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PHILATELIC GENEALOGY: MARYLAND AT WORK

By James R. Miller

An old envelope from a postal history collection can help us imagine our ancestor at work. This article presents six envelopes that show Maryland workplaces and products from the 1850s and 1860s. The sender and recipient of each envelope are identified in a U.S. census or city directory whenever possible. The pictures on these envelopes add detail and color to occupations shown in the census as machinist, agent, and grocer. All of the envelopes are from postal history auction catalogs from which *Philgen.org* (http://philgen.org) has permission to use photographs.[1]

Philgen.org was launched in March 2009 to begin building a digital archive of envelope and postcard images with genealogical value and to promote an exchange between postal historians, postcard collectors, and genealogists. The site has grown to more than 1,600 envelopes and postcards. Every item includes a photograph (used with the owner's permission) and U.S. census or similar details on the sender and/or recipient. As with any source of genealogical information, old envelopes must be studied in combination with other sources before reaching a conclusion. Prior to 1863 (and in rural areas until after 1900), people picked up their mail at the post office. The address written on an envelope may be the nearest post office and not the recipient's home address.[2]

"A. Russell, Carriage Manufacturer" of Cumberland, Maryland, sent an envelope to "Dr. A.B. Hayden" of Hampshire County,

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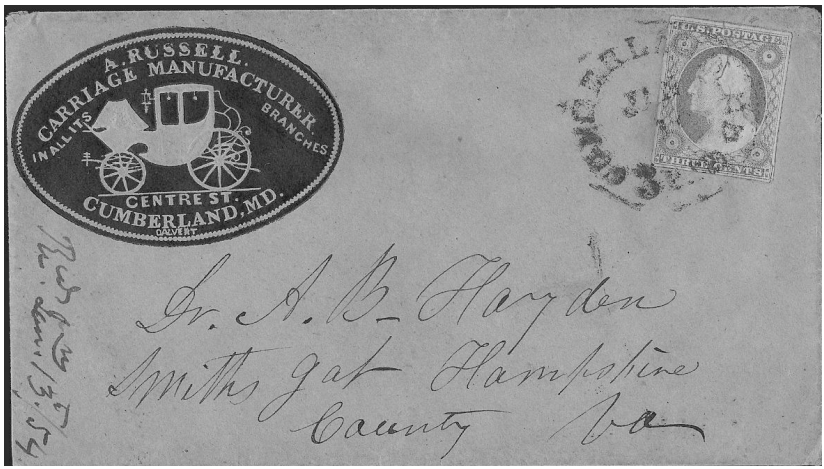

Figure 1. 1854 envelope from Cumberland, Maryland to Hampshire County, Virginia with illustration of a carriage made by Abraham Russell (Photograph courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Sale 933, Lot 686.)

Virginia, in 1854. [Figure 1] An Abraham Russell, carriage maker, is in Cumberland in the 1860 U.S. census, with Elnathan Russell, apparently his son.[3] Elnathan is probably the Elnathan J. Russell, coach maker, in the 1863 Civil War registration of Cumberland; the E. John "Russel," coach manufacturer, in the 1870 U.S. census; and was the principal of "EJ Russell & Co" in the 1884 Cumberland city directory.[4] An Anaximander Hayden, physician, is in Hampshire County, West Virginia, in the 1870 U.S. census, and he probably received this envelope.[5] The envelope has an illustration of a carriage.

"G. H. Reese & Bros., Tea Dealer and Family Grocers" of Baltimore, Maryland, sent an envelope to "Louis Stabler" of Sandy Spring, Montgomery County, Maryland, circa 1855. [Figure 2] The 1864 Baltimore city directory includes "G. H. Reese & Brothers" at the street address printed on the envelope, and shows Charles, Gerald H., Henry, and Thomas M. Reese working there.[6] Charles, Gerald H., Henry, and Thomas M. Reese appear in the 1860 U.S. census as merchants and grocers,

Figure 2. Circa 1855 envelope from Baltimore, Maryland to Sandy Spring, Maryland with illustration of the G.H. Reese & Brothers building. (Photograph courtesy of Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions, Sale 23, Lot 277.)

and an online family tree shows they were brothers.[7] Lewis Stabler, a farmer, is in Sandy "Springs" in the 1860 U.S. census.[8] The envelope is illustrated with the G. H. Reese & Brothers' building.

"Richard Cromwell" of Baltimore, Maryland, sent an envelope to P. T. Woodward of Saluda, Middlesex County, Virginia in 1868. [Figure 3] The 1870 Baltimore city directory includes "Richard Cromwell, agricult[ural] and horticultural imp[lement] manufac[turer] and seedsman" at the street address printed on the envelope, and the 1870 U.S. census includes a "Richd" Cromwell, merchant.[9] P. T. Woodward, a clerk of the county court, is in Saluda in the 1870 U.S. census, and his first name is shown as Philemon in the 1860 U.S. census.[10] The envelope is illustrated with a horse-drawn plow, hand-tools, and a cold frame, all presumably made in Richard Cromwell's shop.[11]

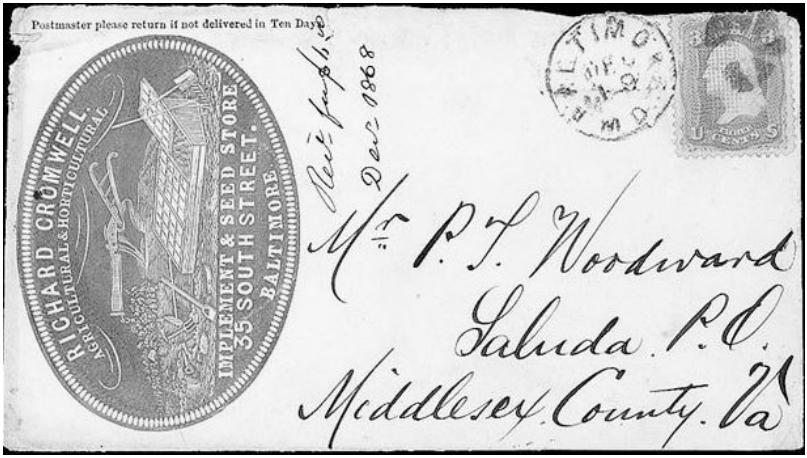

Figure 3. 1868 envelope from Baltimore, Maryland to Saluda, Virginia, with illustration of a horse-drawn plow, hand-tools, and a cold frame made by Richard Cromwell. (Photograph courtesy of Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions, Sale 35, Lot 1626.)

"Willcox & Gibbs," family sewing machine makers, wrote from their Baltimore office to "Geo. O. Conrad" of "Harrissonburg," Virginia, circa 1868. [Figure 4] The 1870 Baltimore city directory lists "Dewitt C. Cary, agent" for Willcox & Gibbs sewing machines at the address printed on the envelope.[12] A Dewitt "Cury," commission merchant, is in Baltimore in the 1870 U.S. census.[13] A George O. Conrad is in Harrisonburg in the 1870 U.S. census.[14] Willcox & Gibbs was founded by James Edward Allen Gibbs of Rockbridge County, Virginia and James Willcox, and a "James Ed. Gibbs," machinist, is in Rockbridge County in the 1870 U.S. census.[15] The envelope has an illustration of a train pulling a flatcar with a sewing machine aboard.

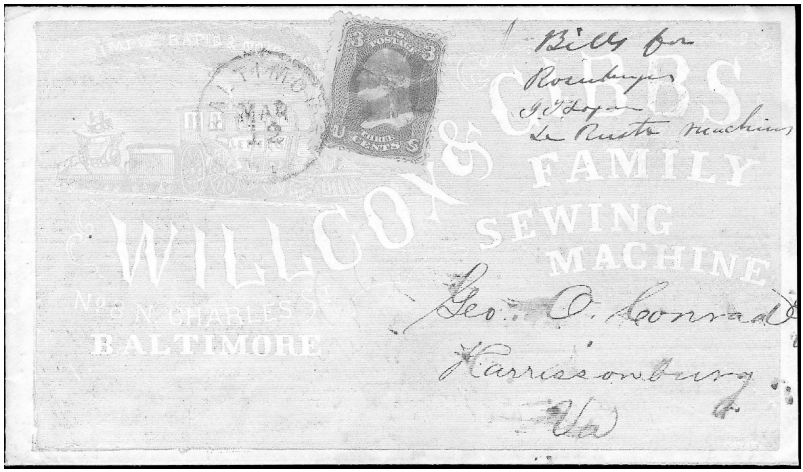

Figure 4. 1903 envelope from Baltimore, Maryland, to Harrisonburg, Virginia, with illustration of a Willcox & Gibbs sewing machine aboard a railroad flatcar. (Photograph courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Sale 845, Lot 91.)

"E. S. Zevely" of Pleasant Grove, Allegany County, Maryland, maker of hand stamps for postmaster and a postmaster himself, wrote to "Miss J. Sophia Zevely" in Salem, North Carolina circa 1855. [Figure 5] Edmund Zevely, wood engraver, is in Cumberland, Maryland, (about four miles southwest of Pleasant Grove) in the 1870 U.S. census.[16] An online family tree shows that Johanna Sophia Zevely was Edmund Samuel Zevely's sister, and a Sophia Zevely, a teacher, is in Salem in the 1850 U.S. census.[17] The envelope advertises "Designing, Wood Engraving, Wood Type, Proof Presses. . .for Stamps" made by the sender. As a postmaster, E. S. Zevely sent this envelope for "Free."[18] Two recent philatelic journal articles show other E. S. Zevely hand-stamped envelopes.[19]

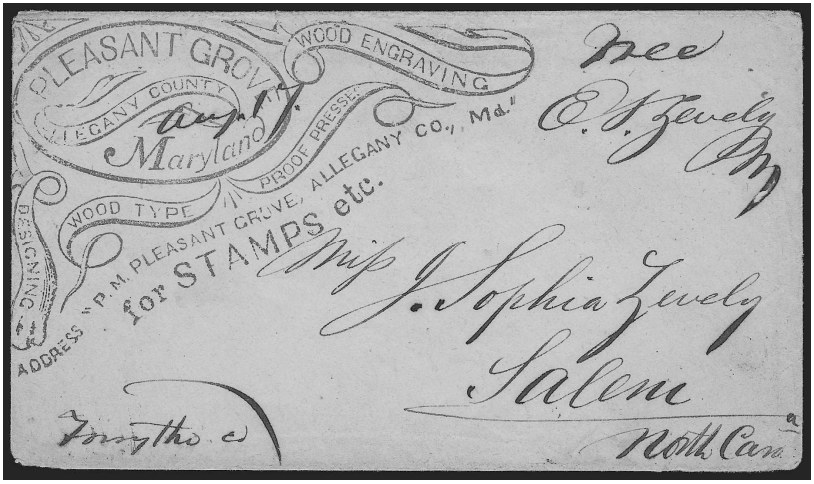

Figure 5. Circa 1855 envelope from Pleasant Grove, Maryland to Salem, North Carolina, with E. S. Zevely woodprint. (Photograph courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Sale 895, Lot 29.)

"William Harris, Gun, Rifle & Pistol Manufacturer" of Baltimore, Maryland, wrote to "Robt H. Crew" of Oak Ridge, North Carolina, circa 1857. [Figure 6] A William Harris, gun maker, is in Baltimore in the 1860 U.S. census, and a "Wm. Harris, gunsmith" is listed in the 1865 Baltimore city directory with a work address matching the address printed on the envelope.[20] A census listing for Robert H. Crew in Oak Ridge was not found, although there is a Madison Crews in Oak Ridge in the 1870 U.S. census.[21] The envelope has an illustration of rifles and pistols.

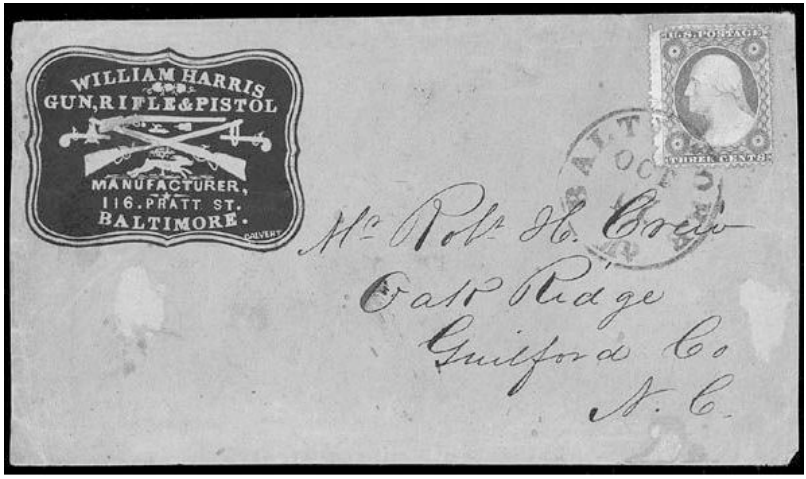

Figure 6. Circa 1857 envelope from Baltimore, Maryland to Oak Ridge, North Carolina with illustration of rifles and pistols made by William Harris. (Photograph courtesy of Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions, Sale 25, Lot 203.)

This article shows how old envelopes illustrate our ancestor's life at work. While workplace owners have been identified in this article, these images let us glimpse the life of every employee of these companies. Postal historians refer to these envelopes as advertising covers, and published reference books show hundreds of other examples.[22] In addition to life at work, old envelopes and postcards can also reveal an immigrant's home village, military service details, social and political interests, and even family photographs in the form of real photo postcards.[23] Millions of old envelopes and postcards await discovery by genealogists. Please contact the author if you have an envelope or postcard that you would like to share on *Philgen.org*, or are interested in adding other envelopes and postcards to the website.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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REFERENCES

[1] Figures 1, 4, and 5 are from Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries (http://www.siegelauctions.com/ accessed 2 September 2011). Click on "Power Search" and enter the sale and lot numbers for additional information. Figures 2, 3, and 6 are from Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions (http://www.rumseyauctions.com/ accessed 2 September 2011). Click on "Auctions" and select a sale number, and then "View Catalog" to find a list of lot numbers to see additional information.

[2] National Postal Museum, "Bringing the World Home," (http://arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=4&cmd=2&eid=37 accessed 2 September 2011; David M. Henkin, *The Postal Age, The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth-century America*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 9. James H. and Donald J. Bruns, *Reaching Rural America: The Evolution of Rural Free Delivery*, (Washington, D.C.: National Postal Museum, 1998), 21.

[3] 1860 U.S. census, Allegany County, Maryland, population (pop.) schedule, 6th district, post office Cumberland, page 135 (penned), dwelling 965, family 965, Abraham Russell; digital image, Ancestry.com (http://www.ancestry.com: accessed 2 September 2011); citing National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) microfilm publication M653, roll 456.

[4] "Civil War Draft Registrations Records, 1863-1865," database and digital images; Ancestry.com; citing NARA record group 110, entry for Elnathan J. Russell, Cumberland, Allegany County, Maryland; 1870 U.S. census, Allegany County, Maryland, pop. schedule, 6th district, post office Cumberland, page 12 (penned), dwelling 91, family 98, E. John Russel; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA M593, roll 566; *Sheriff & Taylor's Cumberland City Directory. . .for 1884-5*; digital image, Ancestry.com; 96. "Russell E. J. Mrs." Elnathan J. Russell may have died prior to 1884.

[5] 1870 U.S. census, Hampshire County, West Virginia, pop. schedule, Sherman, post office Romney, page 20 (penned), dwelling 153, family 146, Anaxamander Hayden; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA M593, roll 1687.

[6] *Woods' Baltimore City Directory, Ending Year 1864*; digital image, fold3.com (http://www.fold3.com/: accessed 2 September 2011); 323-324, "Reese G. H. & Brothers," "Reese, Chas.," "Reese, Gerald H.," "Reese, Henry," and "Reese, Thomas M."

[7] 1860 U.S. census, Baltimore (independent city), Maryland, pop. schedule, Baltimore, ward 20, page 269 (penned), dwelling 1724, family 1908, Charles Reese; Baltimore, ward 14, page 140 (penned), dwelling 816, family 930, Gerald H. Reese; Baltimore, ward 20, page 336 (penned), dwelling 2130, family 2304, Henry Reese; and Baltimore County, Maryland, pop. schedule, district 1, post office Catonsville, page 270 (penned), dwelling 1964, family 1829, Thomas M. Reese; digital images, Ancestry.com; citing NARA M653, rolls 464 (Gerald H.), 466 (Charles and Henry), and 467 (Thomas M.); "Patrick Family Tree Main," owner: Doreena208; sources are U.S. censuses and online family trees.

[8] 1860 U.S. census, Montgomery County, Maryland, pop. schedule, district 5, post office Sandy Springs, page 48 (penned), dwelling 337, family 322, Edward Stabler; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA M653, roll 478.

[9] *Woods's Baltimore City Directory, 1870*; digital image, fold3.com; 135, "Cromwell Richard;" 1870 U.S. census, Baltimore County, Maryland, pop. schedule, district 9, post office Towsontown, page 211 (penned), dwelling 1410, family 1409, Richd Cromwell; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA M593, roll 570.

[10] 1870 U.S. census, Middlesex County, Virginia, pop. schedule, Saluda, page 19 (penned), dwelling 131, family 130, P. T. Woodward; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA M593, roll 1663; 1860 U.S. census, Middlesex County, Virginia, pop. schedule, post office Saluda, page 1 (penned), dwelling 1, family 1, Philemon T. Woodward; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA M653, roll 1363.

[11] Wikipedia, "Cold frame," (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_frame: accessed 2 September 2011).

[12] *Woods's Baltimore City Directory, 1870*; digital image, fold3.com; 92, "Cary Dewitt C."

[13] 1870 U.S. census, Baltimore (independent city), Maryland, pop. schedule, Baltimore, ward 4, page 54 (penned), dwelling 298, family 369, Dewitt Cury; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA M593, roll 573.

[14] 1870 U.S. census, Rockingham County, Virginia, pop. schedule, Harrisonburg, page 40 (penned), dwelling 277, family 287, George Conrad; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA M593, roll 1676.

[15] Wikipedia, "Sewing machine," (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sewing_machine: accessed 2 September 2011); 1870 U.S. census, Rockbridge County, Virginia, pop. schedule, South River, post office Lexington, page 2 (penned), dwelling 10, family 10, James Ed. Gibbs; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA M593, roll 1675.

[16] 1870 U.S. census, Allegany County, Maryland, pop. schedule, district 13, post office Cumberland, page 389 (stamped, verso), dwelling 753, family 799, Edmund Zevely; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA M593, roll 567.

[17] "Kelly Family Tree," owner: kathykelly560; sources include U.S. censuses and Allegany County, Maryland, marriage abstracts; 1850 U.S. census,

Forsythe County, North Carolina, pop. schedule, Salem, page 219 (stamped, recto), dwelling 295, family 305, Emil De Schweinitz; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA M432, roll 630.

[18] Wayne E. Fuller, *The American Mail, Enlarger of the Common Life*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 295.

[19] James W. Milgram, "E.S. Zevely Makes Postmasters' Handstamps," *The Chronicle* [U.S. Philatelic Classics Society], Vol. 58, No. 2 (February 2009): 109-120; Cheryl R. Ganz, "E. S. Zevely and the 1853 New York World's Fair," *The Chronicle*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (February 2009): 30-32.

[20] 1860 U.S. census, Baltimore (independent city), Maryland, pop. schedule, Baltimore, ward 17, page 151 (penned), dwelling 948, family 1213, Anna Hellman; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA M653, roll 465; *Woods' Baltimore City Directory, 1865-'66*; digital image, fold3.com; 181, "Harris Wm."

[21] 1870 U.S. census, Guilford County, North Carolina, pop. schedule, Oak Ridge, page 20 (penned), dwelling 133, family 128, Madison Crews; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA M593, roll 1140.

[22] See for example: *American Illustrated Cover Catalog, The Collection of John R. Biddle*, (North Miami, Florida: David G. Phillips Co., Inc., 1981).

[23] For examples of other types of genealogical information available from postal history, please visit http://philgen.org, and in the Main Menu click on NEA, American Ancestors, Michigan, Minnesota Case Study, Nebraska, or North Dakota for examples showing immigrant origins; on Central NY, Georgia, Maine, South Carolina, or Western Pennsylvania for Civil War service; on Kansas for examples of real photo postcards; on Iowa WWI or NGS for First World War service; or one of the other state names for a general survey.