

Such a simple cover, but *oh* the story it might tell

Ken Stewart (#3245) finds more questions than answers

It is always fun to pick up a cover and see how much it can tell you. The more you learn about our hobby, the more you can learn and the more you will know to look for.

The cover in Figure 1 is a rather bland, gray envelope. The stamp tells us that it is from Belgium. Careful examination of the cover tells a lot

ery and does not have a company corner card but does have a company perfinned stamp, we can assume that this letter was written on board a ship and that the letter was placed in the Belgium postal system on arrival in Antwerp. The purple hand stamp, if it is genuine, indicates that the

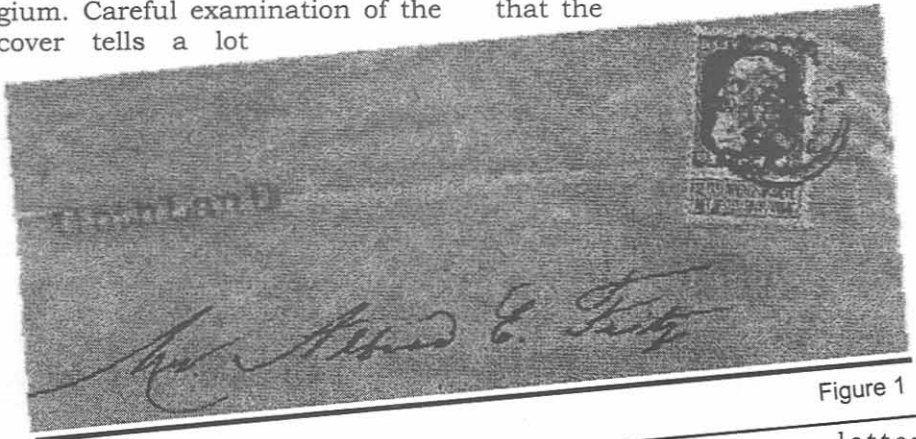


Figure 1

more.

On the back (Figure 2) is a red seal of a type common to ship-board stationery. It says "Red Star Line/Antwerpen."

On the front is a purple hand-stamp that says "GothLand." Even more careful examination reveals that the stamp is a perfin—a five-pointed star consisting of 30 holes. The perfin is very hard to see in real life because the envelope is made of gray security paper. The cancellation, under a magnifying glass, reveals that this cover was mailed in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1910. The stamp is Scott # 87 with the "Do not deliver on Sunday" label intact. The cover is addressed to Chicago.

What might we deduce from the evidence provided so far? Actually a lot. Since this letter was written on ship company station-

letter was posted at sea on the Red Star Line's ship *GothLand*. The purple hand stamp also indicates that the *GothLand* is not an important ship with a lot of passengers' mail as the cover does not have a *pacquet boat* cancel.

A little research in my favorite book for trivia (11th edition of the *Britannica*) shows that the Red Star Line's real name is the *Societe Anonyme Belge-Americaine*, which by 1911 was part of the American

Line. It ran between

Antwerp and New York. Was the writer an American going to Belgium who was notifying someone of his or her safe arrival? Was the writer a Belgian businessman?

Who knows, but you can always surmise whatever you wish.

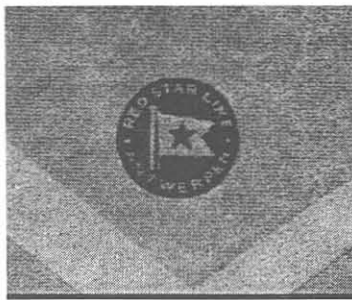


Figure 2