less than four months after it was written Snell had remarried. On May 30 Emma Hadnot, of Harris County, became the postmaster's new wife⁴. Whatever became of James Wilson, his previous wife's son, is not known. M.K. Snell, however, remained in Houston, served as a major for the Confederacy during the Civil War, and did not die until 1865.

J. Riordan also resided in Houston until at least 1866. This letter is one of 36 of his which Ward saved, all written 1848-66, all but one datelined Houston⁵. The large majority of Riordan's letters deal only with business and legal affairs, and none other contains news of such sensational nature as his account of the Houston postmaster having been shot twice through the head.

Whether or not Riordan's letter can be believed, other accounts of Martin Kingsley Snell's life prove that it was, indeed, very eventful. Snell was born in Pennsylvania in 1815. He entered the Texas Army at age 20 as a private in the New Orleans Grays, participating several weeks later (along with Colonel Ward who helped organize the brigade) in the Siege of Bexar, at San Antonio. (Ward lost his right leg in the conflict). Five months later Snell fought in the battle of San Jacinto. Following this decisive victory he remained in the Texas Army, reaching the level of captain and serving with distinction until his discharge in 1839. He was appointed Houston postmaster October 1, 1844⁶ during the administration of the Texas Republic's last president, Anson Jones. Since he maintained this appointment almost five years, well into statehood, Martin Kingsley Snell has the distinction of having been, at age 31, both the last Houston postmaster of the Republic of Texas as well as the first Houston postmaster in the United States.

Shown on the next page are four Republic of Texas letters bearing Houston manuscript postmarks applied while Snell was Houston postmaster. Although there is great variety among the postmarks in the manuscript "H", the remaining letters "...ouston" (as well as others) show definite and very strong similarities. It seems very likely that one or more (all?) of these marks was penned by Martin Kingsley Snell.

Snell was succeeded in office September 8, 1849, not by J. Riordan but by a Mr. Isaac G. Wade. Little information concerning Wade can be found. Charles Deaton's extensive records of early Texas postmasters show, however, that this second of Houston's statehood postmasters remained in office a very short time -- less than nine months. It can only be hoped that he enjoyed a more peaceful homelife while in office than did his distinguished predecessor.

Houston, Dec. 18 Free
Col Tho^W Ward
Austin
Texas

Houston Dec 18 Free
Col Thomas W. Ward
Austin
Texas

Houston March 1st Free
Col J. W. Ward
Gen'l Land Office
Austin
Texas

Houston
Mar 31st Free
Hon. Tho^W Ward
@ Austin

1 [1844] Houston, Dec. 18 Free

2 [1844] Houston Dec 18 Free

3 [1845] Houston March 1st Free

4 [1845] Houston
Mar 31st Free

Republic of Texas letters that received Houston manuscript postmarks during Martin Kingsley Snell's first six months as postmaster in Houston. The postmarks, at least one (or more?) of which is probably Snell's, are reproduced in full size, following. Government officials of the Republic of Texas received liberal free franking privileges while in office. Although none of these letters involved government business, each received a "Free" marking simply because the addressee, Colonel Ward, was Commissioner of the General Land Office at the time the letter was written.

FOOTNOTES

¹Thomas William Ward was appointed Houston postmaster April 12, 1839. His postmaster's certificate, signed by Texas Postmaster General Robert Barr, is shown opposite. Two similar Republic of Texas postal certificates are illustrated by Alex ter Braake in Texas, The Drama of its Postal Past (APS Handbook Series, State College, Pa. 1970. p.53, 113.) This book also shows (p.122) that Ward served only until January 13, 1840. (This single reference by ter Braake to Thomas William Ward as "T.M. Ward" is simply a typographical error). Ward's certificate and his many other documents and letters had not come to light when ter Braake's classic reference on Texas postal history was written. These papers fortunately permit two slight improvements in the book's listing (pp. 120-122) of the eight Republic era postmasters of Houston: in addition to providing the exact date of Ward's appointment, they also indicate that the city's second postmaster, known to ter Braake only as "J. Hull, or Hill," (c. October 1837) was undoubtedly one Jonathan Hull, a politically very active citizen of Houston at that time. Ter Braake illustrates a letter (figure 12, p. 122) bearing a Houston manuscript postmark dated May 30, 1837. However the handwriting of this postmark does not appear (to me) to match Jonathan Hull's. Does anyone know of a later 1837 Houston manuscript postal marking that can be compared with the examples of Jonathan Hull's handwriting shown here:

Houston 23^d December 1844 Jonathan Hull
Houston Sept. 10th 1845 - Houston 26th Nov 1845

These are datelines (NOT postmarks) from letters written by Jonathan Hull during 1844-45. Other examples of Hull's handwriting are the addresses on Republic of Texas letters #1 and #2 illustrated in the article. I would be very interested in seeing copies not only of marks which might be Hull's, but also of ANY manuscript postal marking applied in Houston 1836-1845: David Connally, P. O. Box 430039, Houston, TX 77243.

²This date reads "2nd February 1851," obviously in error. In general the docketing on Ward's letters indicates if and when they were acted upon or answered.

³Unpublished information courtesy Charles Deaton.

⁴This and all other biographical information concerning Snell (except as otherwise noted) is from The Handbook of Texas, Texas State Historical Association, Austin, 1952.

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Be it known, That I, Robert Barr
Postmaster General of said Republic of Texas, reposing special trust
and full confidence in the Honor, Patriotism, Fidelity, Skill and Capacity of
Thomas W. Ward do by these presents, nomi-
nate, constitute and appoint him the said

Ward to the office of Post Master
at the City of Houston,

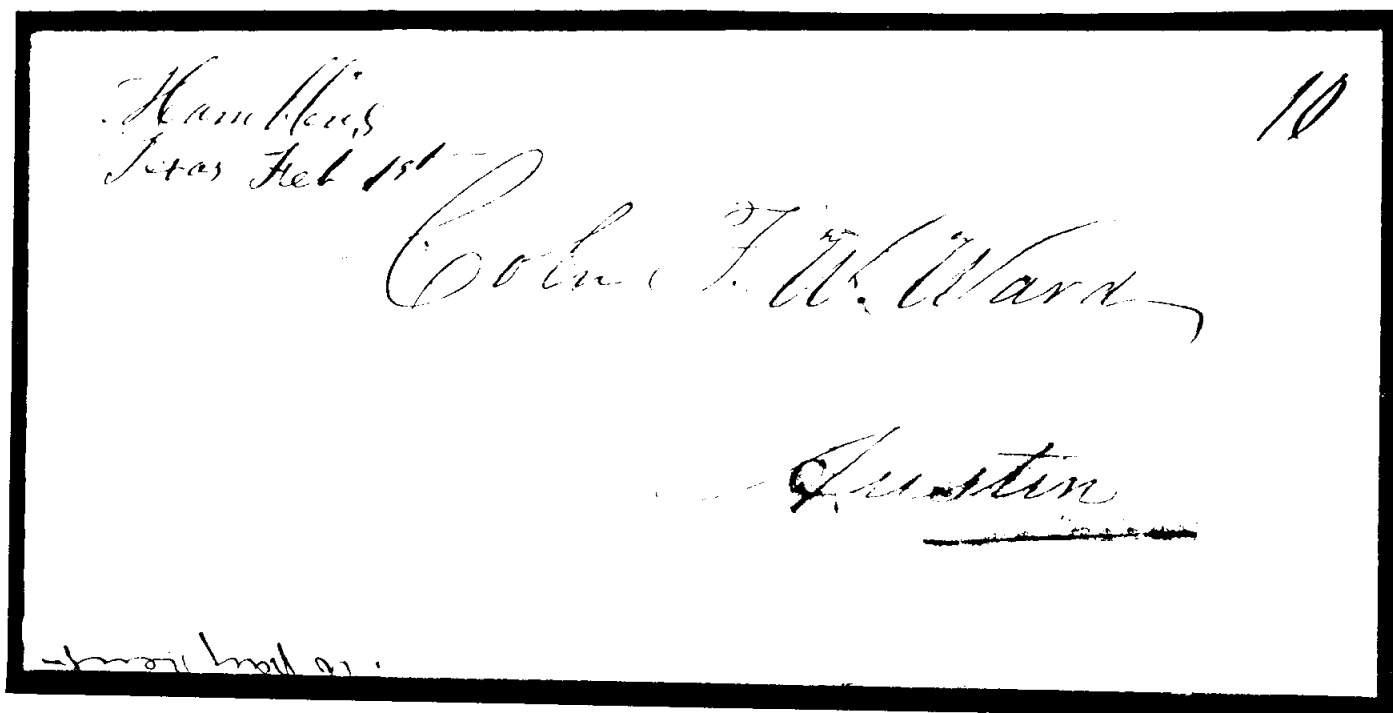
Giving and hereby granting to him, the said T. W. Ward
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cise and discharge all and singular the duties, obligations, and trusts to
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Office Law of this Republic: To have and to hold the same, and all
and every the honors, fees, perquisites, and dues thereunto belonging, for
and during good behaviour; or my term of service, agreeable to the law
regulating this department.

Given under my hand and seal of my office, at
Houston this 12th
day of April A. D. 1839,
and of the Independence of said Republic
the Fourth

Robert Barr
Postmaster General

Republic of Texas postmaster's certificate appointing
Thomas William Ward postmaster at Houston (see footnote
1, preceding page). The handwriting on the document is
that of Texas Postmaster General Robert Barr.

⁵One of these two is an 1848 folded letter with a "Hamblin's Texas Feb 1st" manuscript postal marking. Charles Deaton's Texas Postal History Handbook (p. 103, 192) identifies Hamblin's as a discontinued Harris County post office which was in existence only between 1846-1851. During that brief lifetime the town's name was twice changed: first to Eden, then to Hamblin. Because the early statehood marking on this Riordan letter is undoubtedly scarce (and possibly unique) it is illustrated below:



An 1848 letter with a Hamblin's, Texas, manuscript postmark. The apostrophe in the town name appears to have been placed below the line: "Hamblin,s". The letter, which only consists of a very long list of dry goods, received the 10-cent rate because of its weight.

⁶Report of the Chief Clerk of the Gen. P.O., 1844. Texas State Archives, Austin. (ter Braake, p. 122.)

OCTAGON CANCELS OF TEXAS
FROM FRED EKENSTAM

OCTAGON DESCRIPTIVE CODE

E ELONGATED SHAPE
DOL DOUBLE OUTER LINE
SOL SINGLE OUTER LINE
MOB MONEY ORDER BUSINESS
PNB POSTAL NOTE BUSINESS

Anderson	84	SOL
Athens	83, 85	SOL
Atlanta	--	SOL
Auroro	84	MOB
Buffalo	91, 92, 94	SOL
Burton	92ms	MOB
Caldwell	83, 84	SOL
Carrizo Springs		MOB
Carthage	83	SOL
Crafton	84	E DOL
Daingerfield	80	SOL
Dexter	76	MOB
Dresden	91, 93, 97	PNB
Elgin	90	E
El Paso	(81)	SOL
Fairfield	88	MOB
Ferris	80, 85, 86	MOB
Fort Griffin	82	MOB
Gatesville	87	SOL
Greenvine	--	SOL
Hallettsville	81	SOL
Hico	88	MOB
Hillsborough	81, 82, 84	MOB
Hubbard	89	MOB
Independence	83	SOL
Indianola	79	SOL
Jewett	86, 91, 92, 94, 95	SOL
Kerens	83	SOL
Kingston	--	MOB
Koerth's	86, 87	DOL
Leon Springs		SOL
Lewisville	85	MOB
Linn Flat	90	SOL
Lockhart	74, 90, 91	SOL
Lodi, Marion Co.	86	DOL

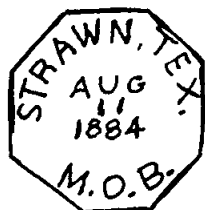
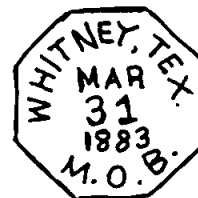
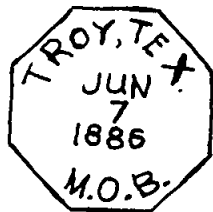
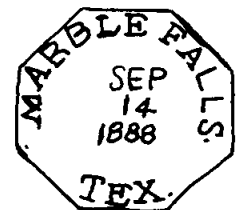
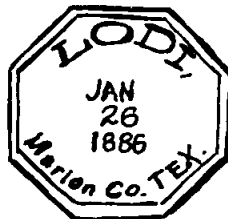
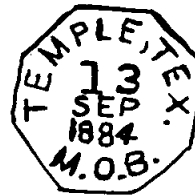
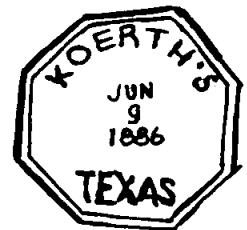
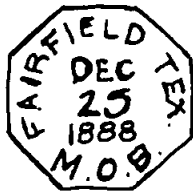
OCTAGON CANCELS OF TEXAS
(Continued)

Marble Falls	88	SOL
Marlin	85	SOL
Mexia	90	SOL
Midland	86, 87	SOL
Milford	88, 90, 91	SOL
Mineral Wells	84	MOB
New Braunfels	--	SOL
Oak Valley, Hill Co.	79	E DOL
Pickton	92	SOL
Plano	79	SOL
Schulenburg	82	SOL
Shiner	90	E
Sour Spring	92	SOL
Strawn	84	MOB
Tehuacana	86	MOB
Temple	84	MOB
Thorndale	--	PNB
Trinity	84	SOL
Troy	86	MOB
Truxton	92	SOL
Uvalde	81	SOL
Victoria	84	SOL
Whitney	83	MOB

Many thanks to Jim Alexander for copies from his collection and his support in this project. I would appreciate photocopies if you have others.

-BIBLIOGRAPHY

"U.S. Octagonal Postmarks" - by Roger J. Heinen,
U.S. Cancellation Club News, Vol. 13, No. 2, Whole
No. 148, March 1978.



BOOK REVIEW

by Jane King Fohn

POSTMARKS ON POSTCARDS

Richard W. Helbock

La Posta Publications, Lake Oswego, Oregon. 1987.

One of my greatest headaches is telling one United States postmark from another, such as a flag from a four-bar. Of course, with the flag cancel, there is a clue: with the four-bar, imagination puts the bars anywhere.

Classifying and describing postmarks is a mystery that has not been unraveled by the specialty postmark references on hand. Books about a particular postmark seldom tell how to first separate it from the other postal markings.

When writing, I get up to look for information that might shed light on the postmark. After looking through books and clippings, I fix a cup of tea, and forget to include any postal marking information at all in my article.

Postmarks on Postcards by Richard W. Helbock, is a primary reference to identify the mysterious postmark. I began reading Mr. Helbock's book immediately upon receipt, and could not put it down until I had completed it. [MENTAL NOTE: put in briefcase for next bourse.]

The subtitle states the exact purpose of the book: An Illustrated Guide to Early Twentieth Century United States Postmarks. The reference details ninety years of postmark evolution and use in logical progression, making the material easy to remember. This excellent book is well-illustrated to aid beginning and intermediate collectors in recognizing postal markings.

Mr. Helbock divides Postmarks on Postcards into two sections: I. The Postmarks; and II. Collecting Postmarks. The broad range of twentieth century postal markings discussed include--manuscript, handstamped and machine townmarks to specialized areas including Doanes, rural free delivery markings, railway and military postmarks. Price and value, acquisition, and research are detailed.

Richard W. Helbock has used three decades of experience in compiling Postmarks on Postcards. His ability as an editor of the bi-monthly postal history journal, La Posta, has enabled him to produce a book that is clear and educational. This quality reference is worth the nominal price. The book is available for \$19.95 postpaid from La Posta Publications, Box 135, Lake Oswego, Oregon 97034.

