

Remailed in B Flat

By Patrick Crosby

When I see a postage stamp attached to a prepaid government postal card (supplementary postage) it sparks my attention in a good way. But when I see a card where the stamp is missing my heart drops. The featured postal card provided both emotions. It was mailed twice and that is why 1¢ postage (Sc. 279) is added. The missing stamp was from the first mailing and probably removed for a good reason – to avoid confusion and cluttering for the card's second mailing.

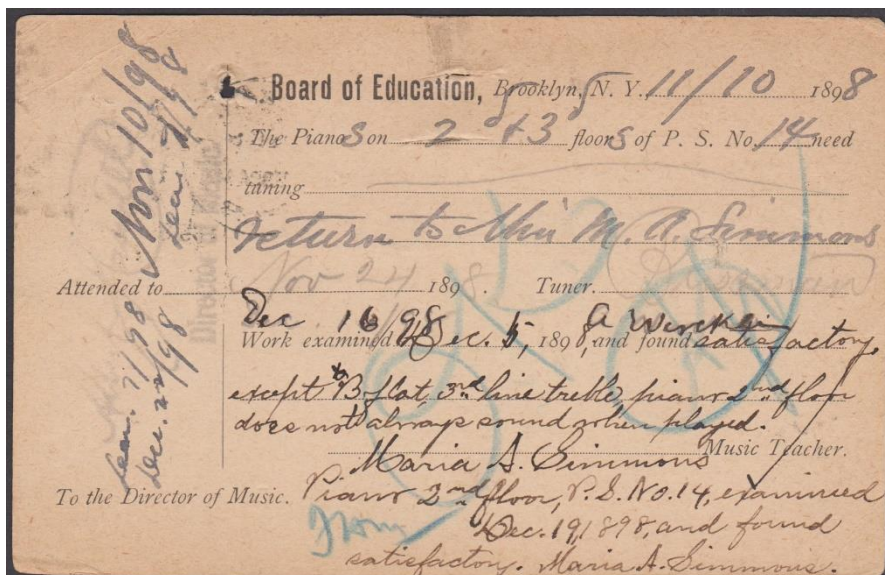
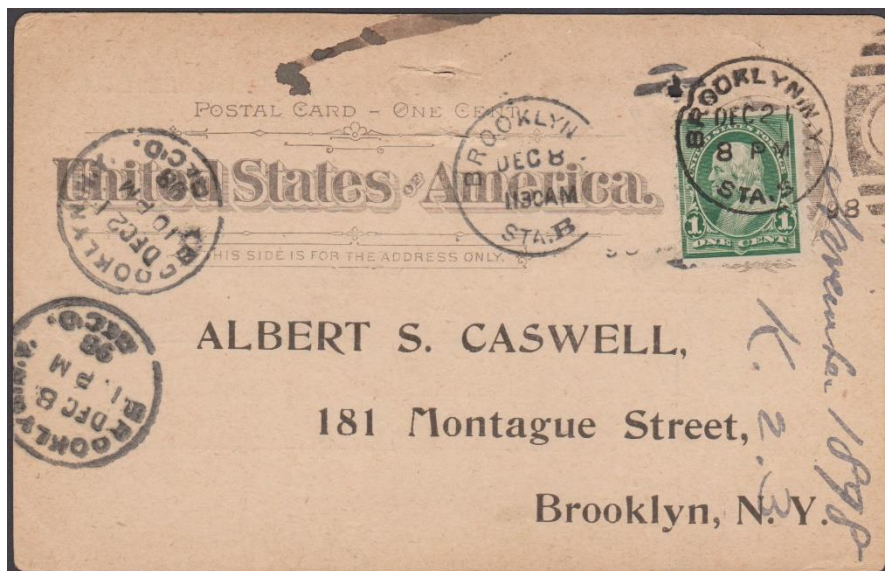
Oddly, the 1¢ Jefferson postal card (Sc. UX14, UPSS S15) paid the correct rate and so by adding the (later removed) stamp the card had been overpaid. The original postmark of Dec. 8, 1898, Station B and its barrel shaped killer show blank portions where the stamp had been.

As of July 1, 1898, a remailed card (also called double-mailed) was allowed at the 1¢ card rate, whereas previously the letter rates of 2¢ or 3¢ was required. So the featured card has the correct postage added for the second use on Dec. 21, 1898. Each time the card was mailed it was handstamped with the same received (REC'D) marking device, the time and date changed, both being received the same day mailed.

The Christmas of 1898 was right around the corner, so it was a practical time to have Public School 14's pianos tuned. Before this postal card was ever mailed it had moved around a bit. The Brooklyn, NY, Board of Education had a form printed on the reverse of postal cards just for piano tuning! They dated the card

November 10th and delivered it (outside the U.S. mails) to Albert Caswell, who was the Director of Music. He signs on the reverse left side in light pencil, and "Caswell" is signed in a way that the "C" encompasses the name (this is notable later). There is a "Director of Music" handstamp under his signature.

Instructions were for the pianos on the 2nd and 3rd floors of P.S. 14 to be tuned, and the card to be returned to Miss M.A. Simmons, music teacher. The pianos were tuned ("Attended to...") November 24th and the tuner was "Bassman". Miss Simmons reports "Work examined Dec. 5, 1898 and found satisfactory except the B flat, 3rd line treble, piano 2nd floor does not always sound when played."



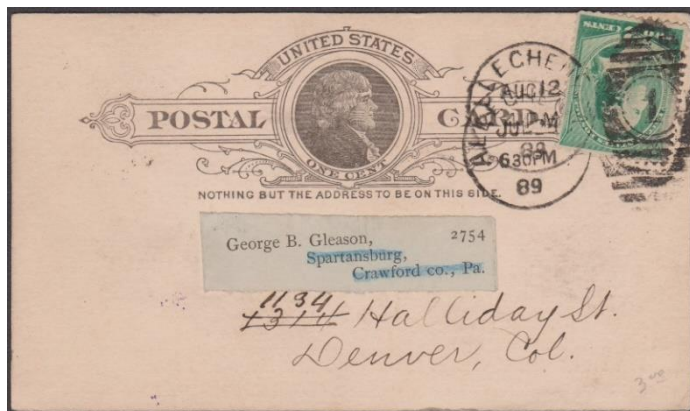
Now, for the first time, the card is put in the mails. It goes back to the Director of Music for the school system, Albert S. Caswell, who has a piano tuner come out again and the tuner writes in pencil (then enhanced by pen) "Dec. 16/98" for "Attended to" and signs A. Werka (?).

The card is left again for Miss Simmons who checks the piano and writes, "examined Dec. 19, 1898, and found satisfactory." For the second time the card is mailed to Mr. Caswell who approves in blue crayon "OK" with his initials, the "C" encompassing the "AS."

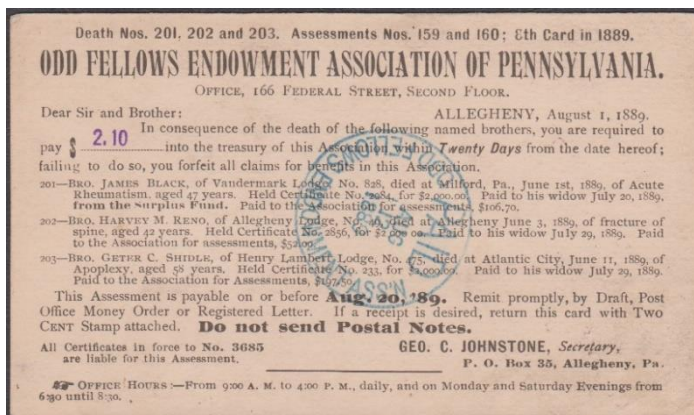
Oh, how I wish there was a third postmark from November 10th, but there is no sign of one. This would have meant the card was mailed correctly three times.

U.S. postal cards that are remailed are uncommon, and most of these are from fraternal organizations for dues assessments, like for a death benefit policy. I have seen examples of these from 1874 to 1952. Even less common are cards that were held too long for forwarding, cards used for magazine and newspaper subscriptions, and novelty cards. Used in any other way, like when the B flat would not strike on the school's piano, remailed cards are scarce.

I found the featured card at Sacramento Philatelic Society's SACAPEX 2021 show in a dealer's \$1 box (then he gave a discount on my entire purchase!). Rемаiled cards have never been declared illegal, but some uses were frowned upon by the U.S. Post Office Department and Postal Service.



A 2¢ stamp correctly pays the letter rate for the second mailing of this fraternal organization card.



Notice includes, "If a receipt is desired, return this card with TWO CENT Stamp attached."

An exception was the remailing of fraternal organizations' assessment cards (sample above) which were an efficient and cheap way to conduct business and, since many government officials were themselves members, complaints of favoritism fell on deaf ears.

Reference:

Anthony S. Wawrukiewicz and Henry W. Beecher, U.S. Domestic Postal Rates, 1872-2011 (Bellefonte, PA: American Philatelic Society, 2011) p. 44 and 49 [Available from APS].

Fricke, Charles A., "Remailed Postal Cards Served as Payment Receipts," Linn's Stamp News, April 11, 2005, pp. 12-13.

Further reading:

Lawrence, Ken, "Collecting Postal Cards, Post Cards, and Postcards as Postal History," The American Philatelist, October 2021, pp. 895-915.

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. aerogram; and postal history on business or picture post cards.