

Philatelic Genealogy: Envelopes at Home and Work in Oregon

by James R. Miller

An old envelope or postcard may let us glimpse the life of an ancestor at home or work. This article presents six envelopes that have a picture of an Oregon workplace or objects or animals offered for sale to Oregon residents between 1886 and 1915. The recipient and sender of each envelope have been identified whenever possible in a census or other standard reference. As with any source of genealogical information, old envelopes must be used in combination with other sources before reaching any conclusion. These envelopes are part of a growing digital archive of envelope and postcard images with genealogical value at Philgen.org (<http://philgen.org>), the Philatelic Genealogy website and database.

H. PARKER of Walla Walla, “W.T.” (Washington Territory) received an envelope from Portland, Oregon, in 1886 with an illustration of “G. Shindler & Co., Furniture Manufacturers.” [Figure 1] A Hollon PARKER, a farmer and real estate agent, is in Walla Walla in the 1880 U.S. census.[1] A G. SHINDLER, a furniture manufacturer and dealer, is in Portland in the 1880 U.S. census,[2] and the 1890 Portland city directory shows Gabriel SHINDLER as president of the G. Shindler Furniture Company.[3] The envelope has a drawing of Shindler factory buildings and stacks of wood. This envelope and others listed were found for sale for \$15 or \$20 each from a postal history vendor who has given permission to Philgen.org to use photographs from his website.[4]

G.C. COOLEY and Company of Brownsville, Oregon received an envelope in 1902 from the Standard Oil Company of Portland, Oregon. A George C. COOLEY, a merchant, is in Brownsville in the 1900 U.S. census.[5] The envelope has an illustration of a “Mica Axle Grease” container with a picture of a wagon wheel on the lid.

Mrs. Myrtle E. NENDEL of Woodburn, Oregon received an envelope in 1908 from Macleay, Oregon, with an illustration of “Pure Bred Angora Goats.” An M.E. (Mrs. O.) NENDEL, a vegetable farmer, is in Woodburn in the 1910 U.S. census,[6] and she is shown in the 1920 U.S. census as Mettie (Mrs. Oscar) “NENDLE.”[7] The envelope was sent by the “Craig Bros.” of Macleay. A David CRAIG, farmer,[8] and a Robert CRAIG, merchant,[9] are in Macleay in the 1900 U.S. census, and an online family tree show a David and Robert CRAIG as brothers.[10] The envelope has a photograph of “Three of Our 2-year-old Ewes.”

William BRUNS of Aurora, Oregon received an envelope from the “Marlin Firearms Co., New Haven, Conn.” in 1915. A William BRUNS, a farmer, is in Aurora in the 1910 U.S. census. [11] The envelope has an illustration of a young woman holding a firearm and the advertising slogan “When you want a Real Gun get a Marlin.” This envelope and the CALBREATH envelop were found in a collection of online philatelic auction catalogs from which Philgen.org has permission to use photographs.[12]

William CASE of Butteville, Oregon, received an envelope in 1880 from Portland, Oregon that was forwarded to Champoeg (three miles west of Butteville). A William M. CASE,

a farmer, is in Butteville in the 1880 U.S. census.[13] The envelope, which lists various types of agricultural equipment, was sent by “Chas. H. Dodd & Co,” and a Chas. H. DODD is in Portland in the 1880 U.S. census.[14] A C.H. DODD is shown as an “Imp[ort?] Merchant” in the 1870 U.S. census.[15]

Dr. J.F. CALBREATH of Portland, Oregon received an envelope from French LICK, Indiana in 1914. A John “T.” CALBREATH, a medical doctor, is in Portland in the 1920 U.S. census at the street address shown on the envelope.[16] The envelope has an illustration of “Pluto Water, America’s Greatest Physic.” A physic acts as a purgative or a laxative.[17]

This article shows that old envelopes can illustrate our ancestors’ life at home or work. The connection is clearest between the sender and the picture shown on the envelope, while the recipients may have only considered purchasing what is shown. The illustrations on the envelopes add detail and color to occupations shown in the census as manufacturer, merchant, and farmer.

Many more envelopes and postcards concerning Oregon residents are yet to be added to Philgen.org. Other types of genealogical information available from postal history include an immigrant’s home village, interstate family correspondence, military service, social and political interests, and even photographs on real photo postcards.[18]

Acknowledgments

The author thanks Jim Forte Postal History and Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions for the use of photographs, the genealogists who posted online family trees and responded to email and message board queries, and Lisa Birsinger for database and website support.



Figure 1. 1886 envelope from Portland, Oregon to Walla Walla, Washington Territory with illustration of the G. Shindler and Company furniture factory. Photograph courtesy of Jim Forte Postal History.

Biosketch

James R. (Jim) Miller is a genealogist and postal historian and is the founder of Philgen.org. His earlier article “Philatelic Genealogy in Oregon: Family Postcards” appeared in the *Oregon Genealogical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Summer 2010): pages 31-34. Jim can be contacted at jim@philgen.org.

Notes

- 1 1880 U.S. census, Walla Walla, Walla Walla County, Washington Territory, p. 57 (written), National Archives and Records Administration [hereafter NARA] series T9, roll 1,398. Viewed on *Ancestry.com*.
- 2 1880 U.S. census, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon, Enumeration District [hereafter ED] 139, p. 13 (written), NARA series T9, roll 1,083. Viewed on *Ancestry.com*.
- 3 *Portland City Directory, 1890* (Portland, Oregon: R.L. Polk & Co., 1890), Vol. 28, p. 464.
- 4 Jim Forte Postal History (<http://www.postalhistory.com/>, accessed 11 October 2010), click on “U.S. By State,” and then scroll down to “Oregon.” The selling price of Figure 5 is not known by the author.
- 5 1900 U.S. census, Brownsville Ward 2, Linn County, Oregon, ED 47, p. 15B (written), NARA series T623, roll 1,349. Viewed on *Ancestry.com*.
- 6 1910 U.S. census, Woodburn, Marion County, Oregon, ED 236, p. 17A (written), NARA series T624, roll 1,284. Viewed on *Ancestry.com*.
- 7 1920 U.S. census, Woodburn, Marion County, Oregon, ED 331, p. 9A (written), NARA series T625, roll 1,497. Viewed on *Ancestry.com*.
- 8 1900 U.S. census, Macleay, Marion County, Oregon, ED 138, p. 3A (written), NARA series T623, roll 1,348. Viewed on *Ancestry.com*.
- 9 1900 U.S. census, Macleay, Marion County, Oregon, ED 138, p. 5A (written), NARA series T623, roll 1,348. Viewed on *Ancestry.com*.
- 10 “bberry June 1, 2010” family tree, owner BarbaraJeanOstertag, (sources not indicated). Viewed on *Ancestry.com*.
- 11 1910 U.S. census, Aurora, Marion County, Oregon, ED 200, p. 4A (written), NARA series T624, roll 1,284. Viewed on *Ancestry.com*.
- 12 Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions (<http://www.rumseyauctions.com>, accessed 3 October 2010). Select “Prior Auctions” at the top of the page, click on a Sale number, and then scroll the Table of Contents to locate the appropriate range of lot numbers.
- 13 1880 U.S. census, Butteville, Marion County, Oregon, ED 82, p. 17 (written), NARA series T9, roll 1,082. Viewed on *Ancestry.com*.
- 14 1880 U.S. census, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon, ED 97, p. 19 (written), NARA series T9, roll 1,083. Viewed on *Ancestry.com*.
- 15 1870 U.S. census, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon, p. 132 (written), NARA series M593, roll 1,287. Viewed on *Ancestry.com*.
- 16 1920 U.S. census, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon, ED 112, p. 9A (written), NARA series T625, roll 1,501. Viewed on *Ancestry.com*.
- 17 *Dictionary.com* (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/physic>, accessed 11 October 2010).
- 18 Articles on philatelic genealogy are listed by state and viewable from the Main Menu of *Philgen.org* (<http://philgen.org>).