Re: 2027 Sarasota National Stamp Expo, 7th Annual Literature Exhibition, January 15-17

Synopsis

Title: FIRST FEMALE NEW JERSEY POSTMASTERS: A Research Odyssey
Author: Jean R. Walton

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Introduction: This article was inspired by a seller discovering a Postmaster Certificate of Appointment for a woman in Princeton, New Jersey, signed by Postmaster General John McLean in January of 1825. Internet searches showed a name in 1828 in another office as currently recognized as New Jersey's first female postmaster, so this certificate would change the record if confirmed. He wanted more information before offering it, and asked the New Jersey Postal History Society for assistance. We were glad to help, with this result.

The Research Journey: Familiarity with the early operations of the Post Office shows women have played noteworthy roles as postmasters – both officially and unofficially - from colonial times. But Statehood records include no checkbox for the sex of the appointee – that is determined by a review of the names, and records sometimes conflict. Historical context is needed here.

National Archives Postmaster Appointments before 1832 are notoriously hard to read because of their condition, and because they were recorded in script. U.S. Registries were not published until 1816, and then only biennially, and were subject to the transcriptions of the publisher. A trip into the world of AI produced dubious results, offering only what had already been published, and how a name had been interpreted (or misinterpreted).

Purpose & Value to Philately: This resulting article has three purposes: First, to determine who might have been the earliest female postmaster in New Jersey since Statehood. Second, to share the tools and pitfalls in this complicated area of postal research. And third, to show *the importance of double-checking philatelic resources*, both old and modern, against the broader field of history. Context and comparison are a researcher's best tools to verify the "facts" as they are uncovered.

Conclusions: This article shows the original online New Jersey recordholder for a female New Jersey postmaster was in fact a *man.* It also uncovered an overlooked woman whose appointment moved the earliest date four years earlier than previously recorded, and earlier than the 1825 Certificate. This conclusion remains tentative, as other missed women may not yet be identified whose names appear only as initials, or whose names are gender-neutral.

Post Office returns and records, local histories and genealogies, and the like await careful research. We are hopeful others will take up the search and find other hidden early New Jersey female postmasters.

My special thanks to those who contributed to this journey: Alan Siegel of the Warren Township Historical Society, Joseph Felcone, NJ's Rare Book dealer in Princeton, and Gabriel Swift, Princeton's Librarian for Early American Collections, Princeton University Library Special Collections, where the original certificate of appointment which launched this research now resides.