

CORNING NY POSTAL HISTORY INCLUDING DPOs NOW SERVED BY THE CORNING POST OFFICE

Synopsis

Thanks to a world renowned commercial enterprise formerly known as Corning Glass Works and now known simply as Corning, Inc., the subject of this exhibit, a small upstate New York city, has achieved fame and fortune far beyond its basic attributes. It is not a state capitol or even a county seat; it does not have an airport of its own, it does not border on a navigable waterway and only recently has it become “connected” to the federal interstate highway system. It has existed as a distinct community only since the late 1830s, a relatively short life span even for western New York, much of which was still wilderness at the time of the Revolution. With the relocation of a small glass factory from Brooklyn in the 1860s, Corning’s future was assured.

The Chemung River, formed at Painted Post one mile to the west of the present Corning city line by the confluence of the Canisteo and Cohocton Rivers, runs from west to east through the middle of Corning. The original settlement in what is now the City of Corning was on the north side of the Chemung River and was known as Knoxville. Corning came about as a result of settlement on the south side of the river.

Corning did not have a post office until July, 1840. Manuscript town marks for Corning are known for 1839, but they had to be placed in the mail at one of the nearby post offices; the closest would have been Painted Post, approximately two miles to the west, with a post office existing since 1800. The closeness of the Painted Post office, and its ability to serve the new settlement of Corning, probably delayed the opening of the Corning office. Two examples of Corning bank correspondence mailed in Painted Post prior to July 1840 are shown at the beginning of the exhibit. Knoxville is listed in *Smith & Kay* as having a post office from August 1852 to August 1854; it, too, would have been served by the Painted Post office prior to July 1840, and thereafter by the Corning post office, except for the brief period when it had its own (as near as can be determined, no confirmed markings are known for this office).

In order to give this exhibit more breadth it includes not only Corning mail but also mail handled by the small post offices (DPOs) formerly existing in the area now served by the Corning Post Office, as listed on the title page. This makes it possible to show a variety of manuscript markings from the stampless period, the unusual handstamp markings used at East Painted Post, a cross-section of rural cancellers during the “postcard era,” and other interesting markings and practices not found in the postal history of Corning itself.

Except for the page on 19th century railway mail service affecting Corning, the exhibit proceeds chronologically from 1834 to the late 20th century. Initially divided into rate periods, it shows examples of the rates charged as well as the markings used. Examples of free frank usage, forwarded mail, turned cover mail, paid vs. unpaid mail, outside-the-mail usage and cross-Atlantic mail are shown for the stampless period.

Thomas J. Alexander’s *1847 Cover Census* records five 1847 5-cent covers from Corning. This exhibit includes the cover dated 9/4/49. Alexander notes that Corning received no 10-cent stamps but then lists a 10-cent 1847 mailed from Corning July 1, 1848 to Mrs. Sarah L. Martial in Nantes, France. This was a folded letter sheet datelined East Painted Post and sent to the same addressee as the three stampless cross-Atlantic letters in the exhibit. The family involved with this correspondence traveled extensively and had ample opportunity to obtain the 1847 10-cent stamp at other post offices.

Beginning with the 1861 issue the exhibit shows fancy cancels and the variety of town marks used at Corning and its satellites (except East Painted Post, discontinued Feb. 1861). This portion of the exhibit also includes a demonetized usage, late usage of manuscript townmarks and killers at DPOs, introduction of postal

cards, receiving cancels, duplexed town marks and cancels, and a very unusual straight-line 1887 Corning town mark on a postal card.

A remarkable 1860s registered mail usage from one of the included DPOs, Caton, finding its way to the Dead Letter Office, highlights the post-Civil War portion of the exhibit.

Corning registered mail examples begin with two 1870s covers with multiple frankings: one for the more common 15-cent registry rate, and the other for the short-lived 8-cent rate in effect from Jan. 1, 1874 through June 30, 1875. A *U.S.P.O.D. Registered Package Envelope* postmarked Corning Jan. 16, 1889 and with a *Record of Transit* and *New Instructions* on the reverse of the envelope is also shown.

Machine cancels made their first appearance in Corning in 1899, courtesy of the Hampden Canceling Machine Company, and the exhibit includes a Hampden cancel three days prior to the earliest reported from Corning. Other Corning machine cancels in the exhibit are those from American Postal Machine Co., Columbia Postal Supply Co. and International Postal Supply Co.

More foreign destinations are shown in the 20th century part of the exhibit, along with RFD, Doane, duplex and 4-bar hand cancels, examples of railway, airmail and parcel post service, auxiliary markings, advertising covers, metered mail, registered mail, Christmas seals tied to covers and World War I rate changes. Of special interest in the 20th century material are the following:

- 1903 1-cent wrapper to Halifax, N.S. cancelled by mute Corning oval
- Shanghai to Corning, 1922, forwarded to Harrisburg, PA
- 1939 airmail to Singapore, 70-cent rate, opened by censor
- 1947 parcel post mailing tag, Corning roller cancel and parcel post insured handstamps
- Opening of Northside branch of Corning Post Office in 1959
- 1972 disaster area free franks by Corning residents

References:

- New York Postal History: The Post Offices and First Postmasters from 1775 to 1880*, by John L Kay and Chester M. Smith, Jr.
- American Stampless Cover Catalogue*, 5th ed., Vol.1, David G. Phillips, editor
- Manuscript Post Offices of New York State*, 3rd ed., Chlanda and Wilcox, editors; *Master Supplement to Third Edition*, Douglas Penwell, editor
- United States 1847 Cover Census*, by Thomas J. Alexander
- Postmarks on Postcards*, 2nd ed., by Richard W. Helbock
- Standard Flag Cancel Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed., by Frederick Langford
- Postal Markings of New York State 1792-1856*, by George Bernadt
- Hampden Postal Markings*, by Reginald Morris and Robert J. Payne
- United States Postal History Sampler*, by Richard B. Graham
- Scott Specialized Catalogue of U.S. Stamps & Covers*
- Standard reference works on 19th century U.S. fancy cancels; Mobile Post Office Society reference works on route agent and RPO cancels and on railroad history